

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMISSION

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

1

VICTORIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

First Session of the Fifty-third Parliament

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMISSION

Proceedings commenced 11.04 a.m. by Clerk reading His Excellency the Governor's proclamation convoking Parliament.

Usher of Black Rod appeared at Bar and announced that Senior Commissioner appointed by the Governor to open Parliament (the Honourable Mr John Harber Phillips, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria) requested attendance of Legislative Assembly members in Legislative Council chamber to hear commission read for commencement and holding of present session of Parliament.

Honourable members, accompanied by chief officers of house, proceeded to Legislative Council Chamber.

On return of members to Legislative Assembly chamber, the Honourable Mr Justice John Spence Winneke entered chamber and was conducted to chair by Serjeant-at-Arms.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

Commission appointing the Honourable Mr Justice John Spence Winneke to administer oath and affirmation of allegiance to members of Legislative Assembly read by Clerk.

Clerk announced receipt of return of writ issued by His Excellency for election of 88 members to serve for electoral districts set out below and endorsed to show election of following members:

<i>District</i>	<i>Member</i>
Albert Park	Johnstone William Thwaites

Altona	Lynne Janice Kosky
Ballarat East	Barry Edward Traynor
Ballarat West	Geoffrey Paul Jenkins
Bayswater	Gordon Wetzel Ashley
Bellarine	Garry Howard Spry
Benalla	Patrick John McNamara
Benambra	Antony Fulton Plowman
Bendigo East	Michael John
Bendigo West	Robert Graham Cameron
Bennettswood	Geoffrey Charles Coleman
Bentleigh	Inga Peulich
Berwick	Robert Logan Dean
Box Hill	Robert William Clark
Brighton	Alan Robert Stockdale
Broadmeadows	John Mansfield Brumby
Bulleen	David John Perrin
Bundoora	Sherryl Maree Garbutt
Burwood	Jeffrey Gibb Kennett
Carrum	David Richard Lean
Caulfield	Helen Jean Shardey
Clayton	Hong Lim
Coburg	Carlo Carli
Cranbourne	Gary James Rowe
Dandenong	John Pandazopoulos
Dandenong North	Janet Tindale Calder Wilson
Doncaster	Victor John Perton
Dromana	Martin Francis Dixon
Eltham	Wayne Phillips

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

2

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

Essendon	Judith Marilyn Maddigan	Morwell	Keith Graeme Hamilton
Evelyn	Sidney James Plowman	Murray Valley	Kenneth Stephen Jasper
Footscray	Bruce Allan Mildenhall	Narracan	Florian Andrighetto
Forest Hill	John Ingles Richardson	Niddrie	Rob Justin Hulls
Frankston	Andrea Lea McCall	Northcote	Anthony John Sheehan
Frankston East	Frederick Peter McLellan	Oakleigh	Denise McGill
Geelong	Ann Mary Henderson	Pakenham	Robert Roy Cameron Maclellan
Geelong North	Peter James Loney	Pascoe Vale	Christine Mary Campbell
Gippsland East	David Lewis Treasure	Polwarth	Ian Winton Smith
Gippsland South	Peter Julian Ryan	Portland	Denis Vincent Napthine
Gippsland West	Alan John Brown	Prahran	Leonie Therese Burke
Gisborne	Thomas Carter Reynolds	Preston	Michael Andrew Leighton
Glen Waverley	Ernest Ross Smith	Richmond	Demetri Dollis
Hawthorn	Phillip Archibald Gude	Ripon	Stephen Noel Elder
Ivanhoe	Craig Anthony Cuffe Langdon	Rodney	Noel John Maughan
Keilor	George Seitz	Sandringham	Murray Hamilton R. Thompson
Kew	Jan Louise Murray Wade	Seymour	Marie Therese Tehan
Knox	Hurtle Reginald Lupton	Shepparton	Donald Kilgour
Malvern	Robert Keith Bennett Doyle	South Barwon	Alister Irvine Paterson
Melbourne	Neil Donald Cole	Springvale	Edward Joseph Micallef
Melton	David James Cunningham	Sunshine	Ian Malcolm John Baker
Mildura	Russell Irwin Savage	Swan Hill	Barry Edward Hector Steggall
Mill Park	Alex Andrianopoulos	Thomastown	Peter Batchelor
Mitcham	Roger Pescott	Tullamarine	Bernard Thomas Christopher Finn
Monbulk	Stephen James McArthur	Wantirna	Kimberley Arthur Wells
Mooroolbark	Lorraine Clare Elliott	Warrandyte	Phillip Neville Honeywood
Mordialloc	Geoffrey Graeme Leigh	Warrnambool	John Francis McGrath
Mornington	Robert Fitzgerald Cooper	Werribee	Mary Jane Douglas

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

3

Williamstown	Stephen Philip Bracks
Wimmera	William Desmond McGrath
Yan Yean	André Haermeyer

Members (other than Mr McNamara and Mr Steggall) took and subscribed either oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Commissioner withdrew.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Mr A. F. PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I move:

That Sidney James Plowman do take the Chair of this house as Speaker.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — I second the motion.

Mr S. J. PLOWMAN (Evelyn) — I accept the nomination.

The Clerk — The time for nominations has expired.

Clerk declared honourable member for Evelyn duly elected as Speaker.

Mr S. J. Plowman conducted to chair by proposer and seconder.

The SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Plowman) — I wish to thank the house for its nomination and my election as Speaker and for the honour of giving me the highest office Parliament can bestow. I accept the responsibility with some humility and with the realisation that the Speaker is the servant of Parliament as a whole and is impartial at all times. I look forward to being a servant of Parliament in the time to come, and I hope I will justify members' confidence in nominating and electing me as Speaker.

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — Mr Speaker, I am honoured that one of my first duties in this new Parliament is to congratulate you on your election and elevation to this very high office. Mr Speaker, you have had a great deal of experience in Parliament, having been first elected as the honourable member for Evelyn in 1973 and serving through to 1982 before being re-elected in 1985. Since then you have served continuously. In your

initial term you served as Speaker from 1979 to 1982, so you come to this office with a great deal of experience. That experience will be beneficial to this congregation of members and to Parliament as it goes about its business over the next four years.

After your return to Parliament in 1985 you served as Minister for Energy and Minerals from 1992 to 1996 and as Minister Assisting the Treasurer on State Owned Enterprises. You now assume the position of Speaker not only having been a member of this Parliament for many years and serving with distinction by closely representing your constituents but also having had the experience of being both the Speaker and a member of the executive government. Therefore, you bring to your office experiences that not many of your predecessors have had.

We wish you well in your new role as you discharge your duties. We are sure you will do so in a manner consistent with the Westminster tradition and the practices of the house. The work of Parliament is critical to the future of all Victorians. It is the place in which laws are made or repealed and where matters of public importance are debated. Sir, I am sure that with the cooperation of all members of this house assisting you in your role as Speaker this Parliament will continue to build upon its proud tradition of serving the community of Victoria, as it has for very many decades now.

Members on this side of the house congratulate you, Sir. We wish you well and look forward to working with you over the next four years.

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — Mr Speaker, I also congratulate you on your appointment to the high office of Speaker. As you pointed out in your remarks, the position of Speaker is the highest office it is possible to attain in Parliament. You bring to this Parliament your experience as a former Speaker during the years of a former Liberal government. The position of Speaker calls for special qualities of impartiality, dignity, integrity, firmness, consistency and, above all, fairness in dealing with matters before the house. As you would know, Sir, from your previous experience, the position also requires great patience, extraordinary resilience, and an excellent sense of humour.

At the conclusion of the previous Parliament I said that the former Speaker, the Honourable John Delzoppo, had been a gracious and dignified ambassador for this Parliament. I am sure you will bring the same qualities to the position.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

4

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

Because of your previous experience as Speaker between 1979 and 1982 you, Sir, also bring to this Parliament an understanding of the importance of the separation of powers between Parliament and the executive. The doctrine of the separation of powers is a cornerstone of the Westminster democracy, and as the minority party the opposition will be relying on your good judgment and your sense of fairness to ensure that the distinction between the role of Parliament and that of the executive arm of government is always maintained.

Mr Speaker, over the next four years you will have to deal with a number of broad issues that face Parliament. Obviously, one of those is the standard of behaviour. Many members, and certainly members of the public, have expressed concern about the behaviour that sometimes occurs during debate in this chamber. You will have the full support of the opposition at all times in your endeavours to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour and decorum in this house.

Another matter under your control is members' accommodation, the services provided to Parliament and your responsibility for members and staff. Of course, the proposed completion of Parliament House will create challenges in terms of the physical structure and settings; again, you will have the opposition's support in dealing with those challenges in a way that is fair and effective. In the meantime I ask that you ensure that all members are treated equally and fairly in the allocation of existing accommodation.

The final issue concerns the ongoing need for parliamentary reform and changes to sessional and standing orders to improve the operation of the Parliament. I note from my reading of *Hansard* that that is a matter in which you have taken considerable interest over the years. I hope during this term in your role as Speaker that you will oversee genuine debate and reform of those sessional and standing orders.

I again congratulate you, Sir, on your election. You have enjoyed the unanimous support of this house in your election, and I wish you every success in your term as Speaker.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on the unanimous support you have received in your election as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

I entered Parliament in 1979 as a new recruit and with a great deal of naivete. At that time you held the position of Speaker and you offered a great deal of guidance to me and many other new members. I am sure you will offer the same guidance and advice to all new members of this Parliament. All new members should avail themselves of the expertise of the Speaker to gain a full understanding of the protocol of this chamber and the conduct required of members in this chamber. We are all challenged from time to time. The Leader of the Opposition highlighted the need for members to conduct themselves in the proper manner because of the media attention that is now focused on Parliament. That is a real challenge to you, Mr Speaker. It is fair to say that over the past few years some public discredit has been brought upon members of Parliament and the conduct of Parliament. I know you will have the commitment to ensure that the work of this chamber is conducted in a proper, orderly and fair manner.

On behalf of the Leader of the National Party I indicate that, as part of the coalition, members of the National Party give an undertaking that they will give you, Mr Speaker, their full support and cooperation. We wish you every success in carrying out your role as Speaker of this Parliament.

Mr DOLLIS (Richmond) — I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your appointment today. You are one of the few people to bring considerable experience to a difficult job. The Westminster system has been and is facing considerable challenges, especially as we move into the next century. Challenges to the democratic institutions of our society have made the job of government more difficult. The job of the opposition is paramount, and that is where your role as Speaker will be of incredible importance to this Parliament and to the democracy we have built in this state.

The Leader of the Opposition has congratulated you and offered you full support and cooperation. I am certain every member on this side of the house will do his or her utmost to cooperate to ensure that fair play is seen in this chamber. In that regard we are looking to you as the fair umpire to ensure that opposition members, with limited numbers, are given equal opportunity to ensure that democracy functions and functions well.

I am certain the next four years will be of considerable enjoyment to you and that justice will be done in this state by a person of your calibre occupying the chair.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER TO GOVERNOR

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

5

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I join with my parliamentary colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Speaker today. You have had bestowed on you the great honour of being elected unopposed. That is a reflection of the respect this Parliament gives to people who offer themselves for the position as Speaker.

You bring to the position experience from a previous time as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and that is a valued asset. However, many members in this Parliament were not here during your previous term as Speaker, therefore, for many they start this parliamentary term with your good self in the chair with a clean slate. It will be a learning experience for both you and all of us.

I note in your speech that you accepted the responsibility that goes with the position of Speaker, and great responsibility is fixed to that position. I was pleased to hear that you regard yourself as being a servant of the Parliament and that you will carry out your duties impartially. It is to you, as the incoming Speaker, that the opposition looks to ensure that there is impartiality and procedural fairness. I am sure that you will do so. I look forward to working with you in the coming period, which I believe will be an enjoyable one.

The SPEAKER — I thank honourable members for their comments.

Sitting suspended at 11.57 a.m. until 2.32 p.m.

The SPEAKER resumed chair and read prayer.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER TO GOVERNOR

The SPEAKER — Order! I have to advise the house that I presented myself to His Excellency the Governor in the library and advised him that I was your choice as Speaker.

His Excellency was pleased to receive me and address me in the following terms:

Mr Speaker,
I have pleasure in congratulating you on your election to the high and important office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The able manner in which you have discharged the duties you have undertaken during your parliamentary career, including a previous period as Speaker from 1979 to 1982, is recognised by members of the

Legislative Assembly who, in their wisdom, have selected you as their Speaker.

I have confidence that you will fulfil the duties of this distinguished office and hold fast to its traditions and customs.

R. E. McGarvie
Governor of Victoria

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Usher of Black Rod brought message from His Excellency the Governor desiring attendance of honourable members in Legislative Council chamber.

Members, led by Speaker, proceeded to Council chamber.

Sitting suspended 2.37 p.m. until 5.05 p.m.

CONDOLENCES

Leslie Victor Shilton, Esq.

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of Leslie Victor Shilton, Esquire, and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Midlands from May 1970 to April 1973.

Leslie Victor Shilton, who passed away peacefully at Foster Hospital on 16 December 1995, was the first policeman to be elected to the Parliament. During his time in this house he raised the profile of police-related matters.

Mr Shilton was born in Traralgon in 1923 and was educated at University High School. During World War II, Mr Shilton served in New Guinea with the 39th Battalion, the Second Australian Imperial Force. Following his return he joined the Victoria Police Force in 1948 and served for 22 years, of which 17 were with the Criminal Investigation Bureau. Mr Shilton distinguished himself when he won the Police Valour Award in 1965. His dedication to the police force was self-evident.

That dedication was reflected in his maiden speech after he was elected to this place as the member for Midlands in May 1970. Mr Shilton addressed this

CONDOLENCES

6

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

house with authority on the police force, arguing payment of a reasonable wage according to the value of police officers to the community. He spoke on their complete dedication to serving the community in the face of criticism and verbal and physical abuse and organisational restrictions — such as a policeman being able to supplement his income only by being a good footballer or a good football coach. Mr Shilton recognised that due to actions by a few the reputation of the police force was low in the public's eyes. He urged this house to put the force back onto the pedestal where it belongs.

While a member of this house Mr Shilton served on the New Zealand Insurance Trustee Company Ltd Committee in 1972 and on the Trustee Companies Trustee Executors Bill Committee in 1973.

Not only was Mr Shilton the first policeman elected to this Parliament, he was, as Sir Henry Bolte stated, the first policeman to be elected to local government. Mr Shilton was a councillor of the Shire of Seymour from 1965 to 1971 and was Shire President from 1967 to 1968. His local interests included the Seymour Football Club, of which he was president from 1960 to 1963; the Seymour Citizens Welfare Committee; the Seymour Girl Guides; and the Returned Services League.

After he was defeated at the April 1973 general election Mr Shilton studied Aboriginal-police relations for the commonwealth government and worked for several years as a bank officer. Mr Shilton was also very dedicated to his constituents, highlighting their problems in this house, particularly in relation to a lack of appropriate education facilities in his electorate and the need to provide assistance and relief to primary producers, especially family farmers.

On behalf of my government I extend condolences to the family of Mr Shilton, his wife Daphne, his daughters Sue and Anne, his stepchildren, Marlene and Laurie, and their respective families.

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — On behalf of the opposition, I join with the Premier in extending condolences to the family of the late Mr Leslie Victor Shilton.

Les Shilton served as Labor MLA for Midlands between 1970 and 1973, and during that time he served on a number of parliamentary committees, including the New Zealand Insurance Trustee Company Ltd Committee and the Trustee Companies Trustee Executors Bill Committee.

He was born in November 1923 and, like most of his generation, served in the military forces during the Second World War. He saw action with the 39th Battalion in New Guinea from 1941 to 1945.

Following the war, Les Shilton joined the Victorian police force, with which he enjoyed a very long, respected and distinguished career. He spent 17 of his 22 years in the police force as a member of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, and in 1965 he received the police valour award.

Mr Shilton's election to Parliament in 1970 was noteworthy because he was the first active member of the Victorian police force to be elected to Parliament. Prior to 1962 members of the police force were unable to join a political party or stand for public office. Les Shilton was one of the first officers to take advantage of the more flexible rules; shortly after they were introduced, in 1962, he joined the Australian Labor Party, and in 1965 he was elected to the Seymour Shire Council. He served for six years as a Seymour shire councillor, including one term as shire president from 1967 to 1968. He was also president of the Seymour football club and many other well-known community organisations.

Les Shilton's commitment to the community as a member of the police force and as a shire councillor and president was also demonstrated as the newly elected member for Midlands. During his term as the MLA for Midlands, he campaigned vigorously for improvements to primary and secondary education facilities, as well as a vast range of government services.

As a former policeman, Les Shilton was also able to pursue issues of importance for members of the Victorian police force. In his maiden speech in this place he chose to speak on the rights and responsibilities of police officers, including their pay and conditions. He said he was able to speak with more authority than any other honourable member on the pay and conditions police officers had to endure, and he was able to raise those issues in the Parliament and in other public domains.

Following his defeat at the 1973 election, Les Shilton investigated Aboriginal-police relations for the commonwealth government and later worked in the banking industry.

Les Shilton was an active and thoughtful leader of his local community and represented his electorate with the same respect, dignity and application that

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

7

he demonstrated throughout his career in the Victorian police force.

The opposition joins the Premier and other members of the Parliament in extending sincere condolences to Mr Shilton's family.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I am sure the Leader of the National Party, the honourable member for Benalla, Pat McNamara, would have liked to be here today to express his sympathy and that of the National Party not only because Leslie Victor Shilton was a police officer but more importantly because he did so much in the Seymour area, a region of which Pat McNamara has a fair knowledge.

Leslie Victor Shilton served as a Labor member for Midlands for three years and was a prominent person in this house. Mr Bill Ebery may have won the seat from him in 1973 — the Leader of the Opposition nods in agreement — but, while I did not know Leslie Victor Shilton, I know that members of his era of the likes of Peter Ross-Edwards had a great deal of respect for him.

I notice that Leslie Shilton studied Aboriginal-police relations for the commonwealth government in 1973. Therefore, work on the relationship between Aborigines and the police has been around for a long time, and we all acknowledge that the work is still going on.

On behalf of National Party members, I extend to the relatives of Leslie Victor Shilton our sympathies and condolences and hope that they feel a sense of pride that someone within their family has served Victoria very well in a number of areas: as a police officer, as a member of Parliament, as a prominent footballer and football coach and as a very prominent member of a number of activities in Seymour. There is not much more you could ask of anybody during a lifetime other than to serve the community well — which, undoubtedly, Mr Shilton has done.

The SPEAKER — I thank members for their comments on the condolence motion for Les Shilton. Although I did not know Les Shilton, I share the grief of other honourable members at his death. A little later in the evening we will move for the recognition of the condolence motion.

Ronald Graham Henry McAlister, Esq.

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of Ronald Graham Henry McAlister, Esquire, and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Brunswick East from 1975 to 1976.

Ronald Graham Henry McAlister was a hard-working community man who passed away suddenly on 21 April 1996, aged 73. Although in Parliament for only a short time, he will be remembered for his service to the Brunswick East community.

Mr McAlister was born in Carlton in 1922, not more than a few kilometres from his seat of Brunswick East. From 1939 to 1945 Mr McAlister served his country well by being in the Royal Australian Navy. After leaving the navy he worked as a mechanical engineer on boilers and at power stations. He was later the principal of a consulting engineering firm.

Mr McAlister entered this house as the member for Brunswick East after a by-election in April 1975. Probably only two members of this place would remember him: the Minister for Planning, and the honourable member for Polwarth.

Unfortunately for Mr McAlister, following a redistribution of electoral boundaries, which was beyond the control of all parliamentarians, prior to the 1976 general election the Brunswick East seat was abolished. Ill health also contributed to his early departure from Parliament.

Mr McAlister used his experience of more than 20 years as a member of two state wages boards to argue in his short time in Parliament for the protection of workers and their conditions. It was not surprising, then, that his first address to this house was on the Workers Compensation Act. Mr McAlister was also committed to conservation and the environment.

Mr McAlister was civic minded and interested in developing community spirit in Brunswick. He served the community as a Brunswick city councillor from 1965 to 1968. He also served the community as a justice of the peace and a marriage celebrant.

His love of football was evident through his support of the North Melbourne football club. In 1975 Mr McAlister was an executive member of the North Melbourne football club and the president of the North Melbourne social club.

CONDOLENCES

8

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

On behalf of my government, I extend condolences to the family of Mr McAlister, including his wife, Jan, and children, Janet, Graham and Suzie and their respective families.

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — Mr Speaker, I join the Premier and other honourable members in extending condolences to the family of the late Ron McAlister.

Ron McAlister served as Labor MLA for Brunswick East from April 1975, when he was elected at a by-election, until February 1976, when the seat was abolished in a redistribution.

Following his service in the Royal Australian Navy during the Second World War, Ron McAlister was employed in mechanical engineering, and immediately prior to entering Parliament was a principal in an engineering consulting firm.

Ron McAlister was active in the local community throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He was a Brunswick city councillor from 1965 to 1968 and a member of the administrative committee of the Victorian ALP from 1971 to 1974. He was also the president of the North Melbourne football club social club at his time of election — a time, I hasten to add, of great success for the club. Ron McAlister was not only the president of the social club but also a club executive member. Members of this house would know that in 1975 North Melbourne won its first ever grand final premiership. In 1976 it was defeated, and in 1977, again when Ron McAlister was very involved with the club, it drew with Collingwood in the grand final and subsequently won the replay.

The club had many greats in that era, such as Phil Baker, Daryl Sutton, Keith Greig and Arnold Briedis. As a Collingwood supporter, I remember that 1977 grand final very well indeed.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — It had Doug Wade, Rantall — it had them everywhere. It had a very good team. I stress that in 1975, in what was obviously a very proud moment for Ron McAlister, North Melbourne won its first ever premiership.

As I said, Ron McAlister was elected MLA for Brunswick East in April 1975 at a by-election after the sitting member, Mr David Bornstein, resigned. Ron served for only 10 months in the Legislative Assembly but in that time was able to pursue a

number of issues close to his heart, specifically those relating to the environment and also, as the Premier remarked, workers compensation and the rights of workers. He continued his activity in the wider community as an energetic and effective activist. He was undoubtedly one of the first environmental activists, long before it became fashionable to be one.

In regard to his background in engineering, Ron McAlister was an informed and qualified advocate for the environment. He was more than able to match in debate other experts in the field, and as a result he had his share of environmental victories.

Other outlets for Ron McAlister's energy were as a marriage celebrant, as an active member of the marriage celebrants association and as a member and past master of the Freemasons.

Ron McAlister's funeral was in many ways a testimony to his lifetime in community involvement. Among the many mourners to pay tribute were four different groups: the Australian Labor Party, the association of marriage celebrants, the North Melbourne Football Club and the Freemasons. It is a great accolade indeed when a person is held in high esteem by four such different groups. He will be sadly missed by many in the community, and on behalf of the opposition I extend sincere condolences to his family.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I also support the condolence motion moved by the Premier. It is proper that we pay our respects to people who have served this Parliament. As has been mentioned, Ron McAlister served in this place for only a short time, from 1975 to 1976. A headline from the *Age* newspaper of 14 April 1975 — after the by-election he won — reads, 'Polling boosts Labor morale'. He scored some 65 per cent of the vote at that by-election. I suppose Labor was looking for a boost in morale at that time, and it is probably doing so at present.

As has been said, Mr McAlister was a consulting engineer and president of the social club of the North Melbourne Football Club. Having played at the old Arden Street oval in 1959, I know it was a place where things would certainly hum along. Of course, many famous players came from the North Melbourne Football Club during the 1970s, and the Leader of the Opposition referred to a few of them and to the premiership the club won. I guess it was the start of an era when clubs would try to position themselves to win a premiership, and that is exactly

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

9

what the administration of the North Melbourne club did at the time. Ron Barassi came in and recruited the likes of Barry Davis from Essendon, John Rantall from South Melbourne and Doug Wade from Geelong. Football was very much part of Ron McAlister's life, as it has been a big part of the lives of many of us, and he played a significant role in it.

On behalf of the National Party I offer condolences to Ron McAlister's friends and relatives and, indeed, his immediate family.

Mr DOLLIS (Richmond) — I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the National Party in expressing condolences at the death of Ron McAlister. Those of us who knew Ron would understand that he was very passionate about everything he did. He was passionate about his commitment to the Labor Party and his commitment to socialism. He was very passionate about his commitment to Australia, and that is why he fought in World War II. In fact, one could claim he was a true patriot.

Ron McAlister served only 10 months in this house, but the short period for which he was a member of Parliament should not be considered as part of a limited record in his being an activist. He was an environmentalist and was committed to all issues that concerned inner Melbourne, not just Brunswick. In fact, just before his death he was a prime organiser against the City Link and spent most of his time arguing for and on behalf of public transport in this state. Ron McAlister displayed the passion he always displayed for this country, his Labor Party and his football club. The way he fought issues reflected Ron McAlister, the person. He was fair and was always interested in defending those who could not defend themselves. He spoke about workers' rights; workers compensation was one of the areas he dealt with during his time in Parliament.

In the 1970s Ron was considered to be a parliamentarian with a promising career. But, as the Premier said, because of ill health and a boundary redistribution, this house missed Ron McAlister's contribution, which should have continued for a long time.

I join with the opposition, the Premier and the Deputy Leader of the National Party in expressing condolences to his family. He was part of a rare breed which is disappearing from our society — that is, men of considerable commitment, passion and belief and men who are committed to the

fundamentals of our society. Ron McAlister will be sadly missed.

Mr HAMILTON (Morwell) — I join with previous speakers in expressing condolences to Ron McAlister's wife, Jan, and to his family. This is a very sad occasion for me because during the relatively short time that I knew Ron McAlister he became an extremely good friend. I first met Ron when I was teaching physics at the Gippsland institute and Ron enrolled in 1985 to complete a bachelor of applied science, majoring in physics. Indeed, Ron was a student who very quickly learnt that my job was not to teach physics but to teach students to love physics. It was from that very sound association that our relationship grew.

Ron studied in the Latrobe Valley in the heart of the power station industry. I must agree with Ron: he was always very strongly committed, as he should have been, to opposing the privatisation of our power stations. Indeed, it is good to see there are some of us still left!

Ron McAlister had a great deal to do with the concern expressed by the people of Melbourne about the construction of the Newport power station and the environmental effects it may have had on Melbourne. Indeed, it was because of Ron's activism that the Melbourne airshed study was put in place. That was a very progressive move that did not come easily, but it was certainly a credit to the government of the day. It led to a much easier path for the setting up of a similar airshed study in the Latrobe Valley. I trust and hope the new environment minister will ensure such airshed studies continue to be carried out in recognition of the work done by people like Ron McAlister.

As other speakers have said, Ron McAlister suffered a great amount of illness and he spent much of his time at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. He would often telephone me saying he would not be in for next week's lectures because he had to have another part removed!

Although during his illness Ron underwent an amazing number of operations and lost many body parts, his heart never wavered. Ron was all heart and commitment.

Ron McAlister worked to oppose not so much the development of the City Link project as the way in which it seemed to him and to people in the affected areas, especially along the Tullamarine Freeway, that the impact on people had been forgotten. Ron's

CONDOLENCES

10

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

opposition was always very considered, well researched, measured and consistent. He did his homework and asked the relevant questions. Honourable members who read the report of the City Link environmental effects hearing will understand Ron McAlister's contribution to opposition to the project. The questions he asked are still relevant and should be taken into consideration.

Ron McAlister had one great strength: he earned the respect of those with whom he worked, no matter where he worked or with what disparate groups. At his funeral I was moved to hear of the range of people whose respect he had earned. When Barry Cheatley of the North Melbourne Football Club spoke highly of Ron's commitment to and efforts in support of the club it reminded me of the time Barry Cheatley and I were students together at Ballarat High School. Barry, who is a well-qualified VFL footballer and administrator at North Melbourne, said he appreciated Ron's work at North, especially during that club's halcyon days as the top side in the former VFL.

At the funeral service we learnt other things about Ron McAlister that had not been obvious to many people. I did not realise he was an active Freemason, a past master and a member of two or three of the higher lodges or that he had been an active member of the Marriage Celebrants Association. We all know he was a life member of the Australian Labor Party.

To sum up Ron McAlister, in anyone's terms he was a true believer — a committed person who let nothing stand in the way of his principles and the things he believed in and worked for. We can all remember and treasure the fact that he was respected by everyone who knew him, including those who disagreed with him. It is easy to have an argument, but the ability of people like Ron McAlister to have an argument and maintain respect is to be valued highly. We say goodbye to Ron. I remember him above all as one of nature's gentlemen and a very good friend.

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I join the previous speakers in extending condolences to Ron McAlister's family. Ron was a committed socialist, a true believer, a community activist and one of the first environmentalists to fight for the locality. He will be sadly missed in the Brunswick area.

Ron was a Second World War veteran, serving in the Royal Australian Navy from 1939 to 1945 and being twice seriously injured. The war injuries he carried

during the rest of his life were obstacles he fought courageously to overcome. He was also a councillor of the former City of Brunswick between 1965 and 1968, which demonstrated his commitment to local activities, and had a strong sense of civic pride. As other honourable members have said, he served as president of the social club of the North Melbourne Football Club.

Ron McAlister was a generous, strong-willed, outspoken and courageous yet soft and loving man. He was proud member of the Australian Labor Party. Last year he received his 40-year medal, which he wore with extreme pride. It is perhaps fitting that he died while smelling a rose in his garden — a garden he particularly loved to look after.

Ron was a mechanical engineer and a consultant in mechanical engineering before entering Parliament. He was also a JP and a marriage celebrant. He met his first wife in 1954 after returning from studies in London. He met his second wife at a meeting of the ALP policy committee for the environment — she was trying to get onto the committee. Someone pointed Ron out to her and said, 'Ron is the person to speak to' and true love followed.

Ron endured great physical pain throughout his life. I met him when I joined the Australian Labor Party in the Brunswick area in the late 1970s. He was one of the founders of the Brunswick South branch. I had been told to join the Brunswick South branch because it was an activist branch and a man called Ron McAlister was a member. Ron did not attend meetings when I first joined because he was very sick. I met him when I went to collect his membership dues in the days before computerisation. It was the first of my many visits to Ron at his house.

Ron was very much an inspiration for me. He approached politics in the context of ideals and a vision for his local area. He very much believed in looking after the needs of the Brunswick area and the local people, and he demonstrated that in his brief period as the member for Brunswick East in 1975 and 1976. He was fundamentally a worker for the people of that area, a commitment he adhered to throughout his life.

Ron was also a cultured man. While he loved Beethoven, he also loved jazz and blues. He loved newspapers, current affairs, discussions and debates. He could always hold his own in a

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

11

discussion or argument — he liked to discuss the key issues at any time and take them apart.

Ron McAlister was a constant opponent of the Tullamarine Freeway from the early 1970s, when he criticised it as being too small for the volumes of traffic expected to use it. He used his considerable engineering skills to criticise the work done by traffic engineers on the Tullamarine Freeway, and he continued that process with the Western Bypass and City Link. He continued to argue the case for local residents on the effects of City Link on local amenity and set up a Tullamarine Freeway residents group to continue the struggle.

Ron McAlister's passing will be a bitter blow to people living in the vicinity of the freeway. He was a community activist, and his death has created an enormous gap. I extend my condolences to his family.

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I join with my parliamentary colleagues in expressing condolences to the family of Ron McAlister — his wife Jan and his children. I speak from the perspective of having worked with Ron in various ways when I first joined the Labor Party. In particular, I worked with him during the controversy that surrounded the Newport power station and, more recently, on opposition to the City Link project.

All his working life Ron McAlister was a fighter for the community. He was only briefly a member of this Parliament, yet despite that responsibility and periodic serious ill health he remained a community activist. Ron was a fighter for the interests of working men and women and the underdog, for the environment and for the community, both his local community and the wider community. These attributes are rarely found in any individual and it is even more rare to find them in one who is prepared to commit himself to his goals and objectives over as long and extended a period as happened in Ron's case.

Right up to his death Ron worked with the Tullamarine Freeway Corridor Residents Group and the other residents groups opposed to the City Link project. Both those who worked with him over many years and those who knew him only recently agree he was an absolutely tenacious man.

He would not say no and would not put his interests first. He was prepared to commit all his energies to those particular issues. I admired and respected his

sincerity and tenacity. One activist told me recently that they were always glad that they had Ron McAlister on their side because Ron was not the sort of person one would like to have opposing one's point of view.

With his technical background, he brought to those community groups his expertise in science, often in areas where such knowledge and expertise was lacking in community groups. He was a shining example of how to put technical and engineering qualifications to the use of ordinary working people.

Some issues will live long beyond the life of Ron McAlister — he will leave a lasting impression and impact on community values and the environment, and will be remembered particularly for his support of public transport and his opposition to the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway.

Mr COLE (Melbourne) — I offer my condolences on the sad passing of Ron McAlister. He was a former member for Brunswick, which is now in my electorate, for a short period until a redistribution took place. As has been pointed out, his political life was cut short because of the redistribution. He tried to get preselected for the seat of Broadmeadows but was unsuccessful. He also lived in my electorate. He was in the Brunswick South branch, as has been pointed out by the honourable member for Coburg.

He often telephoned me to express a view and certainly was not backward in coming forward to say what he thought about things. As a judicious member I would listen intently to what he had to say. He was also a supportive person. He took the time out to telephone me and say hello. I must say that his support for me was unconditional and he never vacillated from that view. He was a beaut bloke!

Like me, he was a great supporter of the North Melbourne Football Club. He supported the club throughout the tough years. It was pleasing to hear Barry Cheatley, who delivered the eulogy, speak of the great work Ron had done and the contributions that he and Harold Henderson had made to build the North Melbourne Football Club into what it is today. He and others took the club from the disappointment of winning one game in 1972 to winning the 1975 premiership. His involvement on the committee that year was one of his most amazing personal achievements. I was present myself. For people like him who barracked for North Melbourne for forty or fifty years, winning the grand final was the most incredible experience.

CONDOLENCES

12

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

He also worked extensively on issues such as the Upfield railway line and the Western Bypass, which is now the City Link. He also embraced the environmental and peace movements, like many others.

During the war he suffered injuries that he carried throughout his life. He should be remembered as an ex-serviceman who gave a lot for his country during wartime and who gave an enormous amount during peacetime.

I say to the family of Ron McAlister that I wish them all the best on his sad passing.

The SPEAKER — Order! I knew Ron McAlister briefly during his period as a member in this place. He became a member shortly after me. During that brief 10 months when I was a new boy on the government benches I got to know him as a cheerful, energetic and friendly member of Parliament who contributed tenaciously to debate in this place.

I wish to add my words of condolence extended to his family together with those of other members.

Honourable Sir Kenneth Henry Wheeler

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Sir Kenneth Henry Wheeler and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Essendon from 1958 to 1979, and as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1973 to 1979.

Sir Kenneth Wheeler sadly passed away last Friday, 10 May 1996, aged 83, following a long illness. He was known to about a dozen of us in this place and will be remembered for his considerable service to the Essendon community and his outstanding contribution to the Victorian Parliament during his 21 years as a member of this house, seven of which were spent as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the term immediately prior to your first innings, Mr Speaker.

Sir Kenneth's story is a rags-to-riches story in a very real sense. He was born in Mernda in September 1912. The son of a farmer and servant, Sir Kenneth left the one-teacher Mernda State School at the age of 13 when his father suffered ill health to work on

the family farm. Sir Kenneth studied at night and saved every penny he could.

Following his marriage to Jean in 1934, Sir Kenneth moved to Melbourne and bought a horse, a cart and a milk run in Coburg. Through hard work and persistence he acquired five horses and carts by 1945, and five years later he amalgamated his business with Croft Bank Dairies and became its first manager. From 1959 to 1970, while a member of this house, he was manager of Metropolitan Dairies. It was his passionate belief in the free enterprise system that eventually led to his joining the Liberal Party in 1948. He was convinced that Victoria could only achieve its best through private enterprise.

Sir Kenneth's strong views on local government and community mindedness were the catalyst for a life dedicated to public service, and in 1950 he was elected to the Coburg City Council. He was a councillor for nine years and mayor from 1955 to 1956.

During that period he became the president of the Coburg Football Club and the Coburg Rotary Club, was a member of numerous school bodies and took an active role in the establishment of the Essendon and District Memorial Hospital.

In 1958 Sir Kenneth was elected as the member for the electoral district of Pascoe Vale, which was later renamed as the electoral district of Essendon following an electoral redistribution. Sir Kenneth's integrity and ability were recognised in 1973 when he was appointed Speaker. He had given the Chair the dignity and the grace that it deserved. He was a man of honour, keen enthusiasm and wisdom — all qualities of a good Speaker.

Sir Kenneth's major aim as Speaker was to encourage more people to come and see the Parliament in action and to visit Parliament House. He seeded the idea of holding exhibitions in Queen's Hall to attract more visitors to the Parliament. As honourable members would agree, there have been many superb exhibitions held in Queen's Hall. We all have Sir Kenneth to thank for this initiative.

Another stamp of Sir Kenneth was the development of the gardens on the south side of Parliament House in 1978 after works on the Parliament station were completed.

A dedicated parliamentarian, Sir Kenneth served as a member of numerous parliamentary committees, including the Printing Committee from 1958 to 1961

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

13

and 1973 to 1979; the Library Committee from 1961 to 1964 and 1973 to 1979; the Public Accounts Committee from 1964 to 1973; the Ansett Transport Industries Committee in 1972, a major committee that blocked the then sale of Ansett Airlines; the Qualifications Committee from 1972 to 1973; the House Committee from 1973 to 1979; and the Standing Orders Committee from 1973 to 1979.

From memory I believe it was during his period as Speaker of the Parliament that the renovations to this place were undertaken — this chamber, then the Legislative Council and Queen's Hall being the last part completed. Those of us who work here, whether it be as parliamentarians or officers of the Parliament, appreciate this building. On days like this when we have a formal opening members of the public are given the opportunity to see what a spectacular building it is internally and to understand why it is worth preserving and why we hope, as a Parliament, to move in the next four years towards completing the original design.

In 1976 Sir Kenneth was awarded the office of Knight Bachelor in recognition of his noteworthy public service.

Despite his nearly 30 years in public life, including 21 years of service to Victoria as a parliamentarian, Sir Kenneth always maintained his interest in the milkman's horse and cart. He had two specially decorated milk carts and four Clydesdales and on occasions during non-sitting periods of this house he would travel through country Victoria exhibiting and entering them in agricultural shows.

Sir Kenneth was always a battler, from the time he ran the family farm at the age of 13, for the 19 years when he delivered milk in the early hours of the morning, in 1970 when he achieved the closest of election wins and scraped in with only a handful of votes, to 1973, when he won the election battle for the speakership after seven exhaustive ballots —when members on the government side of the house say we have exhaustive ballots, we mean exhaustive! We do not have them now, for obvious reasons.

In his last address to the house at about 3.00 a.m. on a Saturday in 1979, Sir Kenneth spoke about the great institution of Parliament. He said:

Parties have their so-called machines, but this institution is more than a machine. I hope that this great institution has earned and will maintain the respect of the Victorian people.

What more could he have said?

As I said, a number of members of this house remember Ken Wheeler with a degree of fondness. Mr Speaker, you will remember that at times he was a feisty Speaker. There was not much of him, but when he set his eye on a member he did not remove it until the member was out of the chamber! I remember one occasion — I remember several occasions, some of which I do not want to own up to even now, 20 years down the track — when I was sitting in the seat the honourable member for Monbulk is sitting in now and on my left sat the then honourable member for Greensborough, Monte Vale. Monte had only one leg and was on crutches. It was during my first term in Parliament in 1976; I had interjected once or twice and I was given a final warning by the Speaker, Sir Kenneth Wheeler. He said that if I interjected again I would be shown the door. I took his good advice and walked out of the chamber of my own volition rather than be thrown out, but Sir Kenneth did not see me go. Monte, who was sound asleep, was snoring fairly loudly and just after I left the chamber he erupted in one great snore. Sir Kenneth immediately began the process to throw me out of the house, only to look over to find I was not in my seat, which caused him consternation for some time.

Sir Kenneth was a wonderful individual. To the best of my knowledge he was a teetotaler. I do not ever remember his drinking alcohol, and the word was that all he ever drank was milk. Sadly, he left this place in order to look after his wife, Jean, who had been ill for a number of years and it was because of her ill health that he was not able to take up a post as Agent-General in London. That was sad for him but it was even sadder that his wife had suffered such a long period of ill health.

We on the government side of the house very much regret his passing, but he had not been in good health for some time and his death brought to an end a period of suffering for him. We extend our condolences to the family of Sir Kenneth, particularly his wife, Jean, who is well known to many members, his daughter, Heather, who is very much part of our party, his son, Lindsay, their families and, in particular, the honourable member for Mordialloc, who is the grandson-in-law of Sir Kenneth Wheeler.

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — I join with the Premier in extending condolences to the family of the late Sir Kenneth Wheeler. As the Premier remarked, Sir Kenneth served in the

CONDOLENCES

14

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

Legislative Assembly as the member for Essendon from 1958 to 1979, of which the last six years were spent as Speaker.

He left school in 1925 when he was 13 to work on his family's farm in Mernda and he continued his education at night school during that time. In 1934 he purchased a milk retailing business in Coburg and by 1945 was operating five horses and carts. Five years later his firm amalgamated with Croft Bank Dairies Ltd and he became the new general manager.

Sir Kenneth's involvement in the local community at that time extended well beyond his small business. He was involved in a large number of community groups in his local area, including the councils of Coburg State School, Glenroy Technical School, Pascoe Vale Girls High School, the Melbourne School of Textiles and the Coburg Football Club. He was actively involved in local government, serving on the Coburg City Council until 1959, including a term as mayor from 1955 to 1956. He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament in 1951 and was subsequently elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1958 as the member for Pascoe Vale. That seat was later renamed as Essendon and he served that electorate for the entirety of his parliamentary career.

As the Premier noted, during his term in Parliament he served on numerous committees, including the Printing Committee, the Library Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Ansett Transport Industries Committee, the Qualifications Committee and the Standing Orders Committee. However, Sir Kenneth's substantial contribution to Parliament was as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly between 1973 and 1979. Newspaper reports at that time show that on his election to the position Sir Kenneth told a meeting of the Essendon Rotary Club, of which he had been the previous president, that he was concerned that he may have some difficulties remaining impartial as the Presiding Officer. However, his concerns were unfounded, as he served with distinction through his long period as Speaker.

As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Sir Kenneth proved to be as effective as he was respected, and that was widely acknowledged on both sides of the house. On his election as Speaker he stated in the press that his major aim was to encourage the general public to visit Parliament House. He successfully pursued that aim throughout his term as Speaker.

In December 1978, shortly before his retirement in 1979, the Legislative Assembly paid tribute to Sir Kenneth's service as Speaker. The then Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Frank Wilkes, praised Sir Kenneth's performance and contribution stating that all the courtesies he received were richly deserved.

Sir Kenneth Wheeler made a significant contribution to the Parliament of Victoria during his term as Speaker and during his long term as the member for Essendon. On behalf of the opposition I extend my condolences to Sir Kenneth's family.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — On behalf of the National Party I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in support of the condolence motion and I pass on our deepest sympathy to the Wheeler family.

Quite a story was written about Sir Kenneth Wheeler in the *Essendon Gazette* of 14 November 1979 at the time he was given his knighthood by the former Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. The article addresses many of the issues and highlights of Sir Kenneth's 21-year parliamentary service and 30 years of hectic public life, including his time on the Coburg council. One interesting part of the story about Sir Kenneth is worth relating to the house because it holds lessons for us all. The article states:

He remembers getting up at 5.30 a.m., without electric light, to milk a few cows, churn the butter by hand and then walk two and a half miles to the one-teacher Mernda State School.

The 30-acre farm wouldn't support the family and his father, in poor health, still had to work as a labourer.

At the age of 13, with only his merit certificate to back him in his future career, it was home on the farm full time for young Ken.

Sir Kenneth left school to work on the farm at 13 years of age and rose through the ranks of business to give outstanding service to the community and to Parliament, ultimately being knighted for that service. It is a lesson to us all: if one is prepared to work and make a commitment there is every chance of one's rising through the ranks and being seen as an outstanding person in the community.

The Premier referred to Sir Kenneth's association with the dairy industry and the market milk industry. Sir Kenneth's involvement in the

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

15

establishment in Coburg of a business that amalgamated with Croft Bank Dairies and was ultimately taken over by Metropolitan Dairies demonstrates the time and commitment he gave to the dairy industry throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne. Perhaps that may have been the inspiration for the ditty 'Ernie, the fastest milkman in the west'. People living in the suburbs would remember that milkmen were the first people to deliver a service in the morning. Undoubtedly the service Sir Kenneth gave through community activity, 31 years in Parliament and 6 years as Speaker, are an indication of the quality of man he was.

I place on the record the appreciation of the National Party for that service and pass on our condolences to the relatives, friends and family of Sir Kenneth Wheeler.

Mr FINN (Tullamarine) — I rise to briefly pay tribute to the career and life of Sir Kenneth Wheeler.

It deeply saddened me when I heard of the death of Sir Kenneth Wheeler last Friday because over many years he had been the patriarch of the Liberal Party in the north-west of Melbourne. He was a great Liberal, a great man and a great achiever for his people of Essendon. He was a strong grass-roots representative of the people of Essendon. He was popular and very effective. Mature electors of Essendon to whom I have spoken over the years fondly referred to him as Ken. He was well known and held in exceptionally high esteem. In many ways he was a legend in that part of Melbourne.

Between the years 1958 and 1979 Sir Kenneth turned the Legislative Assembly seat of Essendon into his own. It is no coincidence that when he decided to retire prior to the 1979 election the Liberal Party lost the seat in the following election and did not regain it until 1992.

I first met Sir Kenneth in the early 1980s when I was working for the Liberal Party on the campaign committee for the seat of Essendon. Sir Kenneth was in charge of the purse strings. I can support the Premier's comments because Sir Kenneth kept a close eye on us and made sure that every single cent was accounted for. He did not let us get away with anything —and, of course, we didn't try to get away with anything.

I remember that during the 1991 preselections for the seat of Essendon, Sir Kenneth defended his area and made it very clear that a local person was

needed to represent the people of Essendon as a Liberal candidate. On the night of the preselection Sir Kenneth was very vocal in seeking to ensure that a local person got up — and he won the night.

Sir Kenneth had not enjoyed good health for some time but had always maintained a keen interest in activities in this place and in his former constituency. I was constantly told by the former member for Essendon, Mr Davis, that he was off to see Sir Kenneth. If there was a problem Sir Kenneth was always on the phone and if the former member for Essendon wanted to know anything he would speak to Sir Kenneth, who was a person who knew and cared about the people he used to represent.

At the time of his retirement Sir Kenneth was the only Liberal Party member of Parliament between the Yarra River and Geelong. I know how he must have felt at the time. Nonetheless, he did an outstanding job for the community and I take on board the precedents he created.

On behalf of Liberals throughout the north-west of Melbourne, I offer our deepest sympathy to Sir Kenneth's family. He was a great Australian and will be very sadly missed.

Mr REYNOLDS (Minister for Sport) — I rise briefly to support the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members in this condolence motion. As has been amply demonstrated by previous speakers, Sir Kenneth Wheeler was successful in everything he tried — whether it was in business, community service or Parliament. He was successful in all those fields because of his application, endeavour and dedication.

I came to know Sir Kenneth better when, upon his retirement, he came to live in Gisborne. If my car was in front of my electorate office he would quickly stop and visit me. He never stopped being a member of Parliament. During my early days as a member of Parliament I needed all the help I could get, so it was good to have him around.

Sir Kenneth was a caring man. He was always interested in you and your family. He was down to earth and had the common touch. He never forgot his early life. As a new member of this place, I valued his views.

Sir Kenneth's community service was second to none and the envy of everybody. He was loyal to his family, his friends, and the Liberal Party. Above all,

CONDOLENCES

16

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

he was loyal to the Essendon Football Club. I thank him particularly for the way he befriended my father at Mount Alexander Retirement Lodge when my father was having difficulties getting over the death of my mother. Sir Kenneth was of great assistance helping Dad over those difficult times. I extend my condolences to Lady Jean, Heather, Lindsay and all the family.

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth) — I also support the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members in their comments on the life and service of Sir Kenneth Wheeler.

From time to time many of us, as male members of the chamber, enjoy being described as honourable gentlemen. During my time of service in the chamber there has been no-one to whom that title has been more appropriate than the honourable gentleman the loss of whom we are mourning today.

Sir Kenneth's service to his electorate was remarkable, spanning all strata of society. He served everybody equitably, equally and vigorously. As a consequence he retained as a relatively safe seat for the Liberal Party a seat that should have been a Labor seat. In his service as Speaker he was fair. He made sure the chamber conducted itself in a dignified way and got through the business that was before it.

He had a unique distinction as Speaker. Sir Kenneth was what I suppose one would describe as quite bald. When he took the office of Speaker he fitted himself out in the regalia that you now have fitted yourself out in, Mr Speaker, and much to his pleasure and amazement — and that of everyone else — his bald head grew quite a strong crop of fair or whitish hair, of which he was very proud. May the same result occur for you, Sir, if you require it.

It is, Mr Speaker, with great pleasure that I praise the life and work of the late Sir Kenneth Wheeler; and I extend to his remaining family my condolences.

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — I rise not so much as a member of Parliament to make a contribution about another member but, as is rarely the case, as a family member — albeit by marriage — to make a comment about the life of another family member who has been a member of the house.

At the end of the last state election campaign when the Labor Party regained the seat of Essendon, Mrs Kirner, a former Premier, described it as a

traditional Labor seat. It is interesting that Ken held that seat for 21 years. I guess it is a great compliment to him that he was able for so long to hold a seat that many other members may not have been able to hold.

I knew him not in this chamber, although obviously as a Liberal Party branch member since the 1970s I was well aware of him, but after his time in this chamber. I am not quite sure what would have happened if I had been a member when he was the Speaker. Having listened to the Premier, I suspect I might have had a little less comfort than I have had from some former Speakers. However, may I note in passing, Mr Speaker, that I feel like a reformed man.

Ken was the great-grandfather of 11 children, among them my children. You could not have a better great-grandfather. He was always interested in what happened to his children, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren. The most important thing in Ken's life, above all else, was his family. It is well and good to be a businessman, a politician and all those other things, but the most important thing in his life — and I hope it is in most of our lives — was the family, and that was so throughout Ken's life.

I shall give a small example of his concern for his family. I believe this to be true only because of what I was told by the Minister for Sport. When I was dating my then future wife, I recall the honourable member for Gisborne rushing up to me and saying, 'You owe me one'. I asked him why and he said, 'Ken Wheeler has just been on the phone and he wants to know what you're like'. I was told that Ken also rang the honourable member for Polwarth, although I am not sure whether that is so because he never actually came up to me and said, as the honourable member for Gisborne did, 'You owe me one'. However, that is a measure of the way Ken was always interested in his family.

He was a great supporter of the Essendon Football Club. My wife will testify to the fact that she and Ken often went to the football. She looks at me with disdain when I am invited to sit in a corporate box, because she and Ken were prepared to sit in the rain in the outer.

On behalf of the family, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his remarks. I consider the greatest tribute to Ken to have come from someone who used to be on the opposition side of the chamber: Frank Wilkes, a former Leader of the Opposition, said that Ken was a fair, responsible and respected

COMMISSION TO SWEAR MEMBERS

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

17

Speaker who served the interests of this Parliament as much as he loved his family.

On behalf of Jean, Heather, Lindsay, Gaynor, André and all our family I express our appreciation of the comments of the house.

The SPEAKER — I wish to add my comments in support of the motion moved by the Premier and supported by the Leader of the Opposition. Ken Wheeler was my predecessor for six years, and one could not help but be touched by his humility, his dignity and his absolute dedication to serving this Parliament and, as has been mentioned by a number of members, to making it relevant to people outside the Parliament and ensuring that when people came to visit the Parliament they were impressed by the behaviour of the members and by the general decorum.

Above all he was a compassionate man who might be an object lesson to all members, particularly those holding marginal seats, in that he was a tireless worker for the people of Essendon, his electorate. He became extremely well known and held his seat by dint of his own personality, his hard work and his dedication to his electorate.

From time to time he had occasion to take me to task, as he did the Premier, and I think it was well deserved. He certainly taught me a few lessons — in fact, both of us, I think. His life and his dedication to this Parliament and his community are an object lesson to all of us.

I wish to add my condolences to his family, and to join in this condolence motion with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition.

Motions agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Leslie Victor Shilton, Esquire, Ronald Graham Henry McAlister, Esquire, and the Honourable Sir Kenneth Henry Wheeler, the house do now adjourn, until 8.00 p.m. this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 6.18 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 8.09 p.m.

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that I have given permission for still photographs to be taken from the press gallery during question time this evening, but no additional lighting or flashlights will be used.

COMMISSION TO SWEAR MEMBERS

The SPEAKER announced receipt from His Excellency the Governor of commission authorising him to administer oath or affirmation of allegiance to members who have not taken and subscribed same since election.

THE MINISTRY

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I inform the house of the responsibilities that will be undertaken by ministers in this Parliament. In the Legislative Assembly, I will be responsible for the role of Premier, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for the Arts. The honourable member for Benalla is the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Agriculture and Resources. He will answer on behalf of the Minister for Tourism in another place. The house will note that the Deputy Premier will be absent on parliamentary business until 18 May and that in his absence the Minister for Police and Emergency Services will answer any questions concerning agriculture and the Minister for Conservation and Land Management will answer any questions concerning resources. The honourable member for Brighton is the Treasurer and Minister for Multimedia and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Finance in another place. The honourable member for Hawthorn is Minister for Education and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology in another place. The honourable member for Wimmera is Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections. The honourable member for Gippsland West is Minister for Transport and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place. The honourable member for Geelong is Minister for Housing and Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs. The honourable member for Warrandyte is Minister for Tertiary Education and Training. The honourable member for Pakenham is Minister for Planning and Local Government. The honourable member for Portland is Minister for Youth and Community Services and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Health and Minister for Aged Care in another place. The honourable member for Gisborne is Minister for

Sport and Minister for Rural Development and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Small Business in another place. The honourable member for Seymour is Minister for Conservation and Land Management. The honourable member for Kew is Attorney-General, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Fair Trading and will answer on behalf of the Minister for Gaming in another place.

In the Legislative Council the Honourable Mark Birrell is Minister for Industry, Science and Technology; the Honourable Rob Knowles is Minister for Health and Minister for Aged Care; the Honourable Roger Hallam is Minister for Finance and Minister for Gaming; the Honourable Louise Asher is Minister for Small Business and Minister for Tourism; and the Honourable Geoff Craig is Minister for Roads and Ports.

I wish them all well in the discharge of their duties over the next four years.

@BILL HEAD = LEADERSHIP OF OPPOSITION

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — I shall outline details of the opposition's shadow cabinet. In addition to my responsibilities as Leader of the Opposition, I am shadow Minister for the Arts and shadow minister for agriculture and rural affairs. The honourable member for Richmond is the deputy leader and shadow minister for planning and major projects. The honourable member for Thomastown is shadow Minister for Transport and the manager of opposition business. The honourable member for Williamstown is the opposition spokesperson on treasury and finance and also industrial relations. The honourable member for Pascoe Vale is the shadow Minister for Women's Affairs and shadow minister for family services. The honourable member for Bundoora is shadow minister for the environment, conservation and land management. The honourable member for Yan Yean is the shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the shadow Minister for Corrections. The honourable member for Morwell is the shadow minister for tertiary education and the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs. The honourable member for Niddrie is the shadow Attorney-General, shadow Minister for Gaming and shadow minister assisting the leader on matters of scrutiny of government — we will bring him on very soon! The honourable member for Altona is the shadow Minister for Health and the shadow minister for youth affairs. The honourable member for Geelong North is the shadow minister for energy and resources and the shadow Minister for Tourism.

The honourable member for Springvale is the shadow minister for ethnic affairs and also the shadow minister assisting the shadow Treasurer with Workcover and industrial relations. The honourable member for Footscray is the shadow minister for education, employment and training. The honourable member for Dandenong is the shadow minister for sport and recreation and the shadow minister for consumer affairs. The honourable member for Albert Park is the shadow minister for health and community services.

In the upper house the Honourable Monica Gould is Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, the shadow minister assisting the shadow minister for health and community services, and the shadow Minister for Aged Care; the Honourable Pat Power is the shadow minister for local government and for regional development and the shadow Minister for Roads and Ports. Finally, the Honourable Theo Theophanous is Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, shadow Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, and shadow Minister for Small Business.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ministerial advisers: pecuniary interests

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to the government's code of conduct for the Victorian public sector which requires ministerial advisers to make declarations of their pecuniary interests. Will the Premier assure the house that all ministerial advisers employed since 1992 have complied with that code and completed their pecuniary interest declarations?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — Firstly, I welcome back the Leader of the Opposition to his job as Leader of the Opposition. I can assure him we will be his greatest supporters in that job!

I cannot answer the question in terms of each specific ministerial adviser. I shall take it on notice and try to provide the Leader of the Opposition with the answer in due course.

Gun control

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — In the light of the terrible tragedy at Port Arthur, Tasmania, on 28 April will the Premier inform the house of the support the government is providing to victims of the shooting

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

19

and their families and the government's support for national gun control?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — All members of the house would have been daunted by the enormous tragedy at Port Arthur. I am happy to say that, immediately the tragedy became known, we offered whatever support we could to the Tasmanian government to deal with the situation there. It requested almost immediately some members of our police force — that is, members of the Special Operations Group. From memory, we discharged 10 such officers, together with 2 members of the Police Media Unit, to assist the Tasmanian police with the inquiries that were flooding in not only from around Australia but from around the world.

As a follow-up to that, we also provided counsellors to assist people in Tasmania, particularly Victorians — not necessarily for those who were injured but for those who witnessed the tragedy — in coming to terms with it. That counselling is continuing today. The death toll itself was an absolute tragedy and a number were injured. However, even those who were not injured but who witnessed the tragedy will probably be scarred for life as a result of what they saw and went through. Counselling is currently under way and will continue for some time.

The second issue concerns the response of the Victorian government to the victims appeal fund.

Mr Baker — Just a moment, why didn't you go to the funerals? Why didn't you go?

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Sunshine!

Mr KENNETT — It is obvious the honourable member for Sunshine has not learnt anything since prior to the election; he continues to be an embarrassment to that side of the house. The government has decided to contribute an amount of \$250 000 to the victims appeal fund. That is not only to be allocated — —

Mr Baker — It was your job. You should have gone!

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Sunshine will cease interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — Taking into account the assistance we are already providing to families, we think that figure represents a reasonable

contribution to the fund, to be used as the trustees see fit. The appeal committee is headed by the Honourable Henry Cosgrove, a retired Supreme Court judge, who will also administer the fund. To date the fund has raised about \$2 million. Tasmania contributed \$100 000, the Commonwealth and New South Wales have each contributed \$200 000 and, because the impact of this incident on Victorian families was obviously very heavy, Victoria's contribution will be \$250 000.

Mr Speaker, you are probably also aware that today federal cabinet met to decide on the administrative procedures for removing semi-automatic and automatic weapons from the community. If my memory serves me correctly, the federal government will increase the Medicare levy by 0.2 per cent in the 1996-97 financial year. The amount paid by individuals to remove weapons from our community will vary according to income — some will not pay at all because their incomes do not come within the criteria for payment of the Medicare levy; others will pay a substantial amount. For politicians it will probably mean a one-off payment of about \$150. At this stage it appears the administrative arrangements will be borne by the states.

Prior to knowing what the federal government would do, I was prepared to release \$1 million immediately to try to assist those who wanted to surrender their weapons, either licensed or unlicensed, to do so as quickly as possible. A couple of issues need to be resolved fairly quickly. One is that of about 320 retailers that sell firearms approximately 120 do so as their sole business — anecdotal evidence suggests that since the massacre there has been an enormous increase in sales as people have begun to believe a ban may be placed on semi-automatic firearms — and all firearm retailers are entitled to compensation at cost for the weapons they have purchased. The government estimates that that will cost between \$1 million and \$2 million in Victoria, and it will have to be looked at fairly quickly.

Mr Baker — Which cost? The present value or the historical cost?

Mr KENNETT — No. We estimate it will cost between \$1 million and \$2 million — that is the wholesale price — for the 120 shops involved solely in the sale of firearms. So we have to address the issue of compensation for those retailers as a matter of urgency because their livelihoods will, in one sense, be altered because of government decisions.

However, that does not address the question of how quickly we can bring in the weapons of those who wish to surrender them. The federal government's levy is proposed for the financial year 1996-97, but we will obviously have to move quicker than that. The government will give consideration to whether it should provide funds in the short term to enable it to take in surrendered weapons in the hope of reimbursement by the federal government from the Medicare levy receipts.

That leaves to be resolved the question of valuation. Obviously we do not want people to profit from surrendering their weapons, but they are entitled to fair compensation for firearms they surrender that were purchased, in some cases, legally.

I particularly thank Victorian officers who went to Tasmania and those who are continuing to provide counselling and assistance. They have done it before, and they are a wonderful band of dedicated men and women. I also thank the Victorian community, and particularly firearm owners, for the way they have addressed what has been a fundamental change in lifestyle.

The community has overwhelmingly expressed a view that everyone will be safer if these weapons are taken out of circulation. We will do everything we can. Tomorrow we will have discussions with the federal government to see whether the Victorian government, if it puts up cash to pay out owners who surrender guns, can draw down on the increased Medicare levy following its introduction in the next financial year. Honourable members should understand that we estimate — I think I am right — that it would cost between \$100 million and \$120 million to buy back all the licensed guns, if surrendered. That does not take into account the same number — it might be twice as many — held by owners who are not licensed. We believe the overall federal government program will cost far in excess of \$500 million. It is an expensive business, but it is for a good cause.

The program will work only if we have full community cooperation. I look forward to that cooperation being offered. This is a window of opportunity to do something of absolute value, and the Victorian government will work with the federal government and any other group in the community to make sure that fairness is applied as the new regime is put into place.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — The opposition fully supports the government's initiatives to implement as rapidly as possible the decisions of the federal government and ministerial council on firearms control and lends its full support to the government in its task of achieving the recommendations.

My question is to the Premier. I refer to the extraordinary decision tonight by Channel 7 management to pull a *Today Tonight* story that detailed alleged business links between the Premier and poker machine king Bruce Mathieson. Did the Premier or anyone else acting on his behalf contact the management of the station in an attempt to stop the story going to air?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I would have thought the Leader of the Opposition, knowing how unsuccessful he was prior to the last election, would have at least got someone else to ask this question rather than again setting himself up for a big fall. Let me take the house through the circumstances of the show that appeared — or did not appear — on Channel 7 tonight. At about 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon I received a letter from a producer of *Today Tonight*. In the letter, after a preamble inviting me to answer or to appear on his television show, the producer set out a number of questions. That was the first time I had been approached by the individual, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten. If any members of my staff are listening they might send it in because there is plenty of time — this will be a very detailed answer.

At the top of the letter the producer said, 'We have been trying to contact you for a number of weeks over the issue'. That was dishonest. That individual had not once contacted my office or any member of my staff, nor had the station tried to contact me by any normal method. The letter the producer sent yesterday was hand delivered. If he were genuine he could have sent me a letter at any time over the past few weeks, but he was dishonest in the way he portrayed the situation.

He then sent a list of questions he wanted me to answer. When I received it, as one would imagine, I had a little chuckle in my normal way. Let the record show that the letter was written by Mr Greg Hoy, a reporter, as I understand, for the *Today Tonight* show produced by Mark Forbes, who — it will come as no surprise to anybody — was with the *Sunday Age*. As

I think I said when he left the *Sunday Age* to join the *Today Tonight* show, the virus is spreading.

The letter invited me to respond because they were going to run the show that night and the next day, and they wanted my assistance or denial, or whatever, so I said to my staff, 'I don't think I should respond. Let it go to air; after all, I have just finished one set of renovations at home but I have not completed what I have in mind, and I would like to pursue the completion of the home in which I live'.

Shortly after that, at about 5 o'clock, I received a call from Channel 7. I hope I am not doing the individual a disservice by saying this. He had been to see me a few weeks before — that is, the new producer of the *Today Tonight* show, an individual by the name of John Boland, whom I have known for many years. He actually approached me in my office some two weeks before asking me to appear on the *Today Tonight* show. I have not been able to fit it in since it went to air about two and a half years ago, mainly because of its ratings failure.

Mr Boland actually wrote me a subsequent follow-up letter in which he said he would like me to consider a regular weekly spot on the *Today Tonight* show. I thought it was appropriate because we do it on 3AW, and their ratings are high, thanks to the combination, and we do it on FM. I wrote back to Mr Boland and said, 'Thank you very much, I will take it on board and think about it'. At about 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon Mr Boland telephoned me and said, 'I am ringing on behalf of Mr Garry Rice. He wants to know whether you got the letter this afternoon'. I said, 'Yes, I have, John, but I'm trying to decide whether to respond or not because, to be quite honest, I want to do more renovations'.

He said, 'Is anything true?' and we went through it in part and in general terms. I have known John a long time; he is a good media soldier and I felt a bit sorry for him because he had obviously been sent on a mission.

I sat down and wrote a letter answering the questions that were put to me by Greg Hoy. Some people in the media, who are probably listening, would understand what I am talking about because yesterday Mark Forbes, ex *Sunday Age*, was ringing journalists saying, 'Hey, have we got a story for you. It's going to break'. We know very well who was assisting him. Some of those in this place now also assisted him before the election, together with an honourable member who is no longer in the

Parliament but who has earned himself a reputation as perhaps the most unsavoury politician we have had in the Parliament in many years.

I wrote the letter and did not speak to anyone else. But I did speak to my chief of staff and said, 'Look, Mr Boland telephoned me obviously on the instruction of Mr Rice. Could you please ensure that we send Mr Rice by fax a copy of the letter that Mr Greg Hoy sent me and my response'. Obviously Mr Hoy was misrepresenting the television station and he was in my opinion making claims that were grossly untrue.

I went off last night and joined all you happy little bunnies at Government House for the normal reception. Some of you were obviously sitting there with bated breath thinking, 'Why is he looking so happy and calm?' knowing what you knew. In fact you had been up to your armpits with young Mark Forbes in trying to bring down this fellow you have for four years been trying so unsuccessfully to bring down.

The faxes were sent to Mr Rice. I think Mr Rice telephoned my chief of staff about 11 o'clock to confirm that he had received the faxes we had sent: the letter from Mr Hoy and my response.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr KENNETT — The man you elected unanimously as leader asked me the question. Let me finish the answer. I went home very relaxed expecting today to see the *Today Tonight* show tonight. There has been a great deal of publicity at Channel 7. In fact, today Mr Forbes went on radio saying, 'Look for tonight'. He has probably defamed me in what he said on radio this morning. Apart from Mr Boland yesterday, I have spoken to no-one at Channel 7 management and, apart from the one call yesterday in response from Mr Rice saying that he received the faxes I sent, I do not think my staff have, either.

At about 3.30 this afternoon I received another fax from Channel 7 indicating that they were not happy. We know that Mr Forbes has not been working alone on this, don't we, Mr Hulls? Come on down, Mr Hulls! I received this second letter faxed through to me and I said, 'Gosh, it had gone so well yesterday, I tried to help and assist, but this latest claim was so outrageous that I don't think I will even respond to this one'. Lo and behold — fortunately condolences had finished — I thought I would go to my room and watch *Today Tonight*. I

missed last night because I was with you guys. I thought I would get the real punch story tonight. Just before it went to air I received a message saying, 'It's going to be pulled'. I said, 'You're joking. It's not going to be pulled. They have been besmirching my character for the past four days'. As I was saying this, lo and behold, in the middle of the news break, up came an advertisement telling the viewers, 'Stay tuned, we are going to get Kennett because of his association with a chap named Mathieson'. The break before it was meant to go to air Channel 7 was still running it.

Then members on the other side went to their rooms with bated breath waiting to see the program. What happened? One of the most extraordinary things I have ever seen on television: up comes an apology from the presenter who said, 'We are sorry, but we are not going on with this program. It is being pulled because of management'.

She was about to introduce the next story when, all of a sudden, an advertisement came on for Channel 7. The presenter came back and looked a little startled. They went through the story and the next presenter was not the presenter for the show but David Johnston. At that stage I heard that the presenter of the original show had resigned or been sacked, and then I received a call that she had collapsed and had to be taken by ambulance to hospital.

In answer to the honourable, and I hope permanent, Leader of the Opposition, who was set up by the now honourable member for Niddrie in his former job as chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition, I say that the new honourable member for Niddrie and the Leader of the Opposition are still at their old dirty tricks; they still do not understand that the public is absolutely sick of them. Not once did I speak to management at Channel 7, not once, except for Mr Boland who telephoned me as a personal telephone call, and I answered as I have said.

There is a consistent line of what I can only describe as dirty journalism associated with Mark Forbes. He was at the *Sunday Age* when he was supported by the Labor Party and people on that side and in the other place. It is continuing now. If Channel 7 has any recourse at all, it should think about the way in which the virus of unprofessional standards is spreading among its own troops. They can put it on but it should be factually correct. They may decide to run the show tomorrow or the day after, but I can only say that this is a major strike-out for *Today Tonight*, and it is an even bigger strike-out for those

in the ALP, particularly those who have just joined this house at the last election who have not learnt a thing as a result of the election just completed.

I look forward to the next question from, I hope, the permanent Leader of the Opposition. You are a rabble, you lead a rabble. You believe in nothing!

The SPEAKER — Order! I commend to ministers the concept that their answers to questions be relatively short. The Premier took 11 minutes to answer a relatively straightforward question, the answer to which I believe was no. If we are to have order during question time, the answers to questions should be relatively brief.

Red Shield Appeal

Mr JENKINS (Ballarat West) — Will the Minister for Youth and Community Services inform the house of the government's response to the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal?

Dr NAPTHINE (Minister for Youth and Community Services) — I thank the honourable member for Ballarat West for his question and for his interest in the Red Shield Appeal. As honourable members would know, the Salvation Army is a worthwhile and multipurpose charity. It does great work right across Australia and right across the world. In Victoria particularly it is well known as a provider of services, especially for those who are in most need. The army is often seen as the first organisation to put out its hand to help people and it works with them through a range of situations. It is always ready to support people who have got back on their feet but who have perhaps stumbled and need a little bit of extra help. The Salvation Army is always ready at the end of a telephone with advice and assistance.

The Salvation Army has an excellent track record for providing services to those in need, and therefore it was with great pleasure that yesterday morning I was able to represent the Premier, the government and indeed all Victorians in presenting the Salvation Army with a cheque for \$50 000 from the Victorian government for its annual Red Shield Appeal.

The Red Shield Appeal is run annually by the Salvation Army and is an effort to seek community support for its good work. The Salvation Army receives about \$8 million a year from the Victorian government to run programs for those who are disadvantaged, and \$6 million of that goes to the accommodation and assistance program to assist

those who are homeless, particularly young people and families in need of that sort of support.

The gift of \$50 000 from the government will be used specifically for a program called Crossplay. The program is run under the umbrella of the Crossroads program of the Salvation Army, which focuses on the work done in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. That work has found that many disadvantaged families have difficulty coping with their children and understanding the role of parenting. Parenting is an important role in our society but it is one for which no formal training or education is given. Disadvantaged people often have difficulty coping with parenting, and the Crossplay program will help them to better understand their children, play with their children and build their self-esteem. The government has directed that the \$50 000 be used for that program.

Yesterday morning when I visited the Crossroads project in Flemington to present the cheque I looked at the work being done to assist young people to rebuild their skills and self-esteem in the workplace. Participants in the program make an excellent range of furniture, and I urge those who are considering buying furniture for their offices or houses to look at the furniture produced by the This Way Up furniture company.

This week the Salvation Army will be looking for assistance from the Victorian community and I urge all Victorians to support the Red Shield Appeal. For one week we should give the Salvos a hand because for 52 weeks of the year they give all those who are in need a hand!

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to his previous answer regarding the decision by Channel 7 management to pull this evening's *Today Tonight* story and I ask: did the Premier or anyone acting on his behalf threaten to withdraw government advertising from Channel 7 if the story went to air this evening?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — Every Premier or Prime Minister would love to have an opposition like this, but you are mine and you are going to stay right there! I don't know where the Leader of the Opposition comes from. I might have given a long answer before, but I thought I explained in fairly clear detail that I received only two telephone calls: one from Mr Boland and one from Mr Rice to my

chief of staff. Under no circumstances did anyone threaten anyone at Channel 7. Far from it, we actually encouraged Mr Boland to get on with the show. We wanted Channel 7 to show it because, based on the letter presented to us, they were in great trouble. I do not know the answer, so if the Leader of the Opposition wants to know why Channel 7 management did anything he should ring Channel 7 management. I am not Channel 7 management. I suspect the show was probably pulled tonight not because of management, which was blamed for it, but because of its own legal advice. Those who know, those who have been hearing about this story, know that the show has been before the channel's legal representatives for most of the afternoon.

Mr Brumby, I can only suggest that you just keep asking those questions!

Grand prix: economic outcomes

Mr FINN (Tullamarine) — Will the Premier detail to the house the final assessment of the economic benefit to Victoria from the staging of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix in March and the financial outcome for the state?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — As everyone on the government side of the house knows the Australian grand prix was a roaring success enjoyed by most Victorians, with a few notable absentees! I am happy to report that the total attendance for the four days of the grand prix was 401 000 people, and on the Sunday of the grand prix 154 000 people attended Albert Park. Importantly, the government received extra tax receipts over and above anything to do with the grand prix — except for the fact it was being staged — of about \$6.9 million — that is, for extra Workcover costs and other fees and charges. Moreover, simply because we held the race we gained an economic benefit to industry in the state of \$95.6 million of extra expenditure. That is separate from the \$6.9 million the government received.

Earlier I indicated that on information I had received the loss associated with the grand prix would be of the order of \$700 000, but I promised the house and the community that the costings associated with it would include every cost we believed was correctly apportioned to the grand prix and so we added in other figures. We left out costings regarding the signage for Melbourne which appeared around the world. The huge value of that was put down by auditors as being in the order of millions of dollars,

but we said it was not a correct inclusion. Obviously, we could sell that site to another sponsor but we want to keep it for advertising Melbourne at future events.

The total loss associated with the race was \$1.789 million, which includes absolutely everything we could find that should be charged to the grand prix. It includes a charge of \$1.7 million for extra security necessary throughout the construction of the track and the running of the race. In other words, after we had paid the licence fee — whatever that figure was, because obviously it was not publicly disclosed — the loss for the first grand prix was \$1.789 million, including \$1.7 million for extra security.

The figures supplied by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation will be audited by the Auditor-General, so the auditing will be independent of government. It will not be done by an auditor selected by the government; it will be done by the Parliament's auditor. He and his staff will go through the figures and report to Parliament in due course.

Victoria's first grand prix, despite all the opposition and including the payment of the licence fee and all associated costs charged to the grand prix but without including potential revenue sources such as signage, has made a loss of \$1.789 million, including \$1.7 million for extra security. I am confident the grand prix will be profitable next year. The Adelaide Grand Prix made a profit only in the second last or last grand prix it held when it knew it had lost the event. This is an incredible result for Victoria and a good investment. It has cost this state nothing and yet Victoria has received \$6.9 million in new tax receipts together with an economic value to business of \$95.6 million and a potential tourist value in excess of \$100 million a year.

The event was viewed by approximately 600 million people throughout the world. This has been a great investment for Victoria and I hope the opposition will come to appreciate that it is an event not just for all Victorians but a national event for the promotion of Australia.

Premier: contempt investigation

Mr DOLLIS (Richmond) — I refer the Attorney-General to the Premier's comments to the Liberal Party state council on Sunday in relation to the National Crime Authority and John Elliott and I ask: will the Attorney-General investigate whether contempt charges should be laid against the Premier?

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) — The matter raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been referred to the Solicitor-General for advice.

Public transport: grand prix

Mr A. F. FLOWMAN (Benambra) — Will the Minister for Transport advise the house of the success of the Met in transporting hundreds of thousands of people to and from the Australian grand prix at Albert Park?

Mr BROWN (Minister for Transport) — I take this opportunity of congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to the high office of Speaker of this house.

On the weekend of 9 and 10 March this year Melbourne hosted the spectacularly successful Australian Formula One Grand Prix at Albert Park. Many sceptics, particularly members of the opposition, said it would not succeed, but what a great success it proved to be and how wrong they were. Some 450 000 people attended the circuit over the four days of the grand prix. On race day 154 000 witnessed the return of formula one racing to Albert Park after a 40-year absence.

With virtually no parking available around the circuit the Australian Grand Prix Corporation was understandably keen for as many spectators as possible to catch public transport to the venue. I am pleased and proud to inform the house that the Met delivered a truly outstanding and world-class service in moving hundreds of thousands of people to the track during an extremely busy four-day period for my staff. The Met conducted the largest movement of people by public transport for a single sporting event in the history of this nation. Met trams delivered more than 60 000 people to the track on Sunday, 10 March and over the four-day event carried well over 200 000 people to and from the circuit.

For that task my staff mobilised nearly 1500 Met tram staff to provide services which included shuttle trams along Clarendon Street and St Kilda Road. More than 4000 tram trips were made between the city and Albert Park and nearly 500 trams were in service throughout the system on the day of the race. That is double the number of trams which normally provide a service on Sundays.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the additional services were made possible due to the sponsorship of the naming sponsor, Transurban. I remember

hearing criticism about the cost to the taxpayer of the provision of public transport, and no-one argued that it was other than a brilliant service. When the clowns found out that the service was provided at the cost of Transurban they had nothing to say!

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr BROWN — Strident criticism of the cost to the public purse was made in various articles. Met train services to Flinders Street Station were also increased and 360 more train services than normal were provided on the Sunday of the race. Nightrider bus services were increased to 30-minute services and operated on a 15-minute frequency between St Kilda, South Melbourne and the city.

Over the four days of the grand prix the Met and V/Line provided almost a million extra services, and I emphasise that point.

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr BROWN — Why did you try to close Upfield? Have you read John Cain's memoirs? I have so much good news about the grand prix.

Mr Cooper — Tell us!

Mr BROWN — I plan to if they give me a chance.

Inclusive in the additional million journeys were 450 000 to and from the track by Met tram, 465 000 by Met train, almost 10 000 by Met bus and almost 400 services by V/Line. In anyone's view, the public transport system provided for the grand prix was an outstanding success. In fact, surveys conducted of people leaving the track showed that approximately 80 per cent, including those who did not take public transport, will use it next time — that is a world-class outcome for a world-class transport service that backed up a world-class event for this great city of Melbourne.

Community residential units: fire safety

Mr THWAITES (Albert Park) — Will the Minister for Youth and Community Services give an assurance to the house that his department has complied with all the recommendations of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for the safety of residents in community residential units for the disabled?

Dr NAPHTHINE (Minister for Youth and Community Services) — Mr Speaker, the question relates to fire safety at residences where people with

intellectual disability reside. The question has its basis, I understand, in the tragic event on 8 April at Kew Cottages, or Kew Residential Services.

Mr Thwaites — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the question didn't relate to Kew at all.

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

Dr NAPHTHINE — I am sure all members of the house would share the concern of all Victorians about that tragedy and would particularly pass on sympathy to the families involved. I also take this opportunity to thank those involved in emergency services — the police, the fire brigade, the ambulance service — and particularly the staff at Kew Residential Services and other Department of Human Services staff who provided support on that night and during the follow-up.

The coroner is now investigating the situation and we are supporting the coroner in that investigation.

Mr Thwaites — Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order on the question of relevance. The minister seems to be answering a question relating to Kew Cottages. This question had nothing whatsoever to do with Kew Cottages; it refers to community residential units. The minister would know, if he had any knowledge of his department, that Kew Cottages is not a community residential unit. This relates to whether his department has followed all recommendations of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in relation to the safety of residents at community residential units. Can he give that assurance or not — simple question, simple answer!

Mr Brown — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, although it may not suit the honourable member for Albert Park, a minister may answer as he or she sees fit. In fact the question related to the provision of emergency services. That was included in the question. Although it may not suit the political purpose of the ALP and the particular purpose of the member who asked the question, if the minister's answer is relevant to emergency services, which was part of the question, the minister is totally in order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I thank the Minister for Transport for giving the answer I was about to give. A minister may develop his answer as he sees fit and he must be relevant to the general question. I ask the minister to address the question and complete his answer.

Dr NAPTHINE — As I was saying, people with intellectual disabilities are housed in a range of accommodation options in the state of Victoria. The situation is that for the first time in 100 years the former minister, the honourable member for Bendigo East, looked at the issue of fire safety in a number of our congregate care facilities and introduced fire audits. The fire audits identified areas where improvements were needed and the former minister instituted action along the lines recommended by the fire audits to improve those congregate care facilities.

I am also advised that community residential units have fire protection, so all residential facilities, both congregate care and community residential, now have the benefit of fire protection.

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr FINN (Tullamarine) — I give notice that tomorrow I will move:

That this house — (a) notes the involvement of the honourable member for Thomastown, in his then role as State Secretary of the Australian Labor Party, to manipulate the result of the Nunawading Province by-election in 1985 by orchestrating a campaign to mislead and defraud voters in the by-election; (b) further notes the refusal of the honourable member for Thomastown to cooperate with the police investigation of this scandal and now calls on the honourable member to disclose the full facts of his and other Australian Labor Party members' involvement in this corrupt incident; and (c) calls on all members of the opposition to publicly dissociate themselves from the actions of the honourable member for Thomastown and to support the demand that he disclose to the house the facts relating to his involvement in this gross abuse of the electoral system.

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your ruling on whether that notice of motion is in order, given that it makes a serious imputation against a particular member.

The SPEAKER — Order! The motion is in order. It is only by a specific motion that members can raise such matters. It is a very serious matter and is not to be treated lightly. I hope the honourable member for Tullamarine is not raising it in any frivolous way. Such matters can be raised only by substantive motion. This is a substantive motion and therefore is in order.

CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) — By leave, I move:

That there be laid before this house a copy of:

- (a) Determination of printed matter classification guidelines;
- (b) Determination of guidelines for the classification of films and videotapes;
- (c) Determination of guidelines for the classification of computer games;
- (d) Amendment no. 1 to the national classification code; and
- (e) Agreement between the commonwealth and states relating to a revised cooperative legislative scheme for censorship in Australia.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) presented documents in compliance with foregoing order.

Laid on table.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wheel clamping

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) presented on practice of immobilising and removing trespassing vehicles on private property, together with appendices and minutes of evidence.

Mr Micallef — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I raise a matter of concern — namely, that between the last parliamentary session and this parliamentary session the former Chairman of the Community Development Committee went public about the findings of the committee before the report was tabled in the house. I want to know, Mr Speaker, whether that sets a precedent for members of future committees, including the chairmen, making findings public before the reports are tabled in the house?

The SPEAKER — Order! I am not prepared to rule on that point of order at this stage. I will take advice on the matter and advise the house tomorrow of the outcome of my deliberations.

Laid on table.

PREMIER'S DRUG ADVISORY COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

27

Ordered that report and appendices be printed.

PREMIER'S DRUG ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) presented report.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

COUNTY COURT JUDGES

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) presented, by command of His Excellency the Governor, report for 1994-95.

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation — Report for the year 1994-95 (incorporates the Reports of the Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation and the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation

Anti-Cancer Council — Report for the year 1994-95

Bacchus Marsh Shire Council Water and Waste Water Functions — Report for the year ended 30 September 1994, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Ballarat School of Mines and Industries — Report for the year 1995

Barton Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Barwon Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Box Hill Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Broken River Management Board — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Building Act 1993 — Building Code of Australia 1990 — Amendment No. 9 (two papers)

Casey Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Central Gippsland College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995 (five papers)

Central Highlands Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Central Wellington Health Service — Report for the year 1994-95

Cobram Shire Council Water and Waste Water Functions — Report for the year 1993-94, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Dental Board (includes the Specialist Practitioners Qualifications Committee) — Report for the year ended 30 September 1995

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — Documents pursuant to section 12H(1) —

Poisons Code — Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons No. 10, Amendment No. 1 and Notice regarding the amendment, commencement and availability of the Poisons Code (three papers)

Poisons Code — Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons No. 10, Amendment No. 2 and Notice regarding the amendment, commencement and availability of the Poisons Code (two papers)

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Euroa Nagambie Regional Water Authority — Report for the year 1994

Financial Management Act 1994 — Notification from the Minister for Health on the failure of the following Public Bodies to submit their 1995 annual report and the reasons therefor:

Corangamite Regional Hospital Services (includes Camperdown District Hospital and Lismore and District Hospital)

Macarthur and District Memorial Hospital (to 30 April 1995)

- Western Highlands Health Service (includes Creswick District Hospital and Daylesford District Hospital)
- Nhill Hospital
- Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre (includes Austin Spinal and Heidelberg Hospital (incorporating Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital))
- Mornington Peninsula Hospital
- Alexandra and District Ambulance Service
- Financial Management Act 1994 — Report of the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training advising that he had received the Annual Report of the Driver Education Centre of Australia Ltd. (DECA) pursuant to section 53A (6)
- Gippsland Rural Water — Report for the year 1994-95
- Glenelg Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor
- Gordon Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Goulburn Valley Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Goulburn Valley Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor
- Government Employee Housing Authority — Report for the period 1 July 1994 to 29 February 1996
- Grain Elevators Board — Report for the year 1994-95
- Harness Racing Board — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Sport of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor
- Holmesglen College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Infertility (Medical Procedures) Act 1984 — Report for the year 1994-95 by the Secretary, Department of Health and Community Services to the Minister for Health pursuant to S. 22(4)
- John Batman Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Kangan Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Kiewa Murray Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor
- Latrobe Regional Commission — Report for the period ended 15 August 1995 (*in lieu of Report previously tabled*)
- Local Authorities Superannuation Scheme — Report on the Actuarial Investigation for the year 1994-95
- Lower Murray Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor
- Macarthur and District Community Outreach Service — Report for the year 1994-95 (incorporating Macarthur and District Memorial Hospital up to 30 April 1995) (two papers)
- Martial Arts Board — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification of failure to submit annual report and the reasons therefor
- Medical Practitioners Board — Report for the period ended 30 September 1995
- Melbourne City Link Act 1995 — Notification from the Minister for Planning and Local Government of the following Amendments to the Melbourne City Link Agreement:
- Deed amending the Master Security Deed (dated 20 February 1996)
- Deed amending the Concession Deed (dated 20 February 1996) and explanatory notes
- Melbourne Institute of Textiles — Report for the year 1995
- Mornington Peninsula Hospital — Report for the year 1994-95 (five papers)
- National Tennis Centre Trust — Report for the year 1994-95
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995
- Numurkah Shire Council Water and Waste Water Functions — Report for the year 1993-94, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Outer Eastern College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Ovens Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Ovens River Management Board — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor

Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 — Response of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into Sexual Offences Against Children and Adults — "Combating Child Sexual Assault: An Integrated Model"

Supplementary Response of the Treasurer on action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Interim Report on the State's Budget and Financial Management Framework

Response of the Treasurer on action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Final Report on the 1993-94 Budget Estimates and Outcomes

Response of the Minister for Fair Trading on the action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Law Reform Committee's three Reports entitled "Curbing the Phoenix Company"

Peninsula Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute — Report for the year 1994-95

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Alberton Planning Scheme — Nos L39, L43

All Planning Schemes — Nos S41, S52, S53, S57, S58, S59, SL2

Altona Planning Scheme — No. L44

Ararat Planning Scheme — No. L2

Bacchus Marsh Planning Scheme — Nos L48 Part 1, L52

Ballan Planning Scheme — No. L14

Ballarat Planning Scheme — No. L5

Ballarat Planning Scheme Consolidation Amendment

Banyule Amalgamation Amendment

Banyule Planning Scheme — No. RL170

Bass Planning Scheme — Nos L41, L43

Beechworth Planning Scheme — No. L28

Belfast Planning Scheme — No. L4

Benalla (City) Planning Scheme — No. L33

Berwick Planning Scheme — Nos L74, L75, L91 Part 2, L101, L102, L105

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Nos L2, L3 Part 1, L6, L9, L11, L15

Bright Planning Scheme — Nos L43, L44

Brighton Planning Scheme — Nos L26, L28, L29

Brimbank Planning Scheme — Nos L3, L5, L10, L12, L14, L16

Broadford Planning Scheme — No. L14

Broadmeadows Planning Scheme — Nos L69, L73

Bulla Planning Scheme — Nos L78, L114

Campaspe Planning Scheme — Nos L4, L7, L8

Castlemaine Planning Scheme — Nos L14, L18

Caulfield Planning Scheme — Nos L33, L37

Charlton Planning Scheme Consolidation Amendment

Colac Otway Planning Scheme — No. L7

Corangamite Planning Scheme — No. L4

Cranbourne Planning Scheme — Nos L24, L100 Part 2, L118, L131, L162, L171

Creswick Planning Scheme — No. L4

Croydon Planning Scheme — Nos L66 Part 2, L73

Dandenong Planning Scheme — No. L45

Darebin Planning Scheme — Nos L1, L3, L8, L20, RL170

Delatite Amalgamation Amendment

Diamond Valley Planning Scheme — Nos L60, L61, L62, L63

Doncaster and Templestowe Planning Scheme — Nos L52, L77, L82, L99, L101, L102, L103, L104, L106

Eltham Planning Scheme — Nos L45, L51, L52

Essendon Planning Scheme — No. L62

Flinders Planning Scheme — Nos L109, L127, L136

Frankston Planning Scheme — Nos L71, L72

French Island Planning Scheme — No. L8

Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme — Nos L7, L19, L20, L27, L28, L33, L41, L44, L45, L46

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Nos L137, R92, R103, R115 Part 2, R118 Part 2, R129, R131, R132, R134 Part 1, R137, R138, R140, R144, R145, R146, RL135

Healesville Planning Scheme — Nos L61, L62, R15

Heidelberg Planning Scheme — No. L74

Heywood Planning Scheme — No. L13

Horsham (Rural City) Planning Scheme — Nos L1, L2, L3, L6

Hume Amalgamation Amendment

Keilor Planning Scheme — Nos L82, L100

Kingston Amalgamation Amendment

Kingston Planning Scheme — Nos L1, L6

Knox Planning Scheme — Nos L88, L94, L95, L97, L98, L99, L103

Lillydale Planning Scheme — Nos L151, L155, L157, L159, L164, L166, R15

Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme — Nos L26, L39

Maribymong Planning Scheme — Nos L4, L10, L11, L13

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Nos L1, L196, L199, L203, L204, L205, L207, L208, L210, L211, L214

Melton Planning Scheme — Nos L43, L65

Metropolitan Region Planning Schemes — No. RL168

Milawa Planning Scheme — Nos L4, L6, L7

Mildura (City) Planning Scheme — No. L50

Mildura Shire Planning Scheme — Nos L35, L37

Mirboo Planning Scheme — No. L13

Mitchell Planning Scheme — Nos L2, L9, L10, L73

Moonee Valley Amalgamation Amendment

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — No. L6

Moorabbin Planning Scheme — Nos L36, L54, L56

Mordialloc Planning Scheme — Nos L14, L15, L16

Moreland Planning Scheme — Nos L7, L11, L12, L18

Mornington Planning Scheme — Nos L48 Part 1, L51, L58, L63

Mortlake Planning Scheme — No. L5

Morwell Planning Scheme — Nos L41 Part B, L50, L51, L52, L53

Narracan Planning Scheme — Nos L35 Part 2, L50, L52

Nunawading Planning Scheme — No. L79

Oakleigh Planning Scheme — Nos L42, L45, L50

Pakenham Planning Scheme — Nos L86 Part 1, L97, L101, L102, L106, L109, L116, L118

Port Fairy Planning Scheme — Nos L13 Part 2, L14

Port of Melbourne Planning Scheme — No. L15

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Nos L9, L15, L17, RL169

Portland City Planning Scheme — No. L40

Ringwood Planning Scheme — Nos L38, L39, L40, L48

Rodney Planning Scheme — No. L86

Rosedale Planning Scheme — No. L37

Sale Planning Scheme — No. L29

Sandringham Planning Scheme — No. L18

Shepparton Shire Planning Scheme — No. L74

Sherbrooke Planning Scheme — Nos L83, L88, L92, L96, L99, L101, L111, L113, L118, R15

South Gippsland Planning Scheme — No. L31

Springvale Planning Scheme — Nos L86, L90, L91, L94

Stawell (City) Planning Scheme — No. L30

Stawell (Shire) Planning Scheme — No. L9 Part 1

Stonnington Planning Scheme — Nos L3, L6, L9, L12

Surf Coast Planning Scheme — Nos L35, R27, R34, R37, RL33

Swan Hill (City) Planning Scheme — Nos L20, L21

Tallangatta Planning Scheme — No. L7

Tambo Planning Scheme — No. L65

Traralgon (City) Planning Scheme — Nos L51, L52, L55, L57, L61, L62

Traralgon (Shire) Planning Scheme — No. L52

Upper Yarra Planning Scheme — Nos L33, L41, L50, L51, L52, L54, R15

PAPERS

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

31

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|--|--|
| <p>Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan Amendment Nos 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90</p> <p>Warragul Planning Scheme — Nos L40, L46, L47, L49</p> <p>Warmnambool Planning Scheme — Nos L2, L15, L16</p> <p>Warmnambool (Shire) Planning Scheme — Nos L11 Part 2, L11 Part 3, L12</p> <p>Waverley Planning Scheme Consolidation Amendment</p> <p>Werribee Planning Scheme — Nos L77, L84, L89, L95, L97</p> <p>Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Nos L111, L120, L122, L125, L126</p> <p>Williamstown Planning Scheme — No. L37</p> <p>Wodonga Amalgamation Amendment</p> <p>Wodonga Planning Scheme — No. L72</p> <p>Wodonga Rural City Planning Scheme — No. L4</p> <p>Woorayl Planning Scheme — No. L48</p> <p>Yackandandah Planning Scheme — No. L28</p> <p>Yallourn Works Area Planning Scheme — No. L2</p> <p>Yarra Planning Scheme — Nos L3, L17, L19</p> <p>Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research — Report for the year 1995</p> <p>Rural Finance Act 1988 — Direction by the Treasurer to the Rural Finance Corporation to establish, operate and administer a scheme of assistance for persons carrying on farming who have been affected by drought</p> <p>South Gippsland Region Water Authority — Report for the year 1994-95, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor</p> <p>South West Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995</p> <p>Statutory Rules under the following Acts:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Adoption Act 1984 — S.R. No. 168</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Australian Grand Prix Act 1994 — S.R. No. 196</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Casino Control Act 1991 — S.R. No. 144</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act 1978 — S.R. No. 160</p> | <p>Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — S.R. No. 159</p> <p>County Court Act 1958 — S.R. Nos 146, 169</p> <p>Country Fire Authority Act 1958 — S.R. No. 188</p> <p>Dangerous Goods Act 1985 — S.R. Nos 181, 182, 183</p> <p>Dentists Act 1972 — S.R. No. 161</p> <p>Equal Opportunity Act 1995 — S.R. No. 158</p> <p>Estate Agents Act 1980 — S.R. No. 179</p> <p>Firearms Act 1958 — S.R. No. 153</p> <p>Food Act 1984 — S.R. No. 162</p> <p>Gaming Machine Control Act 1991 — S.R. No. 145</p> <p>Gas Industry Act 1994 — S.R. No. 178</p> <p>Health Act 1958 — S.R. No. 163</p> <p>Land Tax Act 1958 — S.R. No. 166</p> <p>Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 — S.R. No. 170</p> <p>Local Government Act 1989 — S.R. No. 164</p> <p>Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — S.R. Nos 149, 152, 172</p> <p>Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958 — S.R. No. 187</p> <p>Mineral Resources Development Act 1990 — S.R. Nos 143, 173, 174, 175</p> <p>Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 — S.R. Nos 184, 185</p> <p>Petroleum Act 1958 — S.R. No. 176</p> <p>Pharmacists Act 1974 — S.R. No. 147</p> <p>Physiotherapists Act 1978 — S.R. No. 148</p> <p>Pipelines Act 1967 — S.R. No. 177</p> <p>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — S.R. No. 171</p> <p>Psychologists Registration Act 1987 — S.R. No. 180</p> <p>Road Safety Act 1986 — S.R. Nos 154, 190, 192, 193</p> <p>Stamps Act 1958 — S.R. No. 197</p> <p>Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — S.R. No. 165</p> <p>Supreme Court Act 1986 — S.R. Nos 150, 155, 156, 167, 168</p> <p>Tertiary Education Act 1993 — S.R. No. 195</p> <p>Trade Measurement Act 1995 — S.R. No. 194</p> <p>Trade Measurement (Administration) Act 1995 — S.R. No. 194</p> |
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Transport Act 1983 — S.R. Nos 189, 191

Vegetation and Vine Diseases Act 1958 — S.R. No. 157

Veterinary Surgeons Act 1958 — S.R. No. 151

Water Industry Act 1994 — S.R. No. 186

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 144, 145, 159, 162, 163, 171, 189, 195, 196, 197

Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 146, 147, 148, 149, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 187, 188

Sunraysia Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Transport Act 1983 — Order for transfer of assets and liabilities pursuant to section 81

United Energy Ltd — Report for the period ended 30 June 1995

Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority — Report for the year 1994-95

Victoria Law Foundation — Report for the year ended 30 September 1995

Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority — Report for the year 1994-95 (*in lieu of Report previously tabled*)

Victorian Dried Fruits Board — Report for the period ended 30 June 1995

Wangaratta College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Western Highlands Health Service (includes Daylesford District Hospital and Creswick District Hospital) — Report for the year 1994-95 (two papers)

Western Metropolitan College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Wildlife Act 1975 — Wildlife (Closure of Areas to Hunting) Notice No. 1 1996

William Angliss Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Wimmera Institute of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Wodonga College of TAFE — Report for the year 1995

Yarrawonga Shire Council Water and Waste Water Functions — Report for the year 1993-94, together with notification from the Minister for Natural Resources of the failure to submit the annual report and the reasons therefor.

OMBUDSMAN AND DEPUTY OMBUDSMAN (POLICE COMPLAINTS)

The SPEAKER presented report for 1994-95.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — On behalf of the Premier, in accordance with the usual practice and in order to preserve the privileges of the house, I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to amend the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1994, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

The SPEAKER — Order! I have to report that the house this day attended with His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council chamber, where His Excellency was pleased to make a speech to both houses of Parliament, of which I have a copy for accuracy. As the speech is printed and copies are in the hands of honourable members or are available to them, it is not necessary for me to read the speech.

Mr DIXON (Dromana) — I move:

That the following address, in reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor to both houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this house —

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

33

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, assembled in Parliament, express our loyalty to our Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

It is with great pride and pleasure that I rise as the new member for Dromana. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election today to your esteemed position. I know that you will be fair and decisive in your dealings with the house.

I wish to thank the people of the Dromana electorate who have bestowed on me an honour of great privilege and responsibility. I want them to know that I commit myself to four years of service to them and to the Victorian government. Having been a member of their community for more than 15 years I know I can represent them faithfully and forcefully — and if not, I'll soon be reminded of it!

It is not common for an innocent and unsuspecting person to be preselected, then fight and win an election in just 23 days! It has been a dramatic time for my family. I wish to thank my wife, Chris, and my children, Julia and Martin, for their patience, indulgence and understanding. I know I can rely on them, my parents, my brother, Chris — who would be very comfortable on the benches opposite — and my sisters, Anne and Maureen, for their continued support, faith and good humour.

A sobering fact for all members of Parliament is that we are only one of many contributing factors to an election victory. One major factor is our party organisation, especially at the local level. I wish to thank especially Mr Bob Merry, who was my campaign manager and is now my electorate chairman, for his leadership, enthusiasm and good sense. The traumatic early days of the election gave way to two and a half weeks of enthusiasm, hard work and solid organisation. I thank my 163 booth workers, scrutineers and campaign team workers. The branches in my electorate are strong and enthusiastic, especially my home branch of Rye — they are all already raising funds for the next election!

I thank my upper house colleagues, the Honourable Ken Smith and the Honourable Ron Bowden, and the federal member for Flinders, the Honourable Peter Reith. They were a great support to me and I look forward to working with them as an effective, coordinated team.

I also take this opportunity to thank the former member for Dromana, Mr Tony Hyams, for his

tremendous achievements and hard work not only for the electorate of Dromana but also for Victoria. I know I can confidently look forward to his continued friendship and support.

The electorate of Dromana is an area of 550 square kilometres encompassing the whole of the southern Mornington Peninsula. It takes in the towns of Safety Beach, Dromana, McCrae, Rosebud, Tootgarook, my home town of Rye, Blairgowrie, Sorrento and Portsea; the inland regions of Red Hill, Main Ridge and Merricks; and on Western Port the towns of Flinders, Shoreham, Balnarring and Somers. It is a diverse area of safe beaches, rocky cliffs, surf beaches, magnificent bush, wetlands, farms, orchards, wineries, urbanised townships and small villages.

The electorate has a unique heritage of historical and natural assets: historical mansions, homes and gardens; lime kilns and fortifications; and inland, marine and coastal national parks. The 15 golf courses are the jewel in our crown!

Although the electorate primarily has an elderly population, the proportion of young families is increasing, as is the number of households that rely on social security payments for their income — 70 per cent of children in one school in my electorate come from that sort of household. Cheap housing and rent are a magnet for these families and the resultant social problems, especially among the youth, are endemic.

At a time of cutbacks, rationalisation and sacrifices, much has been achieved by this government for the electorate of Dromana: the purchase of a site and the commencement of construction of a TAFE college at Rosebud; the completion of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway; the extension and refurbishment of the Mornington Peninsula Hospital at Rosebud; the establishment of a domestic violence outreach service; and the setting up of numerous substantial environmental projects, to name a few.

The needs of the people in the Dromana electorate are still great. Public transport on the peninsula is sadly lacking. The buses are infrequent and are accessible only to those living near the highway. Fares are expensive because the public transport is not linked to the Met and there are no trans-peninsula services.

There are three strong reasons to improve our bus services: firstly, the provision of earlier and later services would enable people to access jobs,

education and training in the south-eastern suburbs and the Frankston region. If you do not have a car you are stuck, which severely limits your employment, training and education opportunities. Secondly, when the new and expanded TAFE opens next year, students will need access to it, and not only from the Frankston area. The site is located 3 kilometres inland from the current bus route, so a service that runs closer to it will be needed. Thirdly, the electorate is part of the Peninsula Health Care Network, so many patients are treated in Frankston. That often means that elderly non-drivers are unable to visit their partners in hospital.

I look forward to working with the Minister for Health on this issue and also with his parliamentary secretary, my cellmate, the honourable member for Mornington, who will not escape my attentions.

Sections of the electorate's coastline are in dire need of beach sand restoration and foreshore development and regeneration. The electorate's coastline is one of its greatest assets — it is a source of recreation for locals and tourists and it is vital to the local tourism industry. The situation at the Rosebud and McCrae foreshores are indicative of that. Many interest groups have a stake in the foreshore but no one group can claim it. There is plenty of foreshore for everyone! I will be working with and providing leadership for those groups within the new coastal strategy framework.

One of the main reasons why people live on, holiday at and visit the southern peninsula is its diverse and attractive landscapes. This landscape must be protected by sensible but vigilant planning not only in the rural areas but also in our townships where new buildings must be sensitive to the many historic streetscapes and existing buildings. We must maintain the balance between sensible development and the retention of the character of the peninsula because once the peninsula starts to look like suburban Melbourne it will have lost its attraction to visitors and to those who have chosen to live there.

Coupled with the social problems I referred to earlier is the provision of education, training, support, counselling, entertainment, housing and employment for the youth of the electorate. That is quite a list! Some wonderful organisations and individuals are working for our youth. I will be working with those groups to help coordinate their activities, drawing on their resources, knowledge and data so that the youth can see that, regardless of their personal and family circumstances, they live in a community that is concerned about them,

understands them and, more importantly, is prepared to walk with them. Some of the youth of today may not have the sort of family support we took for granted as we grew up, but our community is capable of substituting and we as a government are not there to hand out and hand feed but to resource, support and encourage organisations that can do it far more effectively.

The Mornington Peninsula Hospital at Rosebud is a newly expanded and renovated institution that the local community has supported and trusted over the years. Its first-class staff and facilities are worthy of the confidence of the total community. I will be working with the hospital network and all groups associated with it in an endeavour to make that hospital an even better equipped and more heavily utilised facility. The government has shown confidence in its future with a capital injection of more than \$4 million. That confidence is well founded!

I have a particular interest in education, having been a teacher, school principal and senior educational administrator for more than 20 years. Schools, and all that happens in them, is of vital concern to me. I intend to work closely with the schools in my electorate because they are assuming a greater role within the community. They are being asked to educate more broadly and yet to concentrate on the basics; to be responsive to the individual student and yet prepare them for employment only. Schools are being asked, and sometimes expected, to provide social services not only for their students but also for their families as well. Many schools offer parenting courses and entertainment and some even offer breakfast!

The community aspect of and the caring adults in schools are sometimes the only positive and consistent experiences in a child's life and therefore there is an opportunity to do some real and relevant good for a large section of our community. I look forward to being of service to schools, and by that I mean the parents, teachers and especially the children. To date I have visited or been invited to seven schools in my electorate. That is a great start and I hope to consolidate that promising beginning to forge an effective and working relationship with them.

I was surprised and delighted when during the election campaign I met a number of former pupils who said they intended to vote for me. Would you have voted for your school principal?

I believe good government is about leadership. That is not telling people what to do or providing them with their every need so that they become dependent on the government. It is about providing opportunities and structures for people to take control of their own lives, to make informed choices and accept responsibility for their actions, to be rewarded for working hard and yet to still protect and nurture those who cannot manage on their own.

Effective leadership is demonstrated by the possession of a vision, being able to communicate that vision, leading by example, being open to learning and change, listening, evaluating outcomes, delegating what can be more effectively done by others, being compassionate and having the courage of one's convictions.

Victoria desperately needed this sort of leadership and the Kennett government provided it. On 30 March the Victorian community was given the opportunity of evaluating its leadership and overwhelmingly decided that the Kennett government has changed this state from the nation's lagging stock to the leading state in the nation.

The second Kennett government will keep Victoria moving. The coalition's elections policies are its vision and the structure and processes of Parliament and the coalition parties will communicate the vision and allow the government to listen to the people, to learn, to change and evaluate its vision.

We will continue allowing the private sector to do what the government was never meant to do. The coalition's youth, community services and health policies are excellent examples of the commitment to compassion. One aspect of leadership that has not been lacking since October 1992 and will not be lacking over the next four years is having the courage of our convictions.

Mr Speaker, my vision for the electorate of Dromana is a community that cares about itself and works together. Over the coming four years we will see further improvement in education, more frequent and accessible public transport, more environmental projects successfully implemented and improved opportunities for our youth. My goal is to be of service to my electorate so that this vision can be realised.

I thank honourable members for their courtesy and the opportunity and honour of addressing this house on this important occasion.

Mr ANDRIGHETTO (Narracan) — I am pleased to have the honour of seconding the motion for the adoption of the address-in-reply so ably moved by the honourable member for Dromana. In doing so I express the high esteem in which His Excellency the Governor is held not only in Narracan but throughout Victoria. The role of His Excellency is both respected and valued by the loyal constituents of Narracan, who look forward to His Excellency's full-time role.

I also congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to your high office. You have a proven record in this regard and rightfully enjoy the support of this house. I also extend my congratulations to all new members of this place on their election results. I am humbled by the great opportunity given to me by the constituents of Narracan to represent them in this place. I consider it an honour and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of my two distinguished predecessors.

The seat of Narracan was created in April 1967 as a new seat in the 44th Parliament. It was held by the late Honourable Jim Balfour, who represented the electorate with great fervour for some 15 years. For most of that time he held the office of Minister for Minerals and Energy and served his electorate and all Victorians well.

My immediate predecessor was the Honourable John Delzoppo, who held the seat for 14 years and also achieved high office by serving as Speaker of this house in his last term. He also did much for his electorate during those years. I am a member of this place as a result of his decision to retire and I thank him for the opportunity that he has made available to me. The late Honourable Jim Balfour and the Honourable John Delzoppo have both set a very high standard for me to follow and I assure you, Mr Speaker, that I do not intend to let them down. I will continue to serve with the zest and vigour that is expected of me by my constituents.

Narracan is a rural country electorate of some 3800 square kilometres and is part of Gippsland Province. It has two major urban towns, Moe to the east and Warragul to the west. The most efficient dairy farms in the world are situated in the west of the electorate around the township of Warragul. They are supported by a world renowned agricultural research centre based at Ellinbank. A prolific explosion in the cut flower and bulb industry has occurred a short distance from the research centre. The rich soil and climatic conditions of the area are ideally suited to those enterprises, as well as many

others. Some of the other produce grown or produced in the area include cheese, venison, beef, ostrich, wine and an enormous array of fruits and berries. The area has become famous as the gourmet deli trail.

Along the northern boundary is the magnificent Mount Baw Baw alpine ski village. A short distance away is the largest storage of potable water in the state, the Thomson Dam, which supplies water to the people of Melbourne, giving them one of the best water supplies in the world.

The Yallourn W power station to the east is well known and provides power generation for use throughout the state. Thorpdale to the south, with its rich red fertile soil is rightfully dubbed the potato growing centre of the state. In fact, Thorpdale potatoes are sold throughout the country. I can go on at great length about the wonderful resources of my electorate that I am so proud to represent. Few people who visit the area fail to be impressed by its diversity, splendour and beauty.

The greatest asset of the electorate is its people. Over the past three and a half years they have renewed their faith in the future of Victoria. They can now look forward with the confidence that all Victorians are sharing in the rewards of good government. Their pride in this state is being restored.

I shall mention two such people as an example of the many. George Ronalds from Jindivick, a long-time dairy farmer, realised some 10 years ago that he could no longer rely on the sole income of a small farm to support himself and his family and also provide for his future. He embarked on a venture to produce cheese believing that it would complement his existing line of produce. He knew nothing about the industry and learnt quickly from a book that he had purchased. He built a small shed near the dairy to house his new venture, and so the story began.

George Ronalds now employs 19 people and produces in excess of 50 tonnes of camembert and brie a year. His establishment is known as Jindi Brie. He still operates from the original shed which he built, although he has extended it on a number of occasions. I can announce that on 11 April this year, in Wisconsin, USA, at the biannual World Cheese Championships, George Ronalds's brie was judged world best soft cheese in the open class. There were 783 entries in the competition, including entries from major multinational companies from around the world. To say that they were amazed when he

described the size of his operation would be an understatement.

The second person I wish to mention is Dr Lindsay Wakefield, who only some eight years ago was a medical practitioner operating from a thriving medical practice in inner Melbourne. A large proportion of his practice consisted of patients suffering from workplace-related injuries, the majority of whom suffered back pain resulting from heavy lifting. Annoyed by the lack of change in workplace practices that could have prevented many of the injuries, Dr Wakefield invented a device he believed would greatly reduce the incidence of this type of injury. Unable to convince established manufacturers of the potential of the product, he was left with no alternative but to manufacture a prototype with the assistance of an engineering friend. That device, which raises palletted goods to a comfortable working height, is known as the Palift and has since become an international success story. He no longer practises medicine but is now fully occupied managing his company, known as Safetech, which employs some 35 full-time staff and — most importantly — is located in Newborough. Some 50 per cent of his company's income is now generated through export of his product to about 12 other countries.

I have mentioned these two success stories by way of example only to show the calibre of the type of innovative and enterprising people of whom there are many in the electorate. When I asked them, and many others like them, what they considered to be the most important single thing I could do for them as their representative in Parliament, the most common answer I received was to tell my colleagues in Spring Street to 'give us a go and let us get on with doing what we do best'. They congratulate the government on the initiatives introduced so far and look forward to further initiatives during this Fifty-third Parliament.

The recovery and revitalisation of Narracan will continue by developing the economy in tandem and in harmony with the community. I believe the region must grow from within — that is, from the applied initiatives of those who live and work in the area. Only then will the renewed growth we have already seen remain sustainable and provide certainty for today's youth, who are, after all, our only hope for the future.

The best way to achieve that objective is to provide real incentives in the form of breaks that encourage development, employment and training in both the

manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The time when we could rely solely on our primary production to provide us with a comfortable living has long gone. What is needed is a continued push for government bureaucracy geared to encourage and serve the needs of enterprises, rather than the building of illogical barriers that only discourage innovation and creativity. That discouragement has occurred in the past. We must encourage value adding wherever possible and do what must be done to build a solid manufacturing base in rural Victoria, and in particular in my electorate of Narracan.

In mentioning education in Narracan I commend the government for the Schools of the Future program. I wish to mention three schools in particular that have greatly benefited from the program: Warragul North Primary School, Trafalgar Primary School and Murray Road Primary School in Moe. Visiting those schools you can see the effect of the Schools of the Future program; you can see the change that has occurred in the schools and you can see the incentive and enthusiasm that have returned to a place where they have been lacking for some time.

At the 30 March election the people of this state overwhelmingly showed their support for the present coalition government, which recorded an historic win. It was returned with an unprecedented majority. That was no accident. It was the result of three and a half years of courageous, effective and committed policy making. Above all, it was a clear indication of the faith, confidence and trust placed in the Premier of this state. He has rewarded the community with unparalleled leadership and a strength and determination that have overseen a complete reversal of the fortunes of Victoria. The Premier is an inspiration not only to the party he represents but to every Victorian.

Having said all that, I make it clear that I could not have gained election to this place without the support of many people, only some of whom I have time to thank. Firstly, I thank my wife, Yvonne, and my children, Mark and Jane, who have been supportive and patient during a very stressful and testing time. I must also thank the chairman of my electorate committee, Mr David Williamson, who was also my campaign director, and my entire campaign team, with a special mention to Mrs Ruby Scott and Mrs Gloria Castle. I also thank the some 400 people who helped with letter drops and the manning of the booths on polling day, especially those affected by the inclement weather.

I also express my gratitude to the Honourable Philip Davis, a member for Gippsland Province, for his solid support, encouragement, advice and guidance over many, many months leading up to the election. I am truly indebted to him for that. I also wish to thank the executive and staff of the Liberal Party for the professional assistance and support offered to me during the campaign, and in particular I wish to mention members of the Victorian Liberal Party policy assembly, without whose loyal support I would not be here today.

I again thank the people of Narracan for giving me the opportunity to represent them in this place. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech, and I thank honourable members for the courtesy they have shown me. I will respect that courtesy in the years to come.

Honourable Members — Hear, hear!

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I am more than happy to speak in favour of this motion. I must say I have been waiting for a very long time to get into this place, and it is a fantastic feeling to be here. I can remember coming to this place as a kid and sitting in the strangers' dining room as a guest of the late Roberts Dunstan, a former Liberal Party member for Dromana, a former journo, a former war hero, and indeed, as some members of this house would remember, a former hell raiser.

I was here because I always had a burning desire to get into the state Parliament. I also had a burning desire to get into the stranger's dining room because I fancied a girl who worked there at the time. I was Roberts Dunstan's guest because the girl I fancied was the daughter of his electorate officer, Ray Dorrington. Thankfully, at the time I had not told Ray that I was a red-hot Labor supporter, so I was able to weasel an invitation into the dining room.

I recall sitting with Roberts's wife, Joanna, and feeling a bit embarrassed at confessing to her that I was no big fan of Liberal Party philosophy, that I intended to vote Labor all my life, that I intended to join the Labor Party and that I intended to try to get into state Parliament. I can always remember Joanna's reaction: to my surprise, a broad smile came over her face, and in her own inimitable way she looked at me and said, 'Darling, that's wonderful. There is no Liberal Party philosophy, and I have been voting Labor for years'. Needless to say, Joanna and I have been mates ever since.

I eventually married the girl I came to see in the strangers' dining room. Unfortunately, Ray Dorrington, my father-in-law, passed away during the state election campaign. Despite his politics and the many arguments we had over the years — and boy, did we have some arguments — he would have been thrilled to be here today. I thank my wife, Petrina, who is here — or certainly was earlier this evening — for all her support over the years and for not having the same politics as her father!

After all these years I am thrilled to be here, and it is because of the faith the people of the Niddrie electorate have shown in me that I am able to stand here today. I thank them for their support and, as I said during the campaign, I will undertake to represent their needs and aspirations with enthusiasm and vigour.

My electorate has many strengths upon which it can build. Niddrie truly is a multicultural electorate — a real microcosm of Victoria. It could well be described as the education capital of the north-west, with its many excellent schools, both state and private. It has an extremely diverse and skilled work force, with a strong manufacturing base. The electorate has a number of leading-edge industries, including metals and engineering, food processing, and aero technology. The multicultural nature of the electorate, with approximately 35 per cent of its residents having been born outside Australia and more than 90 per cent of those coming from non-English-speaking backgrounds, gives a real diversity to the area and enhances its strength.

Tolerance and a real sense of community abounds in Niddrie. Of course, unemployment is far too high in the north-west, with over 11.1 per cent of people in the area are unemployed. The recently announced strategy prepared by the Western Region Economic Development Organisation seeks to address the unemployment problem in the north-west, with plans to create some 6700 extra jobs each year for the next decade. Projects earmarked for that strategy include a far more aggressive promotion of the area as a tourist destination, a rail link from the airport into the city, and a capitalisation on the completion of the Labor federally funded \$400 million Western Ring Road, which will make the west Australia's transport hub, providing quick access between ports, airports, the CBD, and the Princes and Hume highways. So the outlook for my electorate, if its strengths are properly utilised, is indeed excellent.

However, all is by no means rosy. The proposal to impose tolls on the Tullamarine freeway for 34 years

will be an unfair impost on my constituents and will create traffic chaos with people trying to avoid tolls. Teacher morale in the Niddrie electorate has been poor for some time, with the government's radical changes to the education system resulting in school closures, higher class sizes and lower retention rates. The federal government's plan to cut recurrent funding for tertiary institutions by 10 per cent will impact on access to education in my electorate.

Due to the ageing population of Niddrie, more needs to be done to improve aged care facilities and public transport in the area. Just as importantly, quality of life issues cannot be compromised by unelected commissioners attempting to sell off community assets, such as parklands, in an endeavour to implement unsustainable rate reductions.

I suppose with any inaugural speech, anyone who takes any notice is keen to know why the person making the speech wanted to get into politics in the first place. For me it was a fairly easy decision. I was extremely fortunate to have been brought up in a large, caring family that encouraged debate, often boisterous, on a whole manner of social issues. We were taught to think for ourselves and to look after each other. My father practised law here in Melbourne and I did my articles with him. Dad often appeared free of charge for clients who had genuinely been aggrieved by the system. Whether it was the battlers whose livelihood and homes had been threatened as a result of some unscrupulous hire-purchase agreements, or a woman who was continually abused by a former husband and did not know where to turn, my father was keen to right the injustice.

However, knowing and interpreting the law is one thing, but being in a position to make and to change laws is another thing altogether — and that was the position I wanted to be in. So before I threw my hat into the political ring in Victoria, I was keen to broaden my life's experiences by undertaking 12 months with an Aboriginal legal service. It was for that reason that I moved to Mount Isa almost 10 years ago. Despite the fairly broad-minded upbringing and education I received in Melbourne, nothing — and I mean nothing — could have prepared me for my experiences in north-west Queensland. I guess it was those experiences that guaranteed that I would have a political future.

I can recall the first day I arrived in Mount Isa, when I met a senior constable who told me that the night before he had personally witnessed a police sergeant

forcibly placing live cockroaches down the throat of an Aboriginal defendant in order to get that person to confess to a petty offence. My immediate response was to laugh in disbelief. He explained to me that Aboriginal people had no chance of receiving justice before the law until non-Aboriginal people knew about the brutal disregard for human rights that was occurring in Queensland. He told me that my laughter and disbelief was the same sort of reaction that that Aboriginal person would receive when he made his claims of abuse before a court. People living in isolated communities like Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria could get water for only 6 hours a day — this is 1990 we are talking about. It is very difficult to explain to a young kid that he or she cannot use a toilet for 18 hours a day simply because it cannot be flushed.

The point of all this is that for the first time in my life I was witnessing first-hand what occurs when people's rights and entitlements are ignored. I was seeing the flow-on effect of a government, the Bjelke-Petersen government, that had little regard for individuals and looked after the big end of town; a government that practised the fat-man-thin-man theory of looking after mates and making them fatter and fatter in the hope that the battler — the thin man — may be tossed a few scraps. In my view you can simply stand by and ignore these kinds of gross injustices, or you can get angry and get politically active. I was honoured to have been given the privilege of representing the people of the Kennedy electorate in the federal Parliament along my path to my real aspiration: getting into this place.

As we now know, the Bjelke-Petersen dog-eat-dog philosophy of looking after shonky mates and grabbing any paper bag that came your way led to an erosion of democracy in Queensland. That ultimately led to widespread corruption and, of course, the Fitzgerald royal commission. Bjelke-Petersen personally showed an abject failure to understand the concept of the separation of powers, as evidenced by his comments at the Fitzgerald royal commission and actually reported on the *7.30 Report*. On one of the rare occasions he deigned to appear on that program in September 1989 he was asked what he believed about the doctrine of the separation of powers and he said:

I don't know which doctrine you refer to.

He was told there was only one doctrine of the separation of powers and he said:

@INDENT1 = I believe in it very strongly, despite what you may say, I believe that we have a great responsibility to the people who elect us to government and that is to maintain their freedom and their rights. I did that, sought to do it always.

He was then told that that was not what the doctrine of the separation of powers was about and he said to the counsel asking the question:

Well, you tell me, and I'll tell you whether you are right or not. Don't you know?

That is really a most extraordinary admission from a premier of a state.

Further to that and flowing from it is the fact that Bjelke-Petersen had no grasp of the very important concept of conflict of interest. He failed to understand that his public office and those of his ministers could not and should not be deliberately used as sources for private, individual gain. As a result of that lack of understanding of such a basic and important concept, a culture developed throughout Queensland whereby businesses and companies followed the government's lead — and why shouldn't they!

In her book, *Conflict of Interest — The Ethical Dilemma in Politics*, Sandra Williams notes that a conflict of interest denotes a situation in which an official has a private financial interest sufficient to influence or appear to influence the exercise of his or her public duties and responsibilities. The concept is applicable not only in situations where a conflict actually exists but also where it appears to exist. According to Williams, a charge of conflict of interest may arise not only when public duty clashes with public interest but also when they appear to converge.

It is very interesting to note that Williams describes corruption as a particular method of resolving a conflict of interest whereby personal financial interest or gain actually distorts the exercise of an official's public duties and responsibilities. Of course, that is exactly what occurred in Queensland. The Bjelke-Petersen regime was corrupt and was found to be corrupt. But it took a long time before such findings were made, despite years of allegations and warnings about tainted tender processes, favours in return for political donations and special deals for mates. It was also despite repeated calls by a resource-depleted opposition in that state for the conduct of independent inquiries into various aspects of government administration.

The reason the corrupt practices in Queensland took so long to come to light was that the government in that state ensured that virtually every individual watchdog was stood on, squashed or abolished. People and organisations that spoke out against the government were ridiculed and, where possible, sacked and attacked. Some sections of the media were treated with contempt with certain media outlets being banned by the Premier. Other sections were given favourable treatment. Public protests were prohibited and nightly images on television screens of police imposing pressure-point holds and headlocks on the state's citizens were regular occurrences. Freedom of information in that state was non-existent and the government operated in a totally secretive environment.

The government's majority was such that it totally abused the processes of Parliament. Fitzgerald documented most of that in his report. In relation to criticism and dissent, at page 142 of his report Fitzgerald says:

In the past when church and other community leaders, including academics, have expressed independent concerns with respect to public issues in Queensland, their comments frequently have been rebuffed by a barrage of propaganda and personal abuse.

Many persons of ordinary sensitivity, who have not been hardened by experience in public life, are effectively deterred by such invective from valuable participation in public affairs.

In relation to secrecy and the abuse of Parliament, Fitzgerald says at page 126 of his report:

A government can use its control of Parliament and public administration to manipulate, exploit and misinform the community, or to hide matters from it.

Secrecy and propaganda are major impediments to accountability, which is a prerequisite for the proper function of public process. Worse, they are hallmarks of a diversion of power from the Parliament.

In relation to certain sections of the media, Fitzgerald says at page 141 of his report:

Unfortunately ... parts of the media have ... over the years contributed to a climate in which misconduct has flourished. Fitting in with the system and associating with and developing a mutual interdependence have had obvious benefits.

So the gross abuses of process, the trampling on the rights and freedoms of the people, the dirty deals and the jobs for mates were finally exposed by the Fitzgerald royal commission.

I guess it was the anger that I felt about the systematic dismantling of the democratic process in Queensland, the deliberate disenfranchising of the citizens of that state, that ensured that I became politically active in the time I was there. That very same anger with what has been happening in my home state, Victoria, ensured that I put up my hand at the first available opportunity to get into this place.

No person who understands the importance of government accountability, who knows that a person's individual rights and freedoms are sacrosanct, who believes in a fair go for all and not just a privileged few, can simply stand by and allow the most basic tenets of democracy to be torn apart. I guess that is why we on the opposition side of the house are proud to be members of the Australian Labor Party. We are members of a party with a tradition of assisting the underdog. We have a tradition of actively representing the less powerful and the less well off. We have always believed that the best way to do that is to actually ensure there is more democracy, not less.

My party has always believed and will always believe it is incumbent on government to provide a safety net for those who are not fortunate enough to have been born into families that can buy their way in the world or who for one reason or another need assistance. We do not believe in the Liberal philosophy as expressed by John Hewson during the 1993 federal election campaign that to reach an arm out to people that have fallen by the wayside simply has the effect of dragging society down to their level.

My party believes it is incumbent on government to provide essential infrastructure such as water, sewerage, gas and electricity at affordable prices. My party believes it is incumbent on government to provide the mechanisms necessary to protect our natural environment — our forests, alpine areas and the coastline. My party believes it is incumbent on government to provide the mechanisms necessary to protect citizens against the abuse of government power, such as the right to appeal to the Supreme Court or a truly independent equal opportunity commissioner, and a legal system that is accessible, affordable and independent from government. Labor actually believes in the right of every individual to reach his or her full potential and the

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

41

corresponding right of every individual to security, dignity and respect.

Labor stands for a prosperous, fair and creative society rich in opportunities for all its citizens, not just a privileged few. The problem is that Bjelke-Petersen did not believe in those things and, as we now know, the show there fell apart.

I am firmly of the view that the alarm bells and all the signals and warnings that were sounding loudly in Queensland under Bjelke-Petersen have been ringing here for some time. Members on the government side of the house may sit there now in the knowledge that they have won an election just a very short time ago. However, those members should have firmly embedded in their minds the fact that Bjelke-Petersen was actually swept back to power with an increased majority on 2 November 1986, was actually touted as a future Prime Minister a short time later, and was then dumped by his party in disgrace on 27 November just over a year later — so he had fallen from grace in just over a year.

As lawyers know, the wheels of justice often turn slowly but the vehicle grinds on relentlessly. The rule of law must and will survive the machinations of those intent on bending and turning it to their own ends. Whether we talk about the casino controversy and its myriad conflicts, the Bongiorno affair, the sacking of certain judges, inducements or political favours, the sale of public assets or the plethora of other government dealings that are being scrutinised, the truth will come out in the end.

It has to be remembered that one of the legacies of the Bjelke-Petersen regime is that former members of that government are continually asked by their children and grandchildren where the hell they were when democracy in Queensland was being ripped apart. All members of the now disgraced Bjelke-Petersen government have been asked by their children — and in some cases by their grandchildren — why they allowed Premier Bjelke-Petersen to flog off many of Queensland's valuable assets and why they did nothing when they saw that state's education and hospital systems being dismantled.

In Queensland former members of the Bjelke-Petersen government are continually asked where they were when their Premier was involved in questionable tender processes and was allowing his mates to get the inside running on big contracts. They are constantly being asked why they did not

have the spine to stop their Premier spitting vitriol and abuse at anyone who dared to criticise him or his government. Members of the disgraced former Bjelke-Petersen government have nowhere to hide.

In conclusion, I believe in the power of the individual to change things, whether alone or as part of a team. I believe in the power I have to assist my community. I believe in the power I have as part of the Labor team to work for change in Victoria. I believe in the power of principle, regardless of how unpopular or out of fashion particular principles might be at any particular time. Most of all, I am determined to make a contribution and be able to look my family and members of my community in the eye and say of every time I had to stand up and be counted that, indeed, I did.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr GUDE (Minister for Education).

Debate adjourned until next day.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs TEHAN (Minister for Conservation and Land Management) — On 31 March 1994, during the autumn session of Parliament, I advised the house that a Mr Bill Wood of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service had severed all ties with Clinictrans, a company he had previously been associated with. At that time the statement was based on information given to me and I had no reason to doubt its accuracy.

Since the last Parliament it has been brought to my attention that Mr Wood had not severed all ties and that at the time of my statement he continued to have an interest in a lease of premises associated with the business referred to. A mortgage or charge in favour of the business was discharged on 24 May 1994.

My comments on 31 March 1994 were based on information available to me at the time. Information disclosed at a later time showed that the information available at the time of my making the statement was incomplete. I now wish to correct the information provided to the house.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton) — I move:

PROCLAMATION OF ACTS

42

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

That Mr John Francis McGrath be appointed Chairman of Committees of this house.

I have pleasure in nominating the honourable member for Warrnambool. He carried out the duties of the position in an exemplary fashion in the last Parliament.

Mr TREASURE (Gippsland East) — I second the motion.

Mr J. F. McGRATH — I accept the nomination.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for nominations has expired. I have pleasure in declaring that John Francis McGrath has been elected Chairman of Committees of this house. I congratulate him on behalf of the house.

PROCLAMATION OF ACTS

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

That this house authorises and requires the Clerk to lay on the table copies of proclamations of His Excellency the Governor in Council fixing dates for the coming into operation of acts, as published in the *Government Gazette* from time to time.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

TELEVISING AND BROADCASTING OF PROCEEDINGS

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I desire to move, by leave:

1. That this house authorises —

- (a) the televising and broadcasting of Legislative Assembly proceedings, excluding debate on a motion that grievances be noted and debate on a motion moved by a minister for the adjournment of the house at the end of a day's proceedings; and
- (b) the broadcasting and rebroadcasting on radio and television stations of recorded sound excerpts of proceedings in the Legislative Assembly commencing at the time fixed for the meeting of the house until the motion is moved or the question is proposed (and is not put forthwith and negatived) for the adjournment of the house excluding debate on a debate on a motion that grievances be noted.

2. That the following conditions apply and any breach of these conditions may result in the immediate suspension of privileges by Mr Speaker:

- (a) Sound recording pursuant to paragraph 1(a) and 1(b) shall be recorded only from the audio signal of proceedings transmitted by the house monitoring system by representatives of accredited media organisations. No alteration to the sound relay equipment is permitted without the permission of Mr Speaker. The use of separate recording equipment by television stations is not permitted.
- (b) Television recording shall not commence until the conclusion of the prayer.
- (c) Television recording and excerpts pursuant to paragraph 1(b) shall be used only for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings and reasonable balance between both sides of the house is to be achieved by avoiding undue concentration on any one member.
- (d) Television recording and excerpts relating to paragraph 1(b) shall not be used for:
 - (i) political party advertising or election campaigns;
 - (ii) satire or ridicule;
 - (iii) commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising; or
 - (iv) television station advertisements or promotion.
- (e) Television recording of any particular proceeding must provide equality between government and non-government members.
- (f) Television reports of proceedings shall be such as to provide a balanced presentation of differing views and may not include the rebroadcast of events in the chamber unrelated to the proceedings of the house.
- (g) Television excerpts and excerpts relating to paragraph 1(b) must be placed in context. Commentators should identify members at least by name.
- (h) Television excerpts shall not misrepresent any proceeding before the house or the seating position or office held by any member of the house.
- (i) All filming shall be conducted in accordance with guidelines issued by Mr Speaker.

- (j) Points of order or remarks withdrawn are not to be rebroadcast.
- (k) Media personnel are required to obey any instruction given by Mr Speaker or Mr Speaker's delegates.

Leave refused.

Drug debate

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I move:

That —

- (a) this house meets on Friday, 31 May 1996, at 9.00 a.m.; and
- (b) this house invites Professor David Penington, AC, the Chairman of the Premier's Drug Advisory Council, to attend on the floor of the house and address the house on the recommendations of the council's report in the Legislative Assembly chamber on that day at 9.00 a.m.; and
- (c) standing orders and sessional orders be suspended on that day to allow —
 - (i) Professor David Penington, AC, the Chairman of the Premier's Drug Advisory Council, to attend on the floor of the house and address the house on the recommendations of the council's report, after which the only proceedings on that day shall be a debate on the motion 'That this house takes note of the report of the Premier's Drug Advisory Council and the address of Professor David Penington, AC, the Chairman of the Premier's Drug Advisory Council'; and
 - (ii) Mr Speaker to put the question at 6.00 p.m. (or sooner if there be no further debate); and
 - (iii) the time limit for each member's speech to be 10 minutes; and
 - (iv) no amendment to the motion to be accepted by Mr Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Sessional orders

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I move:

That —

- 1. Unless otherwise ordered, the house shall meet on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Mr Speaker to take the chair at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday and 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday and Thursday.

- 2. (1) During the present session, government business shall take precedence of all other business (including motions pursuant to standing order no. 26 which is hereby to the necessary extent suspended, but not including a motion of want of confidence in the government) each Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and at 2.00 p.m. each Wednesday.
- (2) On Wednesdays, other than appointed Wednesdays pursuant to sessional order no. 4, business shall be called on in the following order:
 - 1. General business — notices of motion
 - 2. General Business — orders of the day
 - 3. Oral questions (*at 2.00 p.m.*)
 - 4. Government business — notices of motion
 - 5. Government business — orders of the day.
- 3. Notwithstanding sessional order no. 2 —
 - (1) So much of standing order no. 124 as allows members to ask oral questions without notice at the time of giving notices of motion be suspended and that members ask oral questions without notice at 2.00 p.m. each sitting day (other than on a Tuesday where a motion expressing sorrow at the death of a member or any other person may take precedence): provided that these sessional orders shall not permit more than one question time each sitting day.
 - (2) At 2.00 p.m. on each sitting day (other than a Tuesday) Mr Speaker shall interrupt the business before the house, or if the house be in committee, the Chairman shall report progress and Mr Speaker shall then interrupt such business: provided that in the event that a division is in progress at 2.00 p.m. such division shall be completed and the result announced and if such division be upon a closure motion any question required to be brought to conclusion as a result of such division shall be so brought to conclusion.
 - (3) Any business under discussion and not disposed of at 2.00 p.m. shall be resumed immediately at the conclusion of the asking of oral questions and any member speaking at the time of interruption may, upon the resumption of debate thereon, continue such speech.
- 4. (1) Standing order no. 59 be suspended and, notwithstanding sessional order no. 2, the first order of the day on Wednesdays

appointed by resolution of the house shall be the question 'That grievances be noted', to which question any member may speak for not more than 15 minutes and the whole discussion on this question shall end at 2.00 p.m.

(2) On those appointed Wednesdays, business shall be called on in the following order:

1. Grievances
2. Oral questions (*at 2.00 p.m.*)
3. Government business
4. General business

5. Notwithstanding the right of a minister to move a motion for the adjournment of the house pursuant to standing order no. 25 —

(1) At 10.00 p.m. on each sitting day Mr Speaker shall interrupt the business before the house, or if the house be in committee, the Chairman shall report progress and Mr Speaker shall then interrupt such business: provided that in the event that a division is in progress at 10.00 p.m. such division shall be completed and the result announced and if such division be upon a closure motion any question required to be brought to conclusion as a result of such division shall be so brought to conclusion.

(2) Upon such interruption of business —

- (a) Before a motion for the adjournment is proposed by Mr Speaker, a minister may move that the sitting be continued; which motion shall be put forthwith without amendment or debate and if such motion is agreed to, the house or committee shall resume the proceedings at the point at which they had been interrupted; or
- (b) If a minister does not so move, Mr Speaker shall forthwith propose the question 'That the house do now adjourn', which question shall be open to debate in accordance with the rules and practices of the house and paragraph (4); at the conclusion of the debate, Mr Speaker notwithstanding the provisions of standing order no. 24 shall adjourn the house without putting any question until the time of the next meeting.

(3) Any business under discussion and not disposed of at the time of the adjournment shall be set down on the notice paper for the next sitting and any member speaking at the

time of interruption may, upon the resumption of debate thereon, continue such speech.

(4) On the motion 'That the house do now adjourn' the time available for the raising of matters on the motion be 30 minutes and the time limit per member be 3 minutes.

6. (1) Standing orders shall be suspended to allow for the programming of government business and the following procedures.

(2) Before the house meets for business in any week, the Leader of the House and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (or their nominees) may meet as a government business programming committee with a view to reaching agreement on the manner in which the house is to deal with government business of the week.

(3) On the first day of the sitting week the Leader of the House or his nominee before the calling on of government business may move without leave a motion setting a date and time by which consideration of specified bills or items of business have to be completed in that sitting week. Debate thereon shall not exceed 30 minutes, and in speaking thereon no member shall exceed 5 minutes.

(4) At a change of business, following a special meeting of the government business programming committee convened in accordance with the aims of subparagraph (2), and without leave, the Leader of the House or his nominee may move a motion to amend the resolution under subparagraph (3). Debate thereon shall not exceed 30 minutes and, in speaking thereon, no member shall exceed 5 minutes. Any change to the program cannot come into operation until 1 hour after the motion is agreed to.

(5) Amendments to be proposed in committee of the whole to a specified bill may be circulated in the house during the debate on the question 'That this bill be now read a second time' after an announcement and request of a minister or a member (without leave but not when another member is speaking) foreshadowing such amendments: provided that these amendments are circulated 2 hours before the expiration of the completion time set under subparagraph (3). Such announcement and request shall not be debated.

(6) On the expiration of the completion time set under subparagraph (3), the Chair, in relation

- to a specified motion, shall put forthwith the question on any amendment and/or motion already proposed from the Chair for the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings on the motion.
- (7) On the expiration of the completion time set under subparagraph (3), the Chair, in relation to a specified bill, shall put forthwith the question on any amendment or motion already proposed from the Chair for the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings on the bill and —
- (a) as required, the remaining questions necessary for the passage of the bill through the house and transmission to the Legislative Council shall be combined (except in the case of a bill that requires the second reading and third reading to be passed with an absolute majority of the whole number of the members of the Legislative Assembly, the questions for the second and third readings shall be put separately), the committee stage of a bill being dispensed with if no government amendments have been circulated pursuant to subparagraph (5) ; and
- (b) in the case of the consideration of any bill in committee of the whole or on any of the remaining stages at that time, the Chair shall put a combined question or a number of questions (the form and number being at the discretion of the Chair) disposing of any clauses and schedules and any amendment and new clauses and schedules desired by the government — copies of which have been circulated in the house pursuant to subparagraph (5) — and any other questions required to dispose of the bill (as the case may be) before the committee of the whole or the house. (No other amendments, new clauses or schedules shall be proposed); and
- (8) After the house has concluded the proceedings under subparagraph (6) or (7), in the case of each remaining specified bill or item of government business, the Chair shall —
- (i) in the case of a bill, put in a combined question, as required, the questions necessary for the passage of the bill through the house and transmission to the Legislative Council (including any amendments and new clauses and schedules desired by the government which have been circulated pursuant to subparagraph (5)), the committee stage being dispensed with; and
- (ii) in the case of a bill that requires the second reading and third reading to be passed with an absolute majority of the whole number of the members of the Legislative Assembly, put separately the questions necessary for the passage of the bill through the house and transmission to the Legislative Council, (including a combined question relating to any amendments and new clauses and schedules desired by the government which have been circulated pursuant to subparagraph (5)), the committee stage being dispensed with; and
- (iii) in relation to any bill being considered in the committee of the whole, put a combined question or a number of questions (the form and number being at the discretion of the Chair) disposing of any clauses and schedules and any amendment and new clauses and schedules desired by the government — copies of which have been circulated in the house pursuant to subparagraph (5) — and any other questions required to dispose of the bill (as the case may be) before the committee of the whole or the house. (No other amendments, new clauses or schedules shall be proposed); and
- (iv) in the case of a remaining item of business other than a bill, put a combined question (if required) which brings to a conclusion the proceedings.
- (9) If, on the expiration of the completion time set under subparagraph (3), the house or committee is considering a non-specified motion or bill, and there are specified motions or bills to be completed, Mr Speaker shall interrupt the business before the house, or if the house be in committee, the Chairman shall report progress and Mr Speaker shall then interrupt such business: provided that in the event that a division is in progress such division shall be completed and the result announced and if such division be upon a closure motion any question required to be brought to conclusion as a result of such division shall be so brought to conclusion. The house shall then consider such motions or bills as required by subparagraph (8). At the

completion of such motions or bills the house or committee shall immediately resume the interrupted business and any member speaking at the time of interruption may, upon the resumption of debate thereon, continue such speech.

- (10) The Chair shall not accept any points of order once the expiration of the completion time under subparagraph (3) has arrived and until all the required questions under subparagraphs (6), (7) or (8) have been dealt with.

- (11) Standing and/or sessional orders relating to closure of debate or guillotine shall not apply to any proceedings in respect of a specified bill or item of business.

I will give a brief explanation of the motion. These proposed sessional orders differ slightly from the sessional orders agreed to last session. I draw the attention of the house to the operation of proposed sessional order 6 in a situation when, on the expiration of the completion time set under sessional order 6(3), the house or committee is considering a non-specified motion or bill and there are specified motions or bills to be completed.

Last session, on Thursday, 12 October 1995, a situation arose in which, just prior to the expiration of the completion time set under sessional order 6(3), a minister was presenting the second-reading speech of a non-specified bill. If the minister had gone past the designated completion time the Chair would have been obliged under the sessional order to interrupt the minister and put the questions required to bring the proceedings to a conclusion — in effect, to put the questions to pass the bill. Members will agree that this is not the intention of the sessional order. The changes to sessional order 6(6) and (7) now make it clear that questions to be put forthwith at the expiration of the completion time relate only to specified motions and bills.

Proposed new sessional orders 6(9) and (10) are consequential and provide that at the expiration of the completion time the Chair shall interrupt proceedings on an unspecified motion or bill and proceed to put the questions as required on the remaining specified bills. At the completion of that the house or committee shall immediately resume the interrupted business and any member speaking at the time of interruption may, on the resumption of the debate thereon, continue such speech. The procedure is similar to the procedure under

proposed sessional order 3 when business is interrupted at 2.00 p.m.

It also provides that the Chair shall not accept any points of order once the expiration of the completion time has arrived and until all the required questions have been dealt with. This provision ensures that there will be no interruption in the completion process under proposed sessional order 6.

I commend the proposed sessional orders to the house.

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I oppose the motion moved by the Leader of the House and, by leave, will move the opposition's amendments. They, too, are extensive. I move:

1. That in subparagraph 2(2) the words 'other than appointed Wednesdays pursuant sessional order no. 4,' be omitted.
2. That after subparagraph 3(3) insert the following subparagraphs:
 - (4) That so much of the standing orders be suspended so as to allow the following to apply:
 - (a) a member may ask a question without notice from the time the Speaker calls for questions. Questions without notice may be asked for 1 hour on each sitting day. However, the Speaker may extend the time for questions without notice at his or her discretion;
 - (b) the Speaker may require the language of a question to be changed if it seems to him or her that it is unbecoming or is in breach of the standing orders or conventions of the house;
 - (c) a member asking a question must not offer argument or an opinion on the matter or give facts or names of persons, except those strictly necessary to explain the question;
 - (d) when a member gives facts or names, he or she is responsible for their accuracy. Where the matter is of sufficient importance, the Speaker may require prima facie proof of accuracy;
 - (e) in answering any question the minister or member:
 - (i) must be directly relevant and responsive to the question; and

- (ii) must be reasonably succinct; and
- (iii) must not introduce matter extraneous to the question nor debate the matter to which the question relates; and
- (iv) must comply with the same rules and practices as apply to the asking of questions;
- (f) a minister may decline to answer a question or part of a question:
 - (i) on the ground of public policy; or
 - (ii) if the minister is unable to answer the question fully and accurately without notice and requests that the question or part of the question be placed upon the notice paper; or
 - (iii) if the minister informs the house that the question requires a more extensive answer than is appropriate to a question without notice and that it will be the subject of a ministerial statement or announcement at an early opportunity.
- 3. That in subparagraph 4(1) all words and expressions after the expression 'sessional order no. 2' to the end of the subparagraph be omitted and replaced with the following 'on every third sitting Thursday after the opening of the session, the first order of the day is the question "That grievances be noted". A member may speak for not more than 15 minutes on that question. The whole discussion must not exceed 4 hours.'
- 4. Omit subparagraph 4(2) and insert the following subparagraphs:
 - '(2) After the question "That grievances be noted" is carried, the Speaker may call on a member (except a minister) to make a statement for not more than 90 seconds. The total period provided for these statements must not exceed 15 minutes.
 - (3) On every third sitting Thursday after the opening of the session, business shall be called on in the following order:
 - 1. Grievances
 - 2. 90-second statements
 - 3. Oral questions (at 2.00 p.m.)
 - 4. Government business
 - 5. General business'
- 5. That after subparagraph 5(4) insert the following subparagraph:

'(5) The Speaker may extend the time allowed to a member on the motion "That the house do now adjourn" but only if the Speaker is of the opinion that a member's rights have been unreasonably infringed.'

The opposition wishes to have a detailed discussion on the sessional orders tonight. It chooses to do so at the beginning of the parliamentary session because of the importance it places on the procedures and forms of this house. Nothing can be more central or crucial to those procedures and forms than the sessional orders that members will be discussing tonight. It is appropriate that the house have such a debate at the commencement of the parliamentary session because we will be making decisions on how this Parliament will conduct itself for the next four years.

It should not be a matter of taking lightly the motion moved by the Leader of the House and forgoing a parliamentary debate. It is the opposition's view that the forms of the house as they now stand — in particular, the sessional orders — inhibit the mechanisms of Parliament and the ability of the opposition to contribute to debate. In effect they turn Parliament into a rubber stamp that is merely required to carry out the decisions of the executive arm of government. They leave little room for Parliament to discuss matters of crucial importance to the state of Victoria, which are given only a moment's consideration.

The sessional orders inhibit and restrict what individual members may do and force us all to become just spectators, if you like, of the actions of the executive arm of government, which are played out before us with little opportunity for individual members to make contributions that are meaningful, worthwhile and substantial. It is for this reason that the opposition chooses to consciously and deliberately engage in this debate tonight and to move the amendments that have been circulated.

The amendments attempt to obtain a more responsible and more accountable Parliament. In particular, the opposition is concerned that question time itself be more accountable and more responsive to the people of Victoria.

We also want to ensure that there is more genuine debate in this Parliament. Our aim is to restore this essential role of Parliament as a separate entity to the executive arm of government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BATCHELOR — Government members who are interjecting out of their places resile from the notion that Parliament should be an accountable institution. It should be a separate institution from the executive arm of government. It is of little surprise to me that members such as the honourable member for Tullamarine interject in that fashion trying to denigrate the important role that the opposition believes Parliament should have and the important role all members of Parliament should be carrying out.

It is our aim in moving these amendments to put that firmly on the record at the commencement of this parliamentary session because if the government chooses not to agree with our position and chooses to continue with its high-handed approach to parliamentary democracy, with its attempts to curtail the opposition and to curtail individual members, then it is an issue we will return to time and time again.

Earlier today the opposition gave notice of a motion it will move under general business. We will return to that issue later in the sessional period. We have placed it sufficiently high in priority that it will be a matter of further debate.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition earlier today congratulated you on your election as Speaker and expressed his desire to have the Parliament examine in a thorough and detailed way the sessional and standing orders and the procedures of this house. I acknowledge that it is an issue that cannot be resolved in one debate on the sessional orders; it requires a thorough and detailed examination.

We are calling on the Parliament to provide the forms and mechanisms to do that beyond today's debate. Once tonight's debate has concluded it will not be the last occasion this matter will be raised or pursued by the opposition. It is our intention to say to the Parliament and the people of Victoria that so far as the opposition is concerned democracy is an important and valued freedom and that Parliament should be the pinnacle institution in our state that cherishes and puts these valued traditions into practice.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — I hear again the honourable member for Tullamarine interjecting and indicating his opposition to these ideals. These ideals are not radical ideals; they have been around for a long

period. They are the very heart of the Westminster democracy. No doubt the Premier will find them offensive to his particular view of democracy. His view is that the only form of democracy that is acceptable is that which coincides with his view. He does not want to hear any voice that differs from his. We have seen that occur time and time again. All one needs to do is to ask the church leaders what happens when they put forward a view.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Thomastown is straying somewhat from sessional orders. The honourable member should stay within the content of the motion and his amendments.

Mr BATCHELOR — Mr Speaker, I shall endeavour to explain my point more clearly so that you understand why the opposition is insisting that this debate take place tonight.

We wish to have a robust Parliament, one that cherishes democracy and enables debate, one where Parliament is accountable and responsible — not one that is a rubber stamp.

We have seen this attitude of minority points of view trampled on in this Parliament, as we have seen in the wider community. Just as the opposition is making the point forcefully tonight that we expect our rights as parliamentarians and our right as a parliamentary institution to be preserved, that view is being widely supported in the community. It is a view that all too often we have seen with this government — if an alternative view is put forward, the people putting that alternative view are vilified, criticised, bullied and stood over. The same view we see as parliamentarians each and every day in our parliamentary lives is being extended beyond here into the wider community. People in the wider community are becoming just as upset as the people in this Parliament about Parliament being used as a rubber stamp. The vehicle for doing that are the existing orders.

Sessional orders should be changed. It is important because we have seen elsewhere that if the executive arm of government takes control of the parliamentary process it inevitably leads to problems. There are issues of structural imbalance and structural corruption that occur and then there is a breakdown in accountability. It happened in Queensland, where the executive arm of government was all-powerful and there was a breakdown in the relationship between the executive arm of the government and the

Parliament. That was the subject of extensive comment in the Fitzgerald royal commission. Mr Fitzgerald found that the executive arm of government treated Parliament with absolute contempt, which contributed to the breakdown of general public accountability.

We as an opposition are concerned that that does not happen. It is important for that reason that we have this debate about sessional orders because we wish to ensure that in the next four years this government, through robust debate in Parliament, is held accountable. We have seen the government try to make the Parliament powerless. A good example that goes to the question of sessional and standing orders that underpin Parliament is the changes that will take place to the City Link contract.

The procedures for changing the contract are contained within the Melbourne City Link Act, which envisages some role for Parliament in any subsequent changes that the government thinks might be necessary to make to the City Link contract after it has been entered into. We will see in the weeks ahead that the sessional orders will be used against the opposition, and that that avenue of accountability will work against Parliament, without it being allowed to examine the changes that have taken place to the biggest project in Victoria's history, changes to the very essence of the financial arrangements and to the contracts that will bind this and future governments for 34 years with tolls on our roads.

The sessional orders being put forward by the government tonight will make it impossible, except by leave of the government, for these matters to be debated adequately. Parliament will be used as a rubber stamp to approve changes to the City Link contract and members will not be allowed to debate them. The point that was made by Fitzgerald about the situation in Queensland is relevant to these sessional orders. This situation needs to be examined because the current abuse of the role of Parliament will continue during the weeks ahead when the City Link bill and a number of other matters are debated.

The amendments I have circulated address a number of issues. I will briefly address some of them after setting the scene for the opposition's concerns. We believe question time has been inadequately handled by sessional orders. Mr Speaker, during question time today you found it necessary to advise the Premier that he was taking too long to answer a question, thereby using up the very limited time

available to the opposition to hold the government to account. Today issues of major public importance, which had just broken in the media, needed to be addressed. By the use of sessional orders and the existing forms of the house the Premier was able to filibuster. Very early in your term, Mr Speaker, you rightly sought to intervene to remind the Premier that the practice of filibustering when answering questions was a recognised and well-tried abuse of the forms of Parliament. For that reason we seek to lengthen question time on each and every day that Parliament sits. Our amendments would have question time continuing for 1 hour. We believe it is not an exceptional or unusual arrangement because other Parliaments around Australia provide question times of longer duration.

There is no reason why the second largest and second most important parliamentary forum in Australia should have a question time that is open to the sort of abuse displayed by the Premier this evening. Question time should provide the opposition with sufficient time to ask a sequence of questions about a range of different issues. During the last Parliament often there was insufficient time during question time for the opposition to pursue one issue let alone a number! How will important issues be dealt with under sessional orders that provide no change?

It is for those reasons that the opposition has moved its amendments, in particular, the amendment to extend the time for questions without notice. The government has a record of going out of its way to reduce the number of questions it answers. During the first three years of the former Labor government an average of 14.6 questions were answered per question time, but during the first 3 years of the Kennett government an average of only 8.1 questions were answered during question time. Of course, the Kennett government has had plenty to hide and it has used the forms of the house to hide it. The government should not be able to use sessional orders and standing orders to protect it from public and parliamentary accountability.

The record stands out loud and clear that the government has not made itself available publicly. It has abused question time by refusing to answer questions quickly or succinctly and by filibustering. If ministers will not make themselves accountable in the Assembly where government is formed where will they be accountable? We know the answer: they will not be accountable! That was the experience in Queensland and that has been our experience during the past three years. The government will not

hold itself accountable. It avoids answering questions. We saw this today during question time when ministers would not answer questions. They routinely answer different questions they have in their minds each and every question time. When the opposition raises points of order in relation to relevance the standing orders are so weak that the abuse is allowed to continue.

These issues have been addressed previously by the report of the Standing Orders Committee. Recommendations were available to the government for implementation, but the government has failed to take action. That is why many of the proposals contained in the omnibus amendments I have moved tonight rely on comments made in the 1992 report of the Standing Orders Committee. That is why Parliament needs to make a further detailed examination of the issues that are crucial to our parliamentary democracy.

I shall make some comments in relation to the grievance debates. As honourable members know, the way sessional orders are structured means that grievance debates are, in effect, a gift of the government. It decides how many grievance debates will be held. Sessional orders do not provide any guidelines for the government on that point, and that is an absolutely inappropriate way for grievance debates to be scheduled. The grievance debate is one of the few opportunities for a member to raise individual matters outside the dictates of the government's legislative program and outside the response of his or her political party. The way the government abuses the opportunity for grievance debates stands as a condemnation of it.

The opposition wants some certainty introduced into the timing of grievance debates by moving them to Thursdays so that they do not interfere with general business motions. The opposition proposes that a grievance debate be held on every third sitting Thursday. The inclusion of the qualification of 'every third sitting Thursday' is an important factor in bringing accountability into Parliament.

Like the adjournment debate it is one of the areas the new Independent member of the house will find useful. If the government continues along the path it has taken in the past, more than one Independent member will be taking its constituencies in rural Victoria at the next election. Because of the new phenomenon of having an Independent member in the Legislative Assembly we need to have proper parliamentary forms so that Independents can have their say. Independents must have a role to play in

the house. The sessional orders introduced by this government will prevent them from performing the roles they want to play. Independents want to talk about issues affecting their electorates. They will discover that the opportunities for doing so under this government are extremely limited.

The opposition's amendments to the grievance procedures would provide an increased number of opportunities for the current Independent and future Independents to have participatory roles in this Parliament, particularly as those roles relate to issues that are important for their electorates.

For that reason the opposition has also proposed the introduction of the 90 second statement, a parliamentary form that it has borrowed from other legislatures, including the federal Parliament. The form would provide an additional opportunity for members to make short and succinct contributions on issues that are of importance to them. There is no provision within the parliamentary forms and procedures of this house to enable that to happen at the moment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, although you might say the adjournment debate provides that opportunity, that debate must relate only to issues of government administration. If a member wanted to succinctly raise something of importance to his or her electorate the 90 second statement process would provide the opportunity to do so. It seems ironic that the forms of the supreme law-making body in the state, which comprises individual members of Parliament representing their constituents, actually prevents them from raising matters that are relevant to their local areas except in a very restricted and limited way. For those reasons the opposition proposes that changes be made to the grievance procedures and that a 90 second statement be introduced.

The final amendment relates to the adjournment debate. On many occasions members on both sides of the house have participated in the adjournment debate when time is crucial. Members have only 3 minutes to make their contributions and they find that due to interjections and points of order they are, in effect, prevented from doing so.

Mr Finn — You do it yourself.

Mr BATCHELOR — The honourable member for Tullamarine acknowledges that that is what he does. Time and again during this debate the honourable member has indicated his opposition to the sorts of

proposals we are putting forward. The opposition believes some common decency and sense of procedural fairness should apply. A member of Parliament who wishes to make a contribution to the adjournment debate at the end of the sitting day should be able to do so without the tricksters from the other side of the house causing problems. Members of the government or the opposition — or, indeed, the Independent — should be able to make their contributions without other members deliberately curtailing and sabotaging their remarks. Often it is the only occasion a member can make a contribution on issues affecting his or her electorate.

For those reasons the opposition supports the amendments that have been moved in my name and circulated in the house tonight. We simply want some sense of democracy under this government. The people of Victoria want to hold the government accountable. Members of the government are frightened of being held accountable. They do not want to be held accountable or made responsible. In line with previous practice the government will force through the sessional orders tonight without taking the amendments into account. By doing so it will be an admission at the commencement of this parliamentary term that at each and every opportunity the government will trample all over parliamentary democracy.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill) — I was fascinated by the remarks of the honourable member for Thomastown. There was such a sense of *deja vu* about them that I felt I was welcoming old friends back again. I had heard it all before.

Mr Batchelor — Because you have abused it all before!

Mr RICHARDSON — Back in the days when my party was in opposition and the honourable member for Thomastown was busily designing how-to-vote cards I think I may even have used some of the arguments in similar speeches. If they were not the same arguments they were arguments with simple variations on them. I thank the honourable member for the compliment he has paid me in using those portions of my previous speeches he has extracted and recycled.

I remind the house that was back in the days when this institution reeled beneath the blows of the Labor Party in government, a Labor Party that disgraced itself and the state. It brought Victoria to its knees. It brought the state into disrepute and finally the people rose up and cast Labor out — and quite

rightly, too; it was thoroughly deserved. Look at what has been left to take over from them! All the good ones have been kicked out and now we are left with the honourable member for Thomastown and the current leadership of the Labor Party.

No wonder they are coming up with designs to make this component of the house unworkable. That is the proposition that has been put forward. The whole idea of sessional orders is to make the house workable and to provide good order. If the opposition behaved responsibly it would not be necessary to have sessional orders of the kind that have been introduced. To ensure that the house can function, at the beginning of each sitting week it has been necessary to establish a program that must be closed off and completed by a certain time each week. Because the opposition has demonstrated its desire to make the house totally unworkable the government has been forced to introduce a sessional order that will provide for the progress of legislation through the house while maintaining the capacity for proper debate.

In essence, it has bounced the ball in the court of the opposition by saying at the beginning of each sitting week, 'Here is the program to be completed at the end of the week. How you handle it is up to you'. They are such dodoes that they fiddle and muck around with trivia, waste as much time as possible and then bleat when the provisions of the sessional orders come into play at the end of the sitting week. They say, 'We haven't had any time to debate these things'. The reason there is not sufficient debate is because time and again the opposition — led incompetently by the Leader of the Opposition, and when he is not here even less competently by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and, when he is not here, which is most of the time, by the honourable member for Thomastown, the great designer — bleats and wastes as much time as possible. When the sessional orders come into play they say they were not given enough time. The opposition wants to make the house unworkable.

To give a degree of respectability to each proposition the honourable member for Thomastown — and I understand his grabbing at every opportunity for respectability — extracts from a report of a Standing Orders Committee some recommendations that were made in a report presented to this place in 1992. The honourable member for Thomastown is using a selective process. He has chosen judiciously for his purpose, but there is a certain bias attached to the approach he has taken. It should be remembered that the then

Standing Orders Committee produced recommendations that were found wanting and have been the subject of careful consideration by the house since 1992. In fact, the house has demonstrated a reluctance to adopt the proposals contained in the report. It is curious given that reluctance that the honourable member for Thomastown should attempt to impose some of those recommendations on the house.

I have never agreed with some of the proposals. For example, amendment 2(c) states:

@INDENT1 = A member asking a question must not offer argument or an opinion on the matter; or give facts or names of persons, except those strictly necessary to explain the question.

Amendment 2(d) immediately contradicts the previous amendment. It states:

When a member gives facts or names — —

The thinking is already muddled at that stage. I have always had some difficulty with that proposition, which was dear to the heart and mind of former Speaker Coghill. One can see his imprint upon the provision because it goes on to say:

Where the matter is of sufficient importance, the Speaker may require prima facie proof of accuracy.

I have difficulty with that proposition, but former Speaker Coghill had no difficulty with it, which is probably why I had difficulty with Speaker Coghill. It seems contradictory because the presumption has always been that a member is asking a question because the answer is not known and he or she is wanting to receive an answer that will provide information or facts. There is a contradiction in the proposal that there can be a provision of facts in the asking of a question, because by definition if a member does not know the answer he will not have the facts to present.

The contradiction is then compounded by the proposal that where some facts are given, which should not be given in the first place, the honourable member is responsible for the accuracy of those facts. However, if a member does not know the answers, how can he or she know whether the facts that are given, which he or she is not allowed to give, are accurate? The silliness of the proposition grows and grows rather like a mole.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr RICHARDSON — I am always grateful to my colleagues for providing assistance at times like this. I know they are here to help; I have always been grateful for their help over many years. The proposition contained in the proposed amendment fails in logic because it is silly. It is a child of former Speaker Coghill. I am not sure whether it is a son or daughter, but the proposition has always been silly.

There was a claim of a connection between Speaker Coghill's view and some obscure reference in the records of Westminster. I have looked at those records and found they relied on a strange event that occurred during the 19th century relating to a Reuters correspondent and the provision of a telegram which related to the activities of a dervish pasha in the Middle East. I am not going to provide the house with the story grain by grain because it is as extensive as the Sahara. The connection drawn by Speaker Coghill between that incident relating to the Reuters correspondent and Westminster is bizarre.

As one proceeds through the proposals contained in the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown, the scene becomes even more bizarre. Everything is tied up in the desire of the opposition to make this house unworkable. Let me put it clearly on the record that the proposed sessional orders as outlined by the Leader of the House are designed to make this house workable. The proposed sessional orders are the same as those which were shown in the last Parliament to have been workable and necessary because of the activities of the opposition during that Parliament.

I have much pleasure in supporting the proposals put to the house by the Leader of the House, and I urge all members to regard the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown with the contempt they deserve.

Mr DOLLIS (Richmond) — I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to the chair that you now occupy.

Will we have another extraordinary four years? It is now 11.40 p.m., and again we start on this nonsense! The honourable member for Forest Hill talked about a dervish pasha appearing before the Standing Orders Committee. The story became taller, and as time went by I thought the government member may have moved from the Middle East back to Australia, and even to this state! What did his contribution have to do with a debate on standing orders?

I will not take an extraordinary amount of time on my contribution because we are almost approaching silly time in this serious debate. The honourable member for Thomastown has proposed fair and equitable amendments which, if passed, would make the business of this house the subject of serious debate.

The aim of the opposition is simple and straightforward: to restore the essential role of this Parliament as an entity separate from the executive arm of government.

Basically, we are talking about the supremacy of Parliament over the executive government. Our ideas go to the very heart of Westminster democracy. None of the contributions from this government has dealt with those matters. Why would any government with a large majority be frightened? Its majority makes it comfortable. Why should we make Parliament a rubber stamp? This place is meant to function not as a forum for executive government but as a forum for the people through their elected representatives.

This executive is meant to be accountable to Parliament, but the proposed sessional orders would result in the reverse effect, that basically Parliament would become accountable to the executive.

I need not remind this house of the report of the Fitzgerald inquiry into corruption in Queensland. It devoted a full chapter to the breakdown in the relationship between the executive arm of government and Parliament in that state. Without wasting too much time I point out that it would be somewhat useful if the honourable member for Mordialloc particularly were to read that section; perhaps even he could understand the simplicity of the argument put by Fitzgerald. That argument is relevant and pertinent to this debate, but I suppose it would be too much to ask the honourable member to take seriously any argument that would make this place more accountable, that would give our minority an opportunity to debate and keep this government accountable, and that would ensure that Victorians had a voice in questioning the legitimacy of many of the propositions put forward by the government.

If the government were serious about reform it would accept the motion of the opposition. It will not alter the facts: the election has been held, the government has again been installed and you, Mr Deputy Speaker, will occupy that great chair for

the next four years — with, I should add, the full support of the opposition.

The sessional orders must make some sense if we are to function properly. You, Mr Deputy Speaker, would agree that the authority of the Speaker in the last Parliament was drastically reduced. Why? Simply because this government did not allow Mr Speaker to act as an independent Chair nor basically to be the impartial umpire that this place requires. Towards the end of the last Parliament we had the farce of the government pretending that the position of Speaker attracted some independence. Against all odds, Mr Speaker Delzoppo tried valiantly to fight.

The opposition's suggested amendments to the proposed sessional orders aim to achieve a more responsive and accountable question time. They would allow more time for opposition business and more opportunities for backbenchers to raise issues through the shifting of the grievance debates from Wednesdays to Thursdays, the introduction of 90-second statements, and the allowing of an extension of time on the adjournment debate when a member's time has been unreasonably infringed.

The government should allow this place to conduct fair debate. It should give the opposition an opportunity to question ministerial responsibility to Parliament, which seems to have been lost because of the rulings of former Speakers about answers to questions, and especially relating to the need for ministers to have written scripts.

Our proposition is simple and straightforward.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr DOLLIS — The honourable member for Forest Hill is back to his old form: don't bother about debate or logic, just adopt sheer abuse — which is thrown around at every opportunity! No wonder this government does not want to change the sessional orders! Why should sessional orders be changed? Because the honourable member for Forest Hill may have to become more accountable to this place, as this government will be asked to become answerable for the business of the house. Is it a crime to argue that the Speaker ought to be given independence and an opportunity to be a fair and impartial umpire? What argument can the honourable member for Forest Hill mount on that point? Is it a crime, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr DOLLIS — I wouldn't dare to be nasty to the honourable member for Forest Hill. He knows that I hold him in very high regard outside this place. However, in this place things do alter.

Now, back to the debate. As I was saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Westminster system of government is seen to be considerably diluted — especially in this Parliament, as a result of particular decisions and rulings made by previous Speakers in this place. We have seen the independence of Parliament thrown out the window.

I ask the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party what is the matter with the amendments that have been proposed? Why is the government frightened of simple, straightforward debate here? Why is the government frightened of having grievances on a Thursday instead of a Wednesday? What about giving the opposition a bit of time to discuss its business on a Wednesday? Why do we want it on a Thursday? Very simple and straightforward: we do not get too many opportunities, so that lovely Wednesday morning is a time we rather cherish. We do not particularly like the government attempting to take that very little time away from us. So it would make considerable sense if we moved grievances to Thursdays. What difference would it make to the government, if it was interested in fair and reasonable debate in this place?

Mr Kilgour — Why didn't you do it when you were in government?

Mr DOLLIS — There is another bit of logic. Let me answer the honourable member, who seems to like the logic of certain words the Premier used recently.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has been extremely tolerant of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He should come back to the matter before the Chair and try to ignore interjections from across the chamber — which are disorderly, I might add.

Mr DOLLIS — I stand corrected, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying in reply to the honourable member's lovely interjection at this late hour, let me use the words of the Premier when he was attempting to correct a wrong: two wrongs do not make a right. If we have failed in the past to basically make the sessional orders — —

Mr Gude — We waited all this time for that!

Mr DOLLIS — You waited all this time for that, did you? What about giving a bit of leadership and making certain that the rules that apply in this house are fair and equitable? You wouldn't be frightened of a bit of debate here and there, would you, Mr Deputy Speaker — a bit of colour and movement, especially as we approach the hour of midnight, when we hear impossible things that come out of the mouths of certain members.

What I am saying is that what we are moving here is fair and equitable. It aims to restore the essential role of Parliament as a separate entity from the executive arm of government. It aims to make the executive arm of government answerable to Parliament, not the other way around. It aims to give the opposition and the newly elected Independent member an opportunity to debate the business before this house. It aims to introduce some logic so that business before the house is debated in such a way that everyone gets a chance to take part.

If this government is interested in making this Parliament the supreme decision-making body in this state it will accept the reasonable proposition put by the honourable member for Thomastown.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I have listened with some interest to the honourable member for Thomastown and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I find it very difficult to equate the argument they are advancing on the amendment to the motion moved by the Leader of the House with my experience in this place between 1985 and 1992.

I well remember the equitable and fair-minded speakerships of Speakers Edmunds and Coghill. I well remember the equitable behaviour of leaders of the house like Tom Roper, as they dealt it out to the then opposition day after day and railroaded this Parliament to achieve what they wanted to achieve.

Then of course came the 1992 election of this government, whose members believed it was probably fair and reasonable that the sessional orders they put in place be the same as those that applied during the time of the previous Labor government. To our dismay, as most of us can recall, during 1992 and into 1993 we had a display from the opposition that showed that its members certainly knew their way around the sessional orders and the standing orders. Most members will recall the long sittings that regularly went into the early hours of the morning. Most members will recall the day when the house met at 2 o'clock on Friday and rose for the week some 24 hours later, having sat for

longer than 24 hours because of the disruptive tactics of the opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr COOPER — There was no reason other than the disruptive tactics of the opposition. It was determined by the government that the business of the duly elected government was being disrupted, so new sessional orders were brought in. But the interesting thing is that they were brought in during the last Parliament, despite the bleats of the opposition and all the talk about democracy that arose at that time. I found very interesting the debate that took place during the last Parliament when sessional orders the same as these were introduced — the chatter and the rattlings from the opposition about democracy. That was the last bastion of the scoundrels who sat on the opposition benches: they started to talk about democracy.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr COOPER — During the 10 years they were in power they made no attempt to give the opposition a fair go. We then brought in sessional orders that were the same as the sessional orders in place in the House of Representatives in Canberra. Guess who was in government in Canberra at the time? For 13 years the House of Representatives was able to get by on these sessional orders under a Labor government. Did we hear any protests from any of these people opposite about that? Not a word. So we have hypocrisy with a capital H at work here night. We have it in big numbers.

I say to the opposition: if you are going to use smart-alec tactics, if you are going to use all the forms of the house available to you, then you shall reap as you sow. That is exactly what opposition members got. They got it during the last Parliament. Because they used disruptive tactics, they got what they put into this Parliament. They got it back, and they can only blame themselves. If they think we are so stupid as to swallow the line that has been put tonight by the honourable member for Thomastown and backed up by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, they had better think again.

On 30 March this government was re-elected to do some work on behalf of the people of Victoria and it is not about to be disrupted by a 29-member rump that got saddled by a bunch of safe seats around the state. The 58 members of the coalition are going to get on with the job they were elected to do, and they are going to do it under the sessional orders that

were put forward by the Leader of the House tonight.

The opposition should start producing policies and thinking positively about Parliament and it should stop being a disruptive rabble, which is why it was disintegrated at the last state election. It is about time we and the people of Victoria got a decent opposition. I am afraid that tonight we have seen and heard more of what we were presented with between 1992 and 1996. This opposition is a disgrace to the Parliament and to the great party it purports to represent.

Mr COLE (Melbourne) — Before I begin I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on achieving your office yet again.

It is always great to follow the honourable member for Mornington; I feel moderate when I do, which is unusual for me. It seems he endorses everything we have said. He is saying, 'We've got a few people and you're a minority so why worry about you? We don't have to have debates on anything. We won, you lost and that's it, end of story. Let us move on to the next one'.

Let us recall the years when the present government was in opposition and the number of times the guillotine was used. It was around 11 or 12 times, and only during budget debates after about 23 hours of debate. We have heard plaintive cries about democracy, but in fact there was democracy in the upper house. If we, the government, did not give the opposition the debate it wanted here it would not let the legislation through the upper house. It is arrant nonsense for members of the present government to suggest that as an oppressed minority it did not receive the opportunity for adequate debate. We talk now about the abuse of rules and regulations, but I recall sitting until 3.00 a.m. or 4.00 a.m. to debate the Royal Botanic Gardens Bill while it was dragged out. We started doing that when we were moved into opposition because that is the way the sessional orders were drafted and agreed to by previous governments.

The most important point is that this government controls the upper house in an unfettered and ruthless fashion. It has introduced legislation that has not been properly debated in this house because we have the world-famous 4.30 p.m. rule: if a bill is not done by 4.30 p.m. on Thursday there is no debate and it goes through. I am sure the honourable member for Wangaratta or wherever — —

Mr Jasper — Murray Valley! Haven't you ever heard of that?

Mr COLE — No. I went to Wangaratta the other day and missed Murray Valley. I do not know what happened. There have been cries about a lack of democracy, and that is exactly what this is. We cannot allow the situation where major bills receive no debate in this house to continue. About seven or eight bills a week do not get debated because on Tuesday the Leader of the House says, 'We have 10 bills that have to be through by 4.30 p.m. on Thursday. On top of that we are having a ministerial statement and another economic statement to say how marvellous we are'. Then there is a blue after question time because the Premier has decided to carry on like a clown yet again! We just have to sit back and cop it, and then we get only 1 hour of debate on important education and privatisation bills.

The best example of this was the Melbourne City Link Bill, which was two feet thick. We had 6 hours to debate what was a crucial issue for Victoria. I resent the government's cries that it copped a bad deal when it was in opposition, because it did not. It was in control of the upper house and there was adequate debate of all bills. Rarely was the guillotine applied. It was applied only after 23 hours of budget debate. Now the most oppressive rules are imposed on a minority party, and that is totally unacceptable.

The honourable member for Niddrie mentioned a Bjelke-Petersen style of government, and that is what we have now; that is what this Parliament is. The contribution by the honourable member for Mornington is a good example. He always gets carried away at the end. You just sit there and wait for the little gems. He said, 'You're small, we're big, we've got power. Separation of powers means we've got it and you haven't. We can do what we like and you can all go hopping. Forget about the community out there. The 48 per cent of them do not matter because we have the strongest group and we will do what we like'. Boy, this government certainly does! It does not matter what issues are up for debate; it says, 'You will not get it unless we want to do it'.

I support the suggestion made by the honourable member for Thomastown that questions without notice may be asked for 1 hour each sitting day. There is an important reason for that point. If we were to ask the Premier whether he was corrupt he would take 2 hours to answer and we would not get a yes or no. There is no such thing as a simple answer from that guy. More importantly, when a

dorothy dixer is asked it is never simple. The question will be something like, 'What have you done for the Victorian economy to make it as great as it is today?'. We all know that is based on an absolute lie, but government members ask questions like that anyway. Then the Premier proceeds to spend half of question time answering one question, which is a dorothy dixer, while we are left waiting to ask important questions.

We see the strategy. When Bill McGrath was the agriculture minister we knew when the government was in trouble because it would send in the nightwatchman for half an hour. We would be sitting there waiting to ask a probing question to take the rabble apart but we would not be able to because the minister would be talking about the problems he had created in the bush. That is why people voted against the government up there. I think there was a swing of about 10 per cent in Shepparton, and Mildura got wiped out altogether! That is what has been happening at question time, and there should be a change in that situation.

The next point states that the Speaker:

may require the language of a question to be changed if it seems to him or her that it is unbecoming or is in breach of the standing orders or conventions of the house.

The sort of violence the Premier does to the English language is disgraceful. It is very bad, and he ought to be pulled up for it on a regular basis. It is shocking. You cannot understand what he is talking about. He is frequently grammatically incorrect. Once he referred to Madam Speaker as 'You, Sir, Acting Madam Speaker'.

This is an important point and I personally would support change, but it is not happening. It really is unacceptable. You cannot have a sentence that goes on for an hour. It is not a good idea.

I should like to say that there has never been a more important time for this Parliament to seek respect. The government has a sizeable majority and has done well at elections, so if ever there were a time for scrutiny, that time is now. The honourable member for Mornington, the Premier and other honourable members treat this place as an absolute joke by rushing things through, and that cannot be allowed to continue.

If you happen to stand up and object to what is going on for 10 minutes or for half an hour, they say,

'Oh, you're just wasting your time'. It is not their time, it is not the Parliament's time, it is our time we are wasting because we get up — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr COLE — The honourable member for Tullamarine says I am wasting time at the moment. Am I? I am trying to point out quite a legitimate issue with respect to debate and the time that I want to get to debate issues for my electorate. The fact is that under this government the Parliament will not sit much, and when it does, the legislative program will be truncated.

I also want to make the point, given that I was on the joint parliamentary review committee in 1992, that what has happened to that joint committee really is a disgrace. It has been used by the Premier as a method to give out patronage; nine committees all went to Liberals. There was no suggestion that they be reviewed and look at issues that we, as a Parliament, should be addressing — no, no! It was all decided by the Premier — and perhaps one or two other members of the Liberal Party. But there is no doubt that the *raison d'être* behind it was to ensure there were enough spots for people to be put into, to placate them so we would not have a revolt in the background, or alternatively, to ensure that the unfortunates who did not get to be ministers — unlike the honourable member for Warrandyte — had either a Parliament secretaryship or a committee chair.

Mr Honeywood interjected.

Mr COLE — There is nothing wrong with a career structure, but unfortunately the career structure for parliamentary committees was usually on the way down, not on the way up. They were giving positions to their mates to whom they could not give a ministry. They gave them committee chairs and they created committees that were, quite frankly, absolutely useless. They changed the names around a little bit, but in substance they did not do what they should have done.

We should have had equity. A true parliamentary committee system should have Labor members and Liberal members sharing the chairs, as was the case when Labor was in government. That would show the bipartisan approach we seek with committees. Unfortunately, the whole process has been perverted by the Premier, who is using the parliamentary system to aid his system, to aid his problems, to make sure that people are satisfied within that.

I finish with these final comments. I believe the 4.30 p.m. rule is a disgrace. If people in the community were aware that it was occurring, they would be appalled. It is totally unnecessary.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — From the outset I must say that I was extremely disappointed with the contribution by the honourable member for Melbourne, whom I have had a great regard for, and the sorts of arguments he put forward pleading the case that we should look realistically at changes which would give more time, and some of the other points that he raised.

I want to take him back in history a little. I admit that he put a pleading case to us. It was, I suppose, a compelling case — he would think it was. But let us take it in its real terms and in the context of what we are trying to do within Parliament. The honourable member for Melbourne should go back in history to look at what has happened in previous parliaments.

I have been in Parliament a fairly long time now; I go back to the late 1970s until 1982, when Victoria had a Liberal government, and then from 1982 to 1992, when it had a Labor government. Now it has a coalition government that is trying to get things done, and is getting things done, and we have a more workable Parliament — not perfect, but certainly more workable — than we have ever had before.

It is a load of hypocrisy for the honourable member for Melbourne to come into this house and support the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown, because he has not taken into account what Labor government members did from 1982 to 1992. They are the ones who really made a mockery of the Parliament. They were not looking at democracy at all. They should have been trying to operate the Parliament more effectively.

You should recall contributions of the former member for Reservoir, Mr Simmonds, in the late hours. On one occasion, when we were debating a workers compensation bill I think he went for a record 3 or 4 hours — from about 1.00 a.m. until 4.00 or 5.00 a.m. If he had been a realist he would have come back and said, 'I will make a contribution and then allow somebody else to make a contribution'. On that occasion it might have been better to have finished debate at a reasonable hour and come back the next day to again debate the issue. But that was not to be the case. Those members who stand in this house and say we should change the current situation need to look at the record.

I support the comments made by the honourable member for Melbourne that we should get sensibility into the debate. I do not disagree with that at all. That is what the government has been trying to do — to have sensible hours and sensible contributions from members of Parliament so that we can be more accountable for and sensible about how the Parliament is being operated.

I listened with great interest to the initial contribution from the honourable member for Thomastown, which was supported by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The contribution of the honourable member for Thomastown seemed to be a compelling case and it seemed to make sense. But you need to put it in the total context.

The sessional orders moved by the government are designed to enable Parliament to keep sensible hours so that we do not sit for extended periods. Many of us who have been here for a long time remember very long hours of sitting in the past. We do not want to return to those types of sittings.

What happens now enables better discussion between the government and the opposition, with members saying, 'What do we need to debate this week? What bills does the government need?'. Then it is up to the government — and the opposition — to decide on the hours to debate the most important bills, without debate on some frivolous or minor bill going on for hours and hours, with speaker after speaker repeating what a previous speaker said, perhaps in some different context.

The opposition should get back to reality, and say, 'This is an important bill; let us talk to the government and ask for extended time in which to debate it'. I am sure if it went to the Leader of the House with a sensible argument, the Leader of the House would say, 'I will respond to that'. But the government has a legislative program which it has to put into place. How can it put it into place if it is frustrated by the opposition?

I have been on both sides of the house and I know how the Parliament is operated by governments and how oppositions respond. Right now the government is trying to arrange more sensible hours, and to allow a situation where the government and the opposition can come together and credibly discuss what bills will be debated, and get a better perception from the outside public. We talk about the Westminster system and the operation of a democratic Parliament, but unless we can work together to create a better image for the outside

public, we will lose the credibility that we are trying to gain.

I will look at the sorts of issues that were raised by the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown. He talked about question time. The honourable member for Melbourne talked about government ministers giving long answers to questions. That was absolute hypocrisy. I go back to the mid-1980s when John Cain and other members of the Labor Party in government extended answers so that the number of questions in question time was restricted.

On the subject of grievances, the grievance debate has been brought back to a Wednesday. I can remember when the grievance debate was on a Thursday. Surely we can have a discussion on that. The opposition should be saying, 'We will discuss it with the government' and come back to the government and say, 'We have reasonable reasons to put forward for changing to what we think will allow a better operation of the grievance debate'.

As to the adjournment debate, the member for Thomastown suggests that 3 minutes is too short. Many of us who have been here a while remember when we were given 5 minutes to present an issue in the adjournment debate, but by general consensus that has been changed to 3 minutes. Opposition and government members would agree that 3 minutes should be enough time to put forward an issue in the adjournment debate. It has been effective because it provides a unique opportunity for more members to speak on the adjournment debate. Let us look at the position and continue with the 3-minute limit on the adjournment debate.

If the member for Thomastown and members of the opposition have concrete arguments to put forward they should take them to the Standing Orders Committee. Let us work together as a team to have a Parliament that operates more effectively. All members of Parliament would agree with that. In the final analysis it is the government of the day that must set the agenda; it has to decide what matters will be debated in a given week and what issues will be brought forward. It is incumbent on the opposition to be able to argue that and put forward what should be realistic changes.

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr JASPER — I respond to the interjection made by the member for Thomastown. The arguments and issues you brought forward do not carry much

weight. If the opposition wants to talk about the broad context let it bring those issues to the Standing Orders Committee; let us take it through the proper process. You will probably get a better response in that way than you would by bringing the matter up and extending the first sitting day when really that is not what any of us want.

I suggest the opposition should drop its amendment and support the motion on sessional orders that has been moved by the Leader of the House. Let us abide by that motion and try to achieve a more effective Parliament; let us try to use more hours to achieve a balance between the government's legislative program and allowing the opposition time to respond to the issues raised. That can be put into a proper context, but not through the amendments to the sessional orders proposed by the member for Thomastown.

I have listened to a great deal of debate on the more effective operation of Parliament. I hope we will hear a debate during this session of Parliament on changes that will make Parliament more effective. I would respond to that as a member of the Standing Orders Committee, but let us make sure we are able to do it constructively and in a way that the government will be able to accept and respond to. We will never reach a perfect position. We will always have the position where governments are seen to respond to the issues that are being raised within the Parliament itself.

I have been on both sides of the house and have seen a range of governments in Victoria. I know the difficulties involved in trying to achieve an effective balance between government and opposition.

I strongly support the sessional orders that have been put forward by the Leader of the House. If the opposition wants to go forward, let it do so properly so we get responses that will make us a more efficient Parliament today and in the future.

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — The member for Murray Valley made some sensible suggestions, but in looking to the past, as he invited us to do to give us a benchmark for this argument, he ought to reflect on what occurred a few years ago, in 1992. At that time the Premier, in congratulating the Speaker on his election, referred to parliamentary reform as something to be considered with due seriousness and in a bipartisan way. That almost anticipates the remarks and the suggestion of the member for Murray Valley. But what did the government do in response to those sentiments? Was any heed taken

of the principles enunciated by the Premier? Has there been any recognition of the principles and suggestions just offered by the member for Murray Valley? No. The government imposes the sessional orders. No amendments are considered; none is contemplated during debate. No recognition is given to the merits of the proposals put forward.

The proposals put forward by the opposition are sensible and specific. Unlike the claim of the member for Murray Valley, they are not to do with the length of sitting days and the length of debates. They are about the rights of members, the rights of the opposition and the rights of minority parties in this place.

The member for Murray Valley also suggested that not only should there be a bipartisan approach, there should also be a reference to the Standing Orders Committee. The propositions that have come from the opposition are the results of the deliberations of the Standing Orders Committee in its unanimously agreed recommendations to the Parliament in 1992.

One might have thought that there could even have been some merit in the suggestion to refer these matters again to the Standing Orders Committee, but what sort of recognition, what sort of credence, what sort of influence or role does this government give to the Standing Orders Committee? How often did it meet in the last Parliament? How many reports did it present? Was the government even game to refer these matters or anything like them back to a discussion between the parties? No, Mr Speaker: the government imposes the sessional orders and we either like it or lump it.

The clearest manifestation of that attitude we have seen tonight was made by the member for Mornington. The government has its program: get on board or get out of the way. The government uses the Parliament as part of the executive implementation of its program. The Parliament is not protected by the government, and despite the unanimity, the bipartisanship and the sensibility of the proposals put forward by the opposition tonight, it is clear from the government spokespeople that there is going to be no recognition, no contemplation that these changes might be made.

There is a wider significance to all of this, and many of the speakers on this side have referred to it. It is quite clear that despite the split of the two-party preferred vote in Victoria being something like 53 per cent to 47 per cent, the government is going to

use its parliamentary majority to impose its standing orders and ram through its program and not protect the rights of the minority in this Parliament.

The Standing Orders Committee's report and its recommendations to the Parliament were obviously the product of a Parliament where the numbers were a lot closer and there was some need, given the closeness of those numbers and the unpredictability of election outcomes at that time, for agreements to be made about the rights of each party in this Parliament. But those days have long been forgotten. Certainly the members of the Standing Orders Committee have shown no sign of either remembering their role or sticking up for the propositions that they then supported.

In referring to some of the specific proposals and the commonsense that they represent, the first one that I mention is the grievance debate and 90-second statements.

Quite simply, the opposition's proposal seeks to guarantee that a grievance debate occurs. At present the sessional orders provide that a grievance debate is a gift from the government to Parliament. I note it is going even further tonight: the foreshadowed motion on televising Parliament seems to suggest that parliamentary proceedings can be televised, except for the grievance debate. The government seems to draw this barrier around grievances and say that not only will it not provide grievance debates as of right but it will certainly seek to prevent them from receiving maximum exposure.

One would have thought guaranteeing a grievance debate was an essential part of ensuring the rights of the minority parties and the rights of members in this place. Advice has been given to the opposition that there will be no grievance debate during the autumn session — so the government has decided not to bestow that gift on the opposition. Also, apparently if the opposition behaves itself, there might be a compensatory extra grievance debate in the spring session. So much for the principles of the Westminster system and the primacy of Parliament!

I would have thought the practice of allowing for 90-second statements, which operates so successfully in the federal Parliament and which was endorsed and recommended by the Standing Orders Committee, was also a sound proposition. It would enable backbenchers, members of minority parties and independents to make brief statements. It is a sensible suggestion. It would take a total of some 15 minutes at a time and would not

dramatically extend the sitting times of Parliament. It would be just another opportunity for the community's views to be represented in this place.

Another sensible proposition is to allow the rights of members to be protected during the adjournment debate. It is well known in this place that some members have perhaps not perfected but spent a lot of time concentrating on the task of disrupting other members during their contributions to the adjournment debate.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MILDENHALL — The honourable member for Tullamarine makes the point well. He interjects yet again when he is not in his seat. He would be one of the prime offenders.

We are not talking about a significant extension of time. All we are talking about is protecting the rights of members and enabling contributions to be put fairly. The rider to the Speaker extending the time allowed to a member on the adjournment debate is 'only if the Speaker is of the opinion that a member's rights have been unreasonably infringed'. There are frequent interruptions during adjournment debates and the rights of contributors are frequently infringed.

The propositions about question time are also sensible. I would have thought that either of the main propositions the opposition has put would go some way towards improving the effectiveness of question time. We are having five bob each way on this one: we are seeking to have some constraints placed on the filibustering of ministers and a requirement that their remarks be reasonably succinct and directly relevant.

Even if we could not achieve that, the extension of question time to 1 hour is reasonable. It seems to be the standard in other jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions it is up to 1 hour and 15 minutes and in most it is 1 hour. Why does Victoria have only 45 minutes or 30 minutes? The Leader of the House in particular has often been heard talking about benchmarks and Australian-best practice. A casual glance around other jurisdictions would reveal that 1 hour is a reasonable minimum for question time and represents the best practice in upholding the rights of the minorities.

These propositions are essentially about protecting the rights of minority parties and the individual rights of members of Parliament. They have been

discussed in a bipartisan way in some depth at a committee level. They were debated again in 1992. Despite the rhetoric of government members about parliamentary reform and bipartisanship, the government's failure to support these amendments again demonstrates its determination to ram the sessional orders through Parliament and in that way not take the opportunity of initiating sensible parliamentary reform and a sensible way of protecting the rights of minority parties and individual members.

Mr A. F. PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I shall speak briefly against the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown. The first section suggests that there be an extension of question time to 1 hour on each sitting day. It seems to me nonsense to suggest that there is not enough time in the day to get the day's business done and that we need to extend question time when, invariably, the questions that are required to be asked are asked in three sitting days.

It was suggested that the average number of questions asked in a question time was 6.1. I suggest that towards the end of the session it is much closer to 8 questions per question time, which is in fact a great improvement on the number of questions asked in question time during the period of the previous Labor government.

The second proposition provides that the Speaker may require the language of a question to be changed. Standing order no. 97 states:

No member shall use offensive words against either house of Parliament; nor against any statute, unless for the purpose of moving for its repeal.

Therefore, the provision is already covered by that standing order.

The next point in the amendments is that a member asking a question must not offer argument or an opinion on any matter. The Leader of the Opposition would be flat out trying to ask a question if he were unable to do that. In fact, almost every question the Leader of the Opposition asks contains some degree of explanation or argument in support of the question. Many members in this house would have difficulty asking questions under those circumstances, but none more so than the Leader of the Opposition.

The substance of proposed subparagraph 4(d), which recommends that a member should give facts

or names where that member is responsible for the accuracy of those facts or names, is, as was said earlier, the case now. No member should bring anything before the house unless he or she believes it to be accurate. To suggest that a matter is of such importance that it requires prime facie proof of accuracy brings into total disrespect anybody's argument for coming before the house, because the Speaker will be faced with great difficulty in determining what should be provided to prove prime facie proof of accuracy.

Proposed subparagraph (e) suggests that a minister's answer to a query must be relevant and reasonably succinct. Again, that is already covered by the standing orders and, therefore, the amendment is not needed. Standing order 99 says that no member shall digress from the subject matter of any question under discussion, which certainly covers that issue. My last point relates to amendment no. 5, which states that:

the Speaker may extend the time allowed to a member on the motion 'That the house do now adjourn' but only if the Speaker is of the opinion that a member's rights have been unreasonably infringed.

I agree with the intent of that amendment because at the moment members' rights can be abused. If the amendment could overcome that problem I would support it, but to amend the motion by giving the Speaker the ability to allow extra time could mean that the time allowed for the adjournment debate could go on indefinitely, certainly to the point of 15 or 20 minutes being spent on one issue if continuous points of order are raised. Therefore, although I agree with the substance of the amendment, I suggest that perhaps the member for Thomastown come up with a different means of achieving the same ends. That would certainly lead to the betterment of debate in the house.

House divided on amendments:

Ayes, 26

Andrianopoulos, Mr	Haermeyer, Mr
Baker, Mr	Hamilton, Mr
Batchelor, Mr	Hulls, Mr
Bracks, Mr	Kosky, Ms
Brumby, Mr	Langdon, Mr
Cameron, Mr	Lim, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Campbell, Ms	Loney, Mr
Carli, Mr	Maddigan, Mrs
Cole, Mr	Micallef, Mr
Cunningham, Mr	Mildenhall, Mr
Dollis, Mr	Pandazopoulos, Mr

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

62

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

Garbutt, Ms
Gillett, Ms

Seitz, Mr (*Teller*)
Thwaites, Mr

Noes, 50

Andrighetto, Mr
Ashley, Mr
Brown, Mr
Burke, Ms
Clark, Mr
Coleman, Mr
Cooper, Mr
Dean, Dr
Dixon, Mr (*Teller*)
Doyle, Mr
Elliott, Mrs
Finn, Mr
Gude, Mr
Honeywood, Mr
Jasper, Mr
Jenkins, Mr
John, Mr
Kilgour, Mr
Lean, Mr
Leigh, Mr
Lupton, Mr
McArthur, Mr
McCall, Ms
McGill, Mrs
McGrath, Mr J.F.

McGrath, Mr W.D.
McLellan, Mr
MacLellan, Mr
Maughan, Mr
Napthine, Dr
Paterson, Mr
Perrin, Mr
Pescott, Mr
Peulich, Mrs
Phillips, Mr
Plowman, Mr A.F.
Reynolds, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Rowe, Mr
Ryan, Mr
Shardey, Ms
Smith, Mr E.R.
Smith, Mr I.W.
Spry, Mr
Tehan, Mrs
Thompson, Mr
Traynor, Mr (*Teller*)
Treasure, Mr
Wade, Mrs
Wells, Mr

historical or research purposes subject to the approval of the Speaker and on such terms and conditions as he or she may determine; and

- (d) access to material presented to any committee on a confidential basis not be permitted in respect of —
 - (i) in-camera evidence;
 - (ii) personal records less than 75 years old; or
 - (iii) all other material less than 30 years old.

As honourable members might recollect, in May 1994 the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution authorising the transfer to the Public Record Office of all joint parliamentary committee records in excess of four years old which have not been tabled in Parliament, subject to a variety of conditions. In August 1983 the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution authorising the transfer to the Keeper of Public Records of all documents which were laid before any select committee of this house more than 75 years ago and which have not been tabled in the house, subject to a variety of conditions.

In May 1994 the house resolved:

That:

- (a) this house authorises the transfer to the Public Record Office of all joint parliamentary committee records in excess of four years old which have not been tabled in the Parliament, subject to the condition that they remain the property of the Parliament;
- (b) subject to paragraph (d), access to such documents be granted only on the joint authority of the Presiding Officers or their nominated delegates;
- (c) reproduction or publication of the whole or any part of the documents be permitted for educational, historical or research purposes subject to the approval of the Presiding Officers and on such terms and conditions as they may determine; and
- (d) access to material presented to any committee on a confidential basis not be permitted —
 - (i) in respect of in-camera evidence and personal records less than 75 years old; or
 - (ii) in respect of all other material less than 30 years old.

The Legislative Assembly has a number of select committee records which require to be transferred to the Public Record Office and which are significantly less than 75 years old. It is, therefore, deemed sensible for the house to pass a resolution similar to

Amendments negatived.

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Select committee records

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

That the resolution of the house of 17 August 1983 concerning the transfer of select committee documents be read and rescinded and that —

- (a) this house authorises the transfer to the Public Record Office of all select committee records of the Legislative Assembly in excess of four years old which have not been tabled in the Parliament, subject to the condition that they remain the property of the Parliament;
- (b) subject to paragraph (d), access to such documents be granted only on the authority of the Speaker or his or her nominated delegates;
- (c) reproduction or publication of the whole or any part of the documents be permitted for educational,

the 1994 resolution in relation to joint parliamentary committee records to allow the records in question to be transferred to the Public Record Office.

To avoid any confusion between the motion I have just moved and the resolution of August 1983, which authorised the transfer to the Public Record Office only of records more than 75 years old and required Mr Speaker to consult with the Printing Committee to authorise in respect of any select committee record access, reproduction or publication for educational or historical purposes, it is proposed to rescind the 1983 resolution and adopt the motion before the house.

The government endorses the proposed changes and commends the motion to the house.

Motion agreed to.

Membership

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

That —

Community Development Committee

- (a) Ms Campbell, Mr Finn, Mr Leigh, Mrs Peulich and Mr Seitz be members of the Community Development Committee;

Crime Prevention Committee

- (b) Mr Haermeyer, Mr Kilgour, Mr Micallef, Mr Rowe, Mr Traynor and Mrs Wilson be members of the Crime Prevention Committee;

Economic Development Committee

- (c) Mr Batchelor, Mr Jenkins, Mr Leighton, Mr Lim, Mrs McGill and Mr Treasure be members of the Economic Development Committee;

Environment and Natural Resources Committee

- (d) Ms Garbutt, Mr Lupton, Mrs Maddigan, Mr Pandazopoulos, Mr Perrin and Mr Spry be members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee;

Law Reform Committee

- (e) Mr Andrighetto, Mr Cole, Mr Loney, Mr Maughan, Mr Paterson, Mr Perton and Mr Thwaites be members of the Law Reform Committee;

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

- (f) Mr Bracks, Mr Hulls, Mr McArthur, Mr Sheehan, Mr Steggall and Mr Wells be members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee;

Road Safety Committee

- (g) Mr Baker, Mr Cunningham, Mr Langdon, Mr McLellan and Mr Richardson be members of the Road Safety Committee; and

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

- (h) Mr Carli, Mr Cameron, Ms Gillett, Mr A. F. Plowman and Mr Thompson be members of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

Privileges Committee

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon complaints of breach of privilege referred to it by the house; such committee to consist of Mr Cooper, Mr Hulls, Mr Maclellan, Mr Micallef, Mr Perton, Mr Ryan, Mr Sheehan, Mr E. R. Smith and Mr Thwaites and that the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records; to sit on days on which the house does not meet and to move from place to place; four to be the quorum.

Standing Orders Committee

That a select committee be appointed to consider and report upon the standing orders of the house, such committee to consist of Mr Speaker, Mr Baker, Mr Batchelor, Mr Cunningham, Mr Jasper, Mr Leigh and Mr Richardson and that the committee have leave to sit on days on which the house does not meet; five to be the quorum.

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENT

Assembly Officers

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that in accordance with the powers vested in the Speaker my predecessor nominated Mr Raymond William Purdey, the Assistant Clerk and Clerk of Committees, to be Deputy Clerk; Mr Marcus Leonard Bromley, the Serjeant-at-Arms, to be Assistant Clerk and Clerk of Committees, and

Mr Geoffrey Herbert Westcott, the Executive Officer of the Road Safety Committee, to be the Serjeant-at-Arms.

The Governor in Council has been pleased to make the appointments in accordance with the said nominations.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr GUDE (Minister for Education).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Community residential units: fire safety

Mr THWAITES (Albert Park) — The matter I direct to the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services concerns the safety of accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities. As the minister said earlier this evening, on 8 April there was a tragic fire at Kew Cottages. I place on record my sympathy for and extend condolences to the families of all concerned, including the families of the other residents of Kew Cottages and the staff. I also acknowledge the heroic work of the staff in saving many residents who might otherwise have perished in that terrible fire.

It is most important that we not allow such an event to occur in any other institutional place of residence. For that reason I ask the minister to consider setting up an independent board to inquire into the care and safety of residents in accommodation services for the intellectually disabled. Unless we have an independent inquiry I fear that the government will seek to brush under the carpet the sorts of problems that can lead to safety concerns and, indeed, to tragedy.

After the fire the parents of residents of Kew Cottages raised many concerns about the cuts the government had made to services at Kew and at other institutions. The president of the Kew Cottages and St Nicholas Parents Association, Mr Welchman, said that if staffing levels had not been cut to the extent that they had, more staff would have been available to help carry the victims out more quickly. That is a key issue that needs to be addressed by an independent inquiry.

I am greatly concerned that the same problem could arise in other units. Even today we have seen reports

that the government has failed to follow expert advice concerning safety in community residential units following a fire at a community residential unit in Ashwood. A recommendation was made that there be single keys for all the doors in those community residential units so that the residents could be removed quickly. Instead of following the recommendation it appears the government ignored it to save money. Those are the sorts of things that must be investigated by an independent inquiry.

Maternal and child health services: Knox

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services. I refer to the last day of last year's sittings, when on 23 November the member for Bundoora raised with the then Minister for Community Services some issues concerning maternal and child health services in Knox.

Some of her statements related to the supposedly devastating effects of cutting a range of children's services and raised further proposed changes. It was alleged that the figures relating to the maternal and child health service and preschools were wrong and that savage cuts had been made to their budgets. It was also alleged that the birth notices that were used to determine their budgets were incorrect. That was said despite the fact that the Save Our Children's Services organisation promised me that it would bring these new figures to my attention once it found the figures used by the City of Knox were incorrect. To date, that has not happened. I find it difficult to accept the fact that this particular group has furnished the honourable member for Bundoora with figures that cannot be substantiated.

There was also talk about increased maintenance fees and the fact that because two preschools had gone private they had to increase fees. That is a decision made by the two preschools — nobody else made the decision. The honourable member for Bundoora made other allegations about enrolment figures that are incorrect. Overall the statement made on 23 November left a great deal to be desired, particularly in accuracy.

The former minister would not have had an opportunity to research and address the particular statements made by the honourable member. Will the minister answer these particular allegations? The correct answers were not stated during the last election campaign, which is the typical form of the ALP. There is a great deal of scepticism about the figures used. Will the minister explain to the house

what the state of affairs was as at 23 November last year?

Rail: Rosanna crossing

Ms GARBUTT (Bundoora) — Mr Speaker, I am here to speak on behalf of my constituents, not to criticise them. I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place concerning safety at the Rosanna railway crossing. There have been several fatalities on that railway crossing, and the responses over the years by the government have included providing fencing and installing one set of automatically locking pedestrian gates. However, those measures have not gone anywhere near far enough and lives are at risk every day at that crossing, as well as at two other crossings frequently used by numerous constituents.

The Rosanna crossing is a very busy one with traffic, children and pedestrians. My constituents remain unsatisfied with the government's response, to such an extent that since the last Parliament I have received petitions signed by more than 1000 people requesting that something be done. The feeling has also spread into other electorates where people are dissatisfied with the government's response. They wish automatic locking pedestrian gates to be installed so that people do not risk their lives crossing after a train and then crossing in front of a second train, which is a familiar situation and has been the cause of several accidents.

I put this issue on the table tonight on the first day of sitting because I want to say to the government that we will not rest until it acts and the safety measures are put in place at that particular crossing. People will not be satisfied until further action is taken. They want extra gates to be put in place, and they will keep this matter before the government until appropriate action is taken.

SES: Lilydale

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to the operation of the Lilydale SES and the manning of SES units across the state. The SES provides a valuable emergency service, in particular to road accident victims in my electorate.

It is important that the SES has the ability to travel to the site of road accidents. The units in my area are equipped and authorised to provide a first response to the scene of road accidents. That early response is critical in the case of serious injuries. In order to

ensure they are able to get to the scene of the accident quickly SES units have been using red and blue flashing lights on their vehicles. A potential problem could arise shortly because of a move dating back to 1991 to a national standard for emergency vehicles. In itself, that is not a bad thing, but the mooted national standard provides that only emergency vehicles are authorised to carry red and blue flashing lights. The definition of emergency vehicles includes police, ambulance and fire brigade vehicles but not SES vehicles.

I seek clarification from the minister on whether this exclusion is a deliberate matter, whether it will continue and whether there is room for manoeuvre. As a consequence of the definition it is possible that SES vehicles will not be able to carry red and blue flashing lights when travelling to the scene of an accident and they will have to resort to amber flashing lights, which may lead to SES vehicles being mistaken for RACV vehicles, tow trucks or even escort vehicles for wide-bodied loads. In that case, other road users may not pull over to make way for SES vehicles and that may result in delays and unfortunate consequences for people involved in road accidents.

I ask the minister to clarify whether it is intended to exclude SES vehicles from the definition of emergency vehicle. If it is not I ask that consideration be given to providing some form of temporary relief and that consideration also be given to including SES vehicles under the definition of emergency vehicles.

Hospitals: proposed northern

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services who is the representative of the Minister for Health in the other place the status of the proposed northern hospital in Cooper Street, Epping. The community in my electorate would like to know what has happened to its 300-bed hospital! The proposal for the hospital has been on the drawing boards for many years and its construction has been eagerly awaited by the people in the northern suburbs. Its construction was set in motion by the former Labor government, which carried out the required investigation and study of health needs and arranged for the purchase of the land so that the proposal could be dealt with speedily.

During the previous Parliament all we saw was a number of cynical announcements that the project was imminent, but the former Minister for Health,

now the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, did nothing to progress the hospital during those four years. Construction should already have commenced but nothing has been done in spite of the fact that the former federal Labor government provided the necessary capital for the hospital to be constructed under arrangements that related to the transfer of the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

I am concerned that reports have been circulating in my electorate as recently as today suggesting that conflicts exist between the builder, the architect and the government and we face the real prospect that the construction of our much-needed northern hospital will be further delayed.

I seek an assurance from the government that there will be no further procrastination or undue delays. The hospital is desperately needed. The people of the outer northern suburbs need the hospital, and if the government does not spend the capital works funds that were provided by the former federal Labor government it will stand condemned!

I seek an absolute assurance from the minister that the proposed northern hospital will be built without further delay. Whatever they are, the current difficulties between the builder, the architect and the government should be resolved so that the people of the northern suburbs will have access to much-needed health resources.

Mordialloc RSL: former honorary secretary

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — I direct a serious matter to the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and request that he pass on to the Fraud Squad information that I will make available to him.

The matter concerns the former honorary secretary of the Mordialloc RSL, Mr Robert Paul Cox. I am told Mr Cox has a number of aliases which include Frederick George Creddin, Reginald Ferguson Kennedy, Paul Simpson, Paul Cox, Paul Walters, George Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Robert Paul Fry, and Dr Paul Napier. He has been investigated by the federal police for falsely wearing medals on Anzac Day, something he is not entitled to do. Although that is a federal offence, it is not a matter I wish to raise tonight.

Mr Cox was involved in a Mordialloc RSL project which sought — with support from the current Leader of the Opposition — a \$13 million guarantee

from the former Labor government. The RSL club is now in debt to the tune of \$2 million. One year some \$150 000 from Cadbury Schweppes was put into a trading account to show a profit for the club rather than a loss. Some \$55 000 of members' money has been taken from the club and I have called on the RSL to bail out those members.

Mr Cox is a conman of extraordinary degree — so much so that the Leader of the Opposition organised for him to see the former Assistant Treasurer in Canberra, Mr George Gear, to organise some money from him. Many people in the Mordialloc community have suffered because of the actions of this man. Because of his activities four old men face being sued by Cadbury Schweppes. The company wants the \$150 000 returned because it was supposed to be used for naming rights. What has happened is a con. Some \$100 000 is owed to Richmond and Bennison, a firm of solicitors; \$400 000 is owed to the City of Kingston; and the total amount owed is in the order of \$2 million.

These are serious matters. I will make available to the minister a number of documents which I have also made available to the RSL. I hope we can do something for the RSL members, some of whom have given \$10 000 to the RSL. Mr Cox has never been able to pay them interest on their money. These people cannot afford that sort of loss. These people have been conned. It demonstrates why the Leader of the Opposition is the Leader of the Opposition when he consistently attacked me in the past for not supporting this proposal. These are not my allegations. The information has been given to me by senior local government officials in my municipality. We have the world's most expensive hockey field out of it, and I ask the minister to take action —

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

Rail: workshops

Mr BRACKS (Williamstown) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Transport to the railway workshops, particularly those in Spotswood and Newport in my electorate, but my comments apply to all workshops that are managed under the auspices of the minister.

Last month I had the privilege of visiting the Spotswood railway workshop with the shadow Minister for Transport. I saw first hand the impressive work done in that workshop. I noted the voluntary productivity improvements that had

occurred with the management and staff of the workshop and the unparalleled pride in the workplace. What struck me was the efficiency, cleanliness and the pride that was associated with the work of about 200 people who were doing all the maintenance for the W-class trams, the Z-class trams and the electric and diesel rail motors in this state.

The key issue is that the workshops are under considerable threat. The work force is certainly concerned about its future due to the danger of outsourcing that may occur as early as this year or next year. I would like an assurance from the minister that he will take into account the productivity improvements that have occurred in these workplaces. I would like an assurance that he does not wear blinkers and assume that because the workshops are in the public sector they must be inefficient. I ask that he judge the workshops on their merits, which include productivity and efficiency gains and workplace improvements. The minister should stand those achievements up against any other private organisations that bid for work in the future.

Preference should not be given to the private sector. If the Minister for Transport takes his responsibilities seriously he will ensure that those things in his trust are working effectively and productively.

There is considerable potential for loss of employment in both the Newport and Spotswood workshops. In fact, approximately 700 people could lose their jobs to private contractors. That would mean the skills built up over many years would be lost, including skills developed in working on the W-class trains.

I ask the minister to think carefully before he moves headlong into sourcing out the work to the private sector.

Transport (Tow Truck Reform) Act

Mr McLELLAN (Frankston East) — I ask the Minister for Education, who is at the table, to direct to the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports difficulties with the Transport (Tow Truck Reform) Act. The intent of the act is to regulate tow trucks in the metropolitan area and, among other things, bring the towing industry into line so that the accident towing number is used as a job number throughout the metropolitan area.

I do not know of one insurance company that is complying with the regulations or the intent of the act. We all know that insurance companies are pillars of the community but that they will find a way to wriggle out of any regulation. Section 176A of the act requires insurance companies to check the allocation number. A number of provisions are set out in the section. For example, the act requires the owner of the vehicle or the owner's agent to confirm that an allocation number has been issued and that the car was not poached illegally from a roadway.

Insurance companies are not complying with the act because Section 176A(5) states:

If some or all of the details listed in subsections (2)(a) and (b) are wrong or missing from the duplicate copy of the authority to tow form, the owner of the vehicle (or the owner's agent) may ask the allocation centre to issue a new job number for the vehicle and to authorise the next rostered tow truck to tow the vehicle to a place specified by the owner (or agent).

If insurance companies were to comply with the intent of the act an illegally towed vehicle could be towed out of a workshop, but the workshop would not receive storage or towage costs or even do the repairs on that vehicle. I ask that the minister consider changing the word 'may' in subsection (5) to 'must' to compel insurance companies to comply with the act.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member cannot ask for changes in legislation during the adjournment debate. He may bring matters to the attention of the minister and ask him to address those matters.

Mr McLELLAN — Another section of the act that is being avoided is section 177C. Insurance agents are visiting storage yards and having cars removed from those yards. If an owner of a vehicle did that he or she would have to pay towage and storage costs on the spot, but insurance companies are not paying those costs.

Unemployment: western suburbs

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services, whom I congratulate on his promotion to a ministerial position. This is the earliest opportunity I have had to raise in the house this matter which concerns greatly many of my constituents.

I am concerned about the adverse publicity surrounding a group of youths from my area who were offered jobs by a group of television persons. That episode has had a negative effect on people in my area which already had a high unemployment rating, particularly among the young. The legacy of the story is that the young people in my electorate now say that when they apply for jobs they are considered unsuitable because of the area they live in. Many people have been knocked back for jobs in the region, particularly since this episode in the media.

As he is still relatively young, the minister should understand the difficulties being faced by the youth of today. Positive action should be taken by the minister with the daily community media in the western region to help young people raise their self-esteem. The minister should attempt to remove the stigma on parents and others in the electorate because people are saying the parents have not properly raised their children. The effect has been devastating.

Many people have raised this problem with me and have said that a negative effect has resulted from the television show. It is not the fault of the government but the legacy of the media episode has been devastating.

Will the minister establish services in the western suburbs to raise the self-esteem of youth in my electorate? I ask the minister to take that on board in his considerations leading to the introduction of the government's budget.

Health: prescription costs

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services who is the representative in this chamber of the Minister for Health a matter on behalf of a constituent, Mr John Purcell, who wishes to ascertain why he is required to pay twice as much in Victoria for a non-prescription schedule 3 pain-killing tablet such as mersyndol as he might otherwise be required to pay in Canberra or Burleigh Heads.

Mr Purcell has a heart valve condition and from time to time is required to take this pain-killing tablet to give some level of relief. By way of broader background, as the former manager of a company with a \$30 million turnover, Mr Purcell has been forced to apply his mind to commercial analyses. He

is a former Australian hockey player and a keen pilot.

It is more than a curiosity; in fact, he is staggered that, when he holidays in Burleigh Heads or drives through Canberra, he pays \$7 in Canberra and \$6.95 in Burleigh Heads if he needs to buy those tablets to alleviate his pain whereas he is forced to pay about \$15 in Melbourne.

He has raised the matter with some pharmacists in Melbourne. He has been advised that the reason for the differential is that Victorian pharmacies are required to register his name and address. In these days of template legislation, if it is necessary for the details to be taken in Victoria, why is that measure not applied in Canberra or Queensland? If it is not necessary Mr Purcell seeks a review by the minister of the method of charging for these non-prescription schedule 3 pain-killing tablets so he and other pain sufferers will not have to bear that additional impost in the future.

Responses

Dr NAPTHINE (Minister for Youth and Community Services) — The honourable member for Albert Park raised with me concerns about safety at residential services for the intellectually disabled. The issue is based on the tragedy on 8 April, when a number of people were unfortunately killed in a fire at Kew Residential Services. As the Premier said at the time, it was a double tragedy because those units at Kew Residential Services were only some weeks away from having a sprinkler system installed. The work to install the sprinkler system was delayed because of the unexpected finding of asbestos in the ceiling when the sprinkler system was being installed.

That installation of a sprinkler system at Kew Residential Services was the initiative of the former Minister for Community Services, the honourable member for Bendigo East, who in 1994 had the foresight to conduct a fire audit of all residential facilities where congregate care is provided to people with intellectual disability. I pay great credit to the honourable member for Bendigo East for undertaking that audit, which was conducted after many years of inattention.

Those on the opposite side of the house can look at their own record. They were in government in this state for more than 10 years. The residential facilities were there; the need for a sprinkler system and fire

protection in those areas was known, yet they did nothing.

When he was the responsible minister, the honourable member for Bendigo East undertook a proper fire audit, with professional people who made recommendations about improvements to fire safety. That fire audit concluded that a two to three-year program be instituted at residential facilities across the state to improve fire protection and outlined a program of work that had to be done. Putting fire protection systems into these sorts of facilities is not glamorous work; it is not the sort of work that gets headlines for a minister. But the honourable member for Bendigo East did it — he allocated the money, he spent the \$2 million, and he did it to improve the safety of residents. It is unfortunate that the tragedy occurred just as that system was being installed.

I inform the house tonight that I am advised that by 7 June all residential facilities at Kew Residential Services will have fully installed sprinkler systems.

The honourable member for Albert Park also raised concerns about staffing of those units. I am advised by the Department of Human Services that the night staffing and backup for those units has not been reduced in any way, shape or form since this government was first elected in October 1992.

The coroner is currently conducting an inquiry into the tragedy. He has very wide powers. He is autonomous and independent and has considerable expertise in the matter. The department is cooperating fully with the inquiry. It is appropriate that the coroner be allowed to do his work, and we await with great interest the outcome of his inquiry.

The honourable member also raised concerns about fire safety at community residential units. I am advised that all such units have fire detection equipment.

The honourable member for Thomastown raised the issue of the proposed northern hospital at Epping. I can assure him that if he reads the coalition health policy, which was released in March of this year, he will see that there was a policy announcement about the hospital at Epping, and I can also assure him that we on this side of the house keep our election promises.

The honourable member for Keilor raised the issue of youth unemployment in his area. The government's response to youth unemployment

comes on a number of fronts. The most important is to actually improve the economy of this state and improve opportunities for business so we can provide long-term job opportunities for young people in Victoria. We also have specific programs under the community-based employment scheme. My colleague the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training has specific programs for TAFE facilities, and in our most recent policy he announced additional programs for apprenticeships and training schemes to help young people in this state get ahead.

I also say to the honourable member for Keilor and others that young people have a responsibility to present themselves to employers in a way that will enhance their employment prospects. There are two sides to this coin, and young people should present themselves to employers in such a way that they appear as potentially useful employees.

The government will continue in its general programs to improve the economy of this state, and I am sure that will have a positive effect on employment in the Keilor area. The honourable member also raised specific issues about youth programs in that area. I will look at that on his behalf.

In his usual manner, with his usual concern for his constituents, whether they be groups or individuals, the honourable member for Sandringham, who is an active local member, has raised the issue of constituents paying for pharmaceuticals that are priced differently in other states and territories. The matter warrants some investigation, especially as the honourable member said the difference might be due to a Victorian administrative requirement. I will ask the Minister for Health to examine the matter and reply to the honourable member as soon as possible.

The honourable member for Knox mentioned maternal and child health services and general children's services in the Knox area. This matter relates to an issue raised by the honourable member for Bundoora during the previous Parliament, and I thank the honourable member for Knox for raising it tonight. He represents that breed of parliamentarian who is a tireless worker on behalf of families and children in his area, and it is easy to see why he was re-elected on 30 March with such significant support.

During the previous Parliament the honourable member for Bundoora raised the matter with the former health minister and made specific claims

ADJOURNMENT

70

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 14 May 1996

about the level of children's services in the Knox area. I have examined the matter raised by the honourable member for Bundoora, and I can report the following to the house. The City of Knox bases its budget for maternal and child health services on the number of births in the area — it goes up and down according to that number, which is reasonable and prudent.

I advise the house that on a statewide basis the government has not reduced funding for child and maternal health services in any way, shape or form. It put \$15 million into the program and in its policy it has announced that a further \$1.4 million will be provided for the program. Some 98 per cent of parents use it. It is an excellent program.

Preschool programs in the City of Knox have been based on actual enrolments. In 1995 no child in the area was on a waiting list for a preschool. The fees charged by preschools in Knox are the lowest in Victoria. The City of Knox provides a gap fee and certain committee fees to keep charges low for parents. The honourable member for Bundoora referred to a decision made by two preschools to become independent, but the decision was made by their own committees of management and was not initiated by the City of Knox.

My investigation suggests that, clearly, the commissioners have acted in a responsible and sound manner and worked to provide the highest quality of services to the people in the area, and I thank the honourable member for Knox for bringing it to the attention of the house.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — The honourable member for Monbulk raised on behalf of the State Emergency Service the provision of red and blue flashing lights, and I thank him for bringing the matter to my attention. A number of honourable members have received correspondence from their local SES controllers and units and the matter was raised with me when I was in Colac for the SES demonstration day involving road accident rescue training and competition. The competition was won by the Morwell SES, which will participate in the national championships later this year.

There has been road transport reform legislation, and my understanding is that the SES was not included as an emergency service in the reform. Therefore, its emergency vehicles are a fraction off being legal by carrying those red and blue lights.

Therefore, in the next day or so I will speak to the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place to ensure that the SES is given the necessary legislative support that it needs for successful and proper operation.

The honourable member for Mordialloc raised the matter of a Mr Cox and asked that information about Mr Cox passed on to me be referred to the fraud squad. The honourable member indicated that a number of aliases were used by Mr Cox. I say to the honourable member that I will pass that on tomorrow when I meet with the chief commissioner.

As the new Minister for Police and Emergency Services I say to the house that I will be involved in matters that relate to policy for the Victorian police department, but I give notice to the house that I will not become involved in or interfere with the operational side of the police force. I believe that is the jurisdiction of the chief commissioner. So I will not interfere and do favours in relation to how the police carry out their requirements and operate. I believe we have a very good police force here in Victoria, and if we make sure there is no politicising of it, it will continue to provide very good policing for the state.

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — The honourable member for Bundoora raised for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place the Rosanna rail line and a particular concern about pedestrian gates. I will draw that matter to the attention of the minister.

The honourable member for Williamstown raised for the attention of the Minister for Transport the Spotswood railway workshop and a particular concern about future prospective outsourcing. I will draw that matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport.

The honourable member for Frankston East raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place with respect to the Tow Truck Reform Bill. I will draw that matter to the attention of the minister.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1.43 a.m. (Wednesday).

PETITIONS

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

71

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

The SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Plowman) took the chair at 10.05 a.m. and read the prayer.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Springvale raised with me yesterday the question of details of a committee report being reported and released prior to its presentation to Parliament. I advise honourable members that the details of all reports to Parliament by parliamentary committees must remain confidential until they have been presented to Parliament. That applies to all committee members.

PETITIONS

The Clerk — I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Native animals and birds

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria arises from deep concern about the selling of Australian native animals to the general public as domestic pets, thus adversely affecting the welfare of the animals.

Your petitioners therefore pray for the enactment of legislation which prohibits the sale or use of any native animals as pets, other than captive bred birds.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Coleman (2945 signatures)

Residual current devices

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

This petition is for the mandatory fitting of RCDs, residual current devices (safety switch) to all rented residential premises.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Dr Dean (141 signatures)

Gas, electricity and water concessions

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The petition of certain residents of the state of Victoria requests:

That no reduction be made in concessions to low-income earners for gas, electricity and water charges.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mrs Wilson (681 signatures)

Crown Casino trading hours

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria respectfully sheweth:

Their total opposition to the proposal to allow Crown Casino to open on Christmas Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day (before 1.00 p.m.)

As Christmas Day and Good Friday are two of the most sacred days in Christendom, and Anzac Day a solemn secular day, we request the government to take action to ensure that Crown Casino does not open on those days.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr E. R. Smith (273 signatures)

Churchill North Primary School

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of Churchill North Primary School community sheweth:

The removal of our mod 4 portable classroom by the DSE. The parents, students and community friends of Churchill North Primary School object to the decision made by the Directorate of School Education to remove our mod 4 classroom. The decision to remove this portable has been done without consultation with the school community or the school council. This portable classroom was supplied to Churchill North Primary School with funds that were made available by the

State Electricity Commission of Victoria in good faith when the Yallourn township was closed.

Churchill North primary has developed this mod 4 into an information technology training room, which could be hired out to other schools to train teachers in new computer technology such as Kidmap, the Internet and other valuable computerised teaching programs. This facility is comparable to no other in the area, it is the only facility in the area that is totally separate from the rest of the school, giving unobstructed access by user groups at all times of the day or night without disturbance to students or the user group. This building has already been a success and praised by teachers and users from all areas of the community. The Churchill North school council and PA association have spent in excess of \$26 000 over the past two years upgrading the computer facilities to the finest in the area. All of this has been done in line with the federal government and state government policies on information technology. The practicality of moving out computers from the mod 4 to another classroom would be expensive and impractical for the purpose for which it has been developed, due to the open plan of our school buildings. Removal of this mod 4 building will disadvantage our school community in its struggle to retain student numbers and will destroy our long-term aims to become a major training resource for teachers and the community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the mod 4 be allowed to remain at Churchill North Primary School.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Hamilton (177 signatures)

Churchill Community Health Centre

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the citizens of Churchill and district sheweth plans to remove doctors and dentists from the Churchill Community Health Centre are strongly opposed by our community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Minister for Health guarantees that both medical and dental practitioners will be retained at Churchill Community Health service.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Hamilton (337 signatures)

Laid on table.

AUDITOR-GENERAL

Marketing government services

The SPEAKER presented special report no. 39, *Marketing government services: Are you being served?*

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 — Response of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management on action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee's Report on Problems in Victoria caused by Long-Billed Corellas, Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos and Galahs

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were laid upon the table by the Clerk pursuant to an order of the house dated 14 May 1996:

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 — Sections 50, 51 and 78(3) on 20 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G49, 14 December 1995*)

Australian Grand Prix (Further Amendment) Act 1995 — Parts 2, 3A and 3 on 7 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G48, 7 December 1995*)

Building Act 1993 — Section 7 on 1 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G50, 21 December 1995*)

Building (Amendment) Act 1995 — Section 20 on 1 May 1996 (*Gazette No. G15, 18 April 1996*)

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995 — Provisions of the Act, except Part 1 on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G50, 21 December 1995*)

Consumer Credit (Victoria) Act 1995 — Section 52 on 5 March 1996 (*Gazette No. G8, 29 February 1996*)

Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 — Parts 4, 5 and 8 on 1 April 1996. Remainder of Act on 1 May 1996 (*Gazette No. G8, 29 February 1996*)

Electricity Industry (Amendment) Act 1995 — Sections 37 and 38 on 28 November 1995 (*Gazette No. S116*, 28 November 1995)

Electricity Industry (Further Amendment) Act 1995 — Section 39 on 5 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G48*, 7 December 1995). All remaining provisions (except for Part 3 and section 39) on 28 November 1995 (*Gazette No. S116*, 28 November 1995). Part 3 on 12 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G49*, 14 December 1995)

Equal Opportunity Act 1995 — Remaining provisions except for sections 115 and 225 and Item 14 of Schedule 2 on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G50*, 21 December 1995)

Estate Agents (Amendment) Act 1994 — Section 14 on 1 June 1996 (*Gazette No. G17*, 2 May 1996)

Fisheries Act 1995 — Part 1 (except section 10); Part 5 (except Division 2); sections 95, 160(3) (a) and (b), 160(10) (b), and 163 on 25 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G3*, 25 January 1996). Section 160(10) (a) on 1 April 1996 (*Gazette No. S31*, 1 April 1996)

Government Employee Housing Authority (Repeal) Act 1995 — Part 3 on 29 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G6*, 15 February 1996)

Grain Handling and Storage Act 1995 — Section 39(2) on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. S124*, 19 December 1995)

Land Revocations (And Other Matters) Act 1995 — Section 11 and Schedule 5 on 25 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G3*, 25 January 1996)

Liquor Control (Further Amendment) Act 1995 — Part 4 on 5 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G48*, 7 December 1995). Sections 3 and 4 and Parts 2 and 3 on 20 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G7*, 22 February 1996)

Marcus Oldham College Act 1995 — Part 2 on 1 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G50*, 21 December 1995)

Melbourne City Link Act 1995 — Part 3 (other than sections 27 and 30) and Parts 5 and 6 on 14 December 1995 (*Gazette No. S120*, 14 December 1995). Section 27 and Schedule 3 on 4 April 1996 (*Gazette No. S32*, 2 April 1996)

Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1995 — Section 60 on 26 May 1996 (*Gazette No. G18*, 9 May 1996)

Mildura College Lands (Amendment) Act 1995 — Remaining provisions on 1 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G4*, 1 February 1996)

Miscellaneous Acts (Omnibus Amendments) Act 1995 — Parts 7, 16 and 17 on 1 April 1996 (*Gazette No. G11*, 21 March 1996). Part 2 on 30 April 1996 (*Gazette No. S45*, 30 April 1996)

National Parks (Yarra Ranges and Other Amendments) Act 1995 — Part 2; sections 46 and 47; and Schedule 1 on 15 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G49*, 14 December 1995)

Planning and Environment (Development Contributions) Act 1995 — Sections 3 and 5 on 30 November 1995 (*Gazette No. G47*, 30 November 1995)

Ports Acts (Amendment) Act 1995 — Sections 8, 12, 17, 19, 22 and 24 on 12 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G49*, 14 December 1995)

Port Services Act 1995 — Sections 93, 96-97, 99, 101-103, 105-125, 126(1), 126(3), 127-134, 135(2), 135(3), 135(16), 135(18), 135(19), 135(20), 136(2), 137-143, 144(7), 144(12), 144(14), 144(15), 145(2), 146-151, 152(14), 152(16), 152(17), 153(1), 169, 194, 195, 196-207 and Schedule 1 on 12 December 1995. Sections 18-63, 68-73, 75, 78-82, 94, 95, 104, 152(9), 155-165, 170-180 on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G49*, 14 December 1995). Sections 10-13, and 17 on 1 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G2*, 18 January 1996). Sections 14-16, 64-67, 74, 76-77, 83-92, 98, 100, 126(2), 135(1), 135(4), 135(6), 135(8), 135(10), 135(11), 135(14), 135(15), 144(2), 144(9), 144(11), 153(2), 154, 174, 181-193 on 1 March 1996 (*Gazette No. S14*, 27 February 1996)

Psychologists Registration Act 1987 — Remaining provisions on 30 December 1995 (*Gazette No. G50*, 21 December 1995)

Public Transport Competition Act 1995 — Sections 40-42 and 45-48 on 23 November 1995 (*Gazette No. G46*, 23 November 1995)

Racing (Amendment) Act 1995 — Section 11 on 19 December 1995. Part 2 on 1 March 1996 (*Gazette No. G49*, 14 December 1995). Revoke fixing of 1 March 1996 as the day on which Part 2 comes into operation (*Gazette No. G8*, 29 February 1996)

Road Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 1995 — Section 10 on 1 February 1996 (*Gazette No. G3*, 25 January 1996)

Road Transport Charges (Victoria) Act 1995 — Whole Act (except for sections 1 and 2 which are already in operation) on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G50*, 21 December 1995)

Trade Measurement Act 1995 — Sections 7-81 on 1 January 1996 (*Gazette No. G48*, 7 December 1995)

Trade Measurement (Administration) Act 1995 — Sections 7, 8, 10-28 on 1 January 1996. Section 27(2) on 1 April 1996 (*Gazette No. G48*, 7 December 1995)

Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995 — Remaining provisions on 30 April 1996 (*Gazette No. S45*, 30 April 1996).

STUDENT UNIONS

Mr HAMILTON (Morwell) — I move:

That this house condemns the government for its attack on student unions and calls on the government to repeal its voluntary student union legislation, which is discriminatory and designed to disempower students.

Given that this week is a week of student action it is most appropriate that this extremely important issue be debated today. The motion points to the contradiction in the government's rhetoric about its attitude to education. Page 5 of the Governor's speech, which was delivered yesterday, states:

The government is committed over this term to ensure our education system builds on the very real gains achieved since 1992.

Some honourable members on this side of the house question the veracity of that statement. The Governor's speech goes on:

Education will focus on providing young people with a sound knowledge base and inspire them to the pursuit of excellence. It will be flexible and will equip them, in every sense, for their adult lives.

The debate on voluntary student unionism will bring into focus the narrowness of that view and how far removed it is from what education is really about. At page 8 the Governor's speech again reveals the government's real view on education when it states:

The government has identified high technology as one of Victoria's major growth opportunities for the future and is advancing a program to put the entire state on-line by the year 2000.

It goes on to state:

The application of technology in this way will overcome the barrier of distance for Victorians. People

in all corners of the state will be able to click on to the information superhighway within just a few years ...

The context of those statements indicates the government's low level of understanding of education. Those statements show the government sees education as a purely utilitarian matter — as no more than a commodity. Attacks on education, such as the current federal government's threatened cuts, are forcing universities to start selling education as a commodity, yet that denies what universities and education in general are about.

Surely everyone knows education is about broadening the mind, pursuing knowledge and expanding horizons. The government deserves harsh condemnation for its implied utilitarian view of education as revealed in the Governor's speech and the government's legislation. I will address that matter in more detail shortly.

The Tertiary Education (Amendment) Bill was introduced on 28 April 1994 by the Minister for Education, who was then the Minister for Industry and Employment. It was not introduced by the then Minister for Education, and I wonder whether there was something in that fact — that is, it was seen not as an education bill but purely as a statement of ideology by the most ideologically driven government the state has ever had.

The debate on the Tertiary Education (Amendment) Bill provided a chance to hear from the new-right section of the government. I thought the honourable member for Malvern would have been a little more expansive in his view of education. He tried to defend the indefensible when he said the legislation was not an attack on students or democracy but was just providing freedom of choice. Since then dozens of commentators have expressed the view that the fears and implications Labor expressed in that debate have eventuated — and we will see more and more negative and disastrous impacts of the legislation as time goes on.

In that debate the honourable member for Malvern was followed by the honourable members for Bentleigh, Shepparton, Mooroolbark and Wantirna, all trying to defend the indefensible. One government member showed the lack of understanding of government members about education — that member never got involved in any student issues or extracurricular activities but went to university to learn. One may ask what the hell that member learnt! Perhaps that explains why that member joined the Liberal Party, the most

misnamed party in the world. The word 'liberal' used to mean something special, but these days it has lost its true meaning and is disgraced. Perhaps that lack of understanding of what happens at universities explains why that member also became a member of the government!

The Tertiary Education (Amendment) Act is claimed to make student unionism non-compulsory and non-prescriptive, yet in fact it proscribes organisations. It mirrors what happens in the ALP, which for years proscribed organisations such as the Democratic Labor Party and the National Civic Council as being non-decent organisations. The deliberate attack on student unionism and unions in the legislation will backfire on the government.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — The honourable member for Bentleigh does not understand one of the fundamental laws of physics — that is, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. And that will be the eventual outcome of this evil piece of legislation. This legislation is evil and does nothing more than indicate the government's absolute fear of unions. I am amazed that a government that claims to be so powerful and to be a can-do government should show its fear of what student unions can do. It is absolutely outrageous.

The Tertiary Education (Amendment) Act was the greatest con in the world. The government said it would make student unionism voluntary and told students they would not have to belong to a union. The necessary result of that for every post-secondary student in the state — —

Mr McArthur interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — It is good to see that some of them have a bit of conscience and at least feel a bit of guilt over it. The necessary result of the legislation was that students entering universities and TAFE colleges thought the payment of student levies would be voluntary.

Students have been paying levies or union fees in this state for ever and ever. The implication is that this great Liberal government, this progressive government, is saying, 'Well, you won't have to pay student fees'. I recall the days when I was at Melbourne University and the fee was about 80 pounds. It was difficult to raise that amount. Students have said, 'It's a great thing, we won't have to pay our student fees'. Some of the sleeping

Liberal members are awake this morning after a late night — they know that is not what happened. There was still a compulsory payment. In the way the government thinks, the way the ideology works, it cannot let students decide for themselves what they will do with this money; there must be an appointed body. It is no different from what the government did with local government — it destroyed the democracy of local government and said, 'We will appoint people to make decisions because they can't make decisions on their own'. This government does not believe in democracy. That is what it has done with student unions and student union fees.

It is pleasing to see that the honourable member for Bentleigh is sensitive to criticism because it shows there is feeling on that side — they go on forever trying to defend the indefensible.

This government, this all-seeing-all-wise government, says the compulsory fee can be used for certain things. The fees can be used to provide food and beverages and to provide meeting rooms but one is not allowed to meet for anything political. There is provision for sport and physical recreation and child care, regardless of whether one has children or not. The fees can be used for counselling — and one might need counselling after one has been bashed to death by this government! You can obtain legal advice — and if any government has taken away the legal rights of people in Victoria, it has been this government. You can have health care — and we all are pretty sick under this government. There is provision for housing, employment, visual arts, performing arts and audio and visual arts, providing one does not publish anything political in a student newspaper.

They are not allowed to spend money on unions. Government members should be collectively ashamed of themselves.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! We are two days into the sitting and we are starting to hit our straps. As I often say from the chair, a bit of good cross-chamber interjection is healthy debate but we have to note the measure of the level of that interjection across the chamber. I turn members' minds to that and will let it proceed, but if it goes the way it was going I will call a stop.

Mr HAMILTON — I thank you for the protection of the Chair. Indeed, the government wants to get rid of anyone who criticises it. You want to destroy anyone who criticises you! It will come back and

haunt you time and time again! They will even allow money to be spent debating, providing they do not debate anything political. One wonders whether even the mention of the word 'union' is political because the government is trying to get rid of that word also.

Academic support is acceptable. The money raised from the compulsory fees is collected and managed by the governing body of the university. It is no longer managed by the democratically elected student leaders. One wonders whether this is like the private school system where students are not allowed to decide anything. One wonders whether that is the case with some Liberal members — because they cannot think for themselves, they have to have the governing body tell them what to do. Do they sit quietly in the caucus room and let the Premier tell them what to do, or do they think for themselves sometimes? Do they believe university students can think for themselves?

The fees can also be used for personal and accident insurance for students, but they cannot be told anything about politics because the governing body is not allowed to spend money on politics or things deemed to be political. There can even be support for overseas students. And the governing body can punish and fine students.

All of those themes in this legislation are abhorrent to university students, but they are symptomatic of what has happened in every sphere of life under this government. This government does not believe we can have democracy in this place. The critics have to be destroyed. We have just had an election, and the honourable member for Niddrie in his first speech yesterday outlined the disgraceful litany of injustices that saw the Queensland government fall from grace. It took a while, but the evidence built up.

The same course is being followed by this government. The thing that sustains me when I get up each morning is that, as surely as night follows day, each day is one day closer to seeing the end of this government. Government members laugh — they cannot even follow simple logic. They are so brainwashed, so instilled with non-thinking, so unable to accept any criticism, that they do not understand even simple logic.

There will be a reaction to this evil legislation, this discrimination against students, this deliberate ideological attempt to destroy unions that have existed for hundreds of years. But they will go on for

hundreds of years and students will revolt. We are already seeing that.

In the latest addition of *Farrago*, one of those good student newspapers with a history of 100 years that will continue despite the attempt by this government to destroy it, an article by Andrew Giles in response to anti-union legislation says that it is typical of what we are seeing in this country. Coalition governments are introducing legislation to frighten them off. It is fear and loathing. This is what the reaction is. Government members, living in Australian society in 1996, should be ashamed of themselves. This question is asked in the article:

Should your student union justify its continued existence on the basis of the 'efficiency' it can offer the university in delivering certain (prescribed!) services?

That is what is happening to our universities.

A sad and dangerous event has occurred because universities are no longer places of learning in the pursuit of excellence or places where minds and horizons can be expanded. They are becoming sausage factories selling off bits of paper that, hopefully, will get jobs for students. That is the culture being fostered in universities by state and federal governments. They are told that they have to raise money and go out in the marketplace. It has been forgotten that the most important market in this country is not the economic market or those market forces that are driven by right-wing thinking but the social fabric that is developed by building together something new and invigorating. The government wants to get rid of that and turn universities into sausage factories.

In 1956 Melbourne University was known as The Shop. That colloquial term explains what it meant to some people. It was a place where you got a piece of paper, but with the paper came a job or a guarantee of one. Some of us had to sign up for our jobs guaranteeing that we would work in those jobs for three years before being able to do other things.

Things have changed, and one of the changes is the deliberate attempt by the government to destroy student democracy and activism. Is some long-held stigma in place? Some of the most active members of the government were student activists. Some federal government members were vigorous student activists during their early days, but despite that they still ended up in the Liberal Party! For heaven's sake, one ended up being the federal Treasurer! Another activist, Michael Kroger, is now a leading

light in the Liberal Party. Are those people frightened that the way they learned to work politically will mean that students of today will become politically active and will then challenge them? The suits will become greyer and greyer because the next generation of students will not have the opportunity to become politically active.

I cannot understand the government's attack on student unionism. It is impossible to understand because some of the most ultra-conservative, right-wing people I know were left-wing student activists when they were growing up. We might even see some of the right-wing ideologues become progressive!

In an article by Eli Greenblat in the same edition of *Farrago* he says:

Much about the way this state is run is wrong. Whether it be the environment, council issues, privatisation or taxes, the Kennett government has been about as tactful as a herd of bulls in a very small china shop.

He got the imagery right there! Believe you me, it will come back and haunt you as well! He continues:

So with the 'crash bang' of Jeff Kennett on the move, slowly a bit of our community seems to disappear. It's something that can't be measured by statistics or the bottom line of the balance sheet, but rather the feeling that Victoria has become a little colder and a little darker.

That is an astute comment by Eli Greenblat and is a good example of what appears in student newspapers. They are not necessarily filled with a great deal of political rhetoric or even political analysis, and every now and again they contain something that is worth pondering.

In another article in the same newspaper Matthew Gingold gives the Labor Party a decent whack as well as the Liberal Party:

You won't catch the Victorian media bagging Kennett any more ...

Look what happened last night on the television program *Today Tonight*. They thought they might be able to bag Kennett but they were wiped off! That is typical of what happens; that is the way the government operates. It gets stuck into its critics and does all sorts of things in an endeavour to silence its critics and stop criticism. The government has a

record that it builds on day by day and night by night.

I recommend that all honourable members should look at the wonderful new program on the ABC called *Mercury*. It is worth taping because it certainly shows that if you want to destroy an excellent newspaper, such as the *Sunday Age*, no matter how much you bag it it will come back to haunt you!

Matthew Gingold's article continues:

@INDENT1 = ... the tape of the phone conversation, the footage of the beauty contest and the cartoon are probably all in a box marked —

by the media as —

'financially damaging'. This is not just left-wing conspiracy theory: when the *Age* was about to publish some of the early anti-casino articles, Jeff, under the guise of saying that the *Age* was therefore not the right place to advertise the casino, threatened to remove hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of advertisements from the paper. Bully-boy tactics. Jeff Kennett is a snake — but he's a damn smart one (or at least his PR staff are). He's got the media and consequently the Victorian public over a barrel. No politician has ever exploited the media so effectively, or for so long. If you speak out against him he threatens to take away your money — (or if you're a student newspaper he actually does take away your money), and then he calls you a liar, and a 'low-brow journo' the very next time he gets near a microphone. Jeff, if you don't like the media ...

I will refrain from reading the rest of the article because of its colourful rhetoric.

Student newspapers are essential because they provide the opportunity to speak out. The government is not averse to publishing a few newspapers of its own. For example, a publication appears regularly in our state schools that is colloquially known as *Pravda*. Those connotations would be understood by most if not all honourable members. The *Education News* is circulated to our schools in all its glory at a cost of millions of dollars and it is designed to brainwash teachers and school communities about the wonderful things being done by the government. It does not criticise because you cannot criticise the government if you work for the Directorate of School Education because of TS140 — that is, teaching service order 140. If you dare criticise the government you will be up on a charge.

For heaven's sake, the government not only does not like criticism but legislates against it.

Teachers found guilty of the offence of standing up for their rights and those of their students are put on a charge because they dare to criticise. That is the situation under the Tertiary Education (Amendment) Act 1994. That is why the legislation should be amended. Student unions are not and never have been able to effect the outcome of any government. Their publications are important symbols of student unionism and their undertakings. They have always played an important part in the development of the culture of universities, and that is what the government wants to wipe out.

Student newspapers such as *Lot's Wife* and *Rabelais* are gone and *Farrago* is on the way out because of insidious legislation. That is what is occurring and that is what the legislation was designed to do, yet the government talks about freedom of choice!

University students have no choice other than to pay their student fees to universities which can allocate those funds for various things. Tertiary students in Western Australia changed the name of their representative organisation because the right-wing government in that state hated the word 'union'. It is ironic that conservative governments are supported by some of the most powerful unions in the country, such as the Australian Medical Association and various law institutes. Perhaps the Law Institute of Victoria is not as supportive of this government as it once was. That is good to see — I am pleased the legal profession is finally seeing the light.

Tertiary education has never been about the blotting paper access to education, and it never will be. Fortunately, Australian universities have traditionally built upon the differences in people and in their intellectual capacities. They have developed the capacities of people from all parts of the political spectrum.

I would understand the government's obsession — it is an obsessive government — with this matter if student unions had recently produced progressive, left-wing politicians. It is a shame they have not, and I do not know what has happened to the left. Student bodies were adopting right-wing policies when the voluntary student union legislation was being drafted. The left had died, but it has re-emerged in university and TAFE campuses.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — People think the honourable member for Tullamarine is a fool, and when he opens his mouth they know for sure!

Left-wing politics are re-emerging in our universities, which is the antithesis of what the government wanted to achieve through the legislation. It wanted to destroy left-wing unions in universities. That the left is re-emerging is a healthy sign, but it should not have occurred just because of the implementation of this over-the-top legislation.

I refer to an article in the *Age* of 13 May by Mike Richards entitled 'Student union law must go', which describes the legislation as 'a somewhat misguided law'. That is a kind way of describing evil legislation. The article states:

This was an issue about free association, the government argued at the time. Some more cynical observers saw it as an evident attempt by the government to limit the supposedly left-wing political activities of student unions against the coalition.

The effect has been quite different. It has reactivated left-wing politics in universities and has created a more active student body. We will now see some reactionary activity in universities and campuses, which have been fairly quiet during the past two decades with hardly any student protests. Indeed, eight university vice-chancellors warned the government that the legislation was stupid and misguided and would destroy an important culture in universities. Some of those vice-chancellors are not left-wing people; they are more likely to be ultra-conservative. They could see the writing on the wall because they know what is happening and is likely to happen in universities in the future. The article by Mike Richards further states:

The then vice-chancellor of Melbourne University, Professor David Penington, said the legislation was intrusive and absurd, and undermined university cultural life.

Professor David Penington is not a radical left-winger. In fact, he is a very conservative member of the community. The comments are an apt description of what is occurring in universities. The article continues:

How right he was. Indeed, there can be few things more pathetic than a state government feeling so threatened by student political activities that it has to pass a law saying that they can't spend their own money as they please.

Mr Doyle — Their own money as they please!

Mr HAMILTON — This is not taxpayers' money. Government members are hiding in the corner. In a feeble attempt to justify the legislation they claim it is voluntary. If the legislation was designed so students could make a voluntary contribution, the government would have ensured that universities did not continue to charge the same amount as the compulsory levy but allowed students to decide whether they wished to make a contribution.

There should be some honesty, integrity and intellectual merit in what the government says it is trying to do, but it did not have the intestinal fortitude to go that far. It is allowing the governing bodies of universities to collect the money from students who have to pay but is not allowing the democratically elected student representatives the right to decide how the money should be spent.

Mr Doyle interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — I hear the bleats from the honourable member for Malvern, but that is exactly what has happened, and that will be reinforced by students this week during a week of action throughout the country.

The article by Mike Richards goes on to say:

Mr Kennett's anti-democratic instincts and his intolerance of any opposition are well known and well documented ... Is this government of otherwise sensible middle-class politicians ...

One could argue whether this is a government of sensible middle-class politicians — that is itself a question. The article states:

Is this government of otherwise sensible middle-class politicians really so spooked by kids at university they want to be responsible for shutting down cultural outlets of significance only to their own campus audiences?

Those outlets are significant only to their own campuses. How often do we see the articles published in the student newspapers reprinted in the mass media? Very seldom.

Mr Doyle interjected.

Mr HAMILTON — That is something you would have known when you were a student. What did you learn from that?

This morning I spoke to one of the members of staff in this place who was outraged and saddened by what happens to any part of the media whose members dare to criticise the government. The person to whom I spoke came from Poland, from the red revolution in Eastern Europe, to escape the attacks on people — anybody who dared criticise the government was wiped out. The person was almost in tears on seeing in this country a reflection of what that person had fled from in Europe.

If that is the perception of an average person, you ought to start asking yourselves what is wrong? Are you so blind that you cannot see that this incessant attack on the media, this incessant attack on criticism of the government, is in fact a replica of the things you claim you hate so much? Are you producing another Soviet state under a Liberal guise? That is the impression that was given today by a member of the staff in this place, who saw what happened on television last night. Whether the report of why the *Today Tonight* program withdrew the story was correct or not, the implication was that the Fuhrer had come down and said, 'You can't run that story because it's critical of me'. That is a pretty sad commentary. You ought to hang your heads in shame. You ought to be absolutely ashamed that anybody could make that connection — because that is the image you have developed in less than four years. How dare you then claim to have some right to do it?

As a final comment on this very sad saga — and it is a sad saga when that perception exists, when criticism is banned, when the courts are closed to ordinary people, when the laws are changed and all those rights of free expression are extracted from the community by this government — Monday's *Age* included a letter from Piers Kelly, who happens to be an artist.

Mr Finn — What sort of artist?

Mr HAMILTON — One wonders about that sort of inane interjection. The letter begins with a reference to *Lot's Wife*, the former student newspaper at Monash University, and continues:

Lot's Wife has recently died an undignified and unnecessary death. After 33 years of publishing student work, the paper has been silenced by the Kennett government under its euphemistic voluntary student unionism legislation.

Make no mistake about it, there is nothing 'voluntary' about this legislation.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAMILTON — Read it! Read it! The letter goes on:

In fact, students enjoy less freedom than they ever did before. That is because the legislation dictates what the students are allowed to spend their money on (after all, they're too young to know what's good for them). No services deemed to be political —

by whom, one could ask as an aside —

in nature are allowed to be funded ...

Lot's Wife and other student newspapers that will soon be closed down are peculiar publications because the editors are democratically elected each year and the newspapers themselves are far more accessible than most —

that is, to their readership.

Before I close, I urge members of the government to read pages 1179 to 1181 of the report in *Hansard* of 1 June 1994 of what was said by one of the intellectual members of the government — I am pleased to say — in the upper house, the Honourable Ron Wells. His speech is worth reading, and it is important that you do read it.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAMILTON — You may laugh. You should not close your minds to anything that might be a little uplifting and right — but that would be typical. Dr Wells says, as reported at page 1179:

Universities are at the cutting edge of society and are one of the pillars that have protected society for generations. The fact that academics challenge ideas and mores and the patterns of society protects democratic societies and should be encouraged ...

Two principal contributions of the Anglo-Saxon world to humanity have been the philosophy of questioning and the development of parliamentary democracies.

These are the sorts of questions that were raised by an honourable member in another place in what was in total a very important speech. He goes on, at page 1181, to say:

I do not intend even to defend the value of student newspapers from a cultural viewpoint. I submit it is

beyond question and doubt that, after the freedom of the individual person's spirit, the print media is a major cultural instrument in a society, including a university society.

Yet the effect of your legislation has been to close down the newspapers!

Mr Doyle — You said *Farrago* would keep on going! That's what you said during your speech!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Let's not whip ourselves into too much energy and enthusiasm. I understand also that the honourable member for Morwell is attempting to close his contribution to the debate. I understand the honourable member for Malvern might have the next call, so I suggest he contain his enthusiasm — and that his colleagues do the same — and allow the honourable member for Morwell to round off.

Mr HAMILTON — It is proof of the old saying: there are none so blind as those who will not see. Because regardless of your process and the defence of the indefensible, the fact is that *Lot's Wife*, *Rabelais*, *Farrago* and probably another dozen student newspapers are closing. Why are they closing? Because it is a fact of life that you cannot produce newspapers without funds. When the funds, which are still compulsorily collected by the universities, are forbidden to be used in these exercises, the net result — whether you like it or not — is that the newspapers are being closed down. That is what happens. You can deny it and say it is all to do with freedom, but let's see a bit of freedom by letting student unions grow and develop.

Dr Wells said also:

It is necessary for universities to have student newspapers, magazines, club magazines, society newsletters and so forth. In my experience those desirable printed materials will not flourish and prosper as we need them to do if their availability is based entirely on the user-pays principle.

That is what your colleague in the upper house said. Read it and understand what he says. It is all right for you people with millions of dollars in the bank to say, 'The user pays — if they want it, they can pay'. What happens is that these poor users are paying and they still can't get it. If you can't get that through your thick heads it's time you opted out and went somewhere else. That's what ought to happen to you!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAMILTON — Dr Wells said:

There are so many other things in our society that would not flourish if we did not support them with taxpayers' funds. I have already mentioned some of them. I say the same of student print media. It is a desirable area of this state's life and justifiably deserves support.

So listen to what Dr Wells said. Read it and understand it, because at least one member of the government back on 1 June 1994 saw and succinctly stated what the problem is. He heralded what is happening and he made an intellectual analysis of what the end result will be.

Unless this government sees some light and withdraws this evil piece of legislation, we will continue to see a downcast trend and a loss of the really important things in this society. You can have the best balanced books in the world, but if you have lost your heart and soul you have achieved absolutely nothing. That is what you are about!

Mr HONEYWOOD (Minister for Tertiary Education and Training) — I would like to read to the honourable member, who, I am thankful, has just sat down, a very important and quotable quote:

No person should be required to join an association against his or her will.

Now they are not my words or the words of some loony philosophical front; they are the words of the United Nations.

That is the very reason why we on this side of the house are Liberal Party members: that we can come into this place with the right to have a conscience vote — something unknown on the Labor side of the world. We have come into this place with the right to have a free vote. We all know that over on that side you dare not vote against what your leader tells you. What happens? Compulsory expulsion — out the door! Is that freedom of association? Is that what underpins a democratic society? Not on your life!

In one of the most significant debates this Parliament will ever be faced with, the debate on the importance and use of drugs in society and what we should do about it, particularly with young people, what are we told? Mr Brumby will not allow the hacks on the other side to vote with any degree of conscience. Mr Brumby will not allow freedom of

association. You dare vote against Mr Brumby and you will be shown the door! We have only one seat up there at the moment for an Independent. We will have to find more.

The honourable member for Morwell should at least accept that Liberal Party members have free votes and a conscience vote and therefore know what we talk about when we refer to freedom of association. We have no quibble at all about the rights to have a student union; we have no quibble at all if some students want to get together and put out a sheet of information about life in general or life in particular. But what we do have a very strong quibble and a very strong philosophical concern about is a requirement, a law that used to exist under the former Labor regime that said: to be a student and to get enrolled for an education you have to pay a fee to prop up a student rag. I am sure all honourable members would agree that newspapers are a very important part of communication in this country and that we have some very high-quality publications.

Mr Cole — Name them.

Mr HONEYWOOD — I could name, I guess, the *Sunday Age* or some of those other favourites. But we have a wide variety of publications, so if they are not of a high quality, there is certainly a wide choice for people who want to read. But at the end of the day it is a choice: people make a decision about whether they will buy a publication based on whether they believe it will communicate to them a particular philosophy or particular information they desire to access. People will pay a price for that newspaper, and advertisers and sponsors will contribute to that.

However, for the past three decades or more in this state the Labor Party has been propping up a system with a compulsory levy that is used to pay for the publication of a newspaper that a very small minority of students on any campus read.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr HONEYWOOD — I invite the honourable member for Morwell to get out of the bunker and go to a few campuses. He will find piles and piles of waste paper, very expensive, usually not recyclable paper, sitting in the corner of student facilities not read or picked up because they are not seen to be relevant.

We heard a lot from the honourable member about newspapers. Did we hear anything about education?

Did we hear anything about quality of education and access to education? Did we hear anything about what student unions are allowed to supply or about that compulsory student fee — as he leaves in a hurry from the chamber — that we did not abolish? The fact is that students are still required to pay a student fee, but they are required to pay a student fee under the Tertiary Education (Amendment) Act for items that have direct benefit to the majority of students. I will cite section 12F(3) of that act, which lists a whole range of important services and activities of direct benefit to students. They include: food and beverages, meeting rooms, sports and physical recreation, child care, counselling, legal advice, health care, housing, employment, visual arts, debating, libraries and reading rooms, academic support, personal accident insurance for students, orientation information and support for overseas students. All of those underpin a compulsory student fee — and quite rightly so, because all of those services are part of the rich tapestry of university life.

At the end of the day it is drawing a long bow indeed to say that an extrapolation of that is that people should be forced to pay money towards a student publication. Heaven forbid! It is expensive enough these days to get an education without having to pay extra money for a newspaper or some other service that at best is an option, that at best is something that would be nice to support. Perhaps in better-off times there was money to throw at a number of publications rather than one particular publication. But at the end of the day the government has got it right. It has recognised the philosophy of freedom of association, which is not just a Liberal Party philosophy, but a United Nations one, and has underpinned that by specifically providing in legislation two years ago for a compulsory student fee and setting out a number of very important issues of direct benefit. I put to the honourable member for Bundoora, who is sitting at the table on the other side, that she would support —

Ms Garbutt interjected.

Mr HONEYWOOD — Child care is specifically allowed for in the legislation as a service that money from a compulsory student fee should be put towards.

I refer to the issue raised by the honourable member for Morwell that all we are concerned about on this side of the house is new technology and providing students with access to new technology. How

ridiculous it was to say that it deprived young people of an education! If the honourable member were in the chamber he would be able to hear me elucidate on the fact that last week I went to Portland and opened a video conferencing network which puts three campuses — not one — namely, Hamilton, Warrnambool and Portland, all on an interactive video network, whereby for the first time those institutes can offer courses that they have never been able to offer before due to lack of student numbers in any one particular geographical location. We sat there and heard an interactive lecture between three geographically isolated locations and campuses about how this is the way of the future. But the troglodytes, the people of the past over there, would have us believe that new technology is some danger or threat to students' education!

The fact is that new technology is already overcoming the very tyranny of distance — which Geoffrey Blainey has spoken about — that country and rural communities have been concerned about for years in so far as their students, in whatever age group, mature or young, have not been able to have access to the same educational opportunities as students in the city. But we heard a long diatribe from the honourable member for Morwell about the threat to education of new technology and what it will do to students' educational outcomes.

At the recent state election, what did we find? We found that it was the young people, in particular the student age group of undergraduates, who were getting the Liberal how-to-vote card and ignoring the Labor one. Why was that? Because they recognise the fact that this government is on about providing them with quality education, and irrespective of whether it be Schools of the Future, pathways between TAFE colleges into university, other dual recognition programs between schools and TAFEs, allowing for credit transfer, or freeing up the system, and giving maximum flexibility for training education opportunities, young people voted with their feet.

They voted for this government, whereas in the past we would have to acknowledge that young people tended to vote the other way. So we must have done something right to get the overwhelming vote from the 18 to 24-year-old age group, which, I might add, has been put at 46 per cent compared with the ALP's abysmal support of below 40 per cent. All members of the opposition should learn a lesson from that outcome.

I return to what freedom of association means. The government does not deny the right of a student newspaper to exist. In some cases there can be very healthy competition and debate. But at the end of the day, young people attending TAFE colleges and universities are doing so to get an education for a vocational outcome. I am sure they also go there for an education in life, and if they want to pay for a student newspaper for that process let them pay for it. However, they should not be forced or required to access or pay for something the vast majority of students say is no longer relevant to their campus lives, their ambitions or their particular reading interest. Most students would rather pick up and read the *Age*, the *Herald Sun* or some other publication, and they really believe the funding of student newspapers goes against the fundamental principles of freedom of association in which members on the government side of the house firmly believe.

The former Keating federal government passed legislation allowing for what it called SOS funding, but even federal Labor politicians had concerns. Simon Crean, for example, wrote to the Victorian Attorney-General pointing out that it was hardly a good idea for a student newspaper to provide shoplifting guides and articles on how to kill one's parents. He actually called on the Victorian Attorney-General to take action against those student newspapers. You really have to wonder about the situation when a federal Labor minister calls on a so-called extreme right-wing government to take action against student newspapers.

At the end of the day the Keating government provided funding to prop up student newspapers, but even then the student unions involved were not clever enough to access the money. Only two universities, Ballarat and Melbourne, bothered to apply. That is why the newspapers on the other campuses have closed down already. Melbourne University received \$1.2 million and Ballarat received \$117 000 in SOS funding, but the others could not be bothered applying. That is how concerned those university newspapers were about their survival and the students about their right to have money given to them compulsorily — they did not even bother to apply for the funding when Simon Crean and Kim Beazley caved in to the Trotskyite student union pressure that props up the ALP in parts of this country! When they said, 'Here's the money,' the student unions did not even bother to access it. That is the ultimate value of those newspapers in the wider community.

Other honourable members wish to contribute to the debate, so I shall not take up more time. The reason I and other members on this side of the house are Liberals is that, unlike those opposite, we have a free vote, we have a conscience vote, and we practise freedom of association.

Mr COLE (Melbourne) — I support the motion moved by the honourable member for Morwell. I do take exception to what the new Minister for Tertiary Education and Training has said, and I congratulate him on his elevation to that position and on his first speech in that important role. However, one has to distinguish between freedom of association pursuant to some United Nations covenant or declaration and the right to have funds directed to an association through a compulsory levy attached to a university. The two things are entirely different. When you go to university nobody says you have to join the ALP club or the Liberal club, but if you do you have to pay a fee, and invariably it is a compulsory levy that you cannot get out of paying no matter what you do. The situation the opposition puts is not that people should be forced to join those groups but that the compulsory levy, which is to be used for child care and other things, should provide for association as well.

One issue the minister did not even begin to address is that the matter was really none of the government's business. It should have got on with the job of governing the state. The minister got a few things completely wrong. I went to university in 1975 and that was the only year in my entire time at university that we had a federal Labor government rather than a Liberal government. At that time I always paid compulsory levies, and although I was an activist I was always involved in a political party, the Labor Party club — that is, I paid my fees each year and did no more.

It seems to me a bit incongruous to suggest that when Sir Robert Menzies was the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne and Rupert Hamer was the Premier of Victoria that they never even dreamed of introducing legislation as abhorrent as the 1994 act. That is the crucial point. As I see it, a true Liberal would not be the least bit concerned about the fact that political parties, along with other clubs at universities, get some funds. I do not care what the political party is, it is entitled to be funded. The most important point is that it should have been left to the university administration to determine those things.

Mr E. R. Smith interjected.

Mr COLE — The simple fact is that when it was in government for some 27 years in this state — and even under Sir Henry Bolte throughout the conscription campaign — the Liberal Party never dreamt of getting rid of the compulsory levy. That says something about how far we have moved in this state: we have moved so far to the right that this lot opposite is likely to do anything! This matter was none of the government's business; it should have been left strictly to the university administration.

I sometimes wonder whether it is right to compulsorily fund religious organisations, but I believe it is because they are clubs. Why do we draw a distinction between political and religious organisations? Why do the Catholic or Baptist fellowships receive funding when political parties do not? They are clubs and they are funded, but the government excludes political parties.

We do not make a big point about the religious issue, do we? The reason I do not make a big point about it is that it is fair enough: if people want to practise their religion they can do so, and if people want to practise their political beliefs they can do so. I don't draw a distinction between the chocolate appreciation league at the University of Melbourne, the ferret breeders club or a political club. In fact, there is a good comparison with the Liberal Party there!

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr COLE — I do not know whether it is with the chocolate lovers or the ferrets!

Why draw the distinction? The only reason the distinction is drawn is purely and totally political. When the government first introduced the legislation it said the payment of the fee would be voluntary. I suppose it had to be described as voluntary when you did not have to pay the compulsory fee if you did not want to, but the government back-pedalled at 3000 miles an hour on this issue — I do not know whether the minister remembers that — and said the fee had to be compulsory. Its argument should have stopped there because as soon as that was said it was no longer a voluntary scheme — it was compulsory. Not only did the government make the payment of the fee compulsory but it also decided where that compulsory levy would be spent at the University of Melbourne. The university council — on which I sit, by the way — did not decide where the levy would be spent because the government does not like Trotskyites getting money; it does not like the Labor

Party, Marxist groups and so on getting money. That is what it is all about — the government just does not like particular groups. It is prepared to have some groups, such as religious groups, being provided with funds from compulsory levies but not others. The minister will remember that the original proposition was for a voluntary levy, yet the government decided that it should be a compulsory levy and that the funds could be spent only in certain areas. That is a most compelling argument for allowing political groups to get money.

Parliament has three representatives on the council of the University of Melbourne. It is the job of university councils to decide these issues. I feel sure Sir Robert Menzies, who was Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, would be turning in his grave over the violation of the independence of universities. When Sir Rupert Hamer and Sir Henry Bolte were respectively Premier they did not introduce the type of legislation we are debating. It didn't concern them, but some current Liberal Party members have an ideologically based objection that violates the fundamental principle of the independence of universities.

University councils are responsible for these issues. It really comes down to one enormous value judgment and a gross act of discrimination against some political groups. As the honourable member for Morwell quite rightly pointed out, they are proscribed organisations — the government has proscribed them. The government has decided which groups will survive and which will not. It has chosen the political groups.

The opposition knows the government has chosen some political groups it does not want to survive because they are not of its political persuasion. Student activities at the University of Melbourne and most other universities have of late not been dominated by Liberal Party philosophy but by leftist groups. They are not of my persuasion, but I uphold their right to hand out how-to-vote cards against me. It is not our right to distinguish between sporting clubs, political clubs and religious groups. If the Catholic Fellowship is entitled to get funds if it gets 25 members, so is a political party.

Who do we blame if student newspapers are dying? *Farrago* is dying. The University of Melbourne council, of which I am a member, recently received a report stating that *Farrago* does not have enough money to keep going. The same situation applies to the newspaper at Monash University.

Mr Baker — Bernie Finn.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr COLE — He has heard about it; it was plastered all over Sunbury.

Mr Finn — We would be happy to buy it.

Mr COLE — It does not work like that. These newspapers cannot raise enough money through advertising. In any case, that is not their purpose. Their purpose is to deliver news in whatever way is possible. Although the two editors are elected each year, under the voluntary student union scheme the government is saying that that is just too bad and they have to go. The government is saying either that it wants to get rid of the papers or that they must survive without funds from the compulsory levy.

In retrospect, if we consider what *Farrago* did in opposing the Vietnam War we might say it was not such a bad idea for people at universities to be jumping up and down. Government members are all revisionists. They are against the Vietnam War now but back then they thought those on campuses who objected to it were all a pack of long-haired louts. It is reminiscent of Nuremberg! The truth is that *Farrago* led the charge. It was one of the first newspapers to oppose the Vietnam War. The government is now saying it wants to get rid of it.

We all know these newspapers cannot fund themselves and the government is getting rid of them by not allowing them the use of funds raised by compulsory levies. The government will give it to the chocolate appreciation group or the ferret breeders association but will not allow it to be used to support a paper like *Farrago*. If that is not government discriminating against a group it does not like, I do not know what is!

When it comes to revisionism nothing beats the attitude taken to Nelson Mandela. Australia was trading with South Africa when Mandela was locked up, and he fought against that. That is also what newspapers like *Farrago* are about — taking on issues which are not particularly popular and which most Liberal Party members do not hear about until they become popular. Like it or not, that is what the government's legislation is getting rid of!

It is all right for Liberal Party members to talk about advertising and so on, but the honourable member for Tullamarine knows *Farrago* cannot dip into the

Hudson Conway or casino barrel. The editors of *Farrago* cannot ask the casino for up to \$3 million for a campaign. It is all right for members of the Liberal Party, with its millions of dollars, to say they should get advertising, but it does not quite work like that. The introduction of the compulsory levy means we will be getting rid of the university newspapers that have fought for some of the most major causes in this country, such as the protest against the Vietnam War.

Mr Finn — Thirty-five years ago.

Mr COLE — If you want me to go through all the issues involved, I will do that. No-one wants to listen to reports of what is going on in Burma. You will never get advertising for that, yet that is what university newspapers are about. Universities should not be run on the basis of profit and loss statements; they are about learning, not about getting advertisements for newspapers. I do not know which university the honourable member for Tullamarine went to! They should be paid for by the students at large, and they were even under Liberal governments for 27 years in this state and a further 10 years under Labor. You would get rid of the *Sunday Age*, too, if you could legislate for it. Look what we copped from the *Herald Sun*! That is what it is about.

Once you put your toe in the water of deciding who can get access to a compulsory levy and who cannot by saying it is a political group, you have violated the fundamental principle of democracy, and you should not allow that to go ahead. You may not believe in what a person is saying, but you should fight for his or her right to say it. That does not apply here. The Premier says, 'No, I will cut them off'. What do they say about *Farrago* and *Lot's Wife* when they are gone?

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr COLE — We all know about John Stuart Mill — the honourable member for Ballarat East, a former policeman, said he arrested him once for smoking marijuana in Daylesford. That was the best we could get out of him on liberalism! I strongly believe a student's time at university should be a time in which to have freedom to enable the student to develop and discuss issues. To that end I think the criterion set down by the university clubs and administrations for the use of the voluntary levy was a good one. If you have sufficient members you can form a club and be funded proportionally. There was nothing wrong with that, except some people

said they did not like part of the voluntary levy going to a Trotskyite club. Others said they did not like part of the funds going to the Liberal Party. They might have had a blue about it, but in the end that was the only way of providing for these clubs and newspapers. They cannot be funded in any other way. If you say you are not giving them any money, you are sending them into political oblivion. The point is that it is not the government's right or responsibility to do that. That is what we have university councils for. If the government is going to interfere here now, will it interfere in curriculums and other things? The bottom line is that it is all totally political.

I understood it was originally proposed — I read back through the debates — that we were going to get rid of theatre at universities because it had the potential to be political. Sometimes university theatres have Bertolt Brecht and at other times they have Gilbert and Sullivan — the Premier could be the modern major-general! We consistently found that those theatres had terrible political ramifications. One might say that we did not want them either.

Also, what happens with the debating societies; what if they go beyond simply debating 'can you trust men with beards?'. They may have simple, straight-out political debates that are vicious. They might be dominated by Trotskyists who say that they will debate only what Trotsky said and go on forever.

Mr Baker interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has been tolerant with the honourable member for Sunshine. I ask him to contain his enthusiasm. He is the next speaker listed. If he continues to interject I may have to miss him when the time comes.

Mr COLE — The most important point is simply that it was none of the government's business; it was an ideological obsession by certain members of the government based on this principle of compulsion — that a person should not have to compulsorily fund these things. It was changed to voluntary and then went back to compulsion on the basis that the government would dictate who would get the money. That is scandalous and something I personally found offensive at the time. I put on notice, now that I am on the Melbourne University Council, that I will be fighting this and taking up the cause like never before. I will attempt to bring together as many groups as possible to highlight

how undemocratic this is, what a disaster it is and how disgraceful it is. It is purely ideological and runs counter to everything the Liberal governments in the past did. And most of all it is none of the government's business. I will be fighting hard against this because I believe it is the most offensive piece of legislation I have seen for some time.

The vice-chancellors have a view that should be listened to. All the vice-chancellors oppose this bill, including Professor Penington. I am sure they will continue to oppose the bill because they know the functions, facilities and needs of the universities and they know they cannot continue to work unless there is a compulsory levy. I never objected to paying the levy when I was at Melbourne University.

Mr Hamilton — We didn't have a choice, we had to pay.

Mr COLE — It did not worry me. I was not overblessed with finances when I was at university, but I utilised a lot of the resources, including the sporting facilities and some of the clubs. It is important those resources be made available. It is more important than ever before that university newspapers continue. The article on the shoplifting issue in the La Trobe University newspaper was, I believe, unacceptable. We would all agree that it should not have happened. I believe charges have been laid, which I think is an over-reaction, but what happened was wrong. Nonetheless, it happened. That is part of the freedom and sometimes the stupidity of university students. If we want 17 or 18-year-olds to be like us, then we are asking too much — not that we are not stupid at times, but in a different way.

The distinction between the compulsory and voluntary levy is crucial. Once it was decided that it was to be compulsory, that was it. It should have been up to the universities to decide procedures — leaving it to them to do it and not cutting across these issues. It is a situation that liberal thinkers of the John Stuart Mill type would condemn because it goes against liberalism.

Things do not always run your way. I had some Greens handing out pamphlets against me at the last election, some of whom were students. That is their right, and obviously the student bodies were supportive of the Greens. I cannot dispute that, and I certainly would not attempt to get rid of them. The opposition would cop as much political flack from various groups as the government would.

Political clubs and newspapers cannot thrive unless they have access to that compulsory levy. That is the truth of the matter, and I do not think it is any great loss of individual liberty if the compulsory levy goes to a political or religious club, provided it is done on exactly the same basis for them all. It should not be the government that decides to proscribe one set of groups or another.

The university culture should be free and run by the university council, and the government should leave it at that.

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — I am delighted to follow the honourable members for Morwell and Melbourne in this debate because they raise interesting points, although not always perhaps as clearly and logically expressed as the contributions from this side of the house.

First, the honourable member for Morwell espoused one of the great aims of our universities — he hit us with the truism that universities should equip students for their adult lives. That was what universities should do for students. In thinking about the subject of this debate I wondered what 'equipment' he was talking about. Is he talking about a right to use a subsidy? A right to use other people's money? A right to collectivism? It is not the right of universities to have a universal compulsory levy used for any purpose by an undemocratically elected minority. But is that the equipment the honourable member for Morwell was talking about?

There was a contradiction between the contributions of the honourable member for Morwell and the honourable member for Melbourne. The honourable member for Morwell said the *Farrago* newspaper would go on and on, but the honourable member for Melbourne tried to convince us that it would fold. The honourable member for Morwell also mentioned the example of *Lot's Wife*. I shall return in particular to *Lot's Wife* because it was announced that it cannot continue. I shall talk about student union board minutes and what they say about the funds available. We will find these matters instructive.

The minister eloquently put the freedom of association argument, which members of the opposition have shied away from, although in their heart of hearts they do not disagree with it. People like the honourable member for Sunshine believe the dinosaur no-ticket, no-start mentality must go — is gone — from our industrial relations landscape, and he would not wish to bring universities under the

historical ACTU umbrella of compulsory unionism. He would not do that because he is an intelligent man, but I am not so sure about his colleagues. This issue is a big problem for trade unions generally and it may be the problem with the honourable member for Morwell's argument. Trade unions generally do not want to be client responsive — they want some as-of-right community funding that can be used in any way they see fit regardless of the benefits and services provided to constituencies.

I do not have a problem with a compulsory levy. The honourable member for Melbourne tried to paint our political side black because we would go for neither a universal compulsory levy nor a completely voluntary levy. We do not accept his black paint.

We see the importance of the diversity of university life. Some ancillary functions are appropriate so long as they provide direct benefits to students. Who can argue with that? This argument is not about whether some Trotskyite group or some Liberal club should receive funding; it is about whether levies should be applied to services that are of direct benefit to students. I should have thought yes was a reasonable answer. And this issue was the subject of legislation passed by this house some time ago. I believe the principles contained in the legislation, including guaranteeing sporting and other clubs continued support, along with the diverse interests that make up the cultural life of universities, are intact.

We all understand that the difficulties and constraints of federal funding do not allow a revenue stream to be directed to some parts of university life. Our government thought a reasonable compromise was a compulsory levy which would provide richness of society but which would not go to elements not appreciably or directly benefiting students. That seems to be not only a defensible but also an eminently sensible position for the government to adopt.

Why fund something students do not want and would not fund themselves? Why should the former federal Labor government be able to shift a cost burden away from universities? That could well be the basis of another debate on the responsibilities of universities. We have not heard that debate from the opposition side.

I have some difficulty with the ideologically blinkered who say it must be either/or and who do

not see that the current legislation provides for the cultural richness they suggest they are defending.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr DOYLE — I will take up the interjection from the honourable member for Morwell, who called me a wimp. I am proud to be part of the wimp faction on the government side of the house. That is perfectly all right with me, and my learned colleagues on this side of the house understand where we all sit in the pantheon of beliefs in our party.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — The honourable member for Sunshine interjected, 'Name the learned ones!' Unfortunately there are 59 of us on this side and I have only 25 minutes to complete my contribution. I can't name them all! I will pass and take up the more insidious argument. It is a kind of State Bank argument — that is, 'It's your money, Ralph'. I have real problems with the argument that says, 'it's the students' money, so why shouldn't they be able to spend it?'. That sort of money belongs to all the students because it was raised through a universal compulsory levy, applied without any constraints as to how the expenditure directly benefits students. That money must not belong to the student leaders who control unions simply because they feel they should control an extensive revenue stream. I will come back to the furphy of democratically elected student leaders later.

It is sometimes argued that the government does not trust students to manage their own affairs, but that is not a real argument. We say that the so-called democratic elections, which are usually run on political tickets, obtain votes from approximately 10 per cent of the student population. A few places, such as Melbourne University, have a good turnout — up to 16 or 17 per cent of the student body. And this scant vote is won by a bare majority, a majority of a minority. The ticket eventually controlling huge revenue streams may be only 3 or 4 per cent of the student population. This sort of result is touted by opposition speakers as democratically elected leadership — the 'It's their money' argument.

Quite properly, the government's legislation provides that it is our responsibility to safeguard the accountability of money collected through a compulsory levy on all students.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — The honourable member for Sunshine mentioned my colleague the honourable member for Oakleigh. You thought you were going to take her seat, didn't you?

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — You are quite right, you didn't! It was your leader who did not agree with you, and now he has a little bit of something on the liver, as you can well understand! The important line in your earlier interjection was, 'She won by X number of votes'. You are right in one respect: she won! And I am very happy to see that she is back again.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — But you interjected, and I could not resist taking it up because it was such a silly interjection. We get a supposedly democratic point of view from a bare minimum who were elected by a tiny percentage of the student body. I turn to the question that was raised by opposition members regarding student newspapers.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — Compulsory voting is a different argument that we might have at a different time.

Mr Baker interjected.

Mr DOYLE — I have not got much in your speeches to inspire me, just as there is not much in those student newspapers. If they dealt with current issues students might be prepared to read them; but why should they not attract some advertising revenue or charge a small fee to survive? According to the opposition, attracting advertising is ideologically unsound! Perhaps the honourable member for Sunshine, who is to follow me in the debate, will explain why you still cannot buy Violet Crumble bars on university campuses? Is it still because Nestlé is considered ideologically unsound?

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr DOYLE — The honourable member for Morwell reminds me that the honourable member for Melbourne said we would ban the *Sunday Age* if we could. No, we would not, and I will tell you what else we would not do: we would not charge all Victorians a compulsory levy for that newspaper and then insist that they have it in their homes. That is what the honourable member for Morwell is suggesting should happen with student newspapers.

I shall address the real issue of the funding of student newspapers. The minister raised the point of federal funding, and he was right to do so because the only two universities that applied for such funding were Melbourne and Ballarat. On one hand, for some inexplicable reason, Melbourne University got \$1.2 million from the former federal Labor minister, Mr Crean — how that figure was arrived at I do not know — while on the other hand Monash University got zip! Was it because at Monash they could not organise themselves? Surely that was not the case with those democratically elected leaders? I presume the reason they did not apply for the top-up funding was that they knew they could still make a go of the student newspaper even without the money from the compulsory levy. My comments are supported by the Monash union board minutes for its first meeting for 1996, held on 29 February, which state:

5.1.4 Financial statements

... reported that a higher surplus than anticipated had been achieved. The recommendation of the executive committee was moved:

that of the surplus of \$955 000, \$300 000 be allocated to the amenities fee reserve and \$200 000 be allocated to the MSA; and

that a decision concerning allocation of the balance be deferred pending the outcome of the federal election and be held as a contingency in an interest-bearing capacity.

By my meagre sums, that leaves \$455 000 as a surplus in an interest-bearing account, yet *Lot's Wife* is folding. With such a surplus they could fund a newspaper if they wished. That is the hypocrisy of it. If they wanted a newspaper, these minutes show it could be funded from such surpluses generated from legitimate student union activities.

Student unions should make themselves efficient and productive. Is Monash an example? They can generate services beyond the compulsory levy if they wish to. They have the capacity to do so, as these minutes clearly show. I argue that that situation puts paid to the bleating that the government is automatically wiping out student services outside the aegis and consideration of the original legislation. Hypocritical argument comes from some student leaders and from all opposition speakers.

I shall not go on for much longer.

Mr Baker — Mercy!

Mr DOYLE — I am delighted the honourable member for Sunshine thinks my contribution has been so wounding that he is bleeding and cries for mercy; he has been silent for quite some time.

This argument is not about freedom of expression. The honourable member for Melbourne referred to the article on shoplifting. We say it was wrong and stupid of the La Trobe newspaper to say that it was 'going to print it regardless!'. It was an excess. I do not care about their self-indulgence, because that is not what worries me, and that is where the opposition has got it wrong. I do care that that self-indulgence should be compulsorily subsidised. Let them have that opportunity by all means, but let them fund it by legitimate means and not by some compulsory subsidy. That is the argument we should be having rather than some false argument about freedom of expression.

I do not want to talk about the student newspaper indulgences, the shoplifting stories or those that try to portray members of the government as political baby eaters. They are trivial and momentary and have the smallest of audiences, even within the universities. They have no currency. The opposition is wrong to say that the government is worried about them. Journalists do themselves no favours in the statewide media by suggesting that the government is worried about them, because we are not.

It is just that I do not see why 95 per cent of the student population should compulsorily subsidise student indulgences, and that is my particular objection to universal compulsory levies. Student newspapers could charge a small fee or even create a readership which may go some way towards making them self-sufficient, but that has not been the way they have gone about relevance. The opposition bleats and claims these activities should be subsidised regardless of the quality of the material they put out or who reads them or the potential alternative revenue streams available. That is not good enough.

I will give just one example of how success may be courted. I refer honourable members to two publications: *In Press* and *Beat*. They are free popular culture music newspapers that support themselves by advertising. They have wide currency on campuses. Even in the current environment these free magazines are successfully targeting their clientele. These are the models that should be followed. Student newspapers can publish whatever they want — we do not care about that — but we

must not ask the entire student population to fund the newspapers so a small minority can have their indulgences paraded free.

I know the legislation constrains the application of profits originally subsidised by the compulsory levy being applied to anything but those services set out in the legislation. That provision is there for good reason. But if the opposition wants to be serious about this issue why has it not suggested that university services such as cafeterias be contracted out?

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr DOYLE — I am not an economic rationalist, but why not have someone competent run the cafeterias, the newsagencies, the travel agencies and other services provided in the university union buildings and make money out of them so that the profit can be ploughed back into student services? If I had a captive audience of 25 000 students for food services I believe I could run the food services at a profit so that money could be ploughed back into student services. What would be wrong with that? That would be getting your hands dirty with commerce! Wouldn't that be an awful thing! Subsidies should be cut and services contracted out. The profits then could be used to run the services that are outside the guidelines set in the legislation, if that were the decision of the students.

For example, why should they not have McDonalds restaurants on university campuses? The ideologues would never let universities bring in McDonalds. Never mind the practice — profits for services — what about the theory of being ideologically unsound? I do not have any problem with sound profits. I believe the market should decide. Students do not have to read the student newspapers or use the union facilities if they do not want to, but if real student unions want to capture markets, why not let them use the profits for student activities? If they can generate sufficient revenue from those ventures to provide services, good on them, but direct services to students can still be subsidised from our compulsory levy.

By way of example, I believe and have been told that in the early 1970s the University of Queensland developed a relationship with Schonell cinemas, operated the cinemas and made a profit of \$300 000. They even built a new theatre that was very attractive to students at that time. That process gave the student body considerable money to apply to student services. The beauty of this is that the

money was generated by students using the service and not through a compulsory levy. Proper management of student affairs could generate revenue for new services, but we have not seen any exploring of those activities.

Mr A. F. Plowman interjected.

Mr DOYLE — My colleague the honourable member for Benambra says it is user pays. He is right. A service that generates a profit would allow money to be ploughed back into other services, rather than having services provided by a uniform compulsory levy across the whole student body, which includes, as the honourable member for Morwell well knows, students who may rarely be on campuses or part-time students who never get the benefit of many of the services provided by these bodies.

In conclusion, my point regarding the application of money is that each individual should have the right to decide how his or her money should be spent. That is the ideal. To say that it is all too hard and we should go back to a universal compulsory levy that can be spent on anything at all and have expenditure decided by a small undemocratically elected minority is not acceptable. I believe in and support student newspapers and unions, but they should not be propped up. They should develop services that are attractive to their client base so that any union could offer something for which students would be prepared to hand over hard-earned cash. If unions are prepared to change their ways we will have healthy student unions, which I support. If they offer services directly to their constituents we will have healthy student newspapers and all the other services the opposition says we have jack-booted over and destroyed. We cannot go back to the mentality that used to exist in universities and unions — no ticket, no start — when members paid their money and a small minority decided how it should be spent. Our legislation is sound and does not preclude any of the opportunities the opposition says are excluded by it.

Mr BAKER (Sunshine) — I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your election to this high exalted and levitated office. I am not suggesting you are floating on your own propelled cushion of air. It is a dubious pleasure to follow the honourable member for Malvern who, in his usual fashion, has made some resonant noise or, put another way, has made a hole in the air that I intend to fill with some substance and to sprinkle with a few facts and some logic, dare I say. Logic, of course, is as someone else

said, in the eye of the beholder, so it is with me in this argument.

I am puzzled by some of the tortuous arguments that have been proffered, but I suppose it is early in the session and people have not oiled up or warmed up yet. I would mention through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the honourable member for Malvern that I am a bit puzzled by some of the lines he has thrown in. For example, I have a daughter who is currently completing a science degree at RMIT — although she won't thank me for identifying her, I suspect; they never own to having such a terrible right-wing father — I can assure you she has not taken up shoplifting. Recently one of my other daughters went through economics and law at Melbourne and another went through veterinary science at Melbourne. I am blessed with many and various daughters. None of them, in my experience, gave up an obsession with eating Violet Crumbles — I should perhaps take this up with them later on.

Because of those examples I am puzzled at the degree of venality, pettiness and angst that certain members on the government benches seem to bring to this issue. I cannot find any explanation of why you would bother, why a government would bother to be so petty and small minded as to bring down a jack-booted heel upon the operations of democratically elected community clubs, which is basically what they are, that have been established in universities, usually under the aegis of extremely conservative governing bodies.

Why would you bother? Unless it is the product of a couple of minds on the other side who had some tortured childhood experience at university and brought that bile and bitterness with them as part of their historical baggage because they were not able to put it aside when they grew up. I cannot see any other explanation. Alternatively, perhaps there is some sense of ideologically based vengeance.

In my experience across what is stretching into a far too extensive lifetime at this stage, my main recollection of when I went onto campus as a young fellow is of seeing a magnificent sign. It showed a clenched fist and said: Socialist Club of the University. It was beautifully done artwork and underneath it said, 'We are the people your mother warned you about'. I thought that was pretty good. I did not join them, though; they were too right wing for me at that stage of my development.

A generation on, the experience of my own daughters at university has been that the majority interest has been in the said chocolate eating society and that the church groups are now dominant on campus. What happens? My experience on university campuses and places of that kind is that they reflect what have been described as the floating ideas of the time; in the same way, unfortunately, as this Parliament reflects the floating ideas of the time. What bewilders me is why members opposite would get their knickers in a twist — if you will pardon the expression — and get so excited about something of this kind.

Look at the lengths to which they have gone. Look at the process. How many times has an attempt been made to have a hit on this minor matter? In the first place, they tackled it through the courts. The honourable member for Box Hill, who is in the house, achieved some notoriety as a student for taking what I understand was legally a quite well-argued and intellectually gifted case to the High Court, where he lost. It does not matter whether he won or lost, but I suggest that if he is the prime mover or the catalyst or the cattle prodder behind this ridiculous attempt to beat up the universities he should grow up, put aside childish things and get on with playing grown-up games, to which he is perfectly well suited, as we all know. It is just ridiculous.

First it was taken to the courts in an attempt to prohibit the charging of compulsory fees and the requirement for compulsory membership of these community clubs, as I prefer to call them. Then an attempt was made to get the students to endorse that notion by ballot. Now, that is perfectly democratic, but it lost.

These are facts. It was taken to the court — no! It was taken to the members of the student body themselves, the broad mass of the student body — no! They said in substantial majority that they wanted to retain the system the way it was. And finally we have this bitter vendetta, this bitter campaign, being carted here before us, to waste our time and to make the Parliament get involved in kicking around some kids and overruling the decisions, against the conventions and the custom and practice that have been established in the way Parliaments deal with universities, and against the relationship with universities that has been built up over hundreds of years. This campaign has been brought here saying that we should move in and exercise some form of totalitarian control over the way universities operate, with their democratically

elected councils that give representation to this house, to past and present students and to university staff. We should say, 'No, you've got this wrong. We're not having this'.

We should take out the arguments that have been put here today by members such as the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, who, to do him credit, I do not think actually believes a word he said. He had to argue the case but he did look a bit shamefaced and he almost blushed a couple of times, just as he is now. The record should show that the minister at the table is blushing with embarrassment.

We should take out these arguments the minister and the honourable member for Malvern have put and give them to the gun lobby. You could not get a better argument than, 'Listen, I've got Grandpa's pump action shotgun that's a family heirloom and I actually need it on the property to shoot feral pigs and vermin and rabbits' — although you really don't need a shotgun, and you certainly don't need a machine gun, to shoot a rabbit. As you and I both know, Mr Deputy Speaker, unlike some of the city slickers on the other side of the house, if you gut shoot a rabbit you can't eat it. One good single shot with an old bolt action or a single shot .22 would do just fine.

I am sure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, see the irony of my point. The gun lobby could not have a better argument than to just take up what has been put from the opposite side and put in 'guns' or 'the gun levy' — the proposed gun levy upon which we have all, across the boundaries of politics, reached splendid agreement around the country.

What about the education levy in the schools? How does that fit with the implicit logic of the government's position? Are the members opposite saying, 'Well, you should have a choice there.'? No. Listen, and you will hear the silence!

What about the state deficit levy? I did not want to pay that — I did not agree with it! In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you have suffered through many hours of listening to my opinions on that matter. What about the support for the opera? I confess that opera is something that passed me by in my formative years, and I greatly regret that I find it — much to my wife's annoyance — absolutely boring and that I am guaranteed to snore very loudly. Yet I do not protest about making a compulsory contribution to the opera. Where is the difference in the argument?

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BAKER — Are you making a hole in the air, as well? A true liberal has no fear of the furious ferment of public debate or argument. But, sadly, there are not too many true liberals left on the other side of the house. I am puzzled, because the floating ideas of the time seem to be so much with those people opposite that I would have thought they would encourage newspapers, in particular, to continue to thrive.

Some play has been made about the old argument that a university should be a place of sanctuary, where people can pursue ideas and argument and pursue knowledge for its own sake. That is why a civilised society finances universities — they are not just job factories. Of course people go there with the intention of gaining skills and knowledge that will fit them for a better life. But they also go there — and for many people it is the one chance in a lifetime — to have that sense of freedom. The old liberals, the true liberals from the Menzies school of liberalism strongly supported and participated in that.

If you look through the history of the various student unions, as they are called, you will find some of the past great names of the Liberal Party. Their ghosts must be rattling their chains as they contemplate what the latest generation of Liberals are preparing to do. It is almost as though they are storming the university, taking it over and telling it what to do. As someone mentioned, the governing bodies of the university, and people such as Professor Penington; the latest vice-chancellor, Professor Gilbert; and vice-chancellors around the country are quite dismayed at this attack upon university freedom. I am sure that Lenin would be very much on your side, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on this issue. Lenin once said that it is true that liberty is precious, so precious that it has to be rationed. He also said, if I remember correctly, that if you give me control of the language, you give me control of the people. You can paraphrase that to say: if you give me control of newspapers, or you give me control of the organs or vehicles by which people can indulge in the furious ferment of public debate, then you give me control of the people.

So it is not us who have the totalitarian position here. Liberty includes the liberty to seek to be in a collective. You never mention that. Liberty certainly involves an implicit notion that you can make an individual decision; but liberty also implies that you equally and appositely have the right to form in a

collective — just as these students did when they were polled and had democratic elections.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BAKER — You don't like this. The trouble is your argument is specious and totally inconsistent with the way you behave elsewhere. It is just the vendetta or the personal baggage of a couple of people on the other side who had a difficult time at university and who have brought it in here into a grown-up forum.

It really should stop. You should back off from this, give it away, and let the people at the university get on with determining how they run their own affairs, so long as they run them within democratic guidelines. As the honourable member for Melbourne, the venerable — I suppose he is now because he has been here long enough to be almost venerable — esteemed and august honourable member for Melbourne pointed out and said so eloquently, there are even ridiculous, illogical distinctions drawn in what you approve of in terms of student activities. You are going to say that the chocolate eaters are all right, the religious freakos are all right, the Liberal Club is all right, the deer hunters are okay, the Molokon holy jumpers are okay, and the tiddly winks society is okay, but the Marxist freakos are not all right. It is all right to eat Violet Crumble bars if you wish to, but it is not all right to produce a newspaper. Where is the logic in that? Don't you see how ridiculous you look? What a sham it is for a party that spent so much money getting onto FM radio in the election campaign period, to convince, to gull, to con and to snow the younger people of this state into believing that you really were a true Liberal Party with some progressive ideas.

I am glad the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has come to the table, because it is okay to impose a compulsory levy and to compulsorily acquire someone's gun — that might have been grandpa's gun that has been around the family for years — because it happens to be an automatic, a semi-automatic or a pump-action. Boy, you really lost that one — nil goals to you!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BAKER — Oh yes, it is okay to do that —

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Sunshine is starting to spray his shots.

Mr BAKER — Yes, I am. It is okay to do that. I say to the minister, now that he has come into the house, that he should take the argument that has been presented by his colleagues and give it to the gun lobby; all it has to do is take out universities, student unions and newspapers and it has the best argument you have ever heard against the gun levy and against what we have all done in unison around the country. Elsewhere government members extol the virtues of the user-pays and fee-for-service principles. In the significant contribution he made earlier, the shadow minister for tertiary education made those positions perfectly clear.

In conclusion I say that this is an absolutely absurd and specious argument. It has no consistency, even within itself. It is illogical and it lacks consistency. I leave you with one story. It has been canvassed in the papers that these community clubs — and they are community clubs, they are not unions because a union negotiates for wages and conditions for its membership —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr BAKER — They do not do that.

Mr Finn — They are the ones that call themselves unions, we don't.

Mr BAKER — These are basically community clubs supported by a sense of community and a tithe they have all agreed to. Whenever you ask them to, they vote for it. They have had the opportunity to vote it out and they have said, 'No, we want it'. These are not children from radical homes; they are children from your kinds of homes, and they are the people who voted for it. Yet still you are back here trying to kill the beast! What is the matter with government members that they would carry their hatred to such an extent that they would force the Parliament into the embarrassing situation of being used as a club against the very will of the people involved?

The story I will leave with the house is interesting. There has been much discussion and mention of the great artistic and creative talent and good minds that have come through the processes involved in these community clubs. I remember a story Richard Walsh, who was the editor of *Nation Review* and who is now head of Australian Consolidated Press, used

to tell when I worked in my younger days at the old *Nation Review*. I had a big Che Guevara moustache, wore a corduroy coat, smoked a pipe and thought I was at the vanguard of social change — and I have ended here! I suppose it is like the road to Corrain: it is a sad ending when I compare what I was then with what I am now.

The story was about a fancy dress party at Sydney University in the 1960s. After having imbibed a little too freely, three people got into one of those dreadful Goggomobil Darts and drove through Sydney in the early hours of the morning. The last of the redneck police motorcycle sergeants could not believe some of the things that came out of that vehicle: a green dragon, Mungo McCallum; a pink fairy, Richard Walsh; and a tree, Laurie Oakes. They were, along with Michael Kirby who could not get into the car —

Mr McArthur interjected.

Mr BAKER — You would not understand it because you are uneducated. I can tell by the head — I think you are the classic Cro-Magnon man!

My point is that those sorts of things are happening here and now. A sophisticated society needs to provide incubators, if you like. They are controlled in the sense that they are part of the social fabric and there are certain rules and boundaries outside which they do not go. They understand. They push the boundaries a little bit here, society gives a little bit there, and they get hurled back a little bit again. If a Liberal society takes away those incubator mechanisms the students will find alternative forms of expression.

There are people in my past and on my side of the house who might think that that might not be a bad result, that we should go for it and keep on turning the screw until we get a breakdown. I say to the honourable member for Box Hill: put away childish things, grow up, and stop forcing your colleagues to deal with these trivial issues.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The honourable member for Sunshine asked why members on the government side of the house feel strongly about this issue. That is a very strange argument from a member of the Australian Labor Party because I always thought one of the things the ALP claimed to be proud of was standing up for the battlers against injustice, and not always wanting to be in the party of the big battalions. Yet when this house adopts legislation to remedy a manifest injustice that has

been around for years the honourable member for Sunshine asks why we are bothering with it because it is just a trivial matter.

The honourable member referred to incubators, and I point out that universities form initial impressions on people reaching adult life. Examples of injustices set at universities can be particularly painful. They can give people entering adult life the wrong impression about what society is about. They can diminish confidence that society operates on just and fair grounds, if students walk in the doors and see how the university establishment and the establishment of the student left interact on the university campus in a compulsory fee regime.

The honourable member for Sunshine displayed in its full glory the position that the left and the Parliamentary Labor Party adopt on this matter. They believe that whatever universities do is okay so long as it is democratic; that they should be totally autonomous, self-governing entities; and that if a majority on campus reaches a decision it is nobody's business but the university's and that the government and, indeed, the general community should butt out.

That view of university autonomy had some currency a few years ago. The honourable member for Sunshine will probably recall that in the United Kingdom the leading universities returned members of Parliament. He would be aware of the well-known writer, A. P. Herbert, an Independent member for the university seat of Oxford. Both in the United Kingdom and Australia the notion of the university being a totally autonomous entity capable of doing whatever it liked and being put on the same parity as government has long since gone.

Universities have a valuable role to play and university autonomy is important, but universities are not miniature governments and they should not be capable of legislating to regulate all aspects of the lives of those who happen to be students or, indeed, members of the academic faculty. That is why the honourable member's analogy with the opera, gun levies and the like breaks down. These matters are properly the responsibility of the governments elected by the community as a whole and not responsibilities that should be entrusted to the governing bodies of institutions which are brought together for one particular, albeit important, purpose — namely, education and learning — and which cannot govern all aspects of the lives of those who come into contact with them.

That is the root of the fallacy that underlies most of the arguments that have been put by opposition members. The honourable members for Melbourne and Sunshine referred to the funding of various clubs and societies and asked why political clubs should not also be funded. The honourable member for Melbourne referred specifically to religious bodies. I think his view is based on a misconception of what the legislation says. Section 12F of the Tertiary Education (Amendment) Act 1993 lays down clearly the range of purposes for which compulsory fees may be applied, and they are distinct: food and beverages, meeting rooms, child care, counselling and so on. There is no general prohibition on political activity, nor is there permission for religious clubs to be funded as distinct from political clubs.

I referred earlier to the injustice of the compulsory regime that has existed on tertiary campuses. Three aspects of that injustice became apparent to me when I arrived at Melbourne University. I have no doubt they have also become apparent to other members of this house who have attended tertiary institutions. Firstly, one's money is levied to contribute to sundry political causes — causes which one does not as an individual support and which in most cases also seem not to be supported by the majority of students. Secondly, one finds that an appalling standard of service is provided by student institutions at tertiary campuses.

The third thing I encountered when I arrived at Melbourne University in the 1970s was that a significant part of the funding that was compulsorily raised from students was being applied for purposes that did not even fall within the scope of the constitutions of the bodies concerned. The honourable member for Sunshine referred to litigation I brought against Melbourne University, the student representative council and the Australian Union of Students and alleged the litigation was unsuccessful. For the record, I point out that in that case the court upheld the fact that significant payments were being made beyond the constitutional power of both the student representative council and the Australian Union of Students. Indeed, some of those causes for which student moneys were compulsorily collected were pretty outrageous.

The upshot of the regime students came across when they arrived at universities and other tertiary institutions was a system that was not just, because it was not supported by most students, was not equitable because the benefits of that system accrued

to only a few and was not effective because it provided a lousy standard of service to students. Let me give a bit more detail on each of those aspects.

The honourable member for Malvern referred to student turnout at elections. In the late 1970s and into the 1980s there was a provision applying at Melbourne University that the student representative council could not be funded unless 25 per cent of eligible students voted. It was a real struggle for the student representative council to get that voter turnout. Its members really did it only by exhorting students to come along and vote lest their funding be imperilled. Even then, they only just fell over the line. That is hardly an example of a representative institution or wholehearted student endorsement of what is going on, where 75 per cent or so of students who could not even care enough about what was going on in the student representative council to vote in elections were finding their moneys being applied to a whole lot of purposes for which they had given no endorsement whatever.

It appears the situation has not changed much in the 1990s. The honourable member for Morwell referred to 'progressive' student political views being in charge of student unions. That was a very nice euphemism, given that I understand currently many student organisations are controlled by Trotskyist and other left-wing groups — to the left even of the Australian Labor Party. That is not a reflection of student political views generally.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr CLARK — I think the honourable member for Morwell suggests by interjection that some of those views are actually held within the Labor Party. I will allow him to exercise that judgment. As the minister indicated earlier, when all the evidence suggests an increasing proportion of students are voting for our side of politics rather than for the Australian Labor Party, only the fact that there is an abysmally low turnout of students at student elections can account for the Trotskyists and others winning.

The second poor aspect of the regime that existed in my days at university was the inequity of it — that is, basically a very small number of student activists managed to capture a large part of the funding contributed by students across the board. The various political clubs — the Liberal Club, the Labor Club and so forth — all lined up and received their funding. I suppose as someone who was an active member of the Liberal Club at Melbourne University

I derived back from the system more than my own share of the fees I contributed.

However, I say to opposition members who talk about distributive justice that no beneficial income redistribution effects emerged out of that regime. If anything, the income redistribution effects ran to the contrary — that is, those who were battling to get through university to establish a career and earn an income were probably less likely to be interested in political affairs on campus but were nonetheless contributing to those who, by and large, were in a more comfortable position to spend time on those activities. If a case is to be made in either direction, I think the stronger is that the compulsory regime has an adverse income redistribution effect.

The third aspect of the regime one encountered in the 1970s was the poor standard of service it delivered. The cafeteria had pretty poor food and, despite having a captive clientele, managed to run at a loss of around a quarter of a million dollars in those days. The various greasy types of eating places in Carlton did a roaring trade as students voted with their feet to walk away from the compulsory regime. During the intervening years at a national level and on a bipartisan basis there has been an increasing amount of analysis of the problems that come from that sort of compulsory closed shop in the provision of services.

This analysis comes under the umbrella of the national competition policy advanced by the previous federal Labor government. One realises that things such as third-line forcing and an absence of competitive tendering end up in a poor standard of service. That also needs to be addressed when dealing with the situation of many student unions.

Another aspect of the regime which is worth commenting on and which I mentioned briefly earlier is the relationship that exists between university administrations on the one hand and student establishments on the other hand in a compulsory regime. Goodness knows what the motives and rationales are of the two parties to that interrelationship, but the effect of it is quite clear. For university administrations the enforcing of a compulsory fee and the handing over of that compulsory fee to the most politically active students on campus is a very good way of achieving a quiet life. The honourable member for Morwell touched on the concern of university administrations that that quiet life might be disrupted if compulsory unionism were abolished. It might be thought by university administrations to

be a good deal to hand over sufficient money to those who are most politically active and interested to deter those groups from agitating and making life difficult for university administrators. Conversely, members of student establishments, who for generations have been of a pretty consistent left-wing persuasion, would continue to receive money with which to carry on their political campaigns. However, it has the noteworthy effect of making those students beholden to the university administrations because those administrations could either implicitly or explicitly hold the threat of curtailed funding over their heads.

Regardless of the rationale of the two parties who enter into that deal, it has the effect of producing a cosy closed shop in which everybody seems to be a winner, except the poor student who does not like to have money siphoned off against his or her will for political causes. That is the injustice, the inequity, and the ineffectiveness of the compulsory student regime on campus.

This issue has been brought to a head recently because of the reports about closures or possible closures of student newspapers. It is worth reinforcing the points made by previous speakers on this subject. Student newspapers have been rags for years, have been appalling reads that have attracted only a minuscule number of students who actually pick them up and look at them.

Certainly back in the 1970s, and I assume it is the same today, the political junkies on campus would pick them up and eagerly scour them looking to see whether their names appeared in print, or those of their friends and colleagues. However, for most students, these newspapers were a complete bore. One really has to ask, 'Why can't a student newspaper in the circumstances of a university attract sufficient revenue through advertising, if not through sales, to maintain itself if it provides something that students want to read?'.

The honourable member for Malvern referred to other newspapers that are freely distributed on campus that appeal to the readership and manage to be self-funding.

In all my time at Melbourne University I can remember only one year in which *Farrago* was halfway near towards being a decent newspaper, and that was a year when Mr Andrew Liston was the editor. I think the honourable member for Sunshine may recall him, as may others. That was the exception. Mr Liston had a cynical and

iconoclastic view of life and politics and a far greater appreciation of the views of average students than most other editors before or after him who seemed intent on pursuing some ideological and esoteric line.

As other speakers in this debate have pointed out, if people want to pursue ideological or esoteric lines, that is their liberty, but they should not be doing it at the expense of people who have no interest in the material they are churning out.

As an aside, given my present involvement with multimedia, I suggest that these various student newspapers ought to consider transferring their operations to the Internet where they can continue to carry on at a small cost compared with the printed media and thus save a lot of trees and do their bit for conservation. They will be able to continue to publish their views, and the students who are keen to read the articles will have the ability to pick them up over the Internet. That may in practical terms resolve their dilemma. However, they should not put up their hands and say that students who have no interest in voluntarily acquiring the newspapers should be forced to pay for them.

Complaints have been made about the government's student unionism legislation. The act proceeds on the principle that it is legitimate for compulsory fees to be imposed for matters that are integral to university life and which do not infringe on the principles of freedom of association and, in particular, do not force people to be associated with political views or certain activities. A list is set out in section 12F of the Tertiary Education Act. One could go through that list and argue about any particular item. However, the principle is there and is clear.

Perhaps it is also time that universities and other tertiary institutions started asking themselves what they should be doing about improving the quality of service provided under these compulsorily imposed fees and to what extent they should be picking up on some of the principles that have been hammered out at a national level. They should be asking themselves, 'Should we be contracting out cafeteria services to competitive tendering? Should we be encouraging alternative service providers? Should we be requiring in-house services to tender against possible external alternatives? Should we be unbundling the services we are providing and let people exercise greater choice to acquire some and not acquire others?'. These are the challenges that the governing bodies of tertiary institutions will have to face.

The application of these techniques has been of enormous benefit to consumers in areas as diverse as electricity undertakings and the provision of services by municipal councils. It would be appropriate for the governing bodies of tertiary institutions to consider to what extent those principles can be applied to good effect at a university level.

I return to the motion moved by the honourable member for Morwell. His condemnation of the government is completely misconceived. No attack has been made on student unions; they are left entirely free to organise, operate and solicit for membership and to carry on whatever activities their members think fit provided, as has been made clear in this debate, that the membership of those student unions is voluntary, and to the extent to which they carry out political activities, that they do not obtain their funding through compulsory sources.

The legislation is not discriminatory, it does not disempower students. In fact, it empowers students by giving them the freedom of choice about whether they want to join political organisations and whether they want to continue to fund political organisations or political causes or other political purposes. For that reason, I oppose the motion and support the retention of the government's legislation.

Ms GARBUTT (Bundoora) — I take this opportunity to once again place on the record my opposition to this legislation and the impact that is now being felt with the closure of student newspapers around this state. We have heard today tortuous arguments and sophistry used to justify this move, but it is nothing more than an excuse to close down student newspapers and to attack student politics. It is dressed up in other languages, but it is clear that the real purpose is to stop the student voice that criticises this government. It is clear, if one examines the record, that it is not only a pattern but a strategy by this government which attacks or even sacks people for criticism. Every time somebody criticises, seeks to scrutinise or tries to put the government under the microscope, he or she is attacked or vilified or sacked. If he or she is a state government employee or in any way attached to a body that receives government funding, it is attack and sack. This is one more step in the process.

One only has to examine the record of the government with its relationship with the media. There are certain favoured media outlets and journalists, and then there are those who are

attacked every day of the week. They are criticised as unprofessional and scurrilous. We all know what the Premier and the government have been saying about the *Age* and the *Sunday Age*. The latest one is *Today Tonight* when last night in this place we saw the Premier attack that program. It is not alone; the *7.30 Report* has suffered a similar fate! Every time someone attacks, argues or criticises government policy he or she is vilified, slammed or denigrated in a forceful and intimidating way. The same thing is happening with student newspapers.

Of course, it is not just media outlets that are targeted; anyone who speaks up to voice an alternative opinion is criticised. Mr Justice Fogarty and Mr Justice Nicholson criticised the lack of action by the government to protect our children, which is a fundamental responsibility of the government, and they were attacked. Another example is the former Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, Moira Rayner, who criticised government policy in relation to the women's prison. She was sacked.

The SPEAKER — Order! Passing reference to these matters are acceptable, but the honourable member cannot develop an argument that is not directly linked to the motion before the Chair.

Ms GARBUTT — It is absolutely fundamental to the fact that this action by the government is part of the broader strategy, and I shall endeavour to make that clear in my comments. Despite the arguments and the rhetoric, the underlying issue is the government's systematic attack on anyone who criticises it.

Student newspapers criticise all governments and they also criticise university administrations. It is a part of the broadening experience of being a university student and of being subject to different points of view. As a result, authority figures are often attacked. It does not mean that the student will continue in that direction forever, but it is part of the learning process. The opposition sees student newspapers fitting into that pattern, but the government cannot tolerate criticism because it has a very thin skin. It wants its constituents to do what they are told.

I contrast that authoritarian approach of the government with the democratic processes used by the student unions whose leaders are subject to election. In a ballot of students on student unionism — that is a corruption of the language if ever I have heard it — students were asked whether they objected to paying fees for student newspapers.

Their answer was no, and that democratic process was in complete contrast to the arrogant, jack-boot approach adopted by the government when trying to dress up its real intention of closing down student newspapers.

Student newspapers are critical of many people. The last two issues of the Melbourne University newspaper *Farrago* my son brought home contained article after article criticising the Premier. It is no wonder the government has taken action to get rid of those newspapers. It wants to silence that voice.

It is interesting that edition after edition of student newspapers criticises their respective university administrations, but the vice-chancellors, both as a body and as individuals, did not support the legislation. When it was passed during the previous Parliament they circulated press releases opposing the legislation. The difference between the government and the vice-chancellors is that the vice-chancellors understand the value of the newspapers to university life; they understand they are an integral part of university life.

The previous government speaker must have had some very hurtful experiences at university and must now be seeking revenge. He said activities that were integral to the artistic and cultural pursuits of university life should be supported but that he did not view the newspapers and their politics as integral to university life. His comments were self-serving nonsense and he was splitting hairs!

He suggests it is all right to have compulsory fees to fund those activities he approves of. He probably spent some time at the Beaupaire pool and was happy about his fees supporting that facility, but in all my years at university I never went to the pool. In the view of the honourable member for Box Hill that funding is politically correct, but that is not the case in the view of others.

Student newspapers are more integral to university life than a range of other activities to which the honourable member did not object. Part of university life is about challenging issues so that students examine them and broaden their views. It is about expanding their horizons and it is about students arguing and participating in a vigorous political and cultural life. It is not about turning out factory fodder who know nothing more than the skills wanted by their employers, and student politics and newspapers are integral in ensuring that that does not happen.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

99

For centuries universities have maintained independence from the government. Academic freedom has been an important factor of university life and universities have been seen as sanctuaries. A major element of the issue is government interference in the operation of universities. It reflects the fact that the government is about control and not about respecting the independence of anybody, particularly institutions that date back for centuries.

Government members have suggested mentioned that student newspapers could seek advertising as a way of keeping the funds flowing. I wonder whether they would receive government advertising? I doubt it. The government uses its advertising in a partisan way and it supports favoured media outlets with its advertising. Resorting to advertising would assist the government in achieving its objective because it would be a way of keeping controversial and political views out of student newspapers.

If advertising were used to fund student newspapers the advertisers would exert some control over the editorial staff and the radical, way-out ideas that university newspapers publish would not be seen. Certainly it would have stopped the La Trobe University newspaper publishing its article on shoplifting. Perhaps foolish and poor judgment was shown by that newspaper, but we should have let that pass. It was silly of the authorities to jump on the newspaper. If student newspapers were totally reliant on the advertising dollar it would have an impact similar to the impact of the legislation.

Despite the rhetoric, arguments and sophistry we have heard today, the underlying issue behind the legislation was to close down yet another voice criticising the government. The government has a very thin skin and will not tolerate opposing views. It has taken measures to silence the student voice by closing down newspapers. The impact was delayed by the former federal Labor government stepping into the breach, but now we are aware of the state government's real intention all along — that is, to close down student newspapers to stop their political comment. That follows the government's strategy of attacking or sacking its critics where it can in an endeavour to silence them. This strategy is yet another creative ploy to achieve the government's aim of closing student newspapers, and if we do not act quickly that is precisely what will happen.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time appointed under sessional orders for debate has expired. The

honourable member for Bundoora may conclude her remarks when the matter is next before the Chair.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER — Order! I inform the house that the Consul-General from New Zealand, Mr Yan Flint, is in the gallery today.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ministerial advisers: pecuniary interests

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to the undertaking he gave in the house yesterday that he would investigate whether all ministerial advisers employed by the government since 1992 had signed pecuniary interest declarations as required by the code of conduct. Will the Premier now inform the house whether all ministerial advisers employed on the Premier's personal staff since 1992 have signed pecuniary interest declarations consistent with the code of conduct?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — No, I cannot inform the house whether ministerial advisers have signed those declarations because I have had a few other things on my plate during the past 24 hours. That has not been given the highest priority.

National Gallery of Victoria

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — Will the Minister for the Arts outline to the house the government's plans to redevelop the National Gallery of Victoria as part of its policy to affirm the state's role as the major cultural centre in the Asia Pacific?

Mr KENNETT (Minister for the Arts) — As the house is aware, since the last election in 1992 the government has been slowly spending money on restoring Victoria's cultural stock. That includes the State Library, for which the government has already allocated \$40 million. Another \$40 million is being made available and a third tranche will be made available when the museum moves out of the State Library premises in 2000.

Construction work will commence on the museum project at a cost of some \$250 million, and the new Exhibition Centre has been completed. All the new assets will be built or refurbished by the end of this century so that they can be handed over to future generations debt free.

As part of that ongoing renewal of our cultural stock we have been looking very closely at the National Gallery of Victoria. Victoria has the most comprehensive art collection in Australia, but unfortunately the storage facilities and the display facilities of the National Gallery of Victoria have fallen somewhat behind what you would expect of a gallery of this sort. The National Gallery building itself is only 27 years old, so it is not a very old building, but work has been necessitated because storage facilities are so in demand that the display area has actually been reduced.

A master plan proposal for the gallery was presented to the government for consideration earlier this year, and in our arts policy leading up to the election and in the statement the Treasurer is about to make you will find an allocation of \$80 million to be spent over the next two or three years to refurbish the gallery. That is going to mean that the entrance will be changed. At the moment, for those who can envisage it, you walk through what is fundamentally a shower into what is an escalator holding area. It doesn't give you any sense of entering into a gallery, as is the requirement and the fact for most galleries around the world. That entrance will change substantially. New galleries will be built out the back and new storage areas will also be made available to the gallery.

We are also exploring ways to continue to position the gallery internationally. We have some marvellous collections coming here over the next two to three years. As you know, we have the Turner exhibition starting, I think, on 25 June. Melbourneans, whether it be for sporting or cultural or educational pursuits, turn out in droves to quality exhibitions such as the Turner exhibition will be.

We are very pleased to be able to be associated with this renewal of these primary cultural assets. They are not only for this generation; we hope they will be for generations to come. There has been some suggestion that a new gallery should be built on Federation Square and that the existing gallery should be handed over to the Arts Centre, but to actually build a new gallery, regardless of the cost of putting in the decking, would cost something like another \$200 million or \$250 million. We do not

have that money at this stage, so the government will be proceeding with the very extensive renovations of the National Gallery of Victoria, and by doing that will not only build on the gallery's national reputation but will continue to reach out into Asia-Pacific, so that people there can not only experience what we have on display and what we bring together but also can display their art and artefacts in our great gallery.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I refer the Premier to his comment this morning that his decision to buy shares in the Guangdong Corporation was made following a meeting he had as Premier with the company in 1993. Why did the Premier fail to disclose this share purchase in accordance with the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act, which requires members of Parliament to disclose pecuniary interests held by themselves or a member of their family which might appear to raise a material conflict with the member's public duty?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I welcome the honourable member for Niddrie to the Parliament. He has been running the Parliament for the past two years — with David White.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — We thank him in particular for his work with David White during the election campaign, because they decided to run the casino issue and without its presence before the public I think we could have lost another six or seven seats. But your failure to understand what it is that the public of this state want gave us the opportunity to be returned with another record majority.

I also note that the honourable member for Niddrie is coming into this house now continuing the sort of approach he took when he was chief of staff of the Leader of the Opposition and, of course, working with David White. What it clearly indicates is that they are more about personality than they are about policy. They have learnt absolutely nothing from the election whatsoever!

The honourable member refers to the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978. We got a bit of a tip-off that you were going to ask this question, so thank you very much indeed. While I am reaching for the books, I would like to thank the member on that side who provided me with the question. Subsection (i) of section 6(2) of the

Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 says:

Any other substantial interest whether of a pecuniary nature or not of the member or of a member of his family of which the member is aware and which the member considers might appear to raise a material conflict between his private interest and his public duties as a member.

The first point I make is that the shares are not held by me, and you know that. You have been doing the work with Mark Forbes for a number of weeks, so don't come in here saying you didn't know that before you started.

Secondly, the company in which my wife has some shares happens to be a company that is run out of Hong Kong; it operates out of China. It is not a company that I or my wife or even, I suspect, you could have any influence over.

The SPEAKER — Order! Me?

Mr KENNETT — Certainly not you, Sir. Certainly the Victorian government doesn't in any way trade with it. It is true to say that when Channel 7 floated and put out a prospectus, I or my wife — I can't quite remember which, but you will have checked my register and you will notice that those shares have been sold now, anyway — took up some shares there. You might argue that that represented a greater potential conflict of interest, because Channel 7 was Australian and based in Victoria.

The simple answer to your question is that if you have a look at the register of interests itself and what is required you will see there is absolutely no pecuniary interest in terms of there being a potential conflict because the company is not one (a) that is based in Australia, (b) that the government deals with, or (c) that my wife or I could possibly influence.

I can only suggest to you — and we welcome you on board — that you keep them coming. We have four years now to clearly establish that you on that side are still totally devoid of policy and are more interested in personalities.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the honourable member for Niddrie to this place. We on this side will continue to develop policy for the long-term development of this state, while you on that side continue to wallow in something that is less than is demanded by the public.

Training: competitive system

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — Will the Minister for Tertiary Education and Training inform the house of steps being taken by the government to provide an open training market in Victoria?

Mr HONEYWOOD (Minister for Tertiary Education and Training) — I thank the honourable member for his question and for his well-known ongoing interest in providing a flexible and competitive training system.

Having said that, I think all honourable members will be pleased to hear and know that Victoria is actually leading Australia and indeed the world in providing a flexible competitive training system. These are not just the words of some politician but the statement of ANTA, the Australian National Training Authority, which has paid great tribute to the work being done here in ensuring that younger generations in particular have a chance for flexibility in their career options.

You get this flexibility in a number of ways, under our government. One is that whilst completing the VCE you are able, through dual recognition, to embark on TAFE courses and gain credit for TAFE courses, just in case you want to establish what career you want to embark on and you are not quite sure whether university is the thing to do. Equally, you get that flexibility by being able to do TAFE courses that give you credit transfer for university.

The other side of the equation, with training, apprenticeships and so on, is that under our training system in this state you are able to enlist a number of providers, whether they be public or private, that will assist you in achieving those clear outcomes. I am pleased to announce that last week we released \$14.5 million to competitively tendered public and private providers. So for the first time, rather than just giving all the money to the public sector and allowing it to sit back on its laurels, and thus not be gaining flexibility, we have allowed private providers to provide training courses.

With that \$14.5 million — which will provide, I might add, an additional 2.7 million contact hours for students — we have allowed, for example, ACI Fibreglass the opportunity to train people in new techniques in glassmaking, and even the Australian Funeral Directors Association has \$66 000 to train people in new embalming techniques.

Honourable members interjecting.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

102

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

Mr HONEYWOOD — I could think of a few candidates opposite who might like to enrol in that course!

What we are on about is providing the best training system possible in Australia, a world-class training system that will ensure that not only students but also industry and employers know that they are going to get a 100 per cent outcome from whatever training can be accessed, whether it be for employees or for students embarking on career opportunities.

I commend the work of the Office of Training and Further Education in ensuring that Victoria is leading Australia in a competitive and open training system.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — Will the Premier inform the house whether he has ever had discussions with Mr Bruce Mathieson about Mr Mathieson's business activities in relation to poker machines?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I have known Mr Mathieson off and on for very many years, and I cannot recall every conversation I have had with him. I guess you cannot recall every conversation you had when you worked for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs — certainly some of the conversations towards the end of your time.

Mr Speaker, I cannot recall conversations that may have taken place years ago, suffice to say I understand the reference and the implication that the member is trying to make. I can only say, as I think I said yesterday, that applications for poker machines are not made to government. They are made to, firstly, Tattersalls or Tabcorp; then Tattersalls and Tabcorp decide whether any venue that is put forward is worthy of their investment for their particular machine; and if they agree, then the applicant gets a planning permit, and so on. Only at the last stage of the whole process, as I understand it, does the casino authority give a final permit. To the best of my knowledge, I cannot remember ever discussing poker machines in anything else but a general way with individuals — —

An Honourable Member — You have a selective memory.

Mr KENNETT — No, it is not selective at all, but if you can tell me what you were doing last week

hour by hour I would be surprised, let alone what you were doing last month or last year!

The SPEAKER — Order! If the Premier is addressing that remark to the Chair, I certainly could not give him that information.

Mr KENNETT — Thank you. I could not give a categorical assurance about conversations that may or may not have taken place some years ago. To the best of my knowledge the answer is no.

Mr Micallef — You may have talked to him or you may not.

Mr KENNETT — I may have talked to you, but I would have been stupid!

Rail: Upfield line

Mr PHILLIPS (Eltham) — Will the Minister for Transport inform the house of the funding boost to the state public transport service, in particular the Upfield railway line?

Mr BROWN (Minister for Transport) — I am delighted to respond to this question, and in doing so, to acknowledge the longstanding commitment of the honourable member for Eltham to improvement in public transport not just in Victoria but in his own electorate. Like most members of this house, he inherited a decrepit system that the Labor decade of disrepair left in transport. We had ministers like Snappy Tom just take it from one crisis to another, not to mention all the others — the lesser lights they had in that portfolio.

I am pleased to inform the house that today the Treasurer will detail a \$103 million capital boost for Victoria's public transport system — yet again. The centrepiece of this capital spending program is a \$25 million upgrade of the long-neglected Upfield rail line.

Upfield is a line that former Labor governments and ministers not only neglected but did everything they could to actually close. The Labor Party left that region and that community in absolute despair about the future of Upfield. Even though Labor was in government federally as well as in this state, for over a decade, it did not lift a finger to provide one dollar for an upgrade of that line. They sit mute — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister may not debate the question.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

103

Mr BROWN — May not what?

The SPEAKER — Debate the question.

Mr BROWN — I am not debating the question. I am saying, Mr Speaker, that this decrepit mob sat mute —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BROWN — Even with the tens of millions of dollars available under the Better Cities funding, the local members did not lift a finger to get a dollar for the Upfield line and its future.

Unlike the Labor government, this government will upgrade and improve services and facilities on the Upfield line, which were neglected for years by the Cain and Kirner governments. On top of that, this government gave a commitment as far back as April of last year to save the line.

The upgrade that is now to take place will bring Upfield up to a standard that is as good as that of any rail service in Australia. Labor left Upfield with not just a second-class decrepit service, but a service that operated 5 days a week, and a half service on a Saturday. Today it remains the poor relation in Melbourne as far as the suburban rail system is concerned. When the capital infrastructure is completed, our upgrade will extend to providing a 7-day-and-night-a-week service for that train line. That means the people in this former Labor heartland that were left for dead will, under this coalition government, get the public transport service for which they have yearned for so long.

That is not all. There is more; there is much more. In addition, we will provide funding to the tune of \$23.8 million for improvements to customer facilities at the jewel in the Crown — of course, I refer to Flinders Street station — which is again honouring an election commitment given by this government.

There are other funding initiatives. They include: a further \$14.2 million to be spent on the continued upgrade of metropolitan rail stations, including our 61 premium stations. That again is acknowledging that we were left with a system where all the suburban stations, over 200 of them, were literally falling apart — rotting into the ground in many cases. The money, in reference to the question I have been asked in part, will continue to be spent by this government to renovate and reinvigorate the precincts of every suburban station. In country Victoria —

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr BROWN — I won't print it myself, buddy! Country rail services will also benefit. We will spend \$5.6 million on our country rail stations. These additional capital commitments will deliver better services to all public transport users in Victoria, regardless of where they live, whether it be in the centre of Melbourne, anywhere in the metropolitan area, or in regional or rural Victoria.

Unlike the Labor Party when in office, this government cares. This can-do government is continuing the marked reforms in transport on an ongoing basis and over the next four years the people of Victoria can look to continuing improvements, as they have had in the past three and a half years.

Auditor-General's report: advertising

Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. I refer the Premier to today's scathing report tabled by the Auditor-General, which found that numerous advertisements and publications by the Kennett government since 1992 were clearly party political and that the use of public funds for this purpose was totally inappropriate and quite improper. I ask: will the Premier arrange for the cost of this party-political advertising to be billed to the Liberal Party, which, as the Auditor-General notes, has been necessary in similar circumstances in other states?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking a relevant question. The report has been presented today, and it is only fair that you should ask a question about it.

I shall firstly make a general response to the Auditor-General's report. Now that the Auditor-General is moving to performance audits, which is a requirement of the Parliament and he answers back to Parliament through them, one problem or difficulty we are noticing is that a lot of the people doing the audits have never been involved in the particular fields they are auditing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — The fact that members on the other side laugh is an indication that they do not understand the difference between a compliance audit and a performance audit. If you examine this Auditor-General's report on this area of government activity and compare it with the reports handed

down at the New South Wales and commonwealth levels, you will note a great similarity in the expressions and wording used. I do not put that down as necessarily a criticism of the Auditor-General, except to make the point that if you are going to have performance audits of anything, whether it be a government or a private sector function, the people doing or assisting in doing the audits have to have an understanding of the industry itself otherwise you cannot make the comparisons or the claims that are being made.

The government has taken on board some aspects of the Auditor-General's report and has rejected other areas, and they are spelt out in part in the responses from the department to various claims made by the Auditor-General. I refute the claims of the Leader of the Opposition that these were party political — —

Mr Brumby — That's what it says.

Mr KENNETT — The government is criticised by the opposition because it does not tell the public enough about what it is doing — there are a whole range of areas where that is clearly the case and where that is on the public record. I can only say to the opposition that it is right: we should communicate more, and we will continue to try to do so. I believe it is correct for any government to spend money on informing people of what it is doing. When the Labor Party was last in office four years ago it used to spend the community's money on informing people what government programs were about. The federal government used to do it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition continues to interject across the table. He has asked his question; if he wants to ask another question I will call him, but I ask him not to continue interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — The Leader of the Opposition does not understand that for the first time in Victoria we have amalgamated all the purchasing power of all the agencies. Under the previous Labor government the Gas and Fuel and the SEC did their own business and there was no central point to bring all the advertising and promotion together. As the Auditor-General says, in amalgamating the purchasing power we have saved the community millions and millions of dollars.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! If the Leader of the Opposition continues to interject across the table I will simply call the next question. I assume he would like to have the answer, so I ask him to be quiet.

Mr KENNETT — There are aspects of the Auditor-General's report that we are taking on board and others that we reject, for the reasons I have given. That is the whole nature of the auditing process, particularly when you get auditing on performance as opposed to auditing on compliance.

As I assured the Auditor-General before we entered government in 1992, we will in all cases take on board his reports and respond to those things that we pick up and believe should be followed up and those things on which we have a difference of opinion. There are quite obviously parts of this — —

Mr Thwaites interjected.

Mr KENNETT — Are you going to feign anger again? Go on, get cross! You get very cross.

As I said, one of the difficulties with performance audits is very simply the fact that there are people — —

An honourable member interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier to ignore interjections.

Mr KENNETT — I have missed the past three months of being in this house! The trouble with performance audits is simply that if you are to be audited on performance, the people doing the audits need assistance — independent of government of course — in understanding the issues and what the auditing is all about. The government will respond to the report in the normal way.

Solicitors Guarantee Fund: levy

Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) — I refer the Attorney-General to comments in the *Age* newspaper that the legal profession is in uproar over the Solicitors Guarantee Fund levy and comments by the Law Institute of Victoria that solicitors are not paying the levy. Will the Attorney-General inform the house of the government's reaction to these reports?

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) — I am sure members who have read the article in the *Age*

TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

105

reporting that thousands of lawyers were not paying a levy imposed by legislation passed by this Parliament would have been most concerned. Honourable members will recall that the levy was imposed by this Parliament as a result of deficiencies in the Solicitors Guarantee Fund that had been caused by more and larger defalcations — or, as I prefer to call them, thefts and frauds — by members of the legal profession — that is, solicitors. The levy was an important part of getting the fund back into a strong financial position.

On 2 April the *Age* published an article suggesting the whole scheme was about to collapse. It is headed 'Legal system in uproar as solicitors reject levy' and states that Victoria's legal system faces severe disruption after thousands of solicitors were automatically suspended from practising because of their failure to pay the levy.

It further states:

In an unprecedented act of defiance, the majority of 5600 solicitors liable for the levy are believed to have missed the deadline for payment.

It then refers to further disasters: that they will be no longer legally able to act for clients, appear in court or give legal advice. It also says that several solicitors strongly objected to the levy and would defy the legislation and that the full impact on clients would be unprecedented. I do not know where this story came from. I took up the matter with the Law Institute of Victoria, whose chief executive said the *Age* story was a silly little beat-up.

I have a report about the levy from Mr Gerry Glennen, who is employed at the institute, to the executive of the institute dated 16 April 1996. I must say that the plot thickens because this short report to the law institute executive states — and I should like the house to note the figures — that 5523 payments of the levy had been processed and that the law institute had indicated it was expecting to receive it from 5400 solicitors. The report also said that 100 payments were yet to be processed. Therefore, on the one hand the law institute appears to have more than 200 payments it was not expecting, but on the other hand the report goes on to state that 700 people the institute had expected to pay the levy have not done so. Things are a bit complicated there! It tells us something about solicitors. It also says something about the law institute and its knowledge of its members.

I advise the house that there is no need for concern about the collection of the Solicitors Guarantee Fund levy.

I have been advised by the law institute that it has collected \$2.9 million as a result of the levy and while the institute is paying out refunds to those who paid but should not have and is chasing up others who have not paid it appears our original estimate of a total of about \$3 million was just about right.

TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

The SPEAKER laid on table warrant nominating Mr Andrianopoulos, Mr Cole, Mr Cunningham, Mr Jasper, Mr McArthur, Mr Maughan, Mr Perrin, Mr Perton, Mrs Peulich, Mr A. F. Plowman, Mr Richardson and Mr Seitz to act as Temporary Chairmen of Committees.

TEMPORARY RELIEF IN CHAIR

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

That during any absence of Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Speaker be authorised to call upon any of the Temporary Chairmen of Committees to temporarily relieve him in the chair and that during any absence of Mr Speaker, Mr Deputy Speaker be similarly authorised to call upon any of the temporary chairmen.

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Membership

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — By leave, I move:

House Committee

That Mr Dollis, Mr Jenkins, Mr Leigh, Mr J. F. McGrath and Mrs Wilson be members of the House Committee; and that the committee have leave to sit on days on which the house does not meet.

Library Committee

That Mr Speaker, Mr Carli, Mrs Maddigan, Mrs Peulich and Mr Treasure be members of the Library Committee; and that the committee have leave to sit on days on which the house does not meet.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (INTERIM 1996-97) BILL

Message read recommending interim appropriation for 1996-97.

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer), pursuant to standing order no. 169(a), introduced a bill to make interim appropriation of moneys out of the consolidated fund for recurrent services and for certain works and purposes for the period July to October 1996.

Read first time.

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that I have given permission for still photographs to be taken from the press gallery during the presentation of the Treasurer's autumn economic statement. No additional lighting or flashlights will be used.

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today's autumn economic statement continues the mature and intelligent partnership between the people of Victoria and their government. The statement recognises that Victorians understand the need for a medium-term strategy, consistent with a long-term vision of a more secure and confident state, if we are to keep Victoria on the move. Victorians know this course is not always easy. They know who undermined our social and economic security and they know what has to be done to rebuild. Despite the sometimes painful adjustments, they have shown that they support that rebuilding.

The government will not let them down. This is not a statement of flashy slogans and reckless new spending. It is solid and reliable; the fruits of hard work and commonsense. The statement is a measured implementation of the program on which the Kennett government was elected and re-elected. It offers further rewards for the community's hard work after 1992 but it also offers a firm foundation for the expectation that people's security will increase and that their quality of life will continue to improve. The new spending and the tax reductions are responsible and sustainable. The benefits already achieved are being locked in and the foundations for

further gains put in place. This statement is based on the mutual respect of a good government and a people who have confidence in that government.

In the March 1996 state election, the Kennett coalition government sought a new mandate from the Victorian people. The government asked the Victorian public not only for their approval of the actions the government had taken during its first term, but, more importantly, for an expression of their confidence in our government's vision for Victoria into the 21st century. Victorians have responded by giving the government that new mandate.

The economic benefits of the decisions taken during the government's first term are already apparent. There has been sustained economic recovery in Victoria during our first term. There has been a 6 per cent rise in Victorian workers' productivity — better than the Australian average for this period — and a 5 per cent rise in real average earnings. Exports are up by one-third in value — again a better than average outcome. In addition, Melbourne currently has Australia's lowest inflation rate, with an annual inflation rate to March of 2.9 per cent compared to 3.7 per cent nationally, thanks to the abolition of the state deficit levy and reductions in council rates.

Business is feeling more confident, and this is reflected in a rise of over 20 per cent in business investment. The unemployment rate has declined from over 12 per cent, the highest in Australia, to a trend rate below 9 per cent. 180 000 new private sector jobs have been created since late 1992 and the rate of interstate migration from Victoria has consistently slowed.

There is now much greater confidence about the Victorian economy in general and about the role of the state government in particular. A number of factors have contributed to this turnaround, including economic recovery outside Victoria and Australia, but the implementation of sound economic policy at the state level has been fundamental.

The 1995 Price Waterhouse/University of New South Wales Business Econometrics and Forecasting Group survey of business and economic performance and prospects for Australian states gave Victoria the highest rating for conduct of economic policy, and concluded that 'it is only for Victoria that the state government has been more

important than the federal government in reducing unemployment'.

Although Victoria no longer faces the unsustainable spiralling deficits that confronted us in 1992, there remain a number of potential risks to the sound fiscal position the government has established. Victoria's debt, although slashed by a third, still stands at over \$22 billion. Victoria's budget sector debt servicing ratio of 12.5 per cent is greater than those of South Australia and Tasmania, and more than double those of New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. As a result, Victoria's public finances remain vulnerable to increases in world interest rates.

A future world economic downturn would also adversely affect the Australian and Victorian economy. If demand for services, particularly in areas such as health, increases more rapidly than forecast this will place further strain on government finances. There is an ongoing risk that future commonwealth governments may not maintain funding policies which recognise the increasing demands on state budgets.

Improved economic performance by other states and competitors overseas constantly presses the Victorian community to continue improving efficiency and costs. Some Victorian revenue sources are not secure. For example, the state's opportunity cost tax on gas is already being phased out. For the sake of the Victorian community, no future Victorian government can afford to lose its resolve to deal with these issues.

The Kennett government has tackled the state's economic and budgetary problems effectively and constructively, and will continue to do so. Victoria can expect to see sustained real economic growth of around 3 per cent per annum, consistent with the national outlook, over the forward estimates period. We have established a base from which we can begin to overcome the handicap of a relatively high tax structure. Delivering tax reductions depends on the government achieving sustainable surpluses by maintaining the momentum of reform.

Improved Services

The government's reforms are delivering better services to the community. In 1995-96, around 850 000 patients are expected to be treated in Victorian hospitals, 14 per cent up on three years ago, and at a real cost per patient which is 25 per cent lower. In October 1992, 924 patients had to wait

more than 30 days for urgent surgery; by December 1995, only 3 patients were in that situation.

Education standards are also improving. A recent Industry Commission report found that 48 per cent of Victoria's school leavers went on to tertiary education, placing Victoria third among the Australian states, compared to fifth in 1991-92. The Victorian Learning Assessment Program, which was held for the first time in 1995, revealed that 90 per cent of primary students in years 3 and 5 were achieving defined standards for their age range in English and mathematics.

The government is in a position to deliver on its election promises, with over \$100 million of new annual spending to meet demand in public services. This total includes :

- an extra \$14 million for teacher training in learning technologies;

- \$10 million for administration and teacher support in schools;

- \$6 million for the Reading Recovery program;

- \$4 million for bilingual schools and teachers;

- a \$25 million community carer package;

- \$8 million for youth suicide prevention measures;

- \$5 million for the Hospital in the Home program;

- \$4 million in increased payments to foster care providers;

- \$8 million for continuation of the Agriculture and Food Initiative research and development program; and

- continuation of \$4 million for the Strategic Industry Research Foundation.

Capital Works

To ensure we plan soundly for the future, the government has increased budget sector infrastructure investment to around 1¼ per cent of gross state product. In 1996-97 work will begin on over \$1 billion worth of major new projects, with \$287 million being spent in the first year. These projects include :

new health and community services infrastructure costing \$156 million, including redevelopment of Geelong and Wodonga hospitals, Metropolitan Healthcare Network projects, aged care works in Ballarat and Bendigo, improved disability and mental health facilities, and health care centres;

new schools and improvements to school and TAFE college facilities, including \$20 million for the Classrooms of the Future program;

transport infrastructure including the Flinders Street Station upgrade, the Boronia rail crossing, and upgrading of country stations;

long-delayed major additions to Parliament House, at a total cost of \$80 million;

improvements to the National Gallery funded through the Agenda 21 program; and

the construction of police station and court complexes at Ballarat and Sunshine.

Tax Relief

Thousands of small business people, first home buyers with dependent children, and pensioners will also benefit from the taxation reductions detailed in today's statement. Small business will save a total of \$10 million a year because of the government's decision to abolish mortgage stamp duty charges on the refinancing of business loans. This move is expected to assist up to 10 000 small business owners each year and enhance competitive pressure on banks and other finance providers.

Community clubs and charities will benefit by \$6 million a year from the removal of the turnover surcharge on bingo, lucky envelopes and raffles.

From 1 July, thousands of first home buyers with dependent children will benefit from the government's decision to lift the maximum home value for which a stamp duty concession applies from \$111 000 to \$150 000 and to raise the maximum family income eligibility from \$34 000 to \$40 000 a year.

The pensioner home purchase stamp duty concession is also being significantly extended. Pensioners will be eligible for stamp duty concessions on the purchase of homes valued up to \$100 000 in place of the previous \$65 000 limit that had remained unchanged since 1985.

These spending and taxation initiatives are only part of the benefits in terms of real improvements in living standards arising from a strengthening economy and from better delivery of government services.

Every Victorian is benefiting from an average 16 per cent reduction in the real price of electricity since 1992. Since 1993-94, the average Victorian household has saved around \$100 a year because of the government's decision to freeze electricity, gas and water charges. The vast majority of Victorian households and businesses are now better off as a result of an overall reduction of around 20 per cent in local government rates.

Except for raising tobacco franchise fees from 75 per cent to the national standard of 100 per cent, Victoria has not increased tax rates or charges over the last three years. Indeed, we have halved stamp duty on securities, abolished the state deficit levy as promised, and reduced the state's reliance on land tax.

Despite the great strides taken by the Victorian community in the last three years, there is still a long way to travel to reach the tax and spending levels of our major competitors in New South Wales and Queensland. It will cost \$400 million a year in foregone revenue to reduce Victoria's business taxes to the levels of NSW. Taking the next step to reduce business taxes to the Australian average will cost a further \$100 million per annum. Victoria has begun the process of reducing its tax burden and the government is committed to continuing these benefits to Victorians.

From the current year, 1995-96, through to the end of the budget forward estimates period, the government is now projecting a modest surplus each year as the underlying overall budget outcome. This underlying position will allow us to move some of the way towards reducing taxes to NSW levels, but further sustainable tax reductions will require additional savings through continued reform and greater efficiency in the delivery of government services. The government has already commenced action to obtain a further \$500 million to \$600 million savings through greater efficiency in administration and service delivery. Capturing these additional savings will not require the type of across-the-board measures introduced in 1992-93.

A Broad Economic Strategy

Fiscal restraint was a prime focus of policy in the first term. This was an inevitable consequence of the budgetary problems facing Victoria. However, this restraint was always part of a broader strategy to improve the competitiveness of Victoria and create the environment for stronger economic growth. The basic elements of the strategy are to:

- refocus service delivery on the outcomes for which government is responsible, and increase the range of choice available to consumers of those services;
- lower business costs by making government more efficient and private industry more competitive;
- streamline business regulation to encourage investment and competition;
- upgrade the economic and social infrastructure which supports growth; and
- provide leadership and assistance where this can trigger initiative.

Restoration of fiscal balance was essential for reviving business confidence and enabling reductions in business costs, as well as a necessary precondition for securing our broader reform objectives. Now that the state's budget position has been restored to a sustainable position, other elements of the strategy will come into sharper focus in the second term.

Eliminating the Budget Deficit

When the coalition first came into office in 1992, the Victorian budget was heading for a deficit approaching \$2 billion and rising. Public debt was high and accelerating, with debt-servicing costs the highest of all states.

We have turned this situation around in a way which is economically responsible.

The 'headline' 1995-96 budget outcome is now expected to be a surplus of \$4936.1 million. However, almost \$4700 million of this surplus arises from the effect of the sales of electricity sector assets and the receipt of tax equivalent payments associated with the sale of the electricity distribution businesses. Excluding these and other one-off items, the 'underlying' budget position is still a surplus, albeit a more modest \$141.7 million.

Looking beyond 1995-96, the forward estimates provided in this statement under the usual 'unchanged policy' assumption show continuing surpluses for the remainder of this decade. These again include several substantial one-off components, in particular electricity franchise fees and contributions from gas distribution, both of which will be substantially reduced by the end of the forward estimates period.

The underlying position projected in the forward estimates is an approximately balanced budget in 1996-97, followed by a surplus of almost \$300 million in 1997-98, almost \$200 million in 1998-99 and \$150 million in 1999-2000. This surplus will vary depending on how economic trends unfold.

Debt Reduction

The government has made considerable progress during 1995-96 towards its long-term budget target of reducing debt and debt service ratios to levels consistent with restoration of Victoria's AAA credit rating. At 30 June 1995 Victoria's public sector net debt stood at \$32.5 billion. Current projections indicate that this debt will fall to around \$22.7 billion by 30 June 1996, substantially through the privatisation of electricity businesses.

Even excluding the impacts of future asset sales, the projections of Victoria's net public sector debt to the year 1999-2000 indicate that during this period, the ratio of the state's public sector net debt to gross state product will fall below the current level of New South Wales, a AAA-rated state.

This improvement, together with the improved budgetary outlook, is reflected in the virtual elimination of any special risk premium on Victorian government bonds. Interest rate margins on Victorian 10-year debt had reached as high as 90 basis points above New South Wales levels in 1992. The margin has since fallen to a negligible 2 basis points as a result of the initiatives taken by the government.

Improving Service Delivery

The biggest single step was to rationalise service delivery in the state. When the coalition government's first term commenced, Victoria was clearly overspending on public services like health and education. Based on the methodology of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the level of service provision in 1992-93 was 13 per cent above the average of all states, after adjusting for

population and other state-specific differences. Much of this extra spending was of low value: taxpayers were not getting value for money. The challenge was to restructure service delivery to maintain, or even improve, standards as resources were scaled back.

Reducing the cost of service delivery meant that the government had to take significant steps, including reducing the budget sector work force by around 20 per cent. This required considerable effort by departments to implement efficiency improvements which would minimise the impact on services. The task was to identify the core services which needed to be delivered and then establish an environment which encouraged competition between potential service providers and provided public sector managers with the incentive to deliver high quality services at least cost.

Where possible, the government also tried to expand the choices available to users of government services. Such choice is an important way of ensuring that the right services are provided: it will be given increased focus in the second term of this government.

The evidence shows that, by and large, we have managed to maintain, and often improve, the quality and range of public services available to Victorians, notwithstanding the rationalisation of recent years. In particular:

the school system ranks highly against interstate benchmarks despite reductions in teacher numbers; and

there has been increased provision of health services and reductions in hospital waiting lists even while savings have been made in health service delivery costs.

The government's program of large-scale across-the-board savings in departmental operating costs has now been implemented, and the budget has been restored to a sustainable position. Maintaining this balance will require ongoing scrutiny of all areas of government to ensure that the efficiency and quality of services is constantly improved, especially if there is to be scope for sustainable reductions in taxes, but will not require a repetition of the adjustments made in 1992 and 1993.

We remain committed to the annual 1.5 per cent productivity dividend and will continue the change to managing outputs, rather than simply focussing

on inputs. In fact, we aim to deepen the commitment to output management. Agencies will need to consider all the time whether services are best provided by private providers, rather than by government. This distinction between *purchaser* and *provider* will be a key focus of continuing reforms across the service delivery sector. The focus will be on improving the quality, quantity, and relevance of public services.

The improvement in the government's fiscal position has already provided the to fund some important new priorities, including:

upgrading of teacher training in learning technologies;

additional funding to meet demand for acute care services in public hospitals; and

greater assistance to community and family carers.

Improvements in service have also been announced in a number of other areas, and a general provision has been made for demand growth in service delivery areas such as education and health over the forward estimates period.

I turn now to other areas of the government's economic strategy.

Workcover

Victoria is now at the forefront in providing workers compensation. Workcover is today fully funded. With a competitive insurance market delivering benefits to both workers and employees, premiums are now the lowest of all states and represent a reduction in annual business costs of \$500 million since 1992-93.

The changes have fundamentally improved workplace culture in this state: return to work rates have improved dramatically. There has not been a compromise on safety standards. On the contrary, the result has been achieved by a shift in focus from prescriptive technical standards to maximising outcomes on workplace safety. Average benefits paid have increased.

Reform of Local Government

The government has implemented widespread operational and structural reforms of local government which include a reduction in the number of councils from 210 to 78, the introduction

of competitive tendering for local government, reforms to management via performance based contracts, and requirements for corporate plans and annual reports.

These reforms will result in an overall reduction in rates of 17.7 per cent or \$263 million in 1995-96. This represents a reduction in rates for 9 in 10 ratepayers. The reduction in business rates will be around 20 per cent.

Infrastructure Provision

Public utilities provide much of the social and economic infrastructure so crucial to strong economic growth. Another large component of this infrastructure is provided more directly by government — in the form of roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other facilities. The government has, from the start, underlined its determination to ensure that Victoria has adequate public infrastructure to attract new business and contribute to a more productive economy. This objective is being achieved by new capital spending as well as by measures to ensure that existing infrastructure is used efficiently.

A substantial additional amount of capital spending is also being undertaken by private operators under contract to the government. Construction of City Link, one of the largest infrastructure projects ever undertaken in Australia, will commence this year and be completed by 2000. At the peak of construction up to 4000 persons will be directly employed and another 4500 new jobs will be created in associated industries. It is estimated that an additional 5000 jobs will be created directly and indirectly by the completed project. Development of privately owned and operated prisons is also under way. By 1998-99, around 40 per cent of Victoria's prisoners will be held in privately operated prisons.

To ensure a rigorous approach to state public sector investment, new *Investment Evaluation Guidelines* will be applied to all proposed investment projects. Investment proposals will need to be justified in terms of service needs, policy priorities, and departmental objectives.

Competition and Regulation

The government has actively pursued measures to reduce the burden of unnecessary regulations and increase competitive forces operating in the Victorian economy.

Government has reduced the burden of compliance with red tape, especially for small business. During 1995, a 25 per cent reduction in business licences was achieved along with a 14 per cent reduction in the number of new regulations.

The application of competition policy to the delivery of government goods and services will bring significant benefits to the Victorian community. Through increasing commercial discipline, competition principles will assist the government to improve internal efficiency and responsiveness to customer needs in the delivery of government goods and services.

In April 1995, the Victorian government, and other state and territory governments, signed three agreements to give effect to the aims of national competition policy.

Reforming Public Utilities

In its first term, this government also placed high priority on improving the efficiency of the state-owned enterprises supplying electricity, gas, water and other infrastructure services to the community. Our aim was to correct the inefficiencies and waste which had developed in the publicly owned monopolies which dominated these sectors.

The incentives facing these enterprises were not consistent with providing high-quality low cost services. We needed to introduce greater accountability and more competition, while at the same time providing the means to safeguard community interests where these might be put at risk in a more competitive setting. We have made considerable progress. Victoria is at the leading edge of reform in this area, not only in Australia but internationally.

The electricity supply industry is radically changed. The monolithic SECV has gone, to be replaced by a number of distribution and generation companies all using a common transmission grid. The distribution companies have all been privatised, and we have also sold one of the generation businesses, Yallourn Energy, which was, incidentally, the largest privatisation to date in Australia. The remaining generation businesses will be sold as soon as commercially feasible.

Proceeds to date from these changes of ownership total \$10.7 billion, enabling state debt to be cut by a third. The Auditor-General has reported that privatisation produced a significant increase in the

net worth of the state. Interest savings have offset the loss of dividends with a net gain to the budget already of around \$400 million a year.

As significant as these interest savings are, in the long run they are less important than the benefits to consumers. The bottom line for consumers will be greater choice between providers, and hence more incentive on the electricity companies to hold down costs and improve service quality. The government has ensured that cost reductions take place during the transition period to full competition in 2000. Electricity tariffs have been held constant since November 1992, effectively an 11 per cent reduction in the real price since that time. Real prices are set to fall a further 5 per cent over the period to 2001.

The reforms place our state in a strong position to take advantage of the development of a national electricity market. Victorian electricity businesses will be very competitive suppliers to that market as it comes into operation.

We have also been moving in other areas, including the restructuring and - in some cases — corporatisation of transport operators and water authorities, the sale of ports, and a new industry structure for gas supply. These reforms will continue. The approaches adopted will be tailored to individual circumstances.

We have no ideological commitment to privatisation for its own sake. The objective has always been value for money for the taxpayers we represent. Performance of GBEs can be and is being substantially improved through the discipline of corporatisation. Government's receipts from GBEs (excluding the electricity industry) are projected to increase by 13.1 per cent in 1996-97 and a further 10.5 per cent in 1997-98, as the reforms take effect.

Investment Strategies

Victorian companies are becoming increasingly successful in penetrating world markets, with exports increasing from \$8.5 billion to \$13 billion between 1988-89 and 1994-95. Business Victoria has supported this expansion through initiatives such as targeted trade fairs and export manager programs and will continue to support strategic export opportunities.

The Victorian government can and does play a strategic role in attracting new investors and economic activity to the State. Over 1000 grants will

be made to Victorian firms during 1995-96 under the joint Commonwealth-State AusIndustry program.

The government aims to promote an innovation culture in both traditional and emerging high value industries such as multimedia. Government will continue to encourage the trend of international multimedia firms establishing regional headquarters in Victoria.

The government has aggressively marketed Melbourne and Victoria as a destination for business investment and tourism. Central to this has been the production of *Advantage Melbourne*, a benchmarking study which compares Melbourne to other states and key overseas competitors. The study shows that Melbourne is highly competitive with many major international cities over a range of indicators.

Commonwealth-State Relations

With a new coalition government in Canberra, the Victorian government is optimistic about greater progress in sensible reform of federal-state relations. The government supports moves to reduce duplication between the two levels of government, as well as a more predictable and equitable funding system and a reduction in the degree of imbalance between spending responsibilities and taxing powers.

Interim Appropriation Bill

The Interim Appropriation Bill which I am now introducing continues the practice commenced in 1994-95 whereby new initiatives can start at the beginning of the financial year rather than awaiting the passing of the September budget bills. This practice puts resource management on a more businesslike footing and facilitates effective project planning.

For the information of honourable members, details of the new capital projects and the new recurrent policies are set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the explanatory memorandum of the bill. Additional information on these initiatives is contained in the autumn economic statement.

In line with established appropriation arrangements, the amounts included in Schedule 1 of the bill follow net appropriation principles whereby certain receipts are credited to a department's appropriations. Details of these receipts are set out in Table 3 of the Explanatory Memorandum.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (INTERIM 1996-97) BILL

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

113

Appropriations to departments in Schedule 1 of the bill have been made in line with the revised structure of government as effected recently by the machinery of government changes.

The amounts contained in Schedule 1 are based on salary rates which applied as at 17 April 1996. The effects of any approved salary and wage increases which may be handed down during the remainder of this financial year, or in the first four months of next year which affect expenditure during the interim period will be handled from the contingency provisions contained in the bill.

The total appropriation sought in the bill is \$4808.7 million. This amount is made up of \$4295 million for recurrent expenditure and \$513.7 million for works and services expenditure.

This legislation will lapse when the Appropriation (1996-97, No.1) Bill is passed by the Parliament.

Conclusion

The Victorian community can be very proud of the success of its efforts over the last three and a half years. The challenge for the government in its second term is to maintain the momentum for change and growth, while locking in the dividends from reforms already in place. We must build on the renewed confidence in Victoria with coordinated economic and fiscal strategies to lay the foundations of sustained economic development into the 21st century.

The 1995 autumn economic statement set out the Kennett government's four long-term fiscal policy objectives, with medium-term targets to be achieved by 1998-99. These targets were:

to maintain budget sector investment at around 1¼ per cent of gross state product;

to achieve real reductions in per capita service delivery costs through improved productivity;

to use privatisation proceeds to reduce public sector debt; and

to achieve an operating surplus sufficient to cover depreciation of the budget sector capital stock, without increasing the state's overall tax effort.

The first three of these targets are already being achieved. The fourth will be achieved, on the policy settings in this statement, by 1997-98.

The wider economic and fiscal goals of establishing competitive markets; expanding scope for consumer choice; transferring public activities to the private sector; and bringing Victoria's overall tax effort into closer alignment with the average of the Australian states will be achieved over the course of this second term. This 1996 autumn economic statement demonstrates that the government remains dedicated to achieving these goals.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 22 May.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (INTERIM 1996-97) BILL

Message read recommending appropriation.

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer), pursuant to standing order no. 169(a), introduced a bill to make interim appropriation of moneys out of the consolidated fund for recurrent services and for certain works and services for the Parliament for the period July to October 1996.

Read first time.

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will be aware that separate appropriation legislation is presented for the Parliament. This interim appropriation bill provides for the necessary appropriation to cover the ongoing operating costs of the Parliament for the period July to October 1996.

In line with the wishes of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council, the amounts included in schedule 1 of the bill are presented in program format. The amounts are based on salary rates which applied as at 17 April 1996. The effects of any approved salary and wage increases which may be handed down during the remainder of this financial year, or in the first four months of next year, which affect expenditure during the period will be handled

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL

114

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

through the contingency provisions contained in the Appropriation (Interim 1996-97) Bill.

The total amount sought is \$10.4 million (\$10 439 500). This amount is made up of \$9.8 million (\$9 839 500) for recurrent expenditure and \$0.6 million (\$600 000) for works and services expenditure.

This legislation will lapse when the Appropriation (Parliament 1996-97, No. 1) Bill is passed by Parliament.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 22 May.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

For Mr McNAMARA (Minister for Agriculture and Resources), Mr W. D. McGrath introduced a bill to amend the Biological Control Act 1986 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

STATE TAXATION (OMNIBUS AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to make miscellaneous amendments to the Business Franchise (Tobacco) Act 1974, the Debits Tax Act 1990, the Financial Institutions Duty Act 1982, the Land Tax Act 1958, the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971, the Stamps Act 1958 and the Valuation of Land Act 1960 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

SUPERANNUATION ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, the Hospitals Superannuation Act 1988, the Local Authorities Superannuation Act 1988, the

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968, the Public Sector Superannuation (Administration) Act 1993, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979, the State Superannuation Act 1988, the Superannuation (Public Sector) Act 1992, the Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989, the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 and certain other acts, to repeal the Superannuation Acts (General Amendment) Act 1995 and the Superannuation Acts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 1995 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

VICTORIAN MANAGED INSURANCE AUTHORITY BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to establish the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority and for other purposes.

Read first time.

WATER ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to amend the Water Act 1989, the Water Industry Act 1994 and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to amend the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Accident Compensation (WorkCover Insurance) Act 1993 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY
(AMENDMENT) BILL***Introduction and first reading*

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) introduced a bill to amend the Electricity Industry Act 1993 and certain other acts and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**LEGAL PROFESSION PRACTICE
(DIRECT MORTGAGES) BILL***Introduction and first reading*

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) introduced a bill to amend the Legal Profession Practice (Amendment) Act 1995 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mrs HENDERSON (Minister for Housing) introduced a bill to amend the Housing Act 1983 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

**DOMESTIC BUILDING CONTRACTS
AND TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL***Introduction and first reading*

For Mr MACLELLAN (Minister for Planning and Local Government), Mr Gude introduced a bill to amend the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995, the House Contracts Guarantee Act 1987 and the Building Act 1993 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

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

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I move:

1. That this house authorises —

- (a) the televising and broadcasting of Legislative Assembly proceedings excluding debate on a

motion that grievances be noted and debate on a motion moved by a minister for the adjournment of the house at the end of a day's proceedings; and

- (b) the broadcasting and re-broadcasting on radio and television stations of recorded sound excerpts of proceedings in the Legislative Assembly commencing at the time fixed for the meeting of the house until the motion is moved or the question is proposed (and is not put forthwith and negatived) for the adjournment of the house excluding debate on a motion that grievances be noted.
2. That the following conditions apply and any breach of these conditions may result in the immediate suspension of privileges by Mr Speaker:
- (a) Sound recording pursuant to paragraph 1(a) and 1(b) shall be recorded only from the audio signal of proceedings transmitted by the house monitoring system by representatives of accredited media organisations. No alteration to the sound relay equipment is permitted without the permission of Mr Speaker. The use of separate recording equipment by television stations is not permitted.
 - (b) Television recording shall not commence until the conclusion of the prayer.
 - (c) Television recording and excerpts pursuant to paragraph 1(b) shall be used only for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings and reasonable balance between both sides of the house is to be achieved by avoiding undue concentration on any one member.
 - (d) Television recording and excerpts relating to paragraph 1(b) shall not be used for:
 - (i) political party advertising or election campaigns;
 - (ii) satire or ridicule;
 - (iii) commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising; or
 - (iv) television station advertisements or promotion.
 - (e) Television recording of any particular proceeding must provide equality between government and non-government members.
 - (f) Television reports of proceedings shall be such as to provide a balanced presentation of differing views and may not include the

rebroadcast of events in the chamber unrelated to the proceedings of the house.

- (g) Television excerpts and excerpts relating to paragraph 1(b) must be placed in context. Commentators should identify members at least by name.
- (h) Television excerpts shall not misrepresent any proceeding before the house or the seating position or office held by any member of the house.
- (i) All filming shall be conducted in accordance with guidelines issued by Mr Speaker.
- (j) Points of order or remarks withdrawn are not to be rebroadcast.
- (k) Media personnel are required to obey any instruction given by Mr Speaker or Mr Speaker's delegates.

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I oppose the motion and wish to move amendments to it. I move:

1. That in subparagraph 1(a) the words 'excluding debate on a motion that grievances be noted and debate on a motion moved by a minister for the adjournment of the house at the end of a day's proceedings' be omitted.
2. That in subparagraph 1(b) the words 'motion is moved or the question is proposed (and is not put forthwith and negatively) for the' be omitted.
3. That in subparagraph 1(b) the words 'excluding debate on a motion that grievances be noted' be omitted.

The Leader of the House has moved a procedural motion that deals with the televising and broadcasting of the proceedings of this house. The opposition was led to believe that this motion was the same as the motion that applied in the last Parliament — in fact, the same as the rules governing the televising and broadcasting of proceedings that were introduced in 1994.

We move the amendments for two reasons: firstly, because this motion provides TV and broadcasting rules for this house that are different from those that applied in the last Parliament, which were introduced and passed in 1994; and secondly, to take into account criticisms about the application of the 1994 requirements for the televising and broadcasting of proceedings.

On a couple of occasions during the last Parliament there was considerable debate on the application of those guidelines, particularly to grievance debates.

On one occasion the then Speaker required that the televising of the grievance debate not proceed. At the time that caused great controversy. By moving these amendments we are seeking to ensure that grievance debates, an important part of parliamentary business when individual members can raise matters of importance outside the constraints and confines of the government's legislative program, are also allowed to be televised. We believe the government used this provision to ban the televising of the grievance debate in the last Parliament. It is one of the numerous armaments it has available in its arsenal to prevent proper accountability and scrutiny. On many occasions during grievance debates issues of public importance are raised, and they are often crucial and urgent.

Grievance debates provide a rare opportunity for individual members of Parliament to raise these types of issues. The government is very happy to have those issues raised in Parliament but it does not want anyone outside Parliament finding out about them. What is the most important and effective way of communicating those issues to the outside world? It is television. The motion moved by the Leader of the House is yet another example of the way this government tries to avoid public accountability and scrutiny through the use of a heavy jack-boot approach. That is why the opposition has moved a number of amendments, which would enable grievance debates to be available to the public at large via a form of communication that is most accessible by them.

The government says Parliament is an open and accessible institution, but how many members of the public are able to come here to listen to the debates? Even today during this debate only about half a dozen people are in the public gallery. The government does not want people in the wider community to find out about grievance debates and the like, when the government comes under scrutiny. That is what it sets out to achieve in the motion on the procedural guidelines. That is a damning indictment of the way the government abuses parliamentary proceedings. However, on this occasion the government goes one step further. As is this government's norm, on every occasion available to it, it tries to whittle away the forms of accountability to which Parliament can subject the government of the day.

Through the inclusion of certain words in the proposed new guidelines the government demonstrates its wish not only to continue the ban

on televising grievance debates but also to ban radio broadcasting. Who would have thought that in 1996 in a parliamentary chamber that prides itself on being democratic, open and accessible a government would be taking steps to ban the dissemination of information in various forms and to ban the radio broadcasting of excerpts of grievance debates? Where will it stop? If this trend continues, perhaps later during this parliamentary session the government will introduce further restrictions, such as limiting the accessibility of *Hansard*. The Premier himself has an obsession with any section of the print media that offers any sort of criticism of the government.

Not satisfied with banning the televising of grievance debates, it is clear from this motion that the government intends to take it a step further by trying to ban radio broadcasting as well. One can only speculate that in future it will also seek to ban the publication of grievance debates. That is the trend with this government: to take bigger and bigger steps towards curtailing the powers and privileges of this Parliament.

The situation should never have occurred, and it certainly should never have been allowed to continue so far. It is a great tragedy that this debate has to take place today without the media being fully aware of its importance. Through the motion moved by the Leader of the House, the government is taking a decisive step to ban the radio broadcasting of grievance debates. Once the civil libertarians and members of the public are informed of that the government will have to answer to them.

The opposition expresses its concerns about the application of the proposed new guidelines to both the televising and radio broadcasting of grievance debates. The government has tried to introduce it in a sneaky, quiet and surreptitious way. It has placed a few words in one paragraph and a few more in the following paragraph and tried to get it passed through Parliament by leave, advising the house that the guidelines were exactly the same as those that operated what previously. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is obvious that the government is continuing with its desire to limit what is broadcast from this place — that is, the words and so-called wisdom of our parliamentary contributions. That is the complete antithesis of the Westminster system and all the traditions that members on the opposition side of the house at least hold so dear.

We call on the government to examine the amendments we have proposed and to accept them. If it does so it will demonstrate that the accusations we have been making are premature, but if it fails to accept the amendments only one conclusion can be drawn: that through the procedural guidelines of this house the government is attempting to ban the dissemination from this place of reports or records of debates. The opposition will not support that position.

The opportunity is available for the government to accept the opposition's amendments and to acknowledge that the public has a right to hear, see and read about what its elected representatives say in this chamber. One of the most crucial things we can do is to ensure that we have procedural guidelines that do not try to conceal from the public what goes on in this chamber.

I reiterate the challenge to the government: adopt the amendments in order to provide a more realistic, more democratic and fairer set of guidelines for the televising and broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings.

Mr THWAITES (Albert Park) — I support the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown and oppose the motion, which effectively limits the public broadcasting of grievance and adjournment debates in this house.

Why is the government proposing this action? It can only be because it has something to hide. If there were any decent reason for the government to introduce new rules to inhibit the broadcasting of the grievance debate, I should be interested to hear it. There is no decent reason. The government is taking this action because the grievance debate is an opportunity for parliamentarians to raise any improper conduct of the government and government departments or outside bodies and businesses.

Before turning to some of the reasons why I believe the government is trying to cover up the matter, I will refer to some important issues raised in previous grievance debates. The honourable member for Frankston East raised a matter concerning the training of police officers that received quite a deal of media attention. I understand his raising that matter resulted in changes to police procedures.

The government's aim in moving this motion is to prevent the public from finding out what is really

going on. Time and again in this place the opposition has raised issues of impropriety and issues such as the Premier's involvement in his own private advertising company while that company was doing business deals with government agencies. The Leeds Media contract was handed out to Mr Leeds by a mate of his, Mr Bennett, without a proper and open tendering process. That arrangement is criticised in the report of the Auditor-General that was presented earlier today, and the government's response was to again attack the Auditor-General. Instead of taking on board the valid criticisms of the Auditor-General, the government simply attacked him.

The opposition has also raised the issue of private ambulance contracts. Last night the former Minister for Health made a personal explanation on why she misled the house about private ambulance contracts some time ago. That is another example of improper government conduct the government clearly wants to cover up. The National Bus Company contract has also been raised in this house. Other important issues raised by the opposition are the casino extensions, the Nettlefold signs issue, the circumstances surrounding the awarding of the casino licence, the Euroa roadhouse issue and the matters concerning housing ministry payments for work on houses in Geelong. Those are only some of the matters raised in the house that have subsequently received attention from the electronic media.

The government's purpose in moving as it has is to prevent members of the public who listen to radio from hearing what goes on in this place. The government seems satisfied to go along with all the trappings of democracy such as the opening of Parliament, the Governor's speech and the garden party, but it is not interested in the substance of democracy. The substance of democracy is all about information — it is about members of the public hearing what is going on. The government fears the public finding out what is really going on.

The Fitzgerald report, which was referred to last night by the honourable member for Niddrie in his inaugural speech, is a lesson to us all. Mr Fitzgerald said there is less likelihood of misconduct occurring if there is full and open public debate — that is, if there is proper media scrutiny a pattern of misconduct is less likely to occur. The motion moved today reflects the Kennett government's attitude to and treatment of Parliament. It is the same style of conduct that early in the government's term resulted, firstly, in the use of the guillotine to

prevent debate and, secondly, in the introduction of sessional orders to stifle debate and ram through legislation without debate. That is the government's style.

The motion we are debating has the same character as the government's treatment of question time, when ministers filibuster for up to 11 minutes so that on one of the few occasions when representatives of the press are in the chamber they do not get an opportunity to hear ministers answer questions. The government's whole aim in this place and in its dealings with the media is to limit as much as possible what the public knows about what government does.

The government's attitude is reflected by the way it limits the number of grievance debates. Not only is that oppression of the opposition, it is oppression of the government's own backbench. The honourable member for Frankston East has previously raised important issues in the grievance debate, but apparently the government does not want even its own backbenchers to raise matters publicly in this place and in the media. It is part of a pattern of behaviour the government exhibits not only in this house but also in the broader community when it attacks media organisations, is secretive and uses the media to manipulate the information the public receives.

The Premier makes a habit of boycotting media organisations of which he does not approve. The Premier, who represents the government, will not deign to appear, nor will he allow his ministers to appear, on the *7.30 Report*. The Premier belittles the ABC and the *Sunday Age*. Why will the Premier not allow the media to scrutinise his activities? If he has nothing to hide what does he have to fear? Nothing whatever! This motion has been moved today because the Premier has plenty to hide.

When reports are published in the electronic media or the press the Premier's reaction is to attack the journalists who wrote the stories rather than to address the issues and respond to the real concerns of people about conflict of interest. The former Minister for Health, who hardly covered herself in glory in the health portfolio and has moved on to greener pastures, attacked a journalist, Julie-Anne Davies, in this house when I raised the issue of private ambulances. Instead of doing something about the matters I raised back in 1994 and investigating the way the contracts were handed out, the minister attacked the journalist. Following an Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearing and an

investigation by the minister's former department we now know that Julie-Anne Davies was right, that the public concern was right. Instead of doing something about fixing up the stench of corruption that surrounds it, the government introduces motions to further cover up the problems.

The Premier talks incessantly about the importance of multimedia and computerisation, yet we cannot even get to the stage of using the most basic form of multimedia, the radio, to publicise the proceedings of Parliament. The government is boasting about the Internet and computers in schools and about how Victoria will be the leading info-tech state, yet we cannot get even a pedal radio report of what goes on in the grievance debate.

It is the height of hypocrisy. It is really about covering up and avoiding scrutiny. The Auditor-General has reported that this government spends something like \$47 million on advertising. Much of that is party political. The Auditor-General said that it was inappropriate and that it raised issues of propriety. Instead of having proper media scrutiny of the facts, we simply have media manipulation by way of millions of dollars being spent on political advertising.

The amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown have the advantage that they will increase public information about what goes on in this place. In that way it will increase respect for this place as an institution. If we do not have some publicity surrounding the most important debates in this house, how can we expect the public to have any real respect for what goes on in this place? Indeed, the only information that we seem to get is photographs of politicians swanning around at the garden party with people in various 17th century garb having afternoon tea. When it comes to actually communicating the substance of what should go on here, the scrutiny of government and the public sector, there is nothing.

I sincerely urge the government to reconsider the amendments and restore the position so that at least there is a radio broadcast of the grievance debate. The grievance debate is an opportunity not only for the opposition but also for backbenchers like the honourable members for Monbulk and Frankston East who, I am sure, will make many contributions to the grievance debate in the future. Indeed, the honourable member for Prahran has had a career in local government, and in her role as local government commissioner she used the press very

well. She also used it very well in her attempt at preselection for a federal seat.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has been tolerant in allowing the honourable member for Albert Park to skate around the issue, but he has indicated that he is about to conclude his remarks.

Mr THWAITES — I emphasise that members on both sides of the house use the media because that is the one opportunity we have to get across to the general public the important things we have to say. As we all know, members of the public cannot afford the time to sit in this place and listen to the debates. Many people obtain information about what goes on in this place by listening to the radio. It seems that opportunity is now to be taken away for probably the most important debate in this house, the grievance debate. For that reason, I urge the government to rethink its position and adopt the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown.

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I do not think that I have seen such a display of crocodile tears for many years. This is really much ado about nothing. The minor change made to the proposal dealing with TV and broadcasting simply makes clear the original motion that was put by Tom Roper in 1991.

For many years there has been no — if ever there was — television broadcasting of grievance debates in this house. I suggest to members of the opposition that they go back to *Hansard* of Tuesday, 22 October 1991, and read what the opposition did when in government. There is only one change in paragraph (a). The motion refers to television, and the words 'and broadcasting' have been added because broadcasting was omitted from the previous motion. If members of the opposition cared to do some homework and go back to the previous propositions, they would see that paragraph (b) says:

... the broadcasting and rebroadcasting on radio and television stations.

The original intention was clear. All that is before the house is simply a minor clarification of the previous intent, an intent with respect to the proper reporting and broadcasting of this place that has been acceptable to both sides of the house for many years.

We are increasingly understanding of the frustration of people on the opposition benches. They lost

comprehensively in 1992 — the largest loss ever in the history of this state — and that was replicated four years later in a way that clearly demonstrates the irrelevance of the Labor Party in this state. It must be hard to take!

I can understand their being churlish and bitter. The reality is that they must do better than whine, carp, whinge and moan. The opposition must go out and actually develop policies and gain some integrity. The opposition does nothing constructive. It should get out into the marketplace and effect changes.

Forgetting my privileged position as a member of Parliament, I would have thought from the communications that I have with the broader community that rather than feeling that they are deprived of the broadcasting, televising, reporting and printing of the processes of Parliament, the people in this state and of Australia are sick to death of overreporting, overrecording and overtelevising of the political processes.

I have news for the honourable member for Albert Park: the centre of the universe is not him here in this Parliament, it never has been and never will be. The government will not accept the amendments moved by the opposition for the reasons I have outlined. Accepting the proposition being put would widen the coverage and scope of broadcasts of this place in a way that was never debated, discussed or agreed to by the opposition when in government. The amendments would open up the Parliament to further television programming of a kind that is not deemed appropriate in this state.

On behalf of the government I reject the amendments moved by the Labor Party and commend the motion to the house.

Mr COOPER (Morrington) — I support the Leader of the House in rejecting the amendments moved by the opposition. I direct the attention of the house to proceedings yesterday when we had, during the debate on the amendments moved by the opposition on sessional orders, what I would describe as the debate of the big whinge.

Today we have heard the great conspiracy debate. I was pleased that the honourable member for Thomastown restrained himself from entering that debate, but the honourable member for Albert Park was in full flight when putting the great conspiracy theory forward. He said that if the government did not accept the amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown it clearly had

something to hide. The honourable member for Albert Park believes you do not have to be paranoid to believe everyone is plotting against you, but because of his position in the Labor Party I can sympathise with him. We all know the Labor Party is the home of plots and paranoia!

According to the media members of the opposition are out to get their leader, and the honourable member for Albert Park is being spruiked as a future leader of his party. Every time these inconsequential issues are raised — this sort of frippery where you don't have to think much about it but it gets you the publicity you are seeking — we see the honourable member for Albert Park, the great poseur, debating them in an endeavour to get them up in the media.

If we were to believe the honourable members for Thomastown and Albert Park — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr COOPER — Of course, they were heard in silence, unlike those on the other side who do not wish to hear contributions in silence. If we were to believe everything they had to say we would believe the government had gone over the top by denying the opposition the freedom to debate various matters.

Honourable members can see how outraged by and interested in this debate the media is! Have a look at the press gallery; it is empty. Not a soul is there. They have not been there since the beginning of the debate. They are not interested in the debate because they know that the opposition has moved amendments that are nothing more than simple grandstanding. I use the word 'simple' in its most natural form when I apply it to the Labor Party. It does not have anything else to offer. It prefers to grandstand on this kind of issue.

We heard the accusation from the honourable member for Thomastown that this government seeks 'to evade accountability and scrutiny'. He made that accusation over and over again. He had a bit of gall doing that when the honourable member for Doncaster was sitting in the house. During the previous Parliament the honourable member for Doncaster was the chairman of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, with the honourable member for Albert Park as a colleague.

It might have escaped the attention of a few members, but it should not have escaped the attention of the honourable member for Albert Park

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

121

that that committee was established by the coalition government. During its 10 years in power the Labor Party did not establish such a joint parliamentary committee. When the coalition government came to power in 1992 one of its first acts was to set up SARC. If any members believe that was an act of a government trying to avoid scrutiny, they have not read any of the reports of the committee. If they have they will know about its solid work and the amount of pressure it put on the government. It was pressure the government sought, and the establishment of that committee was not the act of a government trying to avoid scrutiny.

This government is more open to scrutiny than any other government in this state or country. It is a bit rich for somebody with the reputation of the honourable member for Thomastown to make that kind of accusation. If this government's reputation was as low as the reputation of the honourable member for Thomastown it might have something to be ashamed of! The government is doing everything it can, and the media is doing everything it can, to ensure proper scrutiny, and it will continue to do so. The amendments moved by the honourable member for Thomastown are nonsense and they should be treated as such by the house.

House divided on amendments:

Ayes, 29

Andrianopoulos, Mr	Hulls, Mr
Baker, Mr	Kosky, Ms
Batchelor, Mr	Langdon, Mr
Bracks, Mr	Leighton, Mr
Brumby, Mr	Lim, Mr
Cameron, Mr	Loney, Mr
Campbell, Ms	Maddigan, Mrs (Teller)
Carli, Mr	Micallef, Mr
Cole, Mr	Mildenhall, Mr
Cunningham, Mr (Teller)	Pandazopoulos, Mr
Dollis, Mr	Seitz, Mr
Garbutt, Ms	Sheehan, Mr
Gillett, Ms	Thwaites, Mr
Haermeyer, Mr	Wilson, Mrs
Hamilton, Mr	

Noes, 52

Andrighetto, Mr (Teller)	McGrath, Mr W.D.
Ashley, Mr	McLellan, Mr
Brown, Mr	MacLellan, Mr
Burke, Ms	Maughan, Mr
Clark, Mr	Napthine, Dr
Coleman, Mr	Paterson, Mr
Cooper, Mr	Perrin, Mr
Dean, Dr	Pescott, Mr

Dixon, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Doyle, Mr	Phillips, Mr
Elder, Mr	Plowman, Mr A.F.
Elliott, Mrs	Reynolds, Mr
Finn, Mr (Teller)	Richardson, Mr
Gude, Mr	Rowe, Mr
Henderson, Mrs	Ryan, Mr
Honeywood, Mr	Savage, Mr
Jasper, Mr	Shardey, Mrs
Jenkins, Mr	Smith, Mr E.R.
Kennett, Mr	Smith, Mr I.W.
Kilgour, Mr	Spry, Mr
Lean, Mr	Tehan, Mrs
Leigh, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Lupton, Mr	Traynor, Mr
McArthur, Mr	Treasure, Mr
McCall, Ms	Wade, Mrs
McGill, Mrs	Wells, Mr

Amendments negated.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 14 May; motion of Mr DIXON (Dromana) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Ms McCALL (Frankston) — Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I begin my speech by joining my colleagues in congratulating you on your appointment and also say that I am sure you will continue in the position with dignity and bring great poise to the role.

May I also seek your permission, because today I feel, as a woman no longer in the first flush of youth, somewhat inappropriately standing to make a maiden speech, to call it an inaugural speech.

The SPEAKER — Order! The custom is still to call it a maiden speech, so it may not be entirely technically correct.

Ms McCALL — I begin by acknowledging the honour and privilege I feel in having been elected to the seat of Frankston and to be following in the large footsteps of the Honourable Graeme Weideman, who retired after distinguished service to the people of the electorate. I follow the Honourable Graeme Weideman into this house after his nearly 20 years of service. He in turn followed Edward Meagher,

who was the first member for the then new seat of Frankston. The boundaries have changed a number of times since, but I follow distinguished members and am honoured by the trust placed in me by the electorate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Graeme Weideman for his help and his selfless assistance before and during the campaign. His counsel was wise. May I also single out the Honourable Roy Ward, known to many in both houses as the character that he is. He worked tirelessly as my campaign director — and demonstrated his prowess as a rally driver on the day of the election. And of course I thank those other supporters who worked so hard.

There are many other people, too numerous to mention here today, who have encouraged me over the years in my search for a parliamentary career. I wish to name but three — my parents, for their continued love and support, and the Honourable Rosemary Varty, who is a representative of the Province of Silvan in the other place. My thanks to you all.

I am very proud to be joining Parliament as a woman member in the Liberal Party — a position, I hasten to say, that was achieved without benefit of quota. I am conscious that the Parliament should be as representative as possible of a wide section of the community and that women can and do bring a different perspective to Parliament. With the other two women newly elected to the lower house on 30 March, I join a very talented and competent group, and I am delighted to be part of it. As a woman I shall take a particular interest in some issues of special concern to women, and I look forward to contributing to the debates.

I come to this house as a member in the magnificent sand belt of Victoria. It is marvellous to see the sand belt back safely in Liberal hands, thanks in part to the excellent campaigns of my colleagues in Frankston East and Carrum. We will make a great team.

The electorate of Frankston includes some parts of Seaford, the main CBD of Frankston, and south to Mount Eliza. It boasts a brothel on its northern borders. As honourable members are no doubt aware, that houses the oldest profession in the world; espionage is the second oldest; and politics, according to Robert Louis Stevenson, is the one profession for which no experience is necessary.

The southern borders have a nudist beach, called Sunnyside — I will leave that to rest. It also includes some of the most beautiful coastline in the world. It is an interesting and diverse electorate, an electorate to be proud of.

The Frankston foreshore is one of the city's major assets. It has been neglected for too long. A number of proposals have been put forward by local community groups and the city commissioners with a view to the enhancement and development of the area. I am supportive in principle of many of these initiatives, if they complement our environment and if they lead to increased opportunities for employment and the general improvement of the area. The development of Kananook Creek as a tourist facility is worthy of consideration. As a resident of the foreshore area, I will take a keen interest in its development.

Frankston should not be an area to be bypassed, nor should we be seen as the gateway to the Mornington Peninsula, unless we have a padlock on that gate that invites people to enjoy our city as part of the peninsula.

Frankston, like many other electorates, is not without its problems. I am reminded of the Honourable Graeme Weideman's maiden speech on 27 May 1976, in which he referred to the problems of drugs and young people in the community. Regrettably, many of the issues raised in that speech have not gone away. I congratulate the Premier on his initiative in commissioning the report from the drug advisory council and on allowing the community a high degree of input into the recommendations. It is to be hoped that as a result of this free exchange of views some good will come.

Frankston has also inherited some issues from the councillors who made decisions prior to local government amalgamation. Some of these issues, such as the Central Park Quayside project, which gained much media exposure, will haunt the people of the city for some time to come. However, I hope to work with the Frankston city commissioners towards the return of elected councillors in March next year and ensuring that the city is in good and safe hands.

Part of the electorate of Frankston is Mount Eliza. The external perception is that only the rich live in Mount Eliza. That is not so. Many of the inhabitants of that part of my electorate are on fixed incomes. These people are self-funded retirees who do not benefit from the many concessions available to their

contemporaries elsewhere. Their major concerns are personal safety and accessibility to transport and services. I hope to work with the commissioners of Mornington shire to address many of those concerns and allay the fears of my older constituents.

Transport is a major concern to many of us on the peninsula. We acknowledge the rapid growth corridor in Cranbourne and Berwick, but Frankston and its immediate environs are still transport starved. With the expansion of the Peninsula Institute of TAFE to Rosebud it is a matter of immediate concern that we increase transport accessibility to encourage students to our institutes of learning and our citizens to service and retail areas. My colleagues and I will no doubt be lobbying the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, Roads and Ports, the honourable member for Mornington, to carry our message to the Minister for Transport.

I live in the electorate and my parents have lived there for more than 10 years. It is an electorate that boasts a reasonable percentage of migrants, predominantly from English-speaking countries, so perhaps as a UK migrant who arrived in Australia 15 years ago I fit well into the demographic profile. I, too, understand the issues of adapting to another country, another culture and — dare I say — to another language, and adopting another citizenship.

However, with that profile comes the issue of an ageing population and therefore the increased concerns of adequate provision of care for the more senior members of our community. I commend the current Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Aged Care, for the excellent initiatives being undertaken. I shall view their benefits for my electorate with interest, particularly as I am the only child of ageing parents and I view their welfare as my prime concern.

Within the electorate we record high unemployment amongst our youth. My colleague in Frankston East and I see this as a great challenge for us in the immediate future. We will be working closely with our local community and business groups, in particular in support of such initiatives as those taken by the Mornington Peninsula Business Council and its Southnet project, which seeks to create 1000 new jobs by 30 June. I am encouraged that at today's date the figure is in excess of 820.

Small business is the lifeblood of the rejuvenation and employment and it will be my role to work with my state and federal colleagues to increase the opportunities for small business in my electorate —

in particular, in such areas as hospitality and tourism. Having spent six years running my own business, I am very aware of the issues and difficulties — and, of course, the rewards — particularly in dealing with feral bank managers and the trauma of company liquidations.

As a personnel manager I am aware of the need for greater flexibility in recruitment practices. I spent some time in the Industrial Relations Commission as an employer advocate dealing with issues such as unfair or constructive dismissals.

Frankston has regrettably developed a bit of a reputation for crime. There is no doubt that the increase in crime has been from our failure in the community and society in general to instil pride and civic responsibility into many of our youth. I commend the initiative of the Premier to encourage a cadetship program to encourage our young people towards discipline and civic pride.

I would also like to focus for just a moment on the matter of safety. We have had a couple of tragic incidents in Frankston in recent times in the Kananook area. I hope to work with our excellent police force, a former member of which now represents the local province in the other place, to assist the community and the victims of crime in coping with the changes in our society. With the increase in single-parent families and people living alone, these issues have become crucial.

However, no area can develop without a solid educational base. The schools in my electorate are well run and have excellent academic and sports results. We are participating in the Schools of the Future, and many parents are taking an active role in the education and development of their children. The excellent work begun by the former Minister for Education will begin to bear quality fruit. I particularly commend the vision of the principal at the Frankston High School for his interest in multimedia, a topic very dear to our Treasurer.

But in case we forget, education does not end at the VCE stage. In order to equip the next generation to take an active part in life and in the community we should encourage them to continue their studies in their chosen field.

The Frankston electorate boasts an excellent institution in the Peninsula Institute of TAFE, which borders the Frankston campus of Monash University. Within the electorate lies the Australian Management College, formerly known as Moondah.

As a recipient of a Commonwealth Development Bank scholarship to Moondah some five years ago, I am conscious of how important quality education at tertiary and postgraduate level can be. I would also like to see increased cooperation between these two and other like institutions, and even greater links with business.

I spent five years as a personnel manager within the tertiary sector. Some of that time was spent lecturing in business subjects to students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, full-fee paying students and disadvantaged students from the less glamorous suburbs of Melbourne.

I understand the pride of these students and the joy of their parents at graduation. The achievement is not just in the attainment of a degree or diploma, but in the opportunities we create for our young people in the next 50 years.

I am supportive, too, of the initiatives within TAFE and higher education to attract more mature-age students to their courses. Many people who were not achievers in their secondary school years have clearly blossomed in later life. Some of them are now serving in this house. I welcome the encouragement of further education and training, multiskilling and retraining for this changing world.

Representing the electorate of Frankston presents me with many challenges and I look forward to bringing the experience I have gained in my working life to my work with the people of Frankston.

In conclusion, I pledge my loyalty to the constituents of Frankston and promise to do my best for them all for as long as I am elected to serve. I thank you, Mr Speaker, and also my colleagues for their courtesy and attention.

Ms KOSKY (Altona) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to represent the electorate of Altona in the address-in-reply. Firstly I would like to record my thanks to the Altona electorate for expressing its confidence in me, and I look forward to returning that support in full.

You never get into Parliament without a good team behind you, so I would also like to thank: my ALP comrades for their faith in me to represent the party in the Victorian Parliament as part of John Brumby's team; my family, in particular my husband, Jim, for his wisdom and vision; Brett Miller and John Ballestrino for their energy and support before and

during the campaign; Philip Martin, Linelle Gibson, Trevor Campbell and Terri Bracks for their support on my campaign team; local members Bruce Mildenhall, Steve Bracks and Sang Nguyen; and federal members Barry Jones and Kim Carr.

The Altona electorate encompasses the suburbs of Altona, Altona Meadows, Laverton, Werribee South and a section of Hoppers Crossing. It is diverse in its history, migration patterns and earning capacities. Unfortunately the electorate does not enjoy the same diversity of services or jobs.

Many areas within the Altona electorate are badly serviced by public transport and health and community services, respite and permanent care for the disabled being a glaring example. The decline of manufacturing industry has led to a serious decline in the traditional jobs once provided within the electorate and region. New jobs are desperately needed.

The inappropriate siting of the chemical industry alongside residential areas contributes to ongoing environmental concerns that are not easily resolved. A lack of community consultation about the siting of particular industries, including the Laverton North prison, is also a cause for great concern to residents of the Altona electorate.

Having said that, I know that Altona, while being a relatively new state electorate, has a strong sense of purpose, history and place, and I wish to both build on and enhance the richness which is Altona.

The political climate in Victoria has changed dramatically during the past 20 years. During that time people have become more discerning and demanding about the nature and availability of government-provided services. Much of this revolution in demands on government service has been driven by the baby boomers: those who were born after World War II and who, in the next 10 years, will be moving into retirement. This is the group who grew up expecting universal education, full employment and improved training opportunities, and who pioneered community and work-based child care — and by and large, many of them received it.

More recently the key focus in government has shifted from governments actually delivering services to ensuring that the government gets all the economic settings in place. This is said to involve government taking on more of a steering rather than a rowing role. Some of this changed governmental

focus is occurring in response to the perceived needs of post baby boomers. This is the group of Victorians who have grown up in the more uncertain times of high unemployment, inflation and rapidly increasing world economic competition. These constituents are confronted by much more uncertain job and educational prospects, increased global competition for those jobs and a sizeable health and aged care bill for their parents.

This changing political and economic landscape has also facilitated the unprecedented sell-off in Victoria during the past four years of established government functions and utilities in the unproven belief that the private sector can do a better and more efficient job. This reinvention of government is not just confined to Victoria; it is sweeping Australia and has been under way in most Western economies, including the UK, the United States and Western Europe, for well over a decade.

Many conservative governments throughout the world led by the likes of Margaret Thatcher have cashed in on this set of changes and have developed so-called solutions that meet their own philosophical agendas.

The response by conservative governments has been to reduce the size of the public sector while at the same time expanding the responsibilities of the private sector, sell off valuable public assets and reduce democratic rights. This has all been based on the following set of assumptions, which I believe are misguided. The first is that government is incapable of providing quality services to the community. In the case of bureaucracy, their adage is 'small is beautiful'. The second assumption is that the private sector can always provide more efficient services of a quality equal to, if not better than, government-run services. The third is that it is better to sacrifice long-term government revenue streams in order to achieve short-term reductions in public debt. The fourth assumption is that democratic processes get in the way of good decision making.

What, then, would a progressive response to these societal changes consist of? How would its solutions differ? Firstly, it would meet the key obligation on government to maximise opportunities for all citizens to participate in broad prosperity. This was outlined by the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) after the election of President Bill Clinton in the United States of America. Such an obligation requires above all things sustainable growth not only in the Victorian economy but also the Australian economy and not at the expense of other

states. It is also important that the growth translates into new jobs.

Honourable members may not be aware that over the past decade only the Australian Capital Territory has achieved sustained growth in full-time equivalent employment in both the private and public sectors. Further, only New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia have seen a total full-time equivalent employment increase by more than 100 000 in the past decade.

This uneven employment record in Australia should serve as an early warning signal to Victoria to avoid the path that has been followed in some countries where prosperity has been dispensed unevenly.

Access to rewarding and worthwhile work still seems to be the key to income security, family stability and social harmony. That is even more the case in a dramatically changing world of work, with the erosion of lifetime careers and the rapid disappearance of big employers in both the public and private sectors.

Victoria must not allow social neglect to become institutionalised but nor should we argue for redistribution of resources without adequate growth. Recently we were asked to remember the forgotten people. We should not remember them only when a crisis occurs.

The second key obligation of modern governments is to set fair rules for competition, clarify the key roles for government and identify how the rules will apply to government in order to promote prosperity or, as the Progressive Policy Institute's mandate for change explains it:

... the government's role is not to favour the privileged, but to set fair rules of market competition for everyone.

It is important that Victorians believe the playing field of competition is level and fair. That requires clarification of what economic and social services governments should provide and when they should stand aside.

Conservative governments take the long view and probably envisage a future some 30 to 40 years away when there are very few employees, services or assets still in public hands. I regard this as misguided and as a recipe for increasing economic and social divisions in Victorian society.

Basically, we need an economy that builds on the best traditions of business, government and community — or third sector — and has a healthy respect for social and environmental goals. Within this vision there will always be a role for an effective and responsible public sector. Social and economic success has never been the monopoly of the private sector; it depends on achieving the best mix of public and private.

The third precondition for increased public confidence in the workings of state governments is transparent and accountable governments. Communities within the Victorian electorate may not always agree with decisions of government, but they need to understand why decisions have been made and they need to believe their views have been listened to and addressed. This means Victorians have to be kept fully informed of the processes by which governments make their decisions. The ease with which a Victorian government that controls both houses of Parliament can currently change the Victorian constitution and thus people's traditional rights without full community debate is a case in point. That may result in a reduction of people's liberties and it highlights the need to introduce a constitution that is able to be changed only by a people's vote.

The other pertinent point is that a more bipartisan approach needs to be taken to clarify not just the conditions of cooperation with the private or community sector but the accountability mechanisms that are to apply. That becomes even more critical as public responsibilities are being transferred to the private sector.

A fourth and continuing challenge facing Australian governments, including this one, is to restore greater public confidence in the workings of Parliament and parliamentarians. That was also identified by the PPI as a key theme for the incoming Clinton administration and involves having a very clear view that governing is a two-way street between politicians and the general public. Many Victorians feel that government decision making is pretty much one way — that is, from the top down and that a few favoured people know the shortcuts to the top.

Although I am opposed to rule by a few for the few, I am not a supporter of a simple rights-based model where members of the community just dig in their heels and expect everything their way. Most problems can be solved only by finding the best negotiated settlement, and we must get better at identifying both the rights and responsibilities of all

players in any given situation. We need some new ways of bringing the public back into the decision-making processes of government.

All Victorians — older members of the community, baby boomers and our young people — deserve the best possible government. Government needs to be about more than getting the balance right between rowing and steering. Government at its best should improve the social and economic circumstances of all Victorians in an enduring way. It should not favour some at the expense of others. It should not confuse short-term changes to budgetary planning and debt management with the need for long-term economic and financial stability. It should be open and transparent, not arbitrary or arrogant. It should be two way, not one way.

We need a new approach to government in Victoria that entrenches opportunity, sets fair rules, is clear about its roles, is transparent and abides by respected accountability mechanisms. It should also be accessible daily to our community and should build strength through cooperation and wisdom. I would like to think I can make such a contribution to better and enduring government.

Mr LEAN (Carrum) — Mr Speaker, it is my great pleasure to stand before you today to present my first speech in the Parliament of Victoria. As I do, I am conscious of the honour that has been bestowed on me by you, Sir, and the people of the Carrum electorate who have entrusted me with the role as their representative in the Victorian Legislative Assembly.

I extend my gratitude to honourable members who have also readily lent their support to me in the lead-up to my election and during my first few weeks as the member for Carrum. I consider it an honour to be given the opportunity to represent the area where I grew up and where I now live with my family. I have a sincere affection for the area and am proud to be associated with the various communities in the electorate.

As the new member for Carrum I pledge that I will work hard to advance the needs and interests of the people in my electorate. Regardless of political persuasion, I will endeavour to serve each and every member of my electorate to the best of my ability.

The relationship between parliamentarians and their constituents is of paramount importance to the Liberal democratic system.

As Edmund Burke once stated:

It ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him, their opinions high respect, their business unremitted attention.

Additionally, Burke said that no member of Parliament should place the interests of constituents before his own. However, he pointed out that no member should sacrifice his opinions, or indeed conscience, to anyone. It is this doctrine espoused by Burke that I intend to heed as I embark on my new role as the member for Carrum.

Although my association with the Liberal Party in an official capacity has been brief, the party's philosophy has been of paramount importance throughout the course of my life. I have a firm commitment to liberalism because I believe it is the only political philosophy that allows for diversity over time. It is a pragmatic doctrine and, as such, allows for change which, in a non-static society, ensures delivery of good government. Sir Robert Menzies said:

Liberalism is an attitude of mind and of faith aiming at the highest standards of life.

I have a firm belief in the rights of the individual. However, I believe one's rights may be legitimately exercised only when one has accepted one's responsibilities. As individuals we are privileged to belong to a liberal democratic society such as we have in Australia. Our political system ensures that every individual may exercise his or her rights. However, there is a flip side to the coin. As we accept the rights a liberal democracy allows us, we must also accept responsibility to ourselves and to other members of the community. Although we make decisions and commitments in our own best interests, by virtue of our social contract we must be sure not to impede the rights of our fellow citizens.

As an elected representative an important civic duty has been bestowed upon me. My responsibility now is to ensure that the rights of those I represent are furthered. The notion of civic responsibility is decreasing in importance concurrently with the increased cynicism with which our political institutions and actors are regarded. This inverse relationship — I say inverse because I assume the two phenomena are by no means independent of one another and are not exclusive to our country —

is a source of grave concern to me. I am sure many of my colleagues in this place are similarly concerned about the increased indifference and, sometimes, contempt with which our profession is regarded. The lack of education about and the apathy towards our political actors and institutions is pronounced among young Australians. To ensure the long-term health of our democracy it is essential that young Australians be educated in the political process. As politicians it is our duty to instil in them a sense of confidence in the political system and to demonstrate that their rights can be enhanced only when they accept their role as citizens in our democratic society. As Philip Wylie once said, ignorance is not bliss, it is oblivion.

An interest in politics develops indirectly via the process of socialisation, discussion and education. To be ignorant of our political process is not a blissful state. Young people must have an understanding of processes so they are able to question and debate their political environment and, as a result, justify their beliefs and ideals. To be ignorant and apathetic is dangerous because when people do not have the ability to question political actors and institutions accountability is compromised and, as a result, the very foundations upon which our democracy is based are placed in jeopardy.

Unfortunately schools can teach young people only so much about politics. It is essential that in addition to learning the theory behind our 'Washminster' system young Australians are given a practical knowledge of how our political system works. The role of the wider community including parents, peers, the media and, indeed, politicians themselves is paramount. The former City of Chelsea, of which I was a councillor and which now forms an integral part of the City of Kingston instituted a youth week festival over 20 years ago. An important aspect of the festival was the junior council ceremony, which gave young primary students an opportunity to participate in the political process. The mayor and councillors of the day would meet with the junior council to discuss issues affecting the students' lives, such as their schools, their homes and their environment. At the conclusion of the meeting the school representatives would hold an election to decide who would become the junior mayor and preside over the events of youth week. This allowed many young men and women the opportunity to learn first-hand about grassroots politics and meeting procedure, the three tiers of government and the basic political process.

The hands-on experience gained by the young people who participated will ensure that the political theory they are taught at school will have more direct meaning in their lives. If programs such as junior councils, the Queen's Trust program, the YMCA-sponsored Youth Parliament and mock elections in schools were to become more accessible to younger members of the community young people would benefit from gaining a more intricate understanding of the civic responsibilities they will encounter in the future.

Only by gaining such understanding will young men and women in our community be able to participate effectively in our political system and enhance our way of life. Better understanding of the Australian political process at an early age will dispel the ignorance that breeds apathy.

My election in Carrum was an overwhelming endorsement of the work of the Kennett government. Carrum had been held by Labor since 1976. The fact that it is now held by a Liberal reflects the high esteem in which those in my electorate hold the government. I am proud to be a member of this team and thank the government for the tremendous job it has done in restoring this state.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the many people to whom I owe thanks for their constant support. I thank my wife, Fran, who has encouraged me and often provided a pragmatic influence in my life and without whose love and dedication I would not have made it here today. I also thank my children, Amanda and Campbell, my father, Richard, and my brother, Drew. They have all helped me discover an inner determination — a healthy situation to which few accede.

I take this opportunity to thank my campaign team and those who encouraged me to take up the challenge in Carrum. Rod Atkinson, who served as the federal member for Isaacs until the recent federal election, was a source of great encouragement. I have no doubt my victory is owed largely to the excellent job he did in Isaacs. I thank him most sincerely. I thank Barry and Val O'Meara, who recognised my potential and whose faith in me never wavered. I thank my campaign directors, David Normington and Erhan Karabardak, who worked tirelessly and gave so willingly of their time and together achieved what many believed was impossible. They deserve every credit.

I thank my upper house colleagues Sue Wilding and Cameron Boardman for their support throughout

the course of the campaign and during my first few weeks as the member for Carrum. I look forward to a long and successful partnership with both of them. Finally, I thank the many Liberal Party members and friends of mine who volunteered their time and energy for a cause they believed in. I recognise it is to those who volunteered hours of their time that I owe this privilege. I thank them all. Mr Speaker, I thank you and the house for your indulgence.

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — Mr Speaker, it is with immense pride that I undertake my new role as the honourable member for Pascoe Vale, having been elected as a representative of the Australian Labor Party and as I join John Brumby's team in this 53rd Victorian Parliament.

To my Pascoe Vale constituents, I extend my appreciation for their support on 30 March. That was the first election in which the ALP won every booth in the electorate. The 3 per cent swing to the ALP was a good result, given my predecessor, Kelvin Thomson, in the 1992 election firmly held his seat and his 1988 margin.

In taking my place in this chamber, I am conscious of the immense contribution to the electorate, to Labor's Victorian caucus and to the Victorian Parliament made by Kelvin Thomson. I place on record my appreciation of Kelvin, firstly, for giving me the opportunity, as a part-time electorate officer for more than three years, to learn something of the important role of a dedicated and well-organised politician, and secondly, for his encouragement for my candidature. He continues to serve the Labor Party and many of those in his old electorate as the federal member for Wills.

The electorate of Pascoe Vale spans three municipalities: Moonee Valley, Darebin and Moreland. The vast majority of the electorate is in Moreland.

The 1991 census provided the latest sociodemographic study of my electorate. It showed that the elderly, homeowners, Catholics and childless couples are highly represented. Public transport users and low-income earners figure more highly in Pascoe Vale than in other parts of Melbourne. Moreland has the largest, 11 per cent, Italian-born population in Melbourne. The majority, 68 per cent, of residents have had the same address for five years or longer. Some 31 per cent of residents were born overseas. The largest percentage of those, 14 per cent, were from southern Europe. Italian was spoken at home by 15 per cent, and

Christians formed 77 per cent of the constituency. The majority of the electorate were not qualified, although 9 per cent had tertiary qualifications and 10 per cent had skilled vocations. The bulk of workers, 87 per cent, are wage or salary earners. Approximately 80 per cent earned less than \$25 000, and the majority, 75 per cent, either own or are purchasing their own homes. After the Second World War many service personnel were assisted in settling in the electorate.

The election gave my constituency their first electorate opportunity to vote on the Kennett government. I campaigned against the government's privatisation of public utilities, the increased taxes and charges that are costing families an extra \$1000 a year, limitations on maternal and child health centre visits, the cut of 8000 teacher positions, the slashing of \$500 million from hospitals, health and community services budgets, and the refusal of the government to consult with or even listen to views other than those of its mates.

My electorate voted overwhelmingly in favour of Labor's platform, giving us 61 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. I intend to consistently relay their message, particularly in relation to education, industrial relations, health and community services.

In education, Victoria holds the dubious record of being the state having the worst per capita education outlay per person. The result is a cut of 8000 teachers, which has led to large class sizes and less subject choice. School support centres have been gutted, then amalgamated. Families now face so-called voluntary school levies that fund basic items such as school reports, as is the case in my local secondary school.

English-as-a-second-language teacher positions have been cut, as have teacher's aides. Those two are critical educational requirements for some children. I intend to work to restore high standard, quality, affordable education where the needs of both students and teachers are considered.

In industrial relations the exodus of 600 000 Victorian workers to federal awards confirms that the state system is fundamentally flawed. It was no surprise to read in the AGB McNair poll of January 1996 that, 'Nearly two-thirds of voters do not believe the promise of the opposition leader, Mr Howard, that a coalition government would not cut workers' take-home pay'. Why would they believe it?

Here in Victoria the Premier gave an unequivocal guarantee that no worker would be worse off under a state Liberal government. There are hundreds of thousands of Victorian workers and unemployed who are now testament to the lie of that promise.

The Employee Relations Act has operated in Victoria for three years. Its most devastating effects have been the abolition of awards and the removal of compulsory conciliation and arbitration which underpinned the state's industrial relations system.

The Victorian system is not working. For individual employees or small employers, functioning in an award-free environment can be a nightmare. Considerable time and industrial relations skills are required to negotiate a workable and enforceable agreement. A fairer system is Labor's alternative, which would provide Victorians with a just industrial relations system through an award-based safety net of wages and conditions for all employees who remain with the state system; an industrial tribunal with the compulsory powers to conciliate and arbitrate; and a central role for the state tribunal in settling disputes, protecting employees' rights and entitlements, and providing adequate redress for unfair dismissal.

Industrial relations, free of an award system, is a system based on the master-servant relationship. From my range of experiences as a unionist, a worker and an employee, the Victorian Employee Relations Act is a misnomer — a public relations con. It was introduced during a period of record harmony. It serves the articulate skilful negotiator. It does not serve the student working casually, the unskilled, the non-English-speaking worker, or the manager who wants to compete for labour within industry standards.

In stark contrast to the coalition's philosophy, the Australian Labor Party's philosophy is based on respect for the dignity and worth of one's labour. This is a concept that needs greater prominence during debate in this chamber. From my observation some practical application of respect for co-workers around Parliament House would not go astray. I intend to write to the House Committee seeking some consistency in protocol. If members' preferred option of form of address is Mr, Mrs or Ms from staff within Parliament House then I would challenge them to extend the same courtesy to staff. We are all workers for Victorians.

Healthcare, its provision and quality, is of critical importance to my constituents, particularly as there

is a higher than average percentage of people aged 50 and over. In an emergency, people need to have confidence that an ambulance will arrive promptly, that within a reasonable period they will be treated in casualty in our public hospitals, and that if needed a hospital bed will be available. Sadly, that confidence which gives peace of mind to seniors or those with chronic medical conditions no longer exists in Victoria. The health system needs restoration.

I urge the government to acknowledge the crisis of confidence suffered by patients and health staff and to increase funding for hospitals so they can employ more staff, open more beds, cut casualty waiting times and provide an adequate budget for cleaning wards and sterilising equipment. Although case-mix funding in Victoria is based on the supposition that patients should leave hospital even when they require home nursing, adequate funding must be allocated for a home-visiting, after-care service.

The Kennett government has stripped the ambulance service of 90 operational officers. I have personal knowledge of one of the well-publicised deaths that was due to either the operational failure of the new computer system or the lack of ambulances and operational staff. It is absolutely no comfort to grieving families and friends that cuts to ambulance services have met budget demands. I intend to work with the Labor team to ensure that the health priority is patient care and that quality care is as important as throughput.

Community services are increasingly being driven by terms such as 'unit costing' and 'throughput' and the shift to funding large organisations and defunding smaller organisations. Waiting lists are now common for entry to services ranging from drug rehabilitation, family mediation and marriage counselling to housing counselling for the homeless. The waiting lists do not sit well with those who have taken what for them is a first gigantic step — that is, they have asked for help, thus admitting they have a problem that they cannot deal with alone. The last thing they need to hear is that they will be put on a waiting list for counselling. Being told that their requests for help equates with being put on a waiting list is something ministers should experience.

Ministerial obsession with unit costing and throughput does not sit easily with community support agencies willing to assist multi-problem or long-term clients. The trend towards funding the largest welfare organisations and the defunding of a

range of services means that the remaining agencies have more clients and a smaller budget. The quality of service provision for short-term as well as multi-problem or long-term clients needs to be addressed by the new minister.

The corporate mentality of the Victorian government has been at the expense of compassion. The 'forgotten people', a term the Premier suddenly found during the election campaign, are those people who need mental health services, drug rehabilitation programs, family counselling and disability services. They will be forgotten again during this term if the Labor Party, churches and lobby groups stop calling for justice for the forgotten people. Through work in my electorate, in the chamber, in committees and in my shadow ministerial responsibilities, I intend to make people the priority of the government.

During my future in Parliament there are four areas on which I will work which transcend electorate matters. The first area is my support of the principles that should underpin our parliamentary democracy.

When I was doorknocking I was amazed at the ferocity of statements of support for democracy from those who were born in Europe and South America. Many had lived through totalitarian regimes. For some of them it was a struggle to explain in English the principles of democracy. However, their sign language regarding the Premier and the coalition's practices left little to my imagination. They were voting Labor because they saw dangerous similarities between the regimes they fled and the trends developing in Victoria. For as long as I was prepared to listen and learn from their life experiences they were anxious to enumerate the danger signs that were so evident to them.

In his inaugural speech the honourable member for Niddrie eloquently spelt out the doctrine of the separation of powers. I wholeheartedly endorse his comments. I intend to work for the restoration of democracy in Victoria and to promote the separation of powers. The legislature, the executive and the judiciary should be clearly distinguishable from one another.

The second area in which I will work is to lower the speed limit on suburban residential streets to 40 kilometres per hour. I note that one of the reforms to be discussed next month at the ministerial council on road transport is the lowering of the speed limit on suburban streets to 50 kilometres per

hour. My argument to federal and state ministers is that we should lower the speed limit further to 40 kilometres per hour and leave its implementation to local councils. Road accidents are one of Australia's largest killers. Uniform state legislation to lower suburban speed limits would reduce fatalities and the number of injuries. The true cost of road crashes goes beyond the fatality figures.

The third area in which I will work is the recognition and funding of pregnancy loss counselling. In a country that willingly provides first-trimester abortions and makes second-trimester abortions available the need for post-abortion counselling deserves recognition and government funding directly related to the funding provided for abortions. The profound effect of unresolved grief and post-abortion trauma permeates much of modern family life.

Thirty years ago the physical and psychological pain of sexual abuse and domestic violence was suffered in silence, but thankfully today it no longer needs to be hidden. The problem has been recognised, as has the need for counselling, support groups and programs for survivors. Once the community acknowledges the pain and grief suffered by survivors they can be worked through.

Abortion eliminates pregnancy, but for some it does not eliminate motherhood or indeed fatherhood. It has not yet been recognised by the general community that when pregnancy ends directly as a result of a procured abortion the woman involved, and sometimes the man, may need various degrees of support independent of the service provided by the clinics. Pregnancy loss counselling, which covers miscarriage, stillbirths or abortion, requires an acknowledgment by the community and funding by the government.

The fourth area in which I will work is to promote the positive components of family life. My experience in pregnancy and family counselling, and more recently listening to those working in drug rehabilitation, shows that some factors that may act as antecedents to the crisis point in one's life are family dysfunction, instability in accommodation and unemployment. Strengthening and supporting families will not only be beneficial to its members but it will also be cost effective for the community.

I relish my appointment to the shadow cabinet. I have had a long-standing involvement with women's affairs and family issues. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for allocating to me the

shadow ministerial responsibilities for women's affairs and family services. I assure Victorians that I will highlight the government's inadequacies and I will consult widely with groups representing a range of women's issues as well as family services.

The Kennett government has added directly to the burden on Victorian families by big increases in taxes and charges, large cuts to services on which families rely, cuts to community support services and to education.

Members of the Labor Party believe we must invest in people. We must invest in stronger families and communities. We see the community and church organisations as the partners of government because they are involved in the support of families and they deliver services to them. Labor's principles and practice is to strengthen family life.

We believe the role of government is to work towards ensuring families can carry out their responsibilities.

The coalition's practice is in stark contrast. It has ruined our world-class maternal and child health services and slashed preschool funding, and the child protection system remains in chaos. An early discharge for maternity patients coupled with significantly reduced availability of domiciliary care puts women and their babies at risk. I have often pondered whether a cabinet minister who had surgery that was equivalent to a caesarean operation would go back to work five or six days after the surgery, which is what many women do when they return to home duties with a baby and often a toddler in tow. I think not, but that is what is happening in Victoria.

Labor believes in investing in people. The coalition invests in mausoleums — witness the casino.

As shadow minister for women's affairs it will be with great vigour that I highlight the stark contrast between Labor's genuine commitment to enhancing the lives of Victorian women, and what can best be described as glib rhetoric from the coalition. Beyond the rhetoric, the coalition's policies have taken away vital services which support women in their daily lives, and have set back the quest for equality by decades.

The symbolism of the threatened closure of the Royal Women's Hospital, which has served women since 1856, is not lost on women in this state. The fact the government would dare to contemplate

closing the Royal Women's Hospital is evidence that this government does not understand or care about the health needs of Victorian women.

As I indicated earlier, the abandonment of the protection of state awards disproportionately hurts women. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value has been attacked by a government with a 19th century attitude to industrial relations.

Victorians have suffered a massive reduction — \$550 million per year — in spending on health, aged care and community services. Thousands of the jobs axed have been women's jobs. The burden of extra care for the young, the aged, the sick and people with disabilities, continues to fall on women.

In October last year, the Leader of the Opposition announced that a future Labor government would introduce Australia's first ever comprehensive policy for carers. I will continue to promote the interest of carers. The love and care they provide cannot be purchased. The burden carers continue to carry is monumental.

It is the Labor Party that has always championed the rights of women and pioneered true reform. I look forward to consulting with Victorian women and the groups that represent them and will wholeheartedly present their concerns to this house. I will be the strongest possible advocate for the interests of Victorian women.

My journey to this chamber, while offering great personal satisfaction, holds no spectacular moments. I had and have a loving family. My journey included assisting my parents with their driving-school business, which was run from home, a secondary education that encouraged girls in faith and strength, and a tertiary education where considerable energy was spent in student politics. My first full-time job in Australia's biggest trade union, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, was as its first women's officer and leader of the first women's bureau in an Australian trade union. While home with preschool children my part-time work included union organising, emergency secondary teaching, adult migrant English teaching and being an electorate officer. For the past three years I was manager of the Caroline Chisholm Society, a pregnancy and family support service.

The most enjoyable, responsible, emotionally and physically tiring position I have had was when I was home full time with children. As we have just

celebrated Mothers Day, I pay tribute to the women and men who are their children's primary carers and encourage them to keep pace with current affairs, to express their views to politicians and through the media, and when asked, 'Do you work?' to be assertive and reply, 'Yes, but it is unpaid'.

Through each stage of my journey, I have been accompanied by family, friends, workmates and political colleagues. I am indebted to Peter McCabe, who taught me the importance of trade unionism, Joan Child, who proved that having a large family — four children is a large family these days — need not be an obstacle to a political career, and Caroline Hogg, my upper house colleague, who has worked closely with me since my preselection. My life has been shaped by my family and the values of friends and the rich traditions and diversity of the Australian Labor Party. Perhaps it can be summarised as: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with my God.

My childhood home in Cumberland Road, Pascoe Vale, was built by my father who, after returning from the Second World War, was trained as a carpenter. My interest in politics began at an early age as I helped Dad by folding leaflets and letter boxing for countless election campaigns, and I witnessed my mother's quiet and unswerving support for him, their five children and social justice. They continue to live the values they espouse. I thank my parents for the countless ways they have assisted me and to my brothers and sisters who taught me team spirit, loyalty and the value of argument and standing one's ground.

Without the support of my husband, Kevin, and our four children I would not be standing here today. As an increasing percentage of my time is being spent away from home it will be my husband who has the more difficult of our roles. My heartfelt thanks go to our four children. I hope that my absences from home can, in some way, be compensated by knowing that the society in which they grow has been enhanced by the political contributions I aim to make. My family is again supporting me today by their attendance in the public gallery.

My campaign committee, ably led by Ana Mackay, worked tirelessly for victory. We achieved because we cared. I have already personally expressed my immense gratitude to them.

Becoming a politician was not a career path I intentionally trod. The decision to run for the seat of Pascoe Vale was a direct result of the Victorian

government's strident attack on and dismantling of so many of the institutional supports so essential to maintaining the social justice principles and practice applied by the previous Labor government.

My commitment is to conscientiously represent Pascoe Vale and to ensure that my campaign theme — 'Making people the priority' — has consistent impact in this Parliament until the next election when Labor can be seated on the government benches.

Ms BURKE (Prahran) — Mr Speaker and honourable members, it gives me great pleasure to begin my maiden speech by congratulating you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to the position of Speaker of this house. I know how much you respect that position. The position has obviously been one you have taken before. From what I have seen, after yesterday's proceedings, I am quite confident you are going to be a fair and impartial Speaker of the house.

I also pay tribute to the past member for Prahran, the Honourable Don Hayward. Don Hayward was one of the great contributors to the reform process of this government. He leaves wonderful reforms for education. As the honourable member for Frankston has stated already, although people involved in change take a fair amount of flak in the community, it is the fruits of that labour that will be seen in the future of the educated youth throughout Victoria.

I mention also other members in my electorate — the Honourable James Guest, a former representative of Monash Province, and Peter Costello, who is now the Treasurer of this great country. It is a most unusual circumstance that in March of this year we had three elections — one on 3 March for the federal government; one on 15 March for local government in my electorate; and, of course, the third election, on 30 March, for the state government.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be able to congratulate three new mayors in my electorate — the Lord Mayor of the new City of Melbourne, Cr Ivan Deveson; Cr Liana Thompson, the new Mayor of Port Phillip; and, of course, Cr John Chandler, who is now the Mayor of the City of Stonnington. I pay special tribute to Cr John Chandler, who was a ward councillor with me during my time as a councillor and the Mayor of the City of Prahran. I look forward to joining with him in looking after our combined constituents.

It is indeed a mark of our multicultural society that many of us represent diverse constituencies. The electorate of Prahran is a marvellous example of that, as people from more than 111 different nations reside in the City of Prahran; one-third of the population are from non-English-speaking backgrounds; 56 per cent of the people were born in Australia; almost half the households are couples without dependent children; and 7 per cent of the population is under 14 years of age.

Prahran is famous for encompassing the widest possible social spectrum. The electorate is made up of people from many lifestyles and concerns, ranging from how to make your next million to how to get your next meal. It is less well known that Prahran has some of the densest residential areas in Melbourne. However, the density and diversity are probably some of its best features. Prahran is a place of remarkable harmony and community of purpose. People have learnt to live together and accept each other's differences as they forge ahead to meet the challenges of the future. I am proud and honoured to represent the people of Prahran.

I am, of course, quite familiar with the electorate, as I was a councillor and the mayor for some time. But, like others, my first experience in public life was actually of a very personal nature. I was offended by what I considered to be the destruction of my streetscape by intense development, which is not an unusual situation and I am sure many members of the house today would recognise that. Like many others, I ended up on council on that particular issue. But having become involved, I quickly realised that there were bigger and more challenging issues crying out for attention, and that they were well beyond mere self-interest. I realised also that local government was well placed to serve the community. It is an essential vehicle for the delivery of administration and numerous community services at the local level.

We have recently changed the pattern of local government in Victoria, and particularly, of course, local government boundaries, as part of a more extensive reform package aimed at improving the efficiency of local government. Members will know that I was privileged to be able to play a significant role in that process, although I would emphasise that it would not have been possible without the steadfast support of this government. My experience with the Local Government Board literally expanded my horizons. I was able to meet with every council in Victoria more than once. We travelled the length and breadth of this state. It was an invigorating

experience, and despite our agenda of significantly reducing the number of councils in Victoria it confirmed my belief in the importance of state and local government working together for the future benefits of not only Victoria but also Australia. Being a proud Australian, I am also a firm believer in the federal government.

The issue for me is not whether we have too many levels of government. That debate will go on for quite some time. The issue, and the real challenge to all of us, is how we continue to improve the communications and the efficiencies between the levels of government. We have to learn to have sensible debate about the best arrangements between federal, state and local government. We must learn to do that without resorting to the old clichés of state rights and local government rights.

It is important to recognise the significance of the recent agreement on firearm legislation and the degree of cooperation that was required between the commonwealth and the states to achieve it. Regrettably, it may not stop a further instance of what is sought to be avoided, but it is a very important watershed and it is a clear statement about the sort of future that we Australians want to forge for ourselves. My electorate has made clear to me its overwhelming support for the agreement the governments of Australia have reached.

In the past there have been stumbling blocks in the way of better intergovernment relations. It points to the need to involve the appropriate spheres of government in the appropriate decision-making processes and to establish better channels of communication between the three spheres of government.

But there have also been many successful outcomes. We have uniform national building codes now which also provide for the variations needed to meet the different climatic conditions across Australia; we have improved the national consistency of our corporate laws; and we are discussing the most effective distribution of our health and education programs between the three spheres of government. We also now have a national commitment to competition policy and Victoria is currently reviewing all its legislation to determine whether we comply with this commitment.

This all creates a positive outcome and shows a willingness across all political parties to examine our past and present practices as we all share the challenges of preparing our constituencies, our state

and our nation for an increasingly dynamic and, most importantly, international future.

There will be situations where national consistency is necessary; there will be others where a general consistency framework is justified. At whatever level of government, there will be another set of circumstances that could best be handled, for example, at local level — a local issue is best dealt with at that level.

We might even take a regional approach to uniform legislation. For example, it is difficult to imagine how a piece of legislation on hunting and breeding crocodiles in the top end of Australia might be necessary in Melbourne — perhaps it might be necessary in this house, but it would not be necessary in the rest of Melbourne.

My point is that we must look positively at our systems of intergovernment relations and not be afraid to pursue the best arrangements to achieve efficient administration and quality results for the people we serve. Nor must we forget our partners — private enterprise — as we face this great challenge.

I am reminded of the maiden speech of the honourable member for Burwood almost 20 years ago today, when he emphasised his commitment to private enterprise and noted the importance of federal, state and local government in achieving a healthy free enterprise system.

I am no stranger to private enterprise. It is part of my family history; I was brought up with it. I enjoy the energy and drive of the business environment. My electorate is vibrant with business activity, both large and small, from the boutiques of Chapel Street to the offices along St Kilda boulevard. The issues that concern them are those at the meeting point of government and non-government activities. As the member for Prahran I will be paying particular attention to the ways in which government at all levels affects the health of the business environment in my electorate. I am particularly conscious that the wellbeing of my constituents, from one end of the socioeconomic spectrum to the other, is reliant on an extremely healthy non-government sector.

One aspect of the local economy in my electorate that is often forgotten is tourism, which creates much needed employment for many in our community. As a society we need to rethink and reconsider employment options for those who have been forgotten due to the effects of the technological revolution. One group that immediately comes to

mind comprises those who are 45 and over. Victoria's great capacity to produce the best products in the world is another arena in which there is tremendous opportunity for growth, particularly for employment.

As the first female member for Prahran it is appropriate and pertinent that I make a few comments on the new role of women, which is clearly demonstrated by the number of new members of the fairer sex in the 53rd Victorian Parliament. There is no doubt that the changing role of women in our society will have a great impact on the work and decisions of this house, and I look forward to having some input into the debates.

However, I would also like to make mention of the fact that many women in our society — mothers, carers, volunteers and the like — do not wish to break through glass ceilings or knock down parliamentary doors. They should have the right to take the road they wish to take; it is up to the individual. I would like to hear a lot more public debate on getting on and assisting the effects of change and the rights of the individual and a lot less opinion on the rights of women alone. Many people in our communities are discriminated against, and it is time for the energy of the women's debate to move to them. Women will have made their mark when men see them as mentors, just as I have seen men as mentors for me.

I should like to end by congratulating my magnificent campaign team, particularly my campaign chairman, Margaret Harrison, who did a magnificent job, and my electorate chairman, Ian Moffat. There are too many people to name tonight, but each and every one of them recognises how much I appreciate what was done for me.

I should like to thank my twin sister and her family for their assistance, and I give special thanks to my family, who have been very supportive and who have assisted me during my time in public life so far. I should like to thank my fellow parliamentarians on both sides of the house for their warm welcome. I appreciate that. I pay tribute to the parliamentary staff for the courtesy and understanding they have given me as a new kid on the block and, most importantly, I should like to thank my electorate for electing me on their behalf.

I will work to serve each and every one of them, whether they voted for me or not. I hope I will be worthy of their trust and I look forward to working with the honourable members of this house to

achieve positive reforms and to promote the wellbeing and prosperity of our country, our state, the wonderful city of Melbourne and, of course, my electorate of Prahran.

Ms GILLET (Werribee) — I support the motion before the house and take this opportunity to introduce myself and to reintroduce the seat of Werribee, which I have the privilege to represent. The electorate profile I am about to quote from was created by Elise Wherry during her internship with the retired member for Werribee, Dr Ken Coghill, who at one time occupied the high office you now occupy, Mr Speaker. The profile states:

Werribee is an outer-metropolitan electorate approximately 23 kilometres west of Melbourne and is part of Melbourne West Province. The electorate district covers 513 square kilometres and it includes the suburbs and localities of Werribee, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Balliang East and Exford, and parts of Hoppers Crossing and Little River. The electoral district is developed around the Werribee/Hoppers Crossing area, and it includes a large rural component.

The electorate has two major shopping centres and includes the Gilbert Chandler campus of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture, the University of Melbourne Veterinary Science Clinical Centre and the Division of Industrial Skills of the Western Metropolitan College of TAFE. Government establishments include the Department of Food and Agriculture at the State Research Farm, premises of the Australian Wheat Board, the Melbourne Water Board, the CSIRO Division of Animal Health and the Melbourne Water Board. The Werribee Racecourse is a landmark in the electorate.

Mr Speaker, one of my first memberships was my membership of the racing club. The profile continues:

In 1991 there were 51 459 persons living in the Werribee electorate: 25 688 males and 25 771 females. The majority of the population (50.3 per cent) is aged between 20 and 49, with 36.5 per cent under 19 and 13 per cent over 50 years.

Households in the Werribee electorate typically are purchasing or already own their homes (76.5 per cent). Dwellings are typically separate houses (89.9 per cent). The majority of the people in Werribee were born in Australia (74.6 per cent). Of the remaining 25.4 per cent who were born overseas, 8.0 per cent were born in the United Kingdom or Ireland, 6.2 per cent were born in Southern Europe and 2.2 per cent were born in South East Asia.

Clerical workers (19.5 per cent), tradespersons (14.8 per cent), sales and personal service workers (12.9 per cent) and labourers and related workers (11.5 per cent) form the largest occupational groups in the area. Manufacturing (17.7 per cent), wholesale and retail trade (19.8 per cent) and community services (14 per cent) employ a large part of the electorate's work force. Although most are employed in private enterprise, many in the area are government employees.

It needs to be understood that the census data is five years old. For some communities, not a lot would have changed in that period. That is not the case for Werribee.

Since 1987 the government's planning policy, which had been framed within the context of work done by the then Board of Works in the mid-1970s, established Werribee as one of two corridors for outward urban growth. Population growth in Werribee has proceeded apace since that time. Indeed, it has been predicted that the electorate of Werribee will be one of the most populous areas in Victoria by 2011. The kind of population growth experienced thus far by Werribee, which is predicted to continue, requires a comprehensive, thorough and commonsense approach to the provision of services for the community. These services, sometimes referred to as infrastructure, include schools, roads, hospitals, maternal and child health services, child-care services, and, most importantly, public transport. The achievement of the provision of these services will be my highest priority in this place. If such rapid population growth continues without the steady provision of these services, significant difficulties will develop in the community. They will appear to be unrelated, so-called social problems, which become endemic and almost impossible to solve.

Werribee requires urgent preventive measures to ensure that our rapid population growth is matched with the provision of resources to provide a balanced and healthy environment for the community's development.

Werribee's priority needs have been acknowledged by the Premier and various other ministers during their visits to Werribee during the recent election campaign. The promises made by the Premier and the ministers have been duly noted, and I would like to express my gratitude, because the realisation of those promises has become my most important agenda item in this place.

The circumstances of my candidacy meant that the campaign we ran was short and sharp — quite a lot like me, really! I became the candidate for Werribee on 13 March 1996.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GILLET — Well, I am short. I woke up that morning as a national industrial officer for the National Union of Workers and went to sleep that evening as the candidate for Werribee. On that one day I met Barry Jones and Dr Ken Coghill for the first time. Both were generous in their time and energy and supportive of my candidacy. Ken became my campaign director. I must have had at least a million photos taken by a charming true believer named Cyril Kennedy, who made me look much better than I had ever looked before. Even when my smiling muscles went into cramp, Cyril made me look relaxed. To him I am eternally grateful.

I met my campaign committee and branch executive and began to feel that I was coming home. To a man and woman they gave their all.

By the end of 13 March there was a campaign office, a candidate, and a campaign committee with a campaign to run — and run it we did. It was all hands to the pump. The ALP won Werribee because all the various components of the party worked together: branch members, supporters, the head office, and the trade union movement, represented by the National Union of Workers, the union for which I have worked and of which I continue to be a member.

I have expressed my thanks and gratitude to the people and the organisations in more detail in other places, but I wish to express it here again on the public record. Thank you.

Werribee was not won easily; there was a significant swing. Nonetheless, the majority of the voters accepted that I would be their representative for the next four years.

While I am chastened by the swing, which could possibly have been reduced if I had had, say, at least one more week to campaign, winning in 17 days by 558 votes was fine by me. Indeed, if we take it that we can win 558 votes for each group of 17 days for the next four years, next time I will win Werribee by a margin of 48 038 votes!

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GILLETT — Maybe I could work on another seat as well. On a more serious note, I would like honourable members to know that I come from one of the finest unions in the country in general, and in Victoria in particular — the National Union of Workers which, 10 years ago, was the Federated Storemen and Packers Union. There had never been a woman employed as a national official before I was; now there have been five. I spent a year as an organiser in the Victorian general branch. They had not employed a woman before; now they have employed eight.

The process of change can be grindingly slow and very painful indeed for those who put their body into the game. Spectators feel no pain at all. The process of change, though, is a fundamental responsibility for people who have been given the privilege of public office. I am committed to continuing to work towards structural reform in this place to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in serving the communities we represent.

It will come as no surprise to honourable members that, given my background, I have a most fundamental interest in industrial relations. In many ways I find my new role, representing the constituents of Werribee, to be very similar to my role in the union: representing and protecting the interests and needs of working people. The trade union movement provides the only balance to capital, which in turn provides civilisation and balance for society. If a society becomes unbalanced, for example, and capital becomes entitled to pursue its objectives, unchecked by the civilised protection of labour, the society becomes dysfunctional. Of course, the same could be said if the situation were reversed and Labor pursued its objectives in an unbalanced way — but that has been anything but the case for well over a decade. The trade union movement has, in cooperation with capital and the last federal government, produced a system based on respect, equity, productivity and efficiency. Frankly, we could benefit from a healthy dose of each of those commodities in this place.

This is demonstrably the case. The market has decided. When the market was given the choice between balance, respect, equity, productivity and efficiency, as opposed to a system which entrenched imbalance and inequity, people voted with their feet.

There are approximately 1.7 million workers in Victoria; 700 000 were employed under federal awards before October 1992; 400 000 moved to the

federal system, exercising their choice; 300 000 employees, including 10 000 police and 30 000 public servants, remain stuck in the state system such as it is; and 300 000 employees were always non-award employees. That clear demonstration of the attitude and desire of Victorian employees and employers is encouraging, because it demonstrates that the best Australian tradition of 'a fair go' is alive and well.

I will watch with great interest the developments that take place federally with the new government and its industrial relations reforms, conscious that the Victorian government has publicly stated its intention to transfer this important responsibility to the commonwealth.

In conclusion, and most importantly, I would like to thank my mother and my children. I am the eldest of my mother's four children — and I won't say 'shortest' again, but that is what I had written down.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GILLETT — Sharpest too, yes. At 24 my mother had a 4-year-old child, a 3-year-old child, an 18-month-old small person and a 6-week old baby. From that time she became solely responsible for bringing us up. Her stamina — physical, emotional and spiritual — has been a constant source of example and inspiration. Without her unfailing encouragement and support, I certainly would not be here now.

Like most mothers, I am unashamedly biased about my three remarkable children. They are very proud of me — I want to keep it that way. My children are and remain, in spite of this honour, my proudest achievement. My children keep me balanced; you can never get too carried away with your own self-importance when, upon arriving home, you are greeted with your children's major issues, which they insist you remedy immediately. They keep my perspective balanced and clear.

When I started working for the Federated Storemen and Packers Union in 1987 some attention was paid to the appointment.

I recall the very good advice I received at that time. I was reminded that I was employed to do a job, to represent and protect the interests of members, and to remember that I was simply an instrument of a great working-class organisation. I was told that the achievements, if any, would belong to the union — I could, however, keep the failures. It was not such a

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

138

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

bad deal in the end. The failures taught me much more than the successes ever did.

I bring to this place all that I have learnt and trust that with persistence and good humour I can continue to do my job.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — In speaking to the motion for the adoption of an address-in-reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor I express my loyalty and that of the constituents of Caulfield to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who is represented in Victoria by His Excellency the Honourable Richard McGarvie. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your appointment to the high office of Speaker and also your deputy for his re-election.

I am deeply honoured at the trust placed in me and the opportunity afforded me by the people of Caulfield to represent them in this chamber. I am very conscious that the electorate of Caulfield has been represented by a long line of distinguished parliamentarians, such as Harold Cohen and Joseph Rafferty, both of whom served as ministers and made themselves known to me after my preselection. The seat has further been represented by others who served as ministers in their public service. They include people such as Alexander Dennett and Alexander Fraser.

I also acknowledge and pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Ted Tanner, who was the member for Caulfield for almost 17 years from May 1979 until the recent election. His father, Sir Edgar Tanner, represented the Caulfield electorate for some 21 years from 1955 to 1976. Ted Tanner is well known in the Caulfield electorate as a person of integrity who unselfishly gave of his time to assist those in need. I am sure all honourable members would wish to join with me in recognising his contribution to this Parliament as a longstanding member, a shadow minister and, more particularly, as party whip over the first term of the Kennett government. On a more personal note, I thank Ted Tanner for the advice and assistance he has given me in my initial period as the new member for Caulfield.

The district of Caulfield has a very proud history and one that emerged out of the early European settlement of Victoria. The Caulfield Roads district was first proclaimed by Victoria's Governor Barkly only some six years after the separation of the Colony of Victoria from New South Wales. It was named after one of Melbourne's early pioneers and

builders, John Caulfield, who came to Melbourne in 1837.

Caulfield today is a community rich in cultural diversity. It is by and large a residential electorate with a focus on small business. The electorate offers a wide range of medical and educational facilities as well as, of course, the Caulfield race track. It is an electorate with great community spirit and a sense of belonging for its residents.

In my first speech to the house I note the contribution of the Liberal Party in encouraging women to participate in the political process. Others before me have given recognition to the pioneering work done by the Liberal Party on issues concerning the status of women, and in particular the success of Liberal women in being the first to be elected to the House of Representatives, the Senate, state and federal cabinets, and as a state party president in Victoria.

Although I am proud to be one of five additional Liberal women in the 53rd Parliament to join the ranks of the nine who were elected to the last Parliament, it is not the mere numbers I wish to focus on, but the real and practical encouragement given by the organisation of the Liberal Party to ensure that women of capacity put themselves forward for preselection.

The formation of the Liberal Women's Forum at a federal level of the organisation of the party, led by Dame Margaret Guilfoyle, provided the impetus for state divisions to embark on training programs for prospective women candidates and those who may wish to participate in the political process in other ways.

I am particularly proud of the Victorian state division, through the work of the chairman of the women's section, Trish Wilke and others, where the encouragement for women has not been a matter of mere rhetoric but of positive action that has translated into a record number of women being preselected to winnable seats and elected to this Parliament.

The direction of the Liberal Party on the status of women has been both supported and enhanced by previous Liberal governments, but particularly by the Kennett government's commitment to the equality of opportunity for women.

The period of the last Parliament saw an impressive number of changes to the status of women through

the introduction of legislation to provide for their legal, professional and family needs. Of note were the establishment of the Victorian Women's Council to consult with women throughout the state and advise government on the issues of concern to women; industrial relations reform through the Employee Relations Act 1992 to provide opportunities for employees with family responsibilities to negotiate flexible conditions to provide for the demands and needs of family life; the introduction of the new crime of stalking; and a range of initiatives in the legal system for the protection of women subject to domestic violence.

They are but a few examples of the achievements of a government that has also committed to bringing about further equality for women in the workplace, the home, education and access to services. However, the most important achievement that has continued and will continue to provide opportunities not only for women but for all in our community, including the young, has been the emergence of a strong and vibrant economy through responsible management and the leadership shown by the Kennett coalition government in Victoria.

I now turn to a topic of great interest to me that grew out of the opportunity I had over a number of years to work for the federal Liberal Party as a policy adviser in a number of portfolio areas and my more recent employment in the corporate sector working for Western Mining.

I believe the area of federal-state relations, which historically set the pattern of government in this country through Federation, provides an enormous challenge and great opportunity for both state and federal governments in the years to come. The Australian Federation, through the Commonwealth constitution, was designed to preserve the states as the dominant partners in the Federation. Like the American constitution, it established the institutions of government and set out a framework that detailed agreed principles of the commonwealth government's working.

However, it was a non-prescriptive document which provided the bare bones of the federation, enumerating the powers of the federal government and leaving the residual powers to the states. It has therefore left to the governments of the day the task of finding the means by which their objectives are achieved. Although formal change of the constitution can be achieved through referendums, very few changes to the relationship and allocation of powers between the tiers of government have

occurred through that mechanism. The High Court bears the responsibility in cases of conflict of deciding whether a commonwealth act is in accordance with the powers ascribed to it under the constitution. The bank nationalisation case of 1948 provided a significant interpretation which conditioned the working of federal-state relationships.

The most significant area of change in federal-state relations has occurred through the plethora of agreements reached at federal-state ministerial level providing for the negotiation of uniform and complementary legislation across the nation, thus avoiding High Court permission or refusal. However, as has occurred with most federations, we have seen power shift in the direction opposite to that first intended. In countries such as Canada and West Germany there have been shifts away from central government to the regions, whereas the Australian and American experience has been in the opposite direction.

The Australian commonwealth government currently enjoys a more powerful position in relation to the states than the founding fathers ever envisaged. This has been accomplished through its effective monopoly of the direct taxing power and as a result of several High Court decisions. In recent years concern over this tendency towards centralisation of government within the Australian federation led to a series of special Premiers conferences starting in 1990, which finally brought about the creation of the Council of Australian Governments in 1992.

The special Premiers conferences, which were held specifically to discuss commonwealth-state issues, focused on what the states viewed as deliberate commonwealth government policy under the ALP aimed at centralising commonwealth financial power through tied grants — that is, specific-purpose payments by the commonwealth. Such grants, which have increased to 50 per cent as a proportion of total grants, have been seen to be giving the commonwealth leverage into areas that have previously been the exclusive domain of the states.

The meetings of the Council of Australian Governments outside the normal financial Premiers conferences created a forum for discussion about the financial commitments made through the ministerial council process and other issues of a non-financial nature that are seen to be in the national interest. A more recent meeting of state Premiers and territory

chief ministers was held in Sydney in 1994 to discuss the future of the Australian Federation. The leaders noted that changes in the economy, technology and interpretation of the constitution have led to a need to redefine the roles and responsibilities of various levels of government. The leaders committed themselves to building a new Australian federation through twice-yearly meetings which would complement COAG and be based on a number of important principles.

In summary, these principles focus on the need for the federation to respond to local and regional needs, deliver quality, cost-effective services which remove duplication between the various levels of government and provide a guaranteed revenue base for the states and territories that matches their expenditure responsibilities. This final principle is in recognition of the disparity between the spending and revenue-raising responsibilities of each level of government, which is referred to technically as vertical fiscal imbalance. This imbalance is said to be at the centre of the structural imbalance that is currently inherent in commonwealth-state financial relations.

The poor performance of the Victorian economy in the 1980s was partly caused by this imbalance but, as we know, it was coupled with a lack of performance by the then state administration. The current administration has reversed this trend despite the flaws in commonwealth-state financial relations. In the interests of improving both the rate of growth in Australia and the country's financial position internationally, I believe the currently defective features of commonwealth-state financial relations need to be addressed. As I mentioned earlier, vertical fiscal imbalance should be a priority, but additionally the allocation of grants between states causes a horizontal fiscal imbalance which on a per capita basis has severely disadvantaged Victoria.

In summary, the overhauling of commonwealth-state financial relations is a prerequisite for the delivery by the states of effective financial discipline and the abolition of waste and duplication in service delivery. The challenge and opportunity I referred to earlier in relation to the operation of the Australian federation is possible because of the current unique situation of there being Liberal or coalition governments federally, in the territories and in all but one state. Thus the opportunity exists to bring about reform of commonwealth-state financial relations in a cooperative and constructive manner and for the

states to pursue a cooperative approach to non-financial issues such as competition, the environment and transport.

Indeed, the federal Treasurer has recognised there is a need to guarantee states a share of commonwealth revenue and to cut duplication between the two levels of government. He has recognised the need to deal with vertical fiscal imbalance and, in doing so, has said that the ultimate objective is to breathe new life into federalism.

This federal view has been supported by COAG and the leaders forums, and I am pleased to remind members that His Excellency the Governor noted this government's commitment to taxation reform as a means of maximising Australia's opportunities in the region. He also noted the Victorian government's intention to be a leader in the move towards a more relevant Federation. So I look forward, as I am sure all honourable members do, to substantial progress being made on this all-important issue.

In conclusion, I wish to thank a number of people. My entire family, particularly my husband, Gil, has offered me loving support and encouragement in all my endeavours. Gil has been prepared to take up the slack in family life when the demands of my activities have been the greatest. He is also the voice of reality — much needed in the life of a politician. I owe a debt of gratitude to those in the Liberal Party who have offered me friendship and support. Their continuous help and encouragement over many years is the reason I am here today.

I also wish to make special mention of Liberal Party members in the Caulfield electorate who worked so tirelessly and with such good humour over the entire period of the election campaign. I do thank them. Finally, I would like to say to the voters of Caulfield that I am honoured that you have chosen me as your representative in the Victorian Parliament. I value your trust and will fulfil my responsibilities to the best of my ability. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and colleagues for your courtesy and attention.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Mr CAMERON (Bendigo West) — I am glad to be here, and I am glad to be here among my Labor colleagues. They have been extremely helpful to me in making my transition from normal life to what seems to be the life in this place, especially after yesterday, Sir. May I congratulate you on your

election to office as Speaker in this house. Equally, may I congratulate all new members who have been elected to this house. I congratulate the government on its election. No doubt when people from this side of the house move over to the other side they will happily receive the congratulations of the members in that place.

I pay tribute to the parliamentary staff and the former Speaker, Mr Delzoppo, and to you, Sir, for the seminar that was held last week. It was extremely informative. I am sure all new members learned a great deal about the bare bones of the parliamentary processes. I look forward to learning about some of the flesh that goes on those bones from the longer serving members on this side of the house.

I record my thanks to my campaign director, Mr David Kennedy, a former member for Bendigo West, and my campaign committee and campaign workers for their extremely hard work leading up to the election. Without their support and efforts my election would not have been possible. I also record my thanks to my family for their love and support throughout the whole process.

Bendigo West is an electorate which is provincial — urban and part country. It takes in the Bendigo suburbs of Golden Square, where I was brought up; Kangaroo Flat, where I now live, and Eaglehawk. Its main towns are Castlemaine, Maldon, Bealiba, Dunolly, Newstead and Tarnagulla. Essentially the main centres are Bendigo and Castlemaine. The electorate is part of the old goldfields of central Victoria.

I have had the good fortune to live in Bendigo for most of my life and also to have lived in Castlemaine for a few years. It is a beautiful part of the state with magnificent historic buildings and historic heritage. For example, Maldon in my electorate is the first notable town in Australia that is notable for its historic importance. I suggest that, if honourable members are looking to make a nice short trip, central Victoria is the place for them to go, although I may be accused of bias.

I am extremely pleased to be a member of the ALP because I believe in the notion of a fair go. Equally, I seek for my electorate to be given a fair go. The people of Bendigo West correctly expect that I will raise issues of particular concern to central Victoria. Unemployment and the need for regional development are of great concern to central Victorians. Of particular worry is the fact that we

have not enjoyed recovery to the same extent as other places. As a result, at the end of the first term of the Kennett government we have been left with the tag of having the highest unemployment in country Victoria. Unemployment in the Bendigo-Castlemaine area is 12.1 per cent, compared to 8.2 per cent for country Victoria as a whole.

Bendigo is the largest city on the other side of the Great Dividing Range. It is an industrial and commercial centre as well as a service centre. Given Bendigo's size and geographical location it finds itself the unofficial capital of a much broader region. We like to think of ourselves as the capital of the north of the state. Indeed, many regional offices such as government departments and banks are located in Bendigo because it is a major regional centre.

As a major service centre for such a large region Bendigo relies heavily on commonwealth and state government departments for employment. For this reason when there are indiscriminate cuts in the number of public positions Bendigo is affected a lot more than other centres. Indeed, from my own research and inquiries I know that over 1350 state-funded jobs, full and part-time, have gone from the Bendigo-Castlemaine district since October 1992. That is a lot of jobs and a lot of pay packets, and it impacts heavily on the local economy. Obviously that is the main reason Bendigo has been left with the tag of having the highest unemployment rate in country Victoria.

In 1992 Bendigo looked forward to a project to expand the local economy. It was the relocation of the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture. The then government and the opposition agreed to it. It would have brought 260 jobs and 260 pay packets to Bendigo. Those jobs would have greatly benefited local businesses and would have led to flow-on effects. Bendigo would have been the agricultural capital of Victoria.

A school of agriculture at the local university and agricultural research units were discussed, but this project never happened because the new government dropped the scheme after 1992. Bendigo was promised a job creation scheme which would have provided 800 jobs in the Bendigo-Castlemaine area. What happened instead? Some 1350 jobs went. That is an enormous disappointment to the people of central Victoria who feel very much let down.

It set the scene for the problems, but what can be done about it? Decentralisation is a way of stimulating the economies of centres that are in need

of help. Indeed, the Ballarat Data Centre, which was promised prior to the 1992 election, went ahead, and the people of Ballarat say it has been an enormous success.

I was pleased during the election to reaffirm a Labor platform of decentralisation to the people of Bendigo West. There is a policy now for the regions, given that the problems exist. Melbourne is a large place, but there are places in provincial Victoria which have the infrastructure and which are capable of creating more jobs, employing more people and expanding. The policy of decentralisation would have helped me and my electorate of ridding us of the tag we do not like of having the highest unemployment in country Victoria.

I record my appreciation to the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor spokesman for regional affairs, Mr Power, for their commitment to regional policy. I was pleased during the election campaign that the Leader of the Opposition delivered the Develop Regional Victoria policy in Bendigo. He is aware of the problems of regional Victoria and the urgent attention that is needed to assist areas such as ours. The policy set the scene for decentralisation, but the cornerstone was to assist in the creation of long-term private sector jobs in regional areas. The policy was specifically targeted at building up regional infrastructure and long-term regional jobs. The policy also reaffirmed Labor's youth jobs plan, a plan that is needed for regional Victoria. The unequivocal commitment of Labor is to regional development which helped us win Bendigo West and produced large swings in other areas of country Victoria.

I urge the government to adopt these or similar policies to help the unemployment problem that exists now in central Victoria. Until the problem is addressed, feelings of despair, worthlessness and uncertainty among the unemployed will regrettably persist.

Privatisation in the water industry was a theme during the election campaign in Bendigo West. The local water authority in central Victoria, which has government-appointed board members and looks after sewerage and water for the whole of the central Victorian area, was a major election issue because two-thirds of Coliban Water's operations were up for tender and involved the loss of 110 jobs. Even during the election campaign tenders were assessed and two-thirds of the tenderers for the operations included overseas companies. The people of Bendigo West clearly rejected that plan and agreed

with the Labor plan as they saw it. They wanted the operations to remain in the hands of local people, as has been the case for generations. After the election, despite what was said, the people were ignored. The water board went ahead and announced that a British-based company had won the tender and that company will soon be taking over the majority of the operations. Every time somebody in Bendigo turns on a tap the cash registers will be ringing in England and, predictably, we are told that more jobs will go — in this case, more than 20.

Country people have learnt that privatisation means one thing: the loss of country jobs. One has only to look at the SEC with the loss of country jobs, in addition to having a uniform tariff pulled from underneath them in the year 2000.

It was said that it would be a great thing when the Vetlabs in Bendigo was privatised. Among the fanfare it was promised that everything would be great. What occurred after the fireworks faded? Vetlabs in Bendigo was converted to a mere shop front and most of the workers went out the front door. People do not want the glitz, and that is what privatisation is sold as. Country people want their country jobs. Insecurity for families as a result of this process inevitably means that there are less wages in local economies.

Bendigo West people and I are sick of it. Workers in Bendigo West do not feel insecure only because of the lack of regional development, they also feel insecure about their working conditions.

A fair industrial system is essential, but workers in Bendigo West, and indeed across Victoria, believed the Kennett government when it said that no worker would be one cent worse off in pay conditions. The reason many of them believed him was that that is what they were told. What happened? In reality the situation was entirely different from the glitz: awards were abolished; individual employment contracts were expected to be signed; there were fewer holidays; there was no leave loading; there was no automatic flow-on of national pay rises; and workers were not to be paid penalty rates. Indeed, the Employee Relations Act provides that if a worker breaches an employment contract it will be a criminal offence, not a mere civil offence. Fortunately the federal Labor government allowed many workers to escape to federal awards but the worry of many workers is again alive and well, given the moves that have been taking place recently in Canberra.

As a community we must insist on protecting working conditions. I certainly will be lending my support to that cause, together with my colleagues on this side of the house.

In conclusion, I look forward to participating in debate in this house and thank honourable members for their courtesy.

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I am pleased to take part in the address-in-reply debate. It gives me a lot of pleasure this evening to join my colleagues in making an inaugural speech. A number of my colleagues would have had a lot more confidence than I would have in expecting to make an inaugural speech in this Parliament. Particularly given a number of opinion polls during the election campaign, I am somewhat surprised to be here tonight; not as surprised, however, as the members of the Strathmore branch of the Liberal Party, who are probably still suffering from the shock of it.

My path to this place has not been typical of the path taken by many Labor politicians. I did not study law at Melbourne University, as a number of professional politicians have, nor was I a political activist; indeed, I have never even worked in a trade union. For the first 22 years of my life I lived in the federal seat of Kooyong, which is not normally known as a strong breeding ground for Labor politicians. My profession, that of librarian, is not noted for providing members to this or any other house of parliament, but I hope that will change.

As was the case for a lot of people of my age, my interest in politics came with the election of the Whitlam government and, in particular, its dismissal. The period of the Whitlam government saw the introduction of a number of changes, especially in the working conditions of Australians. I therefore regard the Whitlam government as one of the important reformist governments in our history. Some of its reforms still exist despite the election of governments of different political persuasions. They include such things as Medicare, Workcare, four weeks annual leave and maternity and paternity leave, among others. All of these are legacies of the Whitlam government.

I also attended a school that is not traditionally known as a Labor school, and it was not until I attended university that some of the harder facts of life became apparent to me. I met a broad range of people at university, many of whom had not found life as easy as I had found it. When I first attended university fees were still charged, and I met many

people whose families had made tremendous efforts so that their children could have tertiary educations. It is wrong that some people in our community have certain advantages over others, not because of any merit but because they were born into a particular family — this realisation made me more concerned about the community as a whole.

I worked for the commonwealth government during the Whitlam government's time in office, and after the dismissal of that government I joined the Labor Party, as did many others. Since then I have worked under both Liberal and Labor governments and I have always found the attitudes of a Labor government to individuals and society to be quite different from those of a Liberal government, which has reinforced my beliefs.

I have a strong personal philosophy that the financially strong have a duty to look after the poor, that the physically strong should support the weak and that the intellectually strong should assist the less intellectually able. A government must have as its primary aim the creation of a community that provides equality of opportunity to all its residents, and it must provide the community and government structures that are needed to enable it to meet that aim. This cannot be left to private industry to achieve. A government needs a strong philosophy and strong goals to ensure that that aim is achieved in all sectors of the community.

At the recent election the constituents of Essendon took the opportunity of letting the state government know that they are not happy with a number of its policies. During the election campaign they constantly raised many concerns about those policies with me. Honourable members have probably heard them before; however, I will mention them again. One policy that has had a strong impact on my electorate is the City Link proposal, particularly the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway and the imposition of tolls on the freeway and the ghastly monstrosity known as the Western Bypass. It is significant that all the candidates in the electorates along the Tullamarine Freeway said they opposed the toll — some really did even though one may have only claimed he did — and that they all had swings to them. There is strong community opposition to City Link in the electorates most affected by the changes to the Tullamarine Freeway — that is, Coburg, Pascoe Vale and Essendon.

One of the main problems for Essendon will involve the overflow of traffic travelling into the city.

Essendon is already a dormitory suburb and is used by many people as a quick thoroughfare to other places. It is a great concern that that situation will worsen given the expected overflow of traffic from the Tullamarine Freeway. Even such bodies as the RACV and Transurban, who are not great lovers of the Labor Party, have admitted that they expect many thousands of cars a day to leave the Tullamarine Freeway to avoid the tolls. That will be horrific for the residents of Essendon, many of whom are greatly concerned and continually raise their worries with me. I will be working with the government, Transurban and the Moonee Valley council to ensure that some measures are implemented to protect the residential streets of Essendon from the overflow.

Essendon has an ageing population, as many honourable members will be aware, so another issue of great concern to my constituents is the provision of health services. The closure of the maternity wing of the Essendon Hospital caused great distress to many Essendon residents. I am heavily involved in the Essendon Historical Society, and through my research I have learnt that the Essendon community started raising funds for a community hospital as long ago as 1895 and that after the Second World War the fundraising effort was increased. That was strongly supported by the whole community, and the hospital was eventually built during the time that Sir Frederick Wheeler was the member for Essendon. Unfortunately, the closure of the maternity wing has meant that residents do not have a local hospital to go to; they have to go to other places, which, for a number of reasons, is inconvenient and unsatisfactory.

Unfortunately, the closure of the maternity wing was not the end of the closures at the Essendon Hospital. The number of staff numbers has progressively decreased, administrative functions have been moved to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and only the other day I learnt from a friend of an employee at the hospital that the administration is thinking of removing the 24-hour guard. In the light of the events at the Alfred Hospital last year, and given the many empty wards at the hospital, I would have thought it should be unthinkable to leave staff in a such a dangerous situation.

Another matter that was continually brought to my attention during the campaign was the removal of democratically elected councillors and the fact that elections in Moonee Valley will not be held until next March. Many people in Essendon also feel that Essendon is losing its identity, and they do not want

to accept the new name of Moonee Valley. In fact, a lot of residents take objection to the idea of the municipality being named after a racecourse. Concern about the cuts to education in Essendon have also been raised with me, which is not surprising when one considers that there are more than 30 schools and kindergartens in the area.

In some ways Essendon is like a country town. One of my council colleagues used to say that if you sneezed in Ascot Vale at 10 o'clock, a half an hour later they would be saying in Aberfeldie that you have a cold, and by about midday people in Strathmore would be expressing concern about your likely recovery. That community spirit is one of the strengths of Essendon and makes it a much-coveted city. It has a very strong community base and that community activity is one of the reasons why people are concerned about what is happening around them.

My way to this place has been facilitated through community rather than political activities, and I guess that shows how dangerous it can be to join a local community group! The first group I joined was formed to support a little park called the Bradshaw Street reserve. I assure honourable members that the Bradshaw Street reserve is no Albert Park, but it is certainly important to the people who lived by it. It was the site of an old tip and some of the older residents would enjoy telling me tales about what they saw when they first moved there. At night there would be a sea of rats running behind their houses, which was obviously one of the reasons why they wanted to improve the reserve.

Such community concern has led the residents of Essendon to seek a change in their parliamentary representative. I appreciate the faith they have shown in electing me to represent them this time round. I wish the previous member for Essendon, Mr Ian Davis, and his wife, Bev, all the best for the future. I think they are going on holiday, but I am sure they will be back soon and again involved in community activities.

It is perhaps appropriate, being a librarian and a woman, that I am reading a biography of Vida Goldstein, who was the first woman to stand for the Senate in 1903 and a strong campaigner for women's suffrage in Victoria. Between 1894 and 1900 six suffrage bills and referendum bills were introduced in Victoria, and they were all beaten by either the Assembly or the Council. I have found a couple of lovely quotes in the book and I think it would be appropriate to read them to show the attitude of

some members of that time to the possibility of having women parliamentarians in Victoria.

In 1895 Frank Madden, a well-known member of the Legislative Assembly said:

Woman suffrage would abolish soldiers and war, also racing, hunting, football, cricket and all such manly games ... Women suffragists are the worst class of socialists. Their idea of freedom is ... free love, lease marriages, and so on. Are these the qualifications for the franchise! Are we going to allow women who would sap the very foundations of a nation to have votes?

What a terrible thought! Finally, Victorian women got the vote although it was the last state in Australia to do so. Unfortunately, it did not do a great deal to improve the lot of women in some men's minds. Another quote that I particularly like — I am not sure that the staff of the parliamentary library are familiar with it — from the *Bulletin* of 1 March 1917 says:

For various reasons, the elderly fathers of the Melbourne Public Library do not employ women except to scrub floors. There are a good many jobs at the library. It is a nice, cool, quiet spot in the summer time, and a sheltered and pleasant place without draughts in the winter. Much of the work consists in sitting down and waiting for somebody to turn up and ask for something; and a woman could almost do that. The time seems right to give her the chance. In neither war nor peace can we any longer afford to waste men in unproductive jobs. If the new arrivals at the library are nice things in clean pinnies and with a cheerful appearance, so much the better — always providing that the supply of disabled soldier has failed to satisfy the demand.

Honourable members can see that the position of women had not improved much by 1917, and from the comments that we hear today I do not believe it has improved much since then.

I am pleased to be the first woman member for Essendon and to join a number of female colleagues here tonight. I also look forward to the future when the Labor Party's affirmative action policy is in place for the next round of preselections for both federal and state electorates, which will mean that we will have more female members of the house, and that will be a great advantage to some of the men.

I am here because of a strong team effort in Essendon with many people making a contribution.

It was very nice of them to vote for me even though I did admit that I barrack for Collingwood and not for Essendon, which is a telling point in that electorate.

Labor Party members in Essendon, Footscray and other Labor seats offered to assist with the Essendon campaign because they wanted to be involved with a marginal seat. In addition it was of great assistance to have so many people from the Essendon community, who were not Labor members, offering support. I thank the new federal members for Maribymong and Wills as well as the state member for Melbourne for their advice and encouragement.

I thank my long-suffering husband, Bill, and my daughter, Mary, for putting up with the disruption to their lives. Finally, I appreciate the confidence the people of Essendon have shown in me by electing me to represent them. I look forward to working with my colleagues in this house to provide a more effective representation for the residents of Essendon.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to the position of Speaker, and I look forward to receiving your wise guidance in the future. I am sure you will acquit yourself well in the job, and you already seem very comfortable back in the chair.

It is an honour for me to once again represent the people who live in the electorate of Monbulk. As you know, Mr Speaker, it is a marvellous place given that you represent the seat next door. It is a varied and diverse electorate and it is one that has provided me with a lot of interest and challenges over the past three and a half years. The people of Monbulk, like those right across Victoria, recognised the work that was done by the Kennett government over the past three and a half years and they decided it was in their interests and in the interests of the state and their children that the work should continue. I will be doing my best to ensure that they are not disappointed.

I shall briefly return to the situation that the Kennett government inherited when it was elected in October 1992. Victoria was facing a budget deficit that was rapidly heading towards \$2000 million annually. Unemployment was in excess of 12 per cent and climbing. It is now below 9 per cent and it is decreasing. Businesses were failing at a rapid rate. They were going broke left, right, and centre! There were empty shops in every shopping centre. Farmers were sent to the wall by banks that

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

146

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

could no longer rely on payments being made. That situation showed no sign of turning around.

Victoria was doubly cursed by a failed Labor government that had presided over 10 years of appalling economic management and by a federal Labor government that was rapidly going down the same path.

On 27 October 1992 His Excellency the Governor said:

It is important that I outline the objectives to which the government will aim. They are:

Reducing Victoria's record high and totally unacceptable employment level;

That has been done. As I said, it has been reduced from 12 per cent to below 9 per cent. He continued:

Establishing an appropriate education system for our children as they prepare for an increasingly competitive world;

Following three and a half years of dedicated work by the former Minister for Education, Don Hayward, the education system in Victoria is well on the way to providing exactly that sort of service for the children of today and tomorrow. His Excellency continued:

Re-establishment of Victoria's AAA credit rating;

That has not yet been achieved but we are well on the way to doing it. I hope it will be achieved during this term of government.

A reduction of the state's overall debt and unfunded liabilities;

That has certainly happened, as the Treasurer pointed out today and as honourable members will have an opportunity to debate on the appropriation bill during the coming weeks. The address continues:

The elimination of budget deficits;

That also receives a tick. That has been well and truly achieved. The state budget is now on a long-term and sustainable current account surplus path.

Greater choice and flexibility in workplace conditions;

Another tick; that has been achieved. The Employee Relations Act allows workers and employers the opportunity to provide for flexible and agreed working conditions. His Excellency continued:

A smaller and more responsible public sector;

It is indeed smaller and it is no doubt more responsible. It is providing better, more effective and timely service than ever before at a much lower cost to the taxpayer.

The government is facilitating more effective coordination among the states through an overhaul of commonwealth-state relations, which was delayed to some extent by the return of the Keating government in 1993.

With a coalition government in Canberra — and given that this house has established a joint committee to work on state and federal relations — I now expect the government to proceed further down the path towards the future, which will only be of benefit to all Victorians.

The government has contributed to the rebuilding of Victorian industry and small business on an internationally competitive basis. We regularly read in the trade and daily papers about the success of Victoria's small and large businesses. We hear of companies coming from overseas to invest in Victoria, which is again seen as the primary place in which to invest in Australia. Indeed, it is the prime place in which to invest in this part of the world.

We are again competitive after 10 years of failure, 10 years of rapidly going down the slide into oblivion. We are back up there at the top of the tree, and that will continue. That has taken three and a half years of dedicated effort by the Kennett government in working on the nine stated aims that were outlined in His Excellency's address in October 1992. Seven of those aims have been achieved, and two are well on the way to being met. There are other things that remain to be done during this term of government, but with the sort of energy and effort so far provided by the Premier and his cabinet I am sure the state is well on the way to achieving those remaining aims before the year 2000.

Two prime movers have been the catalysts for the achievements that have been made and the benefits that have accrued to the Victorian public over the past three and a half years — namely, the Premier and the Treasurer. Without the leadership and drive provided by those two men I doubt whether the government would have proceeded as far as it has down the path of reform.

It is also worth noting the efforts of the cabinet. In particular, I pay tribute to the efforts of two former ministers, Don Hayward, the former Minister for Education, and Haddon Storey, a former member

for East Yarra Province in another place, who represented his constituents and the state very well when carrying out his duties as Minister for Gaming and Minister for Tertiary Education and Training during the three and a half years he held those portfolios. They were admirable and effective ministers — as were all the members of the cabinet between 1992 and March 1996.

Despite the efforts and achievements of the first Kennett government, it was opposed at every turn by the ALP, not on matters of principle and policy but simply for the sake of opposing. The opposition opposed the grand prix, which was a marvellous success and which was well supported by Victorians, other Australians and visitors from overseas. It opposed the changes to Workcover, yet that scheme is well on the way to being fully funded and is no longer heading down the path to oblivion, which is where Workcare was heading prior to 1992.

The opposition opposed the changes to the employee relations system, yet we now have flexible and responsive workplaces in Victoria. It opposed case-mix funding, yet the introduction of that system is largely responsible for Victoria's public hospitals treating an extra 850 000 people since 1992. The opposition opposed because it wanted to oppose, not because case mix would not work.

It opposed the reform of the electricity system, which you, Mr Speaker, had a good deal to do with. It did so not because it believed the reforms would result in any great problems for the electricity industry or consumers but because it enjoyed opposing for the sake of opposing. The opposition argued the case for public ownership not to benefit consumers, employees or the state, but just to oppose. Since those structural changes have been made state debt has plummeted, prices have gone down, service standards have improved, the number of disconnections has decreased, and the system has become better because it is more responsible, more flexible and more competitive.

The ALP also opposed reform of the local government system. Although it had tried to do the same thing a few years previously, it opposed this government's proceeding to do so. In effect the Labor Party is opposed to good government. It is a fairly forlorn opposition, one that was totally rejected by the people of Victoria earlier this year. The ALP's basis for opposing was well summed up some 70-odd years ago by Norman Lindsay in *The Magic Pudding*. The book gives a good description of the thesis underlying the Labor Party's economic

approach, which I shall quote. Sam Sawnoff and Bill Barnacle are having a discussion about the pudding, and Bill says to Sam:

'You'll enjoy this puddin' ... handing him a large slice.

'This is a very rare puddin'.

...'It's a cut-an'-come-again puddin'', said Sam.

'... 'It's a magic puddin'.

He goes on to explain:

The more you eats the more you gets.

Cut-an'-come-again is his name, an' cut-an'-come-again is his nature. Me an' Sam has been eatin' away at this puddin' for years, and there's not a mark on him'.

That is typical of the way the ALP thinks about economics — spend, spend, spend. If there is a problem, you throw a bit more money at it. It believes no harm will be done, that the slice will magically heal over and the cake will grow. That is a naive belief, one rooted in an infantile belief that no-one ever has to pay for government spending. The government and the people of Victoria know very well that somebody has to pay. If we do not pay for it now, our children will pay in the future — and that is unacceptable.

In 1992 the government set out to restore Victoria's finances and restore the public sector. It set out to put the state back on the path of responsible management, not for the personal benefit of the Premier or the Treasurer — they gained nothing out of it — but in the interests of the community and the children of the 21st century.

Victoria now has the lowest inflation rate in Australia. It is at about 2.9 per cent compared with the national average of 3.7 per cent. We now have declining unemployment. Approximately 180 000 jobs were created in the private sector during the first term of the government. We now have increasing business investment. Not only Victorians but people from elsewhere in Australia and overseas are investing in Victoria — much to the horror of the Labor Party. People now want to invest in Victoria to create jobs, provide services and produce goods. I do not really know why the opposition wants to oppose that, because it seems to me to be a good thing. However, for some sad reason the Labor Party wants to whinge about it. The opposition comes up with the same tired old

diatribe that it must be bad because Kennett's doing it.

At the moment we are looking at achieving real economic growth of around 3 per cent, and given the way things are travelling that could continue. I certainly hope it will be sustained at that level because that is the basis for a sound economic future for us and our children.

Some 850 000 extra patients have been treated in our public hospital system and it has not cost any extra money. It has not increased our debt because the government targeted the services that were needed and funded hospitals based on the jobs they did, not on an historical-costs basis. It is a bit like shearers in the bush, who, if they don't shear sheep, don't draw cheques. Our hospital system has been running on that basis, and it is a damn good way of making things work. People deliver if the cheques at the end of the week depend on their output.

Our debt is much lower. Public sector debt has declined from around \$32 000 million in 1992 to something like \$23 000 million this year. It will continue to go down because the Treasurer and the government are committed to running a sustainable current account surplus and reducing debt over the longer term.

The government has set a number of aims to be achieved during the current session. One of the first things the Premier did soon after the 30 March election was to talk about the future. There were a couple of comments about it being nice to be back and about the terrific victory, but he then focussed firmly on the things he has always talked about — the program for 1992 to the year 2000, the program for 2000 to 2050 and the things we need to achieve to ensure a strong, solid and sustainable future for our children in the 21st century. If we can do that, we will leave them with the best legacy we could possibly wish for and they could possibly hope to inherit — a good, solid state that will serve them well during their lifetimes.

Victoria is aiming to get back its AAA credit rating. What is the point in that, members of the opposition all ask, who cares about credit ratings? Only a few years ago Victoria was paying an extra \$1000 million a year in debt servicing costs over and above what New South Wales paid in debt servicing costs. That is not to be sneezed at. It provides one or two extra hospitals or schools, extra roads and bridges or other community services that Victoria needs and which

we would be better off having rather than spending money on interest payments.

The government is also aiming at a stable and sustainable current account surplus. It has been achieved, but the government needs to make sure it is maintained. We do not want to go back to the old system of throwing money at the problem. That is not the way to go now or in the future.

We also need to maintain strong sustainable economic growth. To some extent that will depend on national settings, but I am confident that with a federal coalition government in Canberra and a federal Treasurer who knows so much about financial management that the right settings will be put in place so that Victoria can maintain its strong economic growth.

We also need improved arrangements between the states and the federal government. We need to reduce the waste and duplication that occur under current arrangements. We need to move towards untied grants so that the state can more flexibly use taxpayers funds it receives from Canberra — that is, the return of the Victorian taxpayer's dollar. If more grants are untied the government can do a better job.

Those aims underpin a stronger and fairer society. They are not just the basis of a dry economic argument or a dry public sector administration argument; they have some practical outcomes for the community. They underpin better opportunities for all the community. They underpin a system that encourages people for the effort they expend in taking part in the local community rather than the cargo-cult mentality of sitting under the shade of a tree and waiting for someone to come along and feed you. We are much better off to encourage people to get off their bums, get out of the shade and pick up a shovel and do something!

Those aims also underpin proper support for the disadvantaged and better access to services for people who are currently denied those services. That is exemplified by the stories in the *Herald Sun* of 1 April, following the election of the new government, in which 50 projects were identified as worthy for the second term of the Kennett government.

They were wide-ranging projects such as public sector infrastructure projects, public services, community services and environmental programs. They referred to such things as the voluntary school cadet corps, which the Premier has been so

interested in and which will provide cadetship and emergency services in a range of community areas; infrastructure projects such as Docklands and the restoration and extension to double its current capacity of the State Library of Victoria; the Regent Theatre redevelopment; and the \$50 million program for new health care centres in areas such as Lilydale, Melton, Berwick, Sunbury and Knox — not, as the Labor Party has said, in Liberal-held seats but scattered across the community where the services are needed.

They include projects such as the regulation of the wheel-clamping industry — things that upset and affect people's daily lives. Major projects such as City Link will be constructed with private sector funding. It will not cost the community any money or add to the state debt but will link together major roads and provide a better transport system for the whole community.

Other worthwhile community projects include the rail-trail project, which has been developed through the good chairmanship of the Honourable Graeme Stoney in another place. It will convert to trails approximately 480 kilometres of unused railway lines for people's leisure enjoyment and to support and sponsor the development of ecotourism. Mr Speaker, a rail-trail from Lilydale to Warburton and beyond, of which you would be well aware, will provide a valuable resource to people in the outer eastern suburbs. Those rail-trails will provide a lasting community benefit throughout the state and are for people from all walks of life to enjoy.

Another project that is worthwhile mentioning and something that may come as a surprise to members opposite is the \$100 million carers program. The Premier is often accused of being hard-hearted, an economic rationalist and not caring about community services and community programs. Nothing could be further from the truth. Now that the government has established its financial settings on a firm basis it is able to turn its attention to community programs such as the carers package which will provide support and funding for people who have been ignored for far too long. The community has relied on and taken for granted the voluntary effort of those who care for sick and disabled friends or relatives. Insufficient recognition has been given to those people in the past, and it is good to see a program being developed in this term of government.

Some high-tech programs are being developed. I am pleased that a special portfolio for multimedia has

been established. Programs such as the connection of all libraries to the Internet will provide communities, predominantly younger people, with access to the Internet from their nearest municipal libraries.

They are just a few examples of the worthwhile projects the government will take on during the next three or four years. They demonstrate that the Premier and the government do not sit back and enjoy the fruits of power while thinking they have achieved most of the things they set out to achieve. That is not the case. A number of substantial programs remain to be completed before the state can be assured of that sustainable path I spoke about earlier.

Many worthwhile programs need to be entered into and completed in the best interests of the whole community. At the local level I shall be working on behalf of the community in Monbulk on a range of areas. I have a long-term goal to restore the facilities of all government schools in my electorate to acceptable standards. For far too long maintenance and refurbishment of schools were neglected. I have been happy to work with the former education minister, the Honourable Don Hayward, to address those problems. He inherited a \$600 million backlog of unfinished maintenance and capital works programs when the coalition government came to office in 1992. He went a long way towards eliminating that backlog, but some schools in my electorate need refurbishment and facilities to cater for their growing school populations.

I refer particularly to Boronia Heights Primary School and Bayswater North Primary School. One is an older school in desperate need of funding to carry out maintenance and refurbishment programs. The other is a new school, approximately 15 years old, which has good facilities but is bursting at the seams. It comprises mainly temporary buildings, and the school population is already significantly in excess of the Department of Education projections for the maximum number of students and is continuing to grow. That school needs funding to provide more permanent buildings, better classroom facilities for the students and better working facilities for the staff and the administration.

In the transport area I am looking forward to the completion of the Boronia railway crossing project. The Boronia community and former governments have talked about this for 40 or 50 years. In the past many people promised it but nothing happened. I am pleased to see an allocation of \$28 million in this year's capital works program to complete the

project. Some \$10 million has been allocated this coming financial year. For the first time the people in the area are starting to understand that when the Premier makes a promise or commitment, he means it and he delivers on his promises. When he first promised that the railway crossing problem would be solved some people just nodded their heads and said, 'Yeah, yeah, we've heard it all before'.

But in the past few weeks they have seen the drilling rigs on site doing the core samples. They have seen the surveyors working along the railway line doing the measurements to allow the tenders to be lodged. Now they can see for the first time an actual allocation in the state's capital works budget of \$10 million for the coming year to fund the start of the project. We aim to have it completed in two years or so and I certainly hope it is completed in that time.

Public safety issues are very important to my constituents. That ranges from the policing aspect of public safety to better safety on roads, better access to emergency services and ensuring that the residential areas of the Dandenongs are covered and protected in case of bushfire. Mr Speaker, you will remember, as many of the residents remember, the devastation caused by the Ash Wednesday bushfires some 13 years ago.

Those issues are very important to the people of my electorate and this government will work with them to improve their safety. The Boronia police station, which was closed by the former Labor government despite the protests of the local residents, is about to reopen.

Mr Micallef — This is the same speech you made last year.

Mr McARTHUR — I take up the interjection of the honourable member for Springvale. The money was provided last year in the budget. The buildings are up and the lights are on; the police are in the building and they will be working there on Friday. Don't you love to hear it? They will provide much better public safety for the people of Boronia. That is something Steve Crabb totally ignored when he was the member for the area. He walked over the tops of the heads of the people of Boronia. He shut their police station. How did he go? He got his comeuppance and his successor got her comeuppance on that issue. This government honoured the promise, restored the police station and improved public safety in the area. You should come out and see how happy they are!

The tourism industry is very important for the future of the Monbulk electorate. It is very important for the potential business growth in that area. We have icons in tourism, such as Puffing Billy, which are recognised worldwide and which deserve support. It is a tremendous tourism attraction that is worthy of government support. Although it has a small employed staff, it relies to a large extent on volunteer labour. It is one of the few railways in Victoria that actually returns a profit and it will continue to do so. It is worthy of support from this government, and I will certainly be working with the railway to ensure that support continues.

The other area of tourism which shows enormous potential is the redevelopment of the Skyhigh facilities at the Mount Dandenong observatory, a 1960s-style concrete bunker-type building. The former Minister for Conservation and Environment, the Honourable Mark Birrell, announced a year ago that he was calling for expressions of interest to redevelop the site. I am looking forward to seeing that going to tender so that a top-class, world-quality new tourist attraction can be developed to provide information to visitors to the Dandenongs and to provide facilities to increase ecotourism in the area.

Another tourism area where growth is sorely needed is the accommodation sector. The area needs more places to accommodate those who visit its large number of attractions. I do not propose that accommodation should be subsidised, but we need to provide the option for accommodation facilities to be developed so that visitors can spend more time in the Dandenongs.

Mr LIM (Clayton) — Mr Speaker, I join other honourable members in congratulating you on your elevation to the high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I stand here today in the 53rd Parliament of Victoria to give my first speech as the honourable member for Clayton. As I begin my term of office I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dr Gerard Vaughan, the former honourable member for Clayton, who served the people in the area and the ALP with distinction for 17 years. It is an honour to succeed him. I am sure the house will join me in expressing appreciation and wishing Gerard and his wife, Therese, an enjoyable and well deserved retirement.

Like my predecessor I am committed to serve all the people in the Clayton electorate as their elected

representative and as a member of the Australian Labor Party and the labour movement.

I am very inclined to agree with many commentators who heralded my election to Parliament as historic. Indeed, it is momentous in many respects due to my background as an Asian of Cambodian-Chinese ancestry. I take pride in being the first Asian to be elected to a lower house of Parliament anywhere in Australia.

Honourable Members — Hear, hear!

Mr LIM — I am the first Cambodian-born person to be elected to a Parliament in the English-speaking world. The Chinese community in Victoria especially celebrated my election as the first Chinese to enter the Victorian Parliament. Given that the Chinese settled in this state more than 140 years ago, it was historically significant for them.

I am very proud of the people of Clayton and thank them for their confidence in me. Their overwhelming support for me reflected their desire to respond in kind to the call by the ALP not only for fresh blood to join the reinvigorated Brumby team in this 53rd Parliament but also to reflect the true composition of the population of the electorate of Clayton.

I am equally proud and grateful to have belonged to a political party which believes people always come first. The Australian Labor Party is steeped in the tradition of social justice, of access and equity, of the politics of inclusion, of sincerely embracing the underdogs from all backgrounds and ethnic origins and giving them a real fair go — not just in words and rhetoric but in deed. Hence my preselection and election to a safe Labor seat, which is now made safer by the electorate of Clayton. Many of them are the true believers!

Honourable members before me have said their electorates are comprised of people from diverse backgrounds but compared to Clayton, that is nothing. Clayton is the most multicultural of all the Victorian electorates.

According to the 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics census, 51 per cent of the people in the electorate of Clayton were born overseas and 54 per cent speak a language other than English. No doubt the 1996 census will reveal a more substantial figure given the wave of successive newly settled ethnic communities in the district since 1991.

Nevertheless, I am conscious that I have been elected to represent, to be an advocate and work for the citizens of Clayton — not just sections of the electorate.

Having lived in that electorate for the past 20 years I can report to the house with a certain degree of pride the significant contribution made by the diverse but dynamic community that makes up the electorate of Clayton in a whole range of economic, social and cultural life in Victoria.

However, with such a large migrant population the electorate also has its share of resettlement and related problems, including long-term unemployment and youth unemployment. In his speech yesterday His Excellency the Governor said that the government intends to spend a fair bit of money in the youth area. I hope the government is serious about its intention because unless the money being spent is targeted carefully, the youth of Clayton will miss out.

The electorate of Clayton is very cosmopolitan. Residents there have come from just about every part of world — I counted 112 countries — and they speak more than 50 different languages. Besides the more established and larger ethnic groups like the Greek, Slavic, South American and Italian communities, Clayton has recently arrived refugees and migrants from Indochina — that is, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos — North Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia and many other smaller ethnic groups.

It is an understatement to suggest that people from non-English-speaking backgrounds have always disproportionately borne the brunt of any economic downturn. A case in point was the closure a few years ago of the Nissan production line in Clayton. That has severely dislocated hundreds of families in the district. Naturally, workers from the non-English-speaking backgrounds have had tremendous problems adjusting to life after working at Nissan.

The social problems encountered by those new communities can never be overstated. Many honourable members talk about familiarity with the non-English-speaking backgrounds of their constituents. I assure them, as one from such a background, that I can claim with authority how difficult that task is. While the mainstream communities suffer the bitter pills of severe cuts in services and higher taxes and charges in recent

years, the non-English-speaking communities of Clayton have felt disproportionately much more pain and therefore they have sustained incommensurable dislocation due to their lack of language skills, inability to negotiate the complex system — an important point — and unfamiliarity with the processes and procedures of their newly adopted country.

They have suffered those hardships in addition to the need to readjust and cope with the demands of life in an alien and sometimes uncompromising social and economic environment. Yet many have succeeded immensely. The now vibrant shopping centres in Springvale and Clayton are a case in point. They are a testament to the tremendous contributions the communities have made to the district.

The important role of the community-based organisations in assisting the disadvantaged members of the community, the needy migrants and the refugees in my electorate can never be overstated. The long hours worked by the hundreds of volunteers attached to those voluntary agencies in assisting and providing for the smooth settlement and resettlement of those new Australians must be acknowledged. I salute them for their unrelenting hard work over so many years: the value of their work cannot be overstated.

I would like to share with the house a story which involved the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition. I had the honour to share a table with him as I was the adviser to community groups that had invited him to celebrate the Chinese New Year only one year before his election to government. The then Leader of the Opposition asked me and the people around the table — prominent community leaders in the area — 'Why should the government assist or need to fund or resource a community group like yourselves?'. It was a shock to us and we did not know what he meant — until he got into government!

The commitment of community groups to assist needy people — be they from non-English-speaking backgrounds or otherwise — is unquestionable. They are the unsung heroes of our community. I had the good fortune of working very closely with many of them during my eight years as a commissioner of the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission under the previous government.

Some of those agencies must be mentioned: the Springvale Citizens Advice and Aid Bureau; the

Springvale Legal Aid Service; Neighbourhood House; the Springvale Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association; the Springvale Community Health Centre; the South-Eastern Ethnic Advisory Council; the Cambodian Association of Victoria; the Cambodian Chinese Friendship Association; the Migrant Resource Centres (South and South-Central Region); the Springvale Asian Business Association, and many more.

Working in partnership with these community organisations I have been able to call on my professional skills and expertise acquired during my 17-year career with various Victorian government departments including the conservation department, the Environment Protection Authority, and the then departments of labour, and business and employment.

I am totally committed to working with community organisations: I believe they have much to offer and that we can learn from them. They have taught me that success in life can be measured only by how much we contribute to the community; in practical terms, that has always been 1 per cent inspiration and 99 per cent perspiration!

I should also like to applaud the work of many other community organisations in my electorate such as the RSL clubs, bowling clubs, senior citizens clubs, Neighbourhood Watch and many church-related welfare agencies that have been providing invaluable services to their members. I had the fortune to learn first hand of their tremendous achievements and hard work during my campaign over two and a half years.

Clayton has the misfortune of straddling four newly amalgamated councils — Greater Dandenong, Monash, Kingston and Glen Eira. I say 'misfortune' because the electorate covers the physically remote, traditionally neglected and marginalised parts of those new cities. Of course, I hope to make the strongest possible representations on behalf of the district.

Another blemish on the Clayton electorate is that it has the most rubbish tip sites of any electorate in Victoria. That has been a source of concern and annoyance to the electorate. One can imagine what it must be like living next to a tip, especially when it was at the far corner of the City of Oakleigh but is now to be in the City of Kingston. I hope to work with the local community to rectify that anomaly to a certain degree.

Notwithstanding the downgrading of the democratic process in Victoria and the massive cuts to government services — which services the working people of Clayton have come to depend on — my constituents and I believe that the provision of services and facilities should be beyond politics and political excuses. We ask for nothing less.

The Premier promised a softer and kinder government in his second term. He personally promised to upgrade facilities in Clayton when he came to visit Clayton during the campaign. Of course he was hoping for a surprise vote at the time. The surprise vote, of course, did occur — in my increased margin of safety for Labor.

I ask him to remember his promise. The upgrading of Westall Road, which was prioritised by the government in its first term, is now four years outstanding. It is a disaster in the making. We cannot wait until somebody loses his or her life to do something about it. Every second day accidents occur along the 2-kilometre stretch of road. I implore the government to take action as a matter of urgency.

I have four items on my political shopping list for the Clayton electorate. First, as I mentioned, is the upgrading as a matter of urgency of Westall Road to prevent a fatality, which I know will happen sooner or later.

The Clayton electorate also wants the government to stop the downgrading of the Monash Medical Centre, which during the years of the Labor government was one of the best in the world. I especially ask the government not to diminish the role of this hospital as a medical teaching institution.

We need the government to restore the jobs of something like 470 English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers, which affects the area more than any other electorate in Victoria. If we are honest and sincere about helping refugees, the 470 ESL teachers must be restored.

The upgrading of the Westall railway station is also an urgent matter. There have been rapes and bashings. Because the station has been neglected and subject to vandalism it is indescribable. That a station should be allowed to degenerate to that state is irresponsible, to say the least.

In conclusion, it is appropriate that in my speech I record my profound gratitude to the ALP for giving me this chance to join the ranks of the exceptional

team of honourable members on this side of the chamber. I hope to contribute significantly, efficiently and effectively for the cause of the ALP. I thank the members of my branch for believing in me. They stood by me through thick and thin. I am indebted to the mainly Asian organisations and individuals who have been so supportive and single-minded about getting me into the lower house of this Parliament, disregarding my background. They worked hard just to get an Asian into the lower house, and I salute them from here.

I am grateful to my campaign committee and my campaign director, Damian Mannix, who, only days after being involved in the election of former Senator Gareth Evans as the honourable member for the federal seat of Holt, had to swing around completely into ensuring that I was elected, and for that I am grateful. He helped to put together a most effective and efficient team. I take the opportunity of thanking the hundreds of volunteers and members of the party who have given so much before and during the election campaign.

I take this opportunity of thanking my wife, Bopha, and my two sons, Jeremy and Geoffrey, for their patience in putting up with me and for the enormous support they have given me over the past 30 months.

I thank all honourable members for listening to me. I thank particularly the honourable members on this side who have been holding my hand and making my transition to life in Parliament superb. I thank also honourable members opposite who have extended a sincere welcome to me to Parliament. I hope, as they do, that in the next Parliament they have a colleague from my background. Last but not least I thank the Parliamentary staff for their courtesy and their assistance to all new members, including myself. I look forward to working with Parliament for the benefit of all Victorians.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Mr Speaker, in beginning my contribution to the address-in-reply debate I congratulate you on your election to the high office of Speaker. I also extend my congratulations to all new members of this house.

It is appropriate also that I extend my thanks and those of the house to the former member for Ivanhoe, the Honourable Vin Heffernan. Vin represented the electorate for more than 10 years and was Minister for Small Business and Minister responsible for Youth Affairs in the coalition government's first term. As we all know in this

house, our electorates want to be served by their representatives not just in government or in the house but locally, at the grassroots level of politics.

It is indeed a great honour for me to serve the people of Ivanhoe, and I commit myself to representing them in this house and to working with them to achieve sustained results for their benefit. While I am a Victorian, I support the nation state of Australia and honour the ideas that have forged Australia's identity in the modern world.

I started my representative life in the Ivanhoe Ward of the then City of Heidelberg and served the city in two wards, Ivanhoe and West Heidelberg. During my almost six years on the council I realised that to represent members of the community is a tremendous honour and responsibility.

I chose to become involved in politics in 1974 as a response to the initiatives and leadership of the then Whitlam government — I go back that far. From then I have believed in the principles of equity, fairness, equality in and before the law, access to government services, assistance to those in the community who require it, and that the Australian Labor Party cares for people. To that end, my campaign slogan was and my commitment was and is: Putting People First.

Unfortunately I do not see many of these things in which I believe in the policies of the present state government. I have waited with bated breath, hoping the Premier would awaken from his ideological daze and start to experience some of the trauma the government's policies have caused the community.

Parliaments are elected every four years in Victoria. The people get to have their say and a government is formed to put in place the policies to which government members committed themselves during their campaign. According to some, notably the Premier, once the people have spoken they should shut up for four years and let him manage the place as best he can. The response critics of the government have received since the October 1992 election has been one of the greatest practical expositions of the politics of vilification witnessed in this country. We have seen attacks on churches for believing; on community groups for helping; on trade unions for representing; on student unions for just being unions. I mean, where does the Premier go from here?

The community should be listened to. The belief that all wisdom, intelligence and wit resides in the executive, its officers and the bureaucracy is false. There is residual wisdom and knowledge in the community that we must tap into.

I believe my election to this house was a result of concern within Ivanhoe over a number of issues. The futures of the Austin Hospital and the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital were of major concern to the electorate. This is best reflected by the answer given by the former member for Ivanhoe, Vin Heffernan, in reply to the question of whether the government would sell the Austin Hospital: the Austin Hospital would not be closed. This was not an answer to the question; therefore, the people of Ivanhoe doubted the government's honesty on the subject and its commitment to the Austin and Heidelberg hospitals.

For the record I advise the house that the Austin and Heidelberg hospitals are important to Ivanhoe's culture and in respect of employment. At the time of the amalgamation I believe there were 1000 beds. In 1995 there were about 650 beds. A study completed by the government last year predicts that in 10 years the number will be reduced to 316. I remind the house that a hospital is much more than a place where sick people go. It gives those members of the community who are sick or ailing a sense of security. Knowing that good help is next door is more comforting than the sale of the Austin ever would be.

The lack of pedestrian safety at Rosanna railway station was also a major issue during the election campaign. The people of my electorate believe the government failed to respond appropriately to the recent deaths that occurred at Rosanna station. In response to this I call on the government to immediately install mechanically locking gates at all pedestrian crossings near the Rosanna railway station.

The dismissal of local government and other attacks on the community's democratic rights appeared to greatly trouble people in some of the more conservative areas of Ivanhoe. I had many calls from people informing me that they usually voted Liberal but that they were concerned because the government did not appear to respect the democratic rights of the community to appeal to the Supreme Court, to elect local government and, probably most importantly, to exercise freedom of speech — that is, people's right to criticise government, individually or collectively through groups, associations and churches, without being subjected to character assassination.

Road safety, pedestrian safety and traffic management were also major issues during the election. In years gone by Ivanhoe was one of the outer suburbs of Melbourne, with most of the traffic originating locally. Today it is more an inner suburb, with traffic travelling north-south and east-west through the electorate.

The only major works to be completed in the area in the past 10 years were undertaken by the previous Labor government. They were undertaken to help solve some of the east-west traffic problems. Ivanhoe is looking for action; it is not looking for silence or to be put in the too-hard basket. The challenge to the government and indeed to future governments is to improve the road system and public transport to enable them to cope adequately with demand.

I believe the sleeper issue in the electorate was gambling. I do not believe the government fully understands the effects gambling has had on this state. Numerous small businesses in Ivanhoe have complained to me that their turnover has gone down by at least a third since mass gambling was introduced throughout the state. This is on top of the hardships that have been experienced throughout the general community.

Does the Premier realise the effect on the family unit that the government-encouraged explosion in gambling has had? But then, why would he care? His mates own the casino and the gambling industry gives the government 12 per cent of its revenue. The government appears subjected to improper influence when it cedes such a large proportion of its income stream to a small cluster of individuals with no moral obligation other than to maximise their own profits. You do not have to look far to see which industry has the clout to flout planning laws, abrogate the moral code and gain the government's ear when soft decisions need to be taken. No wonder there is a Senate inquiry! May the states house return power over the executive and its cronies to the state and its people.

As a parent of young children and a former residential worker with young people I realise that growing up is harder now than it used to be. Today there is no discernible moral code that provides leadership to our young and no message from our leaders on the principles of right and wrong. Our young people face a vacuum of leadership and are responding in the way that humans do: they make the rules up as they go along. Where do young people fit into our community now and in the

future? What role do they play in developing the policies we will take into the next century? Basic questions need to be asked, and fast.

Incidentally, I commend the government on encouraging the drugs debate. Despite the debate there has been no delving into the question of why. Why have young people turned to drugs now more than ever? What is so wrong with our community that it has caused such an extraordinary number of young people to turn to drugs as an escape? The drug culture is growing around us at an alarming rate. Young people I have spoken to speak of marijuana, pot and so on as casually as young people used to speak of alcohol, and before that Holden cars and meat pies. But the drug problems are not stopping there; there are links with the hard drugs market that allows young people access to acid, LSD, crack, ecstasy, heroin and a cocktail of other drugs. If we care about our children we will not sit idly by. Inaction is the worst outcome that the drugs debate can produce.

It is a confession that we do not understand our young people; it is an admission of failure that we do not care sufficiently about them to learn the right direction and that we are too frightened to show what we are elected to show: leadership.

Where are our young people going? As I went through school I never had to worry about what I was going to do when I grew up: there were plenty of jobs out there for the taking and careers you could rely on if you worked hard, studied and showed commitment. Unfortunately, today this will not necessarily work. Today we are asking our young people to decide their careers by the age of 15 or 16. They are asked to choose courses that may determine the course of their lives for the next 50 years. That is some pressure. Some handle it well; others struggle under the responsibility; others just don't know.

We should ask ourselves why a young person should respect the older generation. Merely because it exists? Should young people respect us when we are handing the planet over to them in the worst state of environmental disrepair since Noah took to the ark? Should young people respect us because we have created a situation where almost one-third of them are unemployed? Should they respect us because the level of alcohol abuse, domestic violence and drug abuse has risen during their young lives?

Young people need to be given more credit. Young people will start respecting the older generation when that respect is reciprocated and warranted.

We will not succeed in rebuilding our community until young people are given their rightful place. We must involve them in more government decision making. How many young people are on government boards? How many young people were consulted before we sold off our state assets — their assets, because they will inherit this state? Young people must be freed from some of the pressures which we so willingly give them, the burdens that we feel are ours to place on them. Young people do not need to be run down all the time, told that they are not doing things right, and judged by our standards. They need leadership.

The state government has forfeited its role on leadership. Leadership in politics is no longer about choosing an issue, taking a stand and arguing the case. Leadership in Victorian politics is about divide and conquer — to not assert the intellectual superiority of an argument, but to demonise the opponents, torture their personalities and assert psychological superiority over their enemy. It is about time we started leading — for the good of all, for the concerns we all share. Unemployment is also a major issue in my electorate, particularly in the West Heidelberg area. In my role as administration officer and acting manager of the North East Employment Project, I experienced first-hand the difficulties of young people, mature-aged people — I'm sorry to inform most members of the house that the category is listed as 40 and above — and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The challenge that people have to find work again after becoming unemployed after 20 to 30 years with the one company, the great culture shock, the new dependence on others for income and the vacuum of activity that these people have to learn to cope with cannot be underestimated.

Like all members, I could not have achieved this high office without the assistance of a great campaign team, headed by Colin Brooks and ably assisted by Dean Sherriff, Dale Peters, Greg Ryan and Stuart Beswick. Many members of the Labor Party in the local area assisted me, and I had a great deal of support off the street by supporters of the party throughout the north-east region.

I advise the house that I will be assisting in trying to convert the honourable member for Essendon to barrack for Essendon — we share the same room, so I will have at least one Essendon supporter there.

The honourable member for Werribee might be known as Shorty. I am not sure what name the house may decide to call me — but shorty is not one of them.

Throughout my life many individuals have helped me to get to this point. There are far too many to name individually; however, there are several I would like to list: my grandfather, Stewart Campbell, who is currently holidaying with his son in Queensland; my late grandmother, Eileen Campbell, who died last December of an Alzheimer's-related illness; and my wife's late grandmother, Isabel Chappell, who passed away during the election campaign. These people taught and showed me what I would describe as true Labor values.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Jenni, who is in the gallery, and my children, Kate and Nicolas, for helping me to get where I am and, no doubt, to get where I might be going in the future.

I conclude with a pledge to actively represent the seat of Ivanhoe, to uphold the stature and dignity of this house, and to work for everyone in the electorate of Ivanhoe without fear or favour. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the next speaker I would like to congratulate all the new members who have made their maiden speeches, which have been interesting —

An honourable member interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I think that might be your prerogative — diverse, sometimes provocative, but above all, sincere. I congratulate from the chair those I have not individually congratulated.

I would also like to mention that over a period of years a tolerance has developed for maiden speeches. I think members on all sides have read their speeches. This is a tolerance that is given for maiden speeches. I advise those members who have made their maiden speeches that they will now have to learn to speak from speech notes and not read speeches. I think that makes for better speeches and for a better Parliament.

Just one other small commercial: a couple of maiden speakers have recognised people in the gallery. I would not want to have to clear the gallery, but members must not recognise people in the gallery,

even though they are thrilled to have people in the gallery here with them.

I again congratulate all those members who have made their maiden speeches. I call a now non-maiden — the honourable member for Mordialloc.

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — Firstly, I say to the Labor Party — I'm back, despite its efforts in the last state election. I don't mind if you go, honourable member for Thomastown, as far from this house as you can go will be fine by me!

Firstly, I would like to thank my family, my campaign workers, particularly my campaign director, Barry Blake, and all those people who worked so very hard — both branch members and non-branch members — to ensure that we retained Mordialloc at the election.

It appeared that the Labor Party spent some considerable time, effort and money trying to remove me from office. It had something like seven direct mails and eight pamphlets; and for all that, effectively it still achieved the state's wing — but that's it. The government still holds the seat of Mordialloc. I think the people of this state, not just in my electorate, saw through the phoniness of the election campaign of the Labor Party.

I would like to refer to a very good quote from a very good source: the father of the current federal Leader of the Opposition. When he entered the Labor Party he said he had the cream of the working class; but when he retired from the Labor Party he said he had the dregs of the middle class. They are not my words; they are the words of the father of the federal Leader of the Opposition about the Labor Party.

Today they are a group of individuals you could best describe as a bunch of chardonnay socialists and union officials, and most of them would not have a clue what somebody in a set of overalls looked like — whether it be Gareth Evans in the federal Parliament, who is the member for Holt but who lives in Eaglemont and had his electorate office as a senator in Bendigo, or whether it be Mr Crean, the federal member for Hotham, who lives in Port Melbourne and has little or nothing to do with our collective communities.

One hundred years ago the Labor Party as a political organisation was very relevant because it ensured that what happened to people, especially the abuses

that occurred in industry and in a whole range of other areas, did not continue.

One hundred years later the Labor Party is not sure what it stands for any more. I think the classic case is none other than the Leader of the Opposition, a Melbourne Grammar boy — surely not a worker! — who was born with a silver spoon sticking out of his mouth. No wonder he complains so often about the supposed silver service in this house; he ought to know because he is used to it. He was also a union official and is a failed member of the federal Parliament.

When one looks through the parliamentary handbook one notes that members of the opposition have one thing in common: basically they have all been union officials. There are a couple of exceptions, such as the honourable member for Bendigo West, who I believe is a solicitor. I suspect he will be the next shadow Attorney-General; perhaps the opposition will finally pick someone with the qualifications to deal with our Attorney-General.

As I said, basically opposition members have been union officials of some description. My opponent at the last election was a union official and the federal Labor member in my area is a union official. That background flows consistently through the Labor Party. The community has a right to expect Parliament to be made up of a lot more than schoolteachers, trade union officials, and even business people in the Liberal Party.

We have had on our side shearers, carpenters, business people, schoolteachers and even union officials, so the Liberal Party stands for a very broad cross-section of people in our community. The Labor Party as a political organisation maintains consistently that it invented social justice, that it is the party with its heart on its sleeve. Social justice came into the political arena through the actions and words of none other than the founder of the Liberal Party, Sir Robert Gordon Menzies. Over the years the Labor Party has corrupted what social justice stands for.

Tonight some new members of the Labor Party have said the government does not understand the effects of poker machines and that there are too many. The amnesia flows thick and fast over there: it was the Labor Party that wanted to double the number of poker machines and it was the Labor Party that put in place a system that makes it so difficult for community organisations to really participate in

making money out of gambling! It was the Labor Party that put Victoria into such a state that it was regarded as the laughing stock of Australia and jokes were made about it throughout the country.

Labor members moan and groan about government decisions. The government has made some tough decisions. A funny thing happened during the election campaign: I think the community understood what was going on. It realised Victoria had a government that stood for something rather than a government that caved in to every group or individual that rushed up the front steps of Parliament House or came into a member's electorate office saying, 'If you don't do this I will not vote for you'. The community found a government that actually stood for something. Not everything was right and we would do some things differently if we had the chance, but human beings make mistakes when they run a government, a country, or anything else for that matter.

The Leader of the Opposition said the recent election exorcised the ghosts of the Guilty Party. It has not exorcised the ghosts of the Guilty Party; 15 of them are still there. Many of them were ministerial advisers and such. The honourable member for Williamstown was a ministerial adviser to a former Premier, Mr Cain. The honourable member for Albert Park was a ministerial adviser to a former Attorney-General, Mr McCutcheon. I might add that the honourable member for Albert Park ensured that in some sense he obtained his minister's seat!

The opposition consists of factional tribes at war among themselves. Some elements of the political party that now sits on the opposition benches hate each other more than they hate the Liberal Party. They often take the view that wiping out a member of another faction is more fun than wiping out a Liberal! Day after day, both at the beginning of this session and during the last Parliament, the opposition's performance has been so awful that government members think we should write some of the questions for it so it might at least look like it is doing something. It is in the interests of good government to have a good opposition. The more the opposition fights the government on issues in a professional way the more likely the government is to improve, so I encourage the opposition to do better.

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr LEIGH — They cannot beat us, not while they have the honourable member for Thomastown and

others on the front bench. They are the dinosaurs of the past who run the opposition. Some of them are tricksters who manipulated the electoral system to their own advantage in some form!

The people of Victoria made a very sensible choice in re-electing this government. They did not think we were perfect in everything, but on the whole they could not go back. What was there to go back to — the honourable member for Williamstown in drag? Victorians were faced with having the honourable member for Broadmeadows as the next leader of this state. That could not be contemplated, and the opposition knows it.

The problem for opposition members is that they know the next election is four years away, but no-one wants to put up his or her hand to take over from the Leader of the Opposition. They will leave him there for two years and then wipe him out. Either the honourable member for Williamstown or the honourable member for Niddrie will be the next leader, and they all know it. They have the current leader dangling, copping the flack day after day but in the end he will be dropped. The Premier knows what it is like because some tried it on him, but I do not think the honourable member for Broadmeadows has the fortitude of the honourable member for Burwood — that is, the Premier.

During the last Parliament the Leader of the Opposition actually described the Treasurer as foolish because he would not support a \$13 million application for something. He then used the immortal line, 'They do not want any money, they just want a guarantee' — so if the venture went wrong the state would have had to pick up the \$13 million debt. Who was the first person to scurry out of the chamber when I raised this matter last night? It was the Leader of the Opposition. He even organised a con man to go to Canberra to talk to the federal Treasurer to see if he could get the money out of the federal government.

The opposition must learn that it is there to fight the government and to make the best of it. The government is really trying to help the opposition in as many ways as it can but it is difficult: we cannot do too much because if we do our own branch members will be after us. We can help the opposition only to some degree.

One of the people who helped me the most in Parliament during my first term was a former Leader of the Opposition, Mr Frank Wilkes, a great tactician. He certainly showed me the ropes of the

Labor Party, which I thought I would never learn. In fact, I like to think that over the years I have become a bit of an historian on the Labor Party. I hope that some day its members will be immortalised in some form of publication — it would read like a comic book because the whole approach of Labor Party members in the last election was to get each other in the fight to pick up some crumbs. That is what the opposition is all about.

The Leader of the Opposition sits at the table in a chair with a steel back on it because behind him sits the honourable member for Niddrie who hungers for the leader's job. He did what he could to help the leader from the outside, but he did not do too much because he did not want to make him look too good. Therefore, with some assistance from the likes of the honourable member for Sunshine and a few others, someone will change positions in this chamber. I suspect the Leader of the Opposition will move elsewhere and perhaps even go back to Canberra. He has cost us a lot in by-elections so far — in fact, more than it costs to refurbish a school — yet he complains about what is happening under this government's administration. Labor Party members complain that not enough money is spent on education, and the honourable member for Footscray agrees.

Who left the state's schools with a backlog of \$650 million worth of repair work? It was the honourable member for Footscray's party! Who made sure there were more teachers during the course of the 10 years of their administration yet fewer students? It was the Labor Party!

The SPEAKER — Order! The time appointed under sessional orders for me to interrupt the business of the house has now arrived.

Sitting continued on motion of Mr GUDE (Minister for Education).

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — Over the past four years \$4.5 million has been made available in my community to look after schools and to turn schools, some of which looked like huts from Bangladesh, into reasonable buildings where children and teachers can enjoy themselves while they work and learn. We all study and work better in pleasant surroundings. Teachers and students have as much right as any one else to expect those things. But the Labor government resourced the unions — the unions had all the money. Millions of dollars were trundled off to the unions and came back to help John Cain and company get elected. But eventually

the cookie jar was empty because all the money was diverted to other uses. The current government protects schools.

The current government has the best record on conservation in the country. That is what Ian Kiernan, the head of Clean Up Australia, said when he launched a new arrangement under which water will be cleaned up before going into the bay. The government has also removed scallop dredgers from the bay, but the Leader of the Opposition wanted to keep them there. I remember the day we went to Carrum for the launch of the program to remove scallop dredging from the bay.

In a previous election campaign the Labor Party used a giant lemon to follow the Premier around. In the recent campaign it used a giant chicken called Chicken Jeff. Labor said the Premier was chicken because he refused to debate the Leader of the Opposition. As we walked off the beach the Premier took Chicken Jeff by the wing and said, 'Is that you in there, Brumby?'. We did not see Chicken Jeff for the rest of the campaign. That anecdote shows the triviality to which the Labor Party was prepared to stoop in the election campaign rather than dealing with the issues. Labor said it had a plan, but you could not find out about it until after the election. The community woke up to the Leader of the Opposition, who ran around pretending there was no money yet spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in the wrong seats.

As a result of Labor's mistakes a tremendous thing happened. Labor expected seats such as Frankston East, Oakleigh and others to fall to it, and it did not think it had to do much to beat people such as the honourable member for Frankston East. Incredibly, his margin increased because the voters recognised that only the government was committed to turning the state around. Labor wanted to go backwards, but Victoria cannot go back.

The Leader of the Opposition says the Guilty Party is dead. Let me assure honourable members that the Guilty Party is alive and well. I suggest Labor members read former Premier John Cain's autobiography. At page 60 he describes ministerial advisers as watchdogs. In the former government those people held more power than the average backbencher — they dictated policy. The backbench members who were swept out at the 1992 election were not the people who had the power. The people who held the power were people such as the honourable members for Thomastown, Footscray, Coburg, Albert Park and Williamstown. They

directed the Labor Party machine as they headed for disaster. They know it — and they hide from it today!

During the next election campaign I will make public details of every one of the 15 ministerial advisers — their photographs, what their roles were, the amount of money they received and the whisky bills some of them collected out of various ministerial offices. I will also publicise the positive aspects of the government's period in office. During the campaign Labor said all we did was run the Guilty Party advertisement. The honourable member for Northcote was in tears because he was under assault for being one of the Guilty Party. He was guilty because he was the Treasurer!

Mr Dollis interjected.

Mr LEIGH — Just like the honourable member for Richmond, who was an adviser in the former Labor administration, the honourable member for Northcote had a role to play but in the end did not want to meet his responsibilities. He said, 'You can't do that to me, it is really unfair'. In my view these people have to stand up and be counted.

Everyone knows what is starting to happen in the Labor Party. I certainly remember the letter of the former member for the federal seat of Casey — I had intended to read it and at some time make it available to the house — in which he says what he thinks about various members of the Labor Party. But he is not the only one — various people around the traps want to say it. The government went into an election campaign with people saying it would lose seats, but it actually gained seats. Labor is down to 10 seats out of 44 in the Legislative Council. It is almost at the point of not being a party in that house.

It must be awful for back-bench Labor members of the Labor Party. I can understand they would say, 'I had nothing to do with it. It is the fault of Theo Theophanous in the upper house, the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable members for Richmond and Thomastown'. They will not even put the honourable member for Essendon on the front bench. She is up the back because she is not one of the factional helpers. Progress in the Labor Party is not based on talent, it is based on the factions. At the next election the same group with old tired faces and with hands pulled behind their backs will say, 'Please let's not get wiped out like last time'.

Last time was Labor's chance to do some damage to the government because the government had made a lot of tough decisions. We are now starting to see some of the fruits of those decisions. The honourable member for Richmond must go home at night in tears when he thinks about the fact that we are repairing schools. I have been to some of those schools. They were awful during the Labor years and needed loads of work done on them. Labor members must be in agony thinking that Liberals have succeeded where they could not.

The honourable member for Thomastown is well known for his vote organising ability. He must be absolutely disgusted, but at the election campaign with all the money and all the effort they put in, how did they wind up? They actually lost seats such as Carrum, for heaven's sake! This was a seat that had belonged to the Labor Party since 1976, when it was created, and was lost to the party by a brilliant campaign — by my new colleague, admittedly — but equally because of the general perception that the Labor Party did not meet the needs of the people.

I saw 18-year-olds going up to the polling booths wearing earrings, and when they walked past the Labor Party representatives some of the ALP representatives thumped them when they wanted to take the Liberal card. These are people who have never voted Liberal in their lives before.

Another interesting thing happened. As someone in his 40s who went through the Vietnam War, I know the Liberal Party lost that generation of voters because of the Vietnam War. Unemployment is Labor's Vietnam; the millstone around its neck. Federally the Labor Party members brought this country into disrepute. These are the people who said 'Don't privatise' and 'Don't do this', but they merrily ask the public to accept that they are fair and genuine and have a philosophy. One hundred years ago they were relevant; today they are not.

I would like to make a prediction in this house today. I think that in the next two to three years there will be about 12 by-elections. They will not be on our side but on the Labor Party's side. The knives and the hatchets are out. The member for Essendon is quite happy; she is not in the group that some of them are after, but the member for Richmond and the member for Coburg are, and the member for Springvale is very high on that list. He is on top of the list and everyone knows it. This is the man who at the 1992 election stood up and said, 'We have been returned magnificently in 1992', when there was no-one else around except him! This is a man

who is not into reality, unfortunately; a man who believes on the one hand he is a king-maker — and he was. When Mrs Kirner was Premier the member for Springvale wielded enormous power. Today that power is not so enormous. There are a few people from his faction who would like an opportunity to represent his seat. The government wishes them godspeed as they go from this chamber, but one of the things the government is really irritated about is that in the life of the last Parliament these people over here swapped seats among themselves from the upper house to the lower house and from here to there. Kelvin Thomson, the former member for Pascoe Vale, escaped to Canberra!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEIGH — I am still here; you guys won't be! I remember when I was supposed to be going in Malvern and Joan Kirner made a joke about it. I said, 'Joan, as long as you are going, too, I can live with that', and I could. I am still here and I am suggesting that a good number of members opposite will not be. In by-elections alone they have cost this state in excess of \$1 million. That is equal to the cost of four school renovations. These people do cheap renovations. They have the gall to sit here and say they have the collective interests of the state at heart when the only thing they are really interested in doing is playing some sort of game of Humpty Dumpty and who's going to crash off the wall next among themselves. This is the way the Labor Party members operate in this state. Their federal colleagues do not even want to know them.

For instance, the member for Springvale cannot ever get to see the federal member for Holt. He is in Eaglemont, or wherever he lives these days. He is certainly not around the seat of Holt. What would dear Gareth know about the workers? He just wanted a seat near the airport. Once the member for Springvale was a great and influential person in his party — off the rails a bit, but still there and of some influence. Today, not so much.

The fact of the matter is that there will be about 12 by-elections; about 12 opposition members will have gone from this chamber by the next election. Their union organisation is saying, 'Hey, listen, we have got to have the by-elections so we can get some talent on our front bench to fight the government'. The ones who are there are saying, 'No, you can't have my seat yet because I don't want to go. I really like this comfy world in the opposition, and I would never get a job out there'. I know that is what some of them say about themselves, that they would never

get a job, and they wouldn't. When was the last time the member for Thomastown picked up a screwdriver or got into a pair of overalls and got out there and worked? His federal leader, the other week when asked by Laurie Oakes to name some blue-collar workers stuttered and couldn't name one! We can name a dozen.

Unfortunately the Labor Party has to decide who it stands for, and it has to get the union monkey off its back. The union bosses have to be removed from its back. Until that occurs these people will sit over here in opposition, not going anywhere fast. The honourable member for Yan Yean is going to go grey sitting where he is. He won't be coming over here. I wish them all godspeed. I hope they will sit down and think about the direction in which they are going as a political party and be a little bit more positive. Victoria is a great place to live, but you are just upset with the things that the government is doing. We know that. You don't like the positive things that are going on in Victoria. You are a group of knockers who can't cope with the fact that somebody can do something right. Unfortunately, Sir, this is a dispirited group of individuals whose head office sees them as the plague and wants them removed but can't remove them. I hope the government can assist them in some way so we can get some fresh blood on their side in here. It will not hurt us; it will make us better. I am trying to imagine one or two of the new leaders. My opponent, for instance, would make an excellent member for Springvale. She is in the right faction. She quit Thwaites's group, the Independents, and joined the Socialist Left. See the world, join the Socialist Left! It is like the old slogan in the army or the navy. Unfortunately she didn't get to see much. Unfortunately for her, the dear member, the nice member for Springvale, will not leave. He will not leave; they are going to have to push him. Some of them are prepared to push and they are pushing hard. I hope in this term of government the Labor Party supports the positive things the government does and knocks us when we are doing the wrong thing. It does not happen too often, I know, but pick us up on it. Try to be positive.

The Leader of the Opposition should be a bit more positive and perhaps the member for Niddrie might leave him alone a bit longer. Godspeed to them; they are a good group of individuals and long may they remain in opposition.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown).

Debate adjourned until next day.

Remaining business postponed on motion of
Mr GUDE (Minister for Education).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Paynesville Primary School

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise with the Minister for Education the cruel hoax perpetrated on the community of Paynesville by the former Minister for Education, the current member for Gippsland East and the Honourables Peter Hall and Philip Davis in another place.

On 21 November 1995 a deputation from the Paynesville Primary School, accompanied by the members I mentioned, met with the former minister seeking funding for a new primary school to replace the present primary school, which consists of 25 portable classrooms accommodating some 280 students. They were not treated with a maybe, a possible or a conditional.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There will be no exchange between the chamber and the gallery.

Mr MILDENHALL — They were not even given an 'I am confident something will happen', which is a speciality of the honourable member for Ripon. They were given a rock-solid commitment that the project would be funded. They were told, 'It will open by the start of the 1998 school year, if not sooner'.

The honourable member for Gippsland East issued a press release that very day announcing that the new school would be built for Paynesville. That school community will be devastated by today's economic statement, which shows that not a brass razoo will be allocated to that project before the end of the 1996-97 financial year, which clearly makes any possibility of that time line being achieved very remote. It makes the minister's commitment absolutely meaningless. Breaking promises and breaching undertakings has been raised to an art form by this government.

I call on the minister to intervene in the process, honour the commitment and restore some much-needed integrity to the resource allocations

process that is known throughout the school communities around Victoria as political pork-barrelling. It is clearly unsatisfactory. The school has been misled, as has the community. The situation must be rectified as a matter of urgency.

Scoresby Road pedestrian crossing

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — The matter I raise for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place concerns the set of pedestrian-operated lights at the Fairhills High School in Scoresby Road, Ferntree Gully. The City of Knox has made a decision to remove the supervisor and it is now necessary for the students to cross Scoresby Road without assistance.

Discussions have taken place between the City of Knox, the school council and me. The school council has advised me that it believes it is inappropriate for young adults to cross this particular road without a crossing supervisor being there. It concerns me that some of these people are not young adults; I do not consider a person of 12 or 13 years of age in year 7 or 8 to be a young adult.

Scoresby Road is a narrow four-lane highway. The speed limit is supposed to be 60 kilometres an hour. The traffic lights are situated on the down side of a hill from the south. There are no overhead arms; it is purely and simply a visually low set of traffic lights.

I have expressed concern, as has the school council, that the number of vehicles rushing down that hill in an attempt to run a red light is putting the lives of these young students in jeopardy. No amount of education will ever educate students, particularly kids as young as 12 and 13 years of age, on how to adjust to a speeding vehicle that is trying to run a set of red lights.

I believe, as does the school community, that overhead lights should be put across Scoresby Road to work in conjunction with the existing traffic lights, and that improving the standard of the lighting would be of benefit to the students. It is a real problem; although the speed limit is 60 kilometres an hour, it does not mean that vehicles using that road do not travel in excess of the speed limit.

Will the minister investigate the urgent need for funding to suspend overhead lights above Scoresby Road and take steps to make the traffic lights more visible?

Powernet: destruction of trees

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I direct to the attention of the Treasurer, and in his absence the Minister for Education, an act of vandalism committed by Powernet, which recently treated the Moreland community with utter contempt when it knocked down 350 trees along Merri Creek. The trail of destruction passed through not only public council land but also an urban farm run by the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies. When local residents and members of CERES attempted to speak to contractors about what they were doing and asked why they were vandalising trees, they were told to nick off. The contractors said the council had given them permission to perform this task, but it had never given them the permission.

Some of the trees that were knocked down were planted as part of a program to beautify Merri Creek that has been carried out by the local community over a number years. The program has been partly destroyed by this barbaric act. What is worse, this is the second time Powernet has knocked down trees in the area. Six months earlier it caused similar outrage in the community, but it promised it would consult the local community and council before undertaking a like process.

Powernet's justification for destroying 350 trees was that some of them were inappropriate because they would grow taller than 5 metres. That may be true of a small number of trees, but is not true of the majority. Powernet has gone about this in an arrogant way that is typical of privatised utilities.

I ask the Treasurer to use whatever influence he can to ensure that companies such as Powernet consult with local communities and act as good corporate citizens. These actions show that Powernet is not a good corporate citizen. I ask the Treasurer to ensure that privatised public utilities such as Powernet give the necessary commitment to consult so that six months from now more trees will not be destroyed by corporate arrogance and institutionalised vandalism.

This matter is of grave concern to those volunteers who helped to beautify the area. They do not take kindly to a corporate power coming in and totally destroying the gains made by years of hard work.

Scuba diving equipment regulations

Mr TREASURE (Gippsland East) — I ask the Minister for Education to direct to the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place the cleanliness of self-contained breathing apparatus, particularly the apparatus available for hire at tourist scuba diving resorts. My constituents are concerned about the potential spread of diseases through the inadequate cleaning of certain items of scuba gear for hire at diving schools. At present there are no regulations governing the required cleanliness of such equipment. The usual practice is to simply wash out the gear in tap water after it has been used.

A number of serious diseases can be transmitted as a result of the inadequate cleaning of such gear, including tuberculosis and various types of hepatitis — A, B and C being the most common. Hepatitis is a changing disease; new forms are being discovered with frightening regularity. We have reached hepatitis E and G. It is believed there are some 200 million carriers worldwide of various types of hepatitis and probably some 50 000 to 100 000 in Australia, many of whom are probably unaware that they are carriers. Many people remain carriers for months and in some cases even for years. Body fluids and blood are the means of transmitting the diseases.

It is highly desirable that the minister make some inquiries about achieving uniformity on standards of cleanliness throughout the states. I understand the state health ministers advisory council advises health ministers. If the minister can look into the matter to see what can be done about standardisation of cleanliness for this type of gear it may assist in stopping the spread of these insidious diseases.

Trams: Bundoora extension

Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS (Mill Park) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Transport the infamous extension of the Bundoora tramline to Mill Park, which has been raised in the house in the past. It is appropriate that it should be the first matter I raise in the 53rd Parliament because it was an issue that dominated the election campaign in March.

The house is well aware that in 1992 the former federal Labor government allocated \$17 million under the Better Cities program to extend the tramline to Mill Park to service the 30 000 people who live there and in the surrounding suburbs. In its

early days the coalition government siphoned off the money for other projects. It went ahead with the extension but only for 2.2 kilometres of the planned 3.1 kilometre line, which means the line is 1 kilometre short.

The minister is well aware of the issue because in a pre-election gimmick last October he came out to Mill Park to open that section of the line. I was heartened by the commitment he gave about providing public transport services to growth areas. Indeed, I was somewhat excited when I heard announced on this morning's news a \$103 million package for public transport measures. However, honourable members can imagine my disappointment when I found that the Mill Park extension had missed out yet again.

I know it is difficult for the minister to find the money for the project overnight, but I appeal to him that at the start of the government's new term he should give serious consideration to returning the \$5 million he earlier syphoned off from this project to complete the much-needed 1 kilometre extension. Mill Park residents consider that to be the no. 1 issue arising out of the last election.

Wilsons Promontory: tourist development

Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management one of the wonderful aspects of representing the most marvellous part of Victoria — that is, the southern coastline from Wilsons Promontory in the west across to Port Albert in the east. Perhaps the jewel in the crown along that stretch of coastline is Wilsons Promontory. I ask the minister what aspirations she has for Wilsons Promontory having regard to her new appointment to this important ministry.

I defy any member of the house to see any more magnificent view than the one seen when driving along the South Gippsland Highway just on sunset coming down the hill into Foster and looking over the beautiful Corner Inlet.

It is as good as any you will see anywhere in the world. The beautiful area of Wilsons Promontory is part and parcel of the area I represent. We are intent on developing a tourism industry in that part of my electorate. Many of our natural attractions are in our national parks, one of the most prominent of which is Wilsons Promontory.

Appropriate commercial facilities are gradually being developed within the park. Only over the past 12 months has the responsible department been involved in planning and developing a \$1.7 million infrastructure investment, which will see the erection of about 17 6-person cabins within the park. They will replace infrastructure which has been there for many years and which has really had its day. I say that with some authority because I have stayed in the park on a couple of occasions with my wife, Trish, and our three children.

In this day and age we ought to be able to investigate developing something that is sympathetic to the important environmental attributes of this beautiful part of our coastline. I am not for one moment talking about a five-star development with a 36-hole golf course that Greg Norman flies in to launch, because that would immediately destroy a magnificent part of the state that I am looking to protect.

When you do look around Australia and at other parts of the world — Canada, in particular — you discover forms of development that are sufficiently discreet to ensure that you preserve natural assets by obeying all the appropriate environmental protocols while appropriately developing and encouraging the tourism industry.

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

RACV: board nominations

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — In the absence of the Attorney-General I direct to the attention of the Minister for Education my concerns about that bastion of the establishment, the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. I refer in particular to two women who have nominated for election to the RACV board and whose experience of the process has been horrendous. One of those women happens to be my colleague the member for Essendon.

I ask the Attorney-General to investigate the matter to see whether the RACV has breached the women's civil liberties. One of the conditions on the nomination form requires the fingerprints of any nominee to be checked by police right across Australia. When I nominated as a candidate for election to Parliament I did not have to give a return office address much less provide my fingerprints to prove that I was a person of sound financial standing and good reputation.

The worst part of this is the statement made by the RACV board in a circular under the heading 'Comments on Judith Maddigan's statement'.

RACV has a healthy and communicative relationship both through direct contact and correspondence with federal and state members of Parliament from both the government and the opposition. We also regularly meet political advisers through our Manager, Government Relations, and Manager, Public Policy.

The RACV board wrote that article to argue that there is no need for the membership to elect the member for Essendon to the board because it has other means of communicating with the Parliament. Last year when people had the audacity to nominate members for election the board tried to change the RACV's articles of association so that even if a candidate got a majority of votes it would not have mattered, because the board could have disallowed the nomination and appointed somebody of its choice.

I ask the Attorney-General to look at that bastion of the establishment, because the RACV is going too far. When we nominate for the highest office in the state or the country, whether it be as Premier or as Prime Minister, we do not have to put up with the police running a search of our personal details, yet that is one of the conditions on the RACV's nomination form.

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

Disability services: Mount Beauty

Mr A. F. PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Youth and Community Services a family living in the township of Mount Beauty.

The township of Mount Beauty is about 1 hour from Albury-Wodonga, where the majority of services are available. In this case the family has a child who suffers from a neurenteric cyst. The treatment for this illness has left the seven-year-old boy a paraplegic. He has only one kidney and is incontinent. The child was assessed by an occupational therapist in October 1995. I shall read part of the report arising from this assessment:

Shane required a new wheelchair to accommodate his growth and facilitate independence.

Carer/mother having increased difficulty managing transfers and personal activities of daily living for Shane.

Rented house has internal steps (five) and inappropriate ramp (front access). Toilet/bedroom/bathroom all upstairs. Mother, Debbie, has to pull Shane on wheelchair upstairs.

Toileting/catheter use — Shane dependent.

The summary states:

Shane is an active and alert seven-year-old, who is quite large in the upper body and growing quickly. It is important at this age for Shane to begin to be more independent in most activities of daily living for:

- (a) himself, preparing him for a life that should not be impeded by his disability and
- (b) Mrs Crawford, who is at risk of back injury through constant lifting (a problem exacerbated by Shane's increasing weight) ...

I ask the minister to review the case because of the difficulties this person experiences living in an outlying centre like Mount Beauty. Shane has to have access to services that are readily available in Albury-Wodonga and in Melbourne. The services are available, but it is difficult for families on low incomes to reach those services. I ask the minister to help them and review the case.

Nillumbik: commissioner appointment

Mr HAERMAYER (Yan Yean) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Planning and Local Government the appointment of a new commissioner for the Shire of Nillumbik. Recently one of the commissioners — the little dictators the government appointed throughout Victoria to replace elected councils — retired and the community was waiting with bated breath to see who would fill the vacant position.

Mr Brown — On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, I take offence at people such as Frank Wilkes and Ian Cathie being called little dictators. An apology should be given to those people. You should apologise.

Mr Haermeyer interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Transport and the honourable member for Yan

ADJOURNMENT

166

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

Yean have been in this place long enough to know the standards of behaviour required.

Mr Cooper interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington has also been in this place long enough to know that he must remain silent when the Deputy Speaker is on his feet.

Mr HAERMMEYER — The person appointed to this position was none other than the former Minister for Small Business and the former member for Ivanhoe, the Honourable Vin Heffernan. The appointment demonstrates the arrogance and contempt the government has for the people of Eltham. It is a disgrace. It is the worst example of jobs for the boys. The former minister failed as the member for Ivanhoe and as the former Minister for Small Business and Minister responsible for Youth Affairs, but now he is being inflicted on the ratepayers of the Shire of Nillumbik.

Mr Rowe — On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member has been waffling on now for more than 2 minutes. He has failed to ask the relevant minister to undertake any action whatsoever or to raise any matters that are relevant.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I expect in the brief time he has left the honourable member for Yan Yean will attempt to do so.

Mr HAERMMEYER — Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am asking the minister to reverse this disgraceful decision.

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

Mr Haermeyer — On a point of order — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Stop the clock. The honourable member for Yan Yean on a point of order.

Mr Haermeyer — Mr Deputy Speaker, I note that you just called for the clock to be stopped. During my contribution I was called to order on what I regard as two vexatious points of order which had no purpose other than to reduce the amount of time I had to speak. I ask you to take note of that because it is something that members on the other side did repeatedly in the last Parliament, and I do not think that is a very good start for this Parliament. I

suggest, Sir, that the same treatment that has just been meted out to the honourable member for Murray Valley when these sorts of things occur should be meted out to members on this side of the house in the same circumstances.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The Chair exercises its right to manage the business of the house in the way it sees fit. The Minister for Transport raised a point of order about comments that were made by the honourable member for Yan Yean. I allowed him to make his point of order. I then attempted to draw the house's attention to the order that I expected and I proceeded to allow the honourable member for Yan Yean to continue and finish what he was attempting to say; so I attempted to maximise his remaining time.

The honourable member for Cranbourne appeared to be waffling on a point of order that may not have been in the best interests of orderly debate, and I quickly concluded that and again asked the honourable member for Yan Yean to conclude his contribution.

The great difference I make between that situation and that of the honourable member for Murray Valley is that I had not called the honourable member for Murray Valley when the honourable member for Yan Yean got to his feet to raise the point of order. Therefore I believe I was in the right in asking for the clock to be stopped while — —

Mr Haermeyer interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! If the honourable member for Yan Yean wants to take it further I am happy to do it either here or in another place, but I am trying to explain to him that the Chair, in the heat of the debate, deals with the issue. I believe I dealt with the issue appropriately. I asked for the clock to be stopped because the honourable member for Murray Valley had not been called and that was the only reason. If you are unhappy with that I am happy to take that further either now or at another time.

Rutherglen Research Institute

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — In the absence of the Minister for Agriculture and Resources I raise a matter with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who is representing him. From the outset I point out that I am not known for being parochial about issues in the electorate of Murray Valley.

However, on this occasion I refer the minister to concerns that have been raised with me by the Rutherglen Agricultural Society and the Rutherglen Development Association about a possible change to the name of the Rutherglen Research Institute.

In his former capacity as Minister for Agriculture in the previous Parliament the minister would have been well aware that investigations have been undertaken into the restructuring of agricultural institutes across country Victoria. Indeed, there has been an investigation into the future management of the Rutherglen Research Institute. A report was presented to the minister late last year and the government decided earlier this year to consider renaming institutes across the state as institutes for integrated agricultural development.

The concern raised with me is that the word 'Rutherglen' should be incorporated in any new name for the very fine Rutherglen Research Institute. If it is to be an institute for integrated agricultural development, as has been suggested, I ask the minister to include 'Rutherglen' in the new name. The institute will be 100 years old this year and the retention of the fine name of 'Rutherglen' in the new title will enable an ongoing association to be made with the institute's continuing provision of research and development information of the highest standard to farmers throughout Victoria and Australia.

Responses

Mr BROWN (Minister for Transport) — The honourable member for Knox was a well-known advocate for issues general in the first Kennett government term of office and achieved many great things for his electorate. As this is only the second sitting day, it appears the honourable member is already being active in again giving the lead in representing that area. I well recall a former Minister for Transport representing that area; he left all these issues undone, unfixed, and in a very untidy and unkempt state.

The honourable member has asked me to take up with my ministerial colleague in another place the necessity, as the honourable member sees it, for traffic lights to be installed on overhead arms to ensure a higher standard of safety for school children who will soon be using a crossing without what are known as lollipop ladies in attendance. I will take up that matter for the honourable member because it should be addressed.

I know that road carries particularly heavy traffic. It will be one of the other areas to benefit from the City Link project, but as that project is some time from completion the interim of a short number of years must be catered for.

It is my judgment that this matter should be given full and speedy consideration. Therefore, I will take it up urgently with my colleague the Minister for Roads and Ports in the other place to see if it can be addressed in the short term.

Forms of this house constrain me from calling the honourable member for Mill Park a hypocrite, so I will not. The Labor Party was in government in Victoria for more than 10 years, but did it fix this problem? No!

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr BROWN — He says, 'The federal government' — that would have escaped me but now it has been brought to my attention, I will respond. The federal Labor government was in office for more than a decade — indeed, for even longer. The hero of the working class, Bob Hawke, who now lives on the waterfront in Sydney, had years in the office of Prime Minister; did he fix the problem, working with his friends and fellow travellers in Victoria? No! What happened when the other champion of the working class came along, the man who stood for the battlers of this country — that is, Paul Keating? Did he work with the Cain and Kirner governments in the years he was Prime Minister to fix this problem? No!

Only recently I was out there to open the first tram-line extension in that area in living memory — constructed, of course, by the Kennett coalition government! We had to do all the work for that project to be undertaken.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BROWN — I remember that on the day I was a little embarrassed when a former Minister for Transport in Victoria — I talk of the Honourable Tom Roper — said publicly that praise was due to the then Kennett first-term government for having achieved something that had not been achieved by former Labor governments over such a long time.

So it is with Upfield. This mob — and I include the current Leader of the Opposition — didn't raise a finger. He still prattles on. The Leader of the Opposition did not raise his finger for all the time

that he was in Canberra with that mob to achieve an allocation of 1 cent, let alone the \$25 million this government is going to spend on Upfield.

What about the member for Thomastown? What did he achieve for his community vis-a-vis the Upfield railway line saga? That's how it was referred to yesterday morning when I was out there, by his own people, the people in the former Labor heartland, former true believers who now wouldn't give the Labor Party in Victoria the time of day because they see it for what it is: the mob that tried to close the line and take away their train. This government not only saved it, but at a cost of \$25 million it is bringing it up to a world-class public transport system.

Under this government the line to Cranbourne has been electrified. It was talked about by the Labor Party for 10 years, and it did sweet nothing! This government has actually achieved it.

Mr Andrianopoulos — On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, will you please advise the house whether standing orders prevent ministers from trying to rewrite history?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I am sure the late night last night is now having a severe impact on the behaviour of my colleagues in this place. That point of order is a frivolous point of order, albeit with a touch of humour, that we could do without. The Minister for Transport, closing his contribution.

Mr BROWN — Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I understand the necessity to be brief on this, and I will be, although the reality is I could go on for hours about the problems left by the former Labor government for this government to resolve. We were left with a public transport system which was a financial sinkhole that was run by their union mates and which no minister in the 11 years prior to this government coming along had even tried to fix!

The point is this: you mob were there for more than a decade and you did nothing for your own communities, including Mill Park. We have done more for your communities in the past three and a half years than you mob did in nearly 11 years. We are and will continue to be the saviours of your communities.

When I look at colleagues like the honourable member for Tullamarine and others, I realise that people out in your communities know which side their bread is now buttered on. When people walk

up to me and thank me profusely when I go to areas like the former Labor heartland, like the Upfield light rail area, like the Cranbourne area that was once a Labor seat, and even when I go to Mill Park and open the only tram extension that community has seen in a lifetime, to make it the longest tram route in this nation, all they say to me is: for heaven's sake, Mr Brown, make sure you continue the excellent work that your government has been doing because we know we are getting good value out of your government and we got nothing out of the mob that we once voted for!

Mrs TEHAN (Minister for Conservation and Land Management) — In directing my attention to Wilsons Promontory National Park in his electorate the honourable member for Gippsland South was right when he said it is one of the five most popular parks in Victoria. I recommend to the house the excellent small brochure detailing the park's history and outlining some of its major features and excellent facilities.

As the park will celebrate its centenary in two years time — not next year but the year after — it is appropriate, as the honourable member indicated, for the accommodation and other facilities to be upgraded. Under the auspices of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment 17 cabins are to be constructed at a cost to the private sector of \$1.22 million. The honourable member for Gippsland South outlined very clearly the need for the development of commercial facilities in a national park to be done sensitively and sympathetically to ensure that the park's assets are preserved.

I take up the honourable member's suggestion that we examine some of the Canadian developments. Perhaps I will have a chance to do that. Architect Ken Latona has been chosen to develop the style of the 17 new huts and I must say that the plans are quite beautiful. I look forward to going down there at the end of the week and seeing for myself the development of these units. From the information I have available I can say that they have been designed in what has been described as a sensitive commission. Ken Latona has been entrusted with the redevelopment of the rustic 1940s and 1950s visitors cottages in Victoria's Wilsons Promontory National Park, affectionately known as The Prom.

I assure the honourable member for Gippsland South that he does not exaggerate when he says this outstanding natural feature in his electorate should be available for ecotourism so that Victorian and

ADJOURNMENT

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

169

Australian visitors and international guests can enjoy and understand the park and use the facilities, enabling it to be enjoyed for many years to come.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — The honourable member for Murray Valley is strongly representing the township of Rutherglen and what it stands for. Under the previous coalition government some \$24 million was made available for the upgrading of agricultural institutes around Victoria, and Rutherglen was one of the beneficiaries of money to the tune of about \$1.6 million. I think the upgrade is nearing completion.

Review teams were given the job of examining the role, function and future direction of those institutes right around Victoria to make sure that the work they were undertaking was relevant to the local and regional farming communities. That exercise was carried out across institutes from Hamilton to Horsham, Rutherglen, Tatura and so on.

One of the recommendations of the review team that undertook an assessment of the institute at Rutherglen was that in future it be referred to as the Institute of Integrated Agricultural Development, Rutherglen.

I understand that the Rutherglen Show Society has requested the honourable member for Murray Valley to ask for a review so that the word, Rutherglen, could be at the forefront rather than at the close of the name, Institute for Integrated Agricultural Development. I remind the honourable member for Murray Valley to advise the people of Rutherglen about many institutes around Victoria, such as the Pastoral and Veterinary Institute at Hamilton, which does not have the word, Hamilton, connected with it, and the Victorian Institute for Dryland Agriculture at Horsham, which does not have the word, Horsham, associated with it and which is seen as a Victorian institute.

While the institute at Rutherglen provides an enormous economic benefit to that town, in an immediate way it must now be seen to be taking a regional role in improving the pastoral capacity of the region and in increasing productivity in the beef, wool and mutton and lamb industries. The institute will take on a significant role with the upgrade of the facilities, and with new people, new scientists, new research workers, and new extension officers coming to it to motivate and assist the farming community to carry on the work and improve overall productivity.

I can understand the parochialism of the honourable member for Murray Valley. It needs to be understood that parochialism is very important, and he identified that. But the warning I give is: do not let parochialism overtake and cloud your views altogether.

I will bring the concern of the honourable member for Murray Valley to the Minister for Agriculture, the Deputy Premier, when he returns from his overseas trip. But bear in mind that this will become an extremely important institute for north-east Victoria. It is based at Rutherglen, it will be known as the Rutherglen campus, and it will provide a very important linkage between research and extension and the farming community in the whole north-east region.

Dr NAPTHINE (Minister for Youth and Community Services) — The honourable member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Health, whom I represent in this place, concerning the issue of hygiene with hired or multi-use scuba diving equipment. I think he was particularly referring to the mouthpieces which may transfer saliva — and hence transfer disease — and he is concerned about the risk.

That just shows the attention to detail of the honourable member for Gippsland East, and the way he is able to represent his constituents on a whole range of issues.

This matter does raise some concerns. I will certainly draw it to the attention of the Minister for Health and ask him to get the public health experts in his department to examine the public health risk of the equipment and to seek appropriate action. It may be that industry guidelines need to be developed for the people who use and handle the equipment. I will certainly take that up with the Minister for Health on his behalf.

The honourable member for Benambra raised a very serious matter concerning a 7-year-old boy and his family at Mount Beauty. The boy has suffered from a neurenteric cyst, and the treatment of that cyst has considerably incapacitated him. I give credit to the child's family, who have worked extremely hard to support the young boy, particularly as they live in Mount Beauty.

I have had the pleasure on more than one occasion of travelling to Mount Beauty. It is certainly a wonderful and beautiful spot in Victoria.

ADJOURNMENT

170

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

The honourable member for Benambra is obviously proud to represent that area. However, as he said, it is isolated from a number of services, which makes it difficult for a family with a young child with those sorts of disabilities. The family certainly needs some support. I understand my department has provided a customised wheelchair for the child through the PADP scheme. I will have my department examine the needs of this family to see what further service can be provided, perhaps by way of a HACCC program or some sort of respite care or support.

Certainly that is the sort of family that highlights the benefits that can be obtained for the community through the \$100 million carers package announced by the government in the 1996 election campaign. Those sorts of families are doing a wonderful thing for their children and families and they need just a little bit of assistance so they can continue being good families and provide good support. That is the best situation for this particular child in the long term. I shall have my department look into this serious matter for the honourable member for Benambra.

Mr MACLELLAN (Minister for Planning and Local Government) — The honourable member for Yan Yean asked if I would reconsider my decision to invite the former member for Ivanhoe, the Honourable Vin Heffernan, to take up the vacant position of commissioner in the Nillumbik shire. Mr Heffernan was a councillor with the Heidelberg council for 18 years and was mayor in the year 1979 to 1980. He was elected to this Parliament immediately following the 1984 year of his membership of council. He served in this Parliament, having been elected in 1985 and re-elected in 1988 and 1992, and with his ministerial appointment continued until the recent election. He was granted the OAM for his services to youth.

Mr Heffernan has been a respected member of the Heidelberg community. The honourable member for Yan Yean seems to express concern that Mr Heffernan is not a suitable person to take up the vacant position at Nillumbik. I disagree with the honourable member and I have a very low opinion of the way he raised the matter and of his lack of appreciation of the qualities of people with whom he served in this place over so many years.

Mr GUDE (Minister for Education) — The honourable member for Keilor raised a matter about an RACV nomination. I am not quite clear — and I do not think too many other members in this house are either — about precisely what he was asking the

Attorney-General to do in this matter. He seemed to be attacking a community organisation's integrity, but knowing the honourable member I shall examine closely the transcript of the proceedings of the house and refer the matter to the Attorney-General.

The honourable member for Coburg raised a matter for the attention of the Treasurer relating to what he referred to as vandalism of trees in the course of the construction of some powerlines by a private consortium, Powercor. That is a matter for the private organisation, not the Treasurer. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the manner in which the issue was raised, I shall refer the matter to him.

The honourable member for Footscray referred to the prospective development of a primary school at Paynesville. He said there had been discussions with my predecessor about that and that some expectation had been generated in the community. I shall certainly look into the matter.

I note that the former member for Footscray, who is also a former Minister for Education, lives in that area. Perhaps he has been working hard in the interests of the community. That would not surprise me because that is the former member's wont.

The Kennett government has a very proud record of performance on major capital works in schools. Some \$800 million has been spent since 1992, a per capita increase of 66 per cent. Spending has gone from \$290 million a year in 1992 to \$480 million this year. On top of that, the government has made a record contribution to the further development of new schools in Victoria.

The commitment made before the last election that \$1 billion would go into schools will clearly be honoured. That money will ensure we have the best quality school system available for young Victorians and for teachers. That will be supported by the vast variety of programs already in place such as the \$52 million Keys to Life program to assist young people with literacy problems and the language-other-than-English programs. The number of youngsters using those programs has grown.

No matter how you look at it, the government has made a tremendous commitment to education. An additional \$180 million from asset sales has been used to modernise and upgrade schools — 35 schools or stages of schools have opened since 1992 and 11 new or replacement schools have opened this year. These initiatives come on the back

ADJOURNMENT

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

171

of more than a decade of neglect by the previous Labor administration, the so-called Guilty Party. Notwithstanding the past failure of the Labor Party, the current administration has a clear commitment to ensuring that the young people of Victoria are given every opportunity to stretch their imaginations and develop their talents so they have the best possible chance of obtaining permanent jobs. The government will do all it can to assist them — and Paynesville will be no exception!

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 11.18 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

172

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 May 1996

Thursday, 16 May 1996

The SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Plowman) took the chair at 10.05 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

The Clerk — I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

South Eastern Arterial noise barriers

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the residents of the area bounded by Therese Avenue, Stephenson's Road, Catherine Avenue and Stanley Avenue, Mount Waverley, Victoria, sheweth that there is an excessive and unbearable amount of noise coming from the South Eastern Arterial. Residents agree that the level of noise has increased threefold during the last 12 months. In fact, especially when there is a north wind we are finding it difficult:

1. To have a quiet night with peaceful sleep.
2. To entertain friends in our garden.
3. To enjoy any social or family occasion in our own garden and home.

Indeed the level of traffic noise is unremittingly loud and unnerving!

We realise that from under the Stephenson's Road bridge there are some metres of natural and man-made barriers along the freeway, but we want to stress that as the freeway goes uphill towards Stanley Avenue and winds around a little, the freeway becomes more exposed and there is nothing to protect the middle section of Therese Avenue and adjacent streets from the noise.

The vegetation along the south side of the freeway is not enough to block the noise, nor the view of its traffic flow, nor its lights and lit-up signposts!

We also want to emphasise that our quality of life has deteriorated and that the house and land value in this area has dropped significantly.

Your petitioners therefore pray that some high noise barriers are provided along a stretch of about 350 metres on the southern side of the South Eastern Arterial in order to decrease the noise level, maintain

the land value of this area and improve our quality of life.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mrs McGill (145 signatures)

Specialist women's hospital

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

This petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Victoria sheweth that:

They strongly oppose the service plan of the Women's and Children's Health Care Network which was developed without consultation with women, with only 10 days allowed for responses and in the absence of a statewide women's health plan.

In particular they oppose proposals in the plan to:

Close the Royal Women's Hospital at Grattan Street, Carlton.

Integrate the Royal Women's Hospital with the Royal Children's on the Royal Children's site.

Further reduce the length of stay for mothers to one to two days for normal births and less than three days for all births.

Reduce the number of beds by one-third at the Royal Children's Hospital site.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the state government will act quickly to maintain an independent specialist women's hospital.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Ms Garbutt (54 signatures)

Austin and repatriation hospitals

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Victoria sheweth that we are strongly opposed to any downgrading of facilities at the Austin and repatriation hospitals.

Your petitioners therefore pray that all members of the Legislative Assembly do all in their power to prevent any closure of services.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Ms Garbutt (121 signatures)

Rosanna railway station

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state sheweth their concern over the delay in installing automatic locking pedestrian gates at the railroad crossings near Rosanna railway station. There have already been several fatalities and near misses in recent years and this situation is a cause of considerable community concern.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the government will urgently address the concerns of the community and install the gates promptly.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Ms Garbutt (655 signatures)

Pearcedale bus service

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria sheweth that:

We seek support for a Pearcedale bus service to run from Pearcedale to Cranbourne via Cranbourne South, along Pearcedale Road and return. At present no public transport services operate in this region. To reach Cranbourne by public transport, one is forced to use a bus service to Frankston, change buses and use a scheduled bus to Cranbourne via Frankston, Karingal and Langwarrin. This would take approximately 4 hours in time. This is unacceptable to residents of Pearcedale and South Cranbourne and we seek support through this petition for consideration for a regular bus service.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Rowe (462 signatures)

Proposed Carrum Downs brothel

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria sheweth that:

We seek to lodge our protest at the proposal for the development of a brothel incorporating six rooms for prostitution, a waiting area, office, staff room, laundry and 13 on-site car parking spaces at 31 Aster Avenue, Carrum Downs.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Rowe (277 signatures)

Langwarrin bus service

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria sheweth that:

We seek support for a bus service to operate along Warrandyte Road as far as Robinson Road and through to North Road to support the many residents living in this area who currently must walk long distances to use the current service that operates along Cranbourne-Frankston Road only.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Rowe (349 signatures)

Mordialloc-Cheltenham Community Hospital

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth that we reject the proposed changes to the Mordialloc-Cheltenham Community Hospital.

These proposals would result in the loss of maternity, general surgery, urology, orthopaedics, gynaecology and plastic surgery services to the citizens of Mordialloc and surrounding districts.

We appeal to the Minister for Health to reject the proposed changes.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Leigh (4454 signatures)

Greenvale secondary college

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of Greenvale Primary School Secondary College Working Party on behalf of the Greenvale and broader communities sheweth that a secondary college is desperately needed in Greenvale to provide access to quality local secondary education for students within the Greenvale, Meadow Heights and surrounding areas.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the government approves planning and full funding for the construction of a secondary college on the site allocated in Glencairn Drive, Greenvale.

In addition we therefore pray that the college be fully operational for the commencement of the 1998 school year. The petitioners acknowledge that a year 7-10 campus linked to Gladstone Park Secondary College is an acceptable option.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Finn (520 signatures)

Laid on table.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Oakleigh be considered next day on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown).

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice under section 32(3)(a) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 9/1996

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — S.R. No. 24/1996

Club Keno Act 1993 — S.R. No. 3/1996

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — S.R. No. 15/1996

Coroners Act 1985 — S.R. No. 36/1996

County Court Act 1958 — S.R. Nos. 30, 31, 34/1996

Dangerous Goods Act 1985 — S.R. No. 29/1996

Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 — S.R. No. 32/1996

Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 — S.R. No. 25/1996

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — S.R. No. 20/1996

Estate Agents Act 1980 — S.R. No. 13/1996

Financial Institutions Duty Act 1982 — S.R. Nos 4, 28/1996

Fisheries Act 1968 — S.R. Nos 14, 16, 26/1996

Guardianship and Administration Board Act 1986 — S.R. No. 1/1996

Liquor Control Act 1987 — S.R. No. 11/1996

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — S.R. No. 35/1996

Mental Health Act 1986 - S.R. 10/1996

Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Act 1989 — S.R. No. 8/1996

Office of the Regulator-General Act 1994 — S.R. No. 2/1996

Pollution of Waters by Oil and Noxious Substances Act 1986 — S.R. No. 18/1996

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — S.R. No. 6/1996

Road Safety Act 1986 — S.R. Nos 5, 17/1996

Royal Botanic Gardens Act 1991 — S.R. No. 12/1996

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — S.R. Nos 27, 33/1996

Supreme Court Act 1986 — S.R. No. 19/1996

Tattersall Consultations Act 1958 — S.R. No. 3/1996

The Constitution Act Amendment Act 1958 — S.R. Nos 22, 23/1996

Tobacco Act 1987 — S.R. Nos 7, 9/1996

Wildlife Act 1975 — S.R. Nos 15, 21/1996

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 6, 10, 16, 19, 27, 34, 35, 36

Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 14, 18, 20, 21, 28.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)— I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 28 May 1996.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Private bill fees

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — On behalf of the Minister for Education, I move:

That the report of the Standing Orders Committee upon fees for private bills be adopted and that the following be adopted in lieu of the standing order no. 168(d) —

“(d) Unless the house expresses the view that fees should be dispensed with —

- (i) before any private bill is read a second time in the Legislative Assembly, a deposit of \$1000 shall be paid to the Department of the Legislative Assembly; and
- (ii) the promoter shall be liable to pay the costs of printing and circulation of the bill; the advertisements placed pursuant to S.O. 168(b); all costs of the select committee appointed pursuant to S.O. 168(c); and any other expenses involved in the preparation and passage of the bill;

(da) The sum of such amounts (less the deposit of \$1000) shall be paid to the Department of the Legislative Assembly before the Clerk of the Parliaments presents the bill for royal assent.”

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 15 May; motion of Mr DIXON (Dromana) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr HAMILTON (Morwell) — I wish to contribute to this important debate, one that I believe should be given a high priority by this

house. I entitle my address, ‘Each one is different’. As I work through my contribution, I will explain in more detail what I mean.

Before doing so, I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation, or should I say re-elevation, to the office of Speaker. I also congratulate the Chairman of Committees on his reappointment to that role and indicate to new members that the way in which the Chair operates is extremely important to the harmony of this house.

I congratulate each of the new members who gave their first speeches in the house this week. ‘Each one is different’ would be applicable to each of the new members who made their first speeches. I have enjoyed each one. There is a great deal of talent, variety and diversity in the expressions of the new members. I look forward to their contributions to the house during the forthcoming weeks.

I decided I would deliberately not be provocative, in keeping with the house, but there are one or two matters that should be raised which I hope will be taken notice of by members opposite. I am pleased that the Treasurer is in the house this morning because I want to direct to the attention of the house some interesting happenings across the Tasman. The government's efforts to privatise and sell-off all of our electricity industry has indeed been couched in terms that there will be benefits for all Victorians, and a lot of the modelling was done on the New Zealand model.

There was public debate in the *Dominion* newspaper of Tuesday, 23 April 1996. The article entitled ‘Hutt power prices increased’ states:

Energydirect had increased power prices for residential customers by 8.5 per cent — the fourth such increase in three years.

A report in the same newspaper of 2 May 1996 carries the headline, ‘Capital Power to increase prices for households by 6 per cent’. That is again the third such increase in four years. The *Daily Times* of 20 October 1995 has the headline, ‘Power suppliers will not lobby government’.

Once again we are seeing increases in power prices from privatised companies after governments told them, as this government told Victorians, that electricity prices would come down. What happened in New Zealand and what will happen here is that the private companies will keep jacking up the prices with no accountability to the Victorian people.

There will be no accountability by the Victorian government — it has thrown all accountability and control of private power companies to the wind and prices will be jacked up. Despite the assurances by the Treasurer yesterday we will see exactly the same thing happen in this country. It is not good enough, and the people of Victoria should be aware of the history of privatisation in the United Kingdom, what is happening in New Zealand and what will inevitably happen in this country.

I wish to pay tribute to some of the comments made in the Governor's address. The first one I wish to direct attention to is at page 2, where the Governor states:

The government's program for its second term recognises the way in which our many multicultural communities, and the contribution to the cultural heritage of our Aboriginal community, enrich our society and broaden its outlook.

As the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I endorse the sentiment expressed in the Governor's address on Tuesday. I also congratulate the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and trust that our working relationship will be as good as the working relationship I had with the former minister, the honourable member for Bendigo East.

It is said that history is written by the winners and, indeed, that is usually the case. Most of the history of the indigenous people in Australia has been written by white people and is a constricted history. It is only since 1988 that we have begun to learn a great deal more. We should recognise the outstanding uniqueness of the indigenous people of Australia. Their culture is the oldest living culture in the world — 60 000 years. When we talk about ancient history, the world forgets that the most ancient — the evidence has been repeated time and again — is of Aboriginal Australians. I makes me very cross when reports in newspapers ask, 'Where did the Australian Aboriginal people come from? They must have come from Indonesia'. If that were true, there would be archaeological and scientific evidence to demonstrate that. There is none. We should be very proud of and become very much involved in the development of the Aboriginal people in this country, especially in this state. I hope the government pays due attention to that paragraph in the Governor's speech and puts a great deal of effort into the development of relations with Aboriginal people and reconciliation between the Aboriginal people in Victoria and those in other states.

My other shadow portfolio responsibility is tertiary education and training. I congratulate the new Minister for Tertiary Education and Training on his appointment and trust that we will have a good working relationship. I also pay tribute to the retiring tertiary education minister, the Honourable Haddon Storey, a former member in another place. When I first became involved in the portfolio I found the former minister and his staff to be very good to work with. I trust I will have the same good working relationship with the newly appointed minister. No doubt members of the opposition will raise a number of matters with him that highlight the differences in policy direction between the government and the opposition.

I draw attention to the front page of today's *Australian* and ask the house to take note of the headline 'Outrage over university cuts' and to the warning by vice-chancellors that universities all over the country are suffering a crisis. In recent times all Australian universities have experienced great changes in culture. They have already been forced to put increasing emphasis on raising their own funds; but none of them, not one, is in a position to withstand cuts in revenue of up to 12.5 per cent. Cries of protest should be heard coming from members of the government in support of local universities, because Victoria's universities have made outstanding contributions not only to the culture of this state but also to its economic and social development.

Geoff Wilson, the Vice-chancellor of Deakin University, is quoted in the newspaper as saying:

There is an air of disbelief around the university today, that this sort of thing could happen and undo all the hard work of the past

Mal Logan, Vice-chancellor of Monash University is quoted as saying:

Cuts of this magnitude have the potential to take universities back to the pre-Whitlam days of elite higher education.

Is that what this government wants? Does it want to make universities available only to the elite, to make them places where only the rich can go, with no access for our most brilliant minds? All Australian universities are protesting about the budget cuts to higher education.

One wonders whether the word 'rational' is being used appropriately when the term 'economic

rationalism' is used to justify the cuts to university budgets. These cuts are irrational. They are the actions of an irrational federal Treasurer, someone who cut his political teeth at university and who owes what he is today to the training that was afforded him at university but who, in aiming to fill the so-called black hole in the budget, is getting stuck into universities. How could any government that properly considered the future of Australia make such an irrational and stupid decision? The university budgets cuts will have a tremendous impact on the community. Already 8000 jobs have been cut. It was already difficult for people to get jobs, so imagine the impact on the community of the loss of another 8000 jobs.

Professor Michael Osborne, the Vice-chancellor of La Trobe University, yesterday told his staff:

This is the worst moment that Australian higher education has ever faced ...

That from a so-called Liberal government! In the light of these budget cuts, one is justified in asking what government members understand the word 'liberal' to mean. Former Liberal governments, even the government of Robert Menzies — he was not my greatest idol — paid greater attention to higher education and had a better understanding of the value of education to the community than does the present federal Liberal government. The opposition should not be the only ones criticising these cuts to university budgets. All Victorians should be protesting, and the state government should be leading that protest.

These budget cuts are outrageous and the federal government has made an absolutely stupid decision. They will not do anything for the country. The federal government is saying to young people who may be looking forward to their education and training, 'We don't care about you'. Yet the cuts are a great example of maintaining current power structures. They will ensure that universities do not properly train new generations and that no-one in the current power structure is threatened. It is scandalous. We call on the government to join the opposition and Victoria's universities in protesting against the federal government's cuts to higher education. That is what should be expected of the state government.

I hope the state Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, along with the Premier, will lead the charge of protest against the outrageous decision made by the federal Treasurer and the Prime

Minister. It is not good enough, and it should not be allowed to happen.

Each university is different — that is certainly true of Victorian universities — but these cuts will ensure that they are entirely different! We should put politics aside and recognise the importance of education and training to the development of Victoria. As has been said in this house time and again, our greatest resource is the Victorian people. If they are not educated, trained and developed to the best of their abilities, we will be damning them and the future of this state. We can bring in economic gurus from overseas, attract overseas capital and sell a lot of the country to overseas interests, but unless the people of this country are educated and trained we will be doing a great disservice to Australia. The government could do no greater disservice to the people of Victoria than to forget its obligation to educate and train Victoria's youth. That is the single greatest challenge for all of us, one that the government must address.

If there is any truth in the statement in the Governor's speech about the government's commitment to ensuring that it builds on the gains that have been made in education, everyone will have a chance to pursue excellence and develop their abilities. The government is under an obligation to ensure that the commitments in the Governor's speech are honoured. If the statements in the speech are to be more than just rhetoric, the government's response must be in the terms I have outlined.

I refer to three articles in a publication which, although I cannot include in my favourite reading list, is important. I refer in particular to the April 1996 edition of the *Business Council Bulletin*. It is important that opposition members read publications such as the *Business Council Bulletin*, just as it is important for government members to read union journals. Although I do not agree with many of the statements made in it — and regardless of my predilection for certain matters — I can always learn something from reading other points of view.

When I was a young lad my father always told me that if a day went past when you did not learn something, you had wasted the day. No matter where you come from or where you are going to, you can always learn something. In fact, when you stop learning you have stopped altogether, and that is something we all should take notice of. I urge government members to pick up the union journals. A number of them have great articles which could

perhaps give members opposite a new perspective on life. Even if the articles do not change the way they think, they will teach them how the other half lives — but it is important to want to know something about that in the first place.

The April 1996 edition of the *Business Council Bulletin* has three articles to which I shall refer. The first article deals with the joint industry submission to the commonwealth government on sustainable energy policy. As a person who has a background in physics, I found it to be an interesting article. I have found the whole debate on the greenhouse effect to be most interesting and important because it does not look at the next 5 years or the next 50 years — as our Premier is wont to tell us — but it looks at the future of our planet! There is no doubt that with the increase in the greenhouse effect as a result of the use of fossil fuels there will be climate changes. Some say that Melbourne experiences a climate change every day — in fact you get the four seasons on some days! This is an extremely important issue.

The first reaction after governments and scientists said that we needed to address this problem was, 'It is a worldwide problem. Australia is just a little place. We can't have anything that will affect our economy or disadvantage our businesses!' It was the usual rhetoric and knee-jerk reaction taken by some businesses.

It is absolutely critical that business takes this on board. I give credit to the Business Council of Australia — that is something I am not prone to do often because I am probably one of its greatest critics — for raising this issue in a sensible manner. It has said that businesses, especially production, mining and agricultural industries in this state, need to address the issue and put in place some strategies to ensure that we play our part in dealing with it.

The article is worthwhile because of the message it sends to business — that is, you can't ignore the problem; it will not go away. The problems cannot be shipped off to South-East Asia and Third World countries in the hope that we will escape them. It is a worldwide problem, and Australia needs to play its part. We need to ensure that the Australian public is educated so that this ongoing problem of immense importance is addressed. I congratulate the Business Council of Australia on raising the debate in the business sector. The business sector together with the government must take the responsibility of playing a leading role in this area for the future of the state.

The next article in the *Business Council Journal* calls for increased levels of scientific and technological literacy in our schools. This is an important issue and it is one that is often overlooked. General criticism has been levelled at our schools suggesting that they do not teach children to read. It has been suggested that when children leave school their literacy and numeracy skills are terrible! When you think back to our days maybe 20, 30, 40 or 50 years ago do you think that everyone who went to school then was brilliant and could spell like a trooper! Of course, they couldn't. Do you think everyone knew their tables? Heaven only knows why you have to learn tables anyway; there are better things to commit to memory than multiplication tables! I remember all sorts of trivia, but in the general scheme of it some of the things that were considered important are not important at all!

However, it is important that we understand the language because we need to communicate. Recently I was listening to a program which talked about jargon, which is another word for gibberish or gobbledegook. We tend to use jargon so that other people cannot understand us. The scientific world and especially the information technology world has a whole new language. To me it is a sign of insecurity when language is used to ensure that others do not understand. If you do not understand the language, how can you ask questions? We need to ensure that the whole community understands the language so that we are literate in the best sense and so that scientists cannot get away with making outrageous and stupid statements without being questioned.

The professionals who use jargon the most are probably accountants and economists. They live in a world of their own. Universities should spend a bit more on training accountants and economists to communicate. They use language that leaves the general public for dead, and they get away with murder because of it. It is good to see that the business council raised the use of language in its journal so that people everywhere can understand and ask important questions.

The last article in the same edition was written by the Director of the Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Mr Bruce Mackenzie. It deals with the future of vocational education and training in Australia. It is a good article and I commend it to any member of the house and to all those interested and involved in education. Mr Mackenzie argues that report after report — which he lists including the Finn, Mayer, *The Working Nation*, *Enterprising Nation* and Karpin

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

180

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

reports — deals with vocational education and training. He says that if we do not rethink our training of young people we will fail in the future possibilities for this nation. He has not suggested a solution, but he does suggest that we need to spend time and effort on research, questioning the way we do things, and ensuring that the business community becomes involved in education and training.

The business community cannot sit back and say, 'It is the government's problem. We want it to produce someone to do the job today'. Mr Mackenzie suggests that we need to look further to see what sort of people we need to employ in the work force to ensure that we do not just mark time. We do not want to be using an abacus when others are using computers, and we do not want to be using horses and carts when others are using jet planes!

Educational and training institutions should not produce people who are stilted or who are forced into slavery in the workplace. Those people should be able to contribute; they should be contributing to more than just the production line.

We have gone past the days of the Henry Ford production lines, when the people who worked on them were no more than slaves and automatons. These days we have robots to do those sorts of repetitive jobs. That question is raised in the latest *Business Council Bulletin*, and it is one we need to address.

During the course of the 53rd Parliament I hope the new minister and his department can work together with the opposition to flesh out some of those questions and come up with decent solutions that turn around and revolutionise training in this state, especially vocational and educational training.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr JENKINS (Ballarat West).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This is a very short bill which amends the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 to simplify the drafting of provisions which insert a subsection or subsections into an existing undivided section.

The bill provides that where an undivided section is amended by the insertion of one or more subsections the original section is to be taken to be subsection (1). The amendment makes it unnecessary to amend the original section to insert '(1)'. The bill makes similar provision for the amendment of statutory regulations containing rules or regulations and for the amendment of clauses of a schedule to an act or statutory rule.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HULLS (Niddrie).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture and Resources, I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will ensure that the Victorian Biological Control Authority is able to make decisions collectively with the commonwealth and other states and territories in relation to the release of biological control agents which will have a proper basis in law.

The bill has two major purposes. The first is to correctly define the ministerial council which is used for the commonwealth, states and territories to reach agreement on the release of a biological control agent. The second is to better define the Victorian Biological Control Authority.

I shall provide some background on the bill and deal briefly with its major purposes. The Biological Control Act 1986 forms part of a national framework of complementary commonwealth-state legislation which allows for assessing and approving, where appropriate, proposals for the biological control of any weed or pest species.

The essence of biological control is the release of a biological agent for the specific purpose of

controlling a harmful target organism. The released agent referred to as the 'agent organism' can take various forms. For example, it could be an insect, a rust or fungus. Examples of biological control include the control of the weed prickly pear by insects and the control of rabbits by myxomatosis. A current example, which is soon to be considered by biological control authorities, is the rabbit calicivirus disease, which has the potential to significantly reduce wild rabbit populations that in many areas cause great economic loss to primary producers.

The national framework of legislation for biological control was developed for the purpose of providing a mechanism for deciding whether any proposal for the biological control of a particular weed or pest would be in the public interest and whether or not the proposal should proceed.

Relevant ministers representing each state, territory and the commonwealth are designated biological control authorities for their respective jurisdictions, and decisions in relation to important matters such as the release of a biological control agent can be made only on the unanimous recommendation of the ministerial council which was formerly known as the Australian Agricultural Council. Significant changes to the name and composition of the former Australian Agricultural Council have occurred during the past four years. The amendments proposed in this bill are required to ensure that the Victorian Biological Control Authority is clearly defined having regard to these changes.

The former Australian Agricultural Council has been replaced by the currently titled Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand. The reference to the ministerial council appearing in the act will be changed to mean the ministerial council of which the minister administering the act is a member, known as the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand. The amendments to the act will also include provisions that will allow for the ministerial council to be changed without requiring further amendments being made to the act.

The Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand has Victorian ministerial representation in addition to agriculture and resources. This additional representation includes the Treasurer, who has responsibility for the rural adjustment scheme, and the Minister for Conservation and Land Management. Because of this wider representation the present definition of the Victorian Biological Control Authority is

ambiguous and needs to be clarified. The amendments proposed clearly provide that the minister administering the act be the Victorian Biological Control Authority. The bill will ensure that the Victorian Biological Control Authority can properly take part in its national decision-making role.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRUMBY (Leader of the Opposition).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

STATE TAXATION (OMNIBUS AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to make numerous amendments to various state revenue acts. The bill introduces further amendments to the Business Franchise (Tobacco) Act 1974 to improve the administration and enforcement of the act. In recent sittings of this house significant legislative amendments have been introduced to address weaknesses in this legislation, which have allowed unscrupulous traders to engage in licence fee avoidance schemes at the expense of honest business people. As I foreshadowed when the last amendments were passed, further amendments may be required in the future to deal with ever-changing avoidance schemes.

These current amendments will further improve the operation of the licensing requirements upon wholesalers by providing for notification to the Commissioner of State Revenue where a company holding a licence is taken over, or has a change in its corporate controllers or major shareholders. The commissioner must be warned if unscrupulous operators seek to avoid probity checks and obtain a licence by taking over an existing licence-holder, where they would have been unable to obtain a licence had they applied in their own right. These provisions, however, apply only to non-listed companies, as it would be impractical to require a listed company to notify when there has been a change in its shareholding of more than 10 per cent, that percentage being the threshold which triggers the requirement for notification. Where notification

STATE TAXATION (OMNIBUS AMENDMENT) BILL

182

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

is given, the commissioner can investigate the new shareholders or corporate controllers to ascertain whether they fulfil the probity requirements laid down in the act to hold a wholesale tobacconist's licence.

The amendments also impose additional requirements upon the granting and holding of retail tobacco licences. The commissioner is granted the discretion to refuse an application for a retail licence, or suspend or revoke an existing retail licence. Applications for retail licences can be refused if the applicant has contravened the act or if the applicant has previously had a licence revoked, while suspension or revocation of an existing retail licence can take place only if the commissioner knows or reasonably believes an offence against the act has been committed. The rights of the licence-holder are protected, as the commissioner must suspend a licence before revoking it and give the holder of the licence 14 days to put his case to the commissioner. If the licence-holder cannot show just cause within this period, then the commissioner may revoke the licence. These amendments complement the regulatory regime applicable to wholesalers. As unscrupulous wholesale merchants must also have retail markets to dispose of tobacco readily so that their avoidance activities are profitable. Regulation of retail licence-holders, although to a lesser extent, is essential to ensure that the amendments introduced by this government in the last session are not undermined.

An amendment enables details of the persons who hold licences and those who have had their licences suspended or revoked to be published by the commissioner in any manner he or she sees fit. This will enable the commissioner to ensure that the tobacco industry has up-to-date information of current licence-holders and will aid the industry's compliance with the act. Wholesalers in particular will have notice of retailers who have had licences suspended or revoked, and will know not to supply them. This new provision is also consistent with the increase in the penalty for sales to and purchases from unlicensed persons which rises from 50 to 100 penalty units. This bill will also ensure that the commissioner can provide details of the persons who hold licences to environmental health officers of local councils to assist them in their responsibilities under the Tobacco Act 1987.

The bill amends the Debits Tax Act 1990 to ensure that debits made by charitable institutions which are exempt under the Financial Institutions Duty Act 1982 are not taxable under the Debits Tax Act. This

will make exemptions from transactions taxes for charitable institutions consistent and thereby reduce administrative costs. The bill also removes section 9 of the Debits Tax Act, whose application is now spent.

The bill makes a number of minor amendments of a technical nature to the Financial Institutions Duty Act 1982 to correct drafting errors in the legislation. A number of minor amendments are also made to the Pay-Roll Tax Act 1971 to repeal obsolete provisions.

Schedule 2 of the Land Tax Act 1958 is amended to resolve the uncertainty as to the application of the capping provisions. The bill ensures that the unimproved value of land to be used in determining the capped liability after a subdivision or consolidation of land in or after 1993 or 1994 will be the unimproved value of the land immediately following that subdivision or consolidation. An amendment to the charitable exemption ensures that land must be used by a charitable body for charitable purposes in order for that land to be exempt from land tax.

The bill amends the Stamps Act 1958 to honour a commitment made by the government during the last election to remove the mortgage stamp duty on the refinancing of business loans as from 1 April 1996. The relief from stamp duty will be provided to persons carrying on a trade, business or profession who are refinancing an existing business loan on which stamp duty has already been paid. This amendment will enable small businesses to take advantage of the competitive interest rates and loan conditions being offered in the deregulated financial markets. The removal of this stamp duty will enable small business to reduce their borrowing costs by allowing them to change their financing arrangements more readily to other financiers with more competitive loan conditions and demonstrates the government's commitment to provide relief from charges on small business wherever possible.

The Stamps Act is also amended to vary the thresholds at which first home buyers and pensioners can obtain exemptions or concessions on the purchase of a home. The thresholds of property value at which a pensioner is entitled to a full exemption from stamp duty on the purchase of a first home is raised from \$55 000 to \$70 000. The threshold at which the partial exemption phases out is raised from \$65 000 to \$100 000. The income qualification threshold for first home buyers exemption is raised, in the case of an applicant

having one dependent child, from \$33 000 to \$39 000, and in the case of an applicant having two or more dependent children, the threshold is raised from \$34 000 to \$40 000. The threshold of property value at which first home buyers are entitled to full exemption remains at \$100 000. However, the threshold at which the partial exemption phases out is raised from \$111 000 to \$150 000. The property value thresholds and income limits in these concessions have not been revised since 1988. The government has therefore responded to community concern that these thresholds have become outdated and deserving cases for relief excluded.

The bill further amends the Stamps Act 1958 by changing the maximum stamp duty payable on statements of livestock by relating the maximum to the amounts of compensation fixed under section 74(2) of the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 rather than to the purchase money. The amendment also changes the definition of calf to mean any cattle less than six weeks old.

The amendments to section 2 of the Valuation of Land Act 1960 provide for the consistent application of land tax to Victoria's ports. The amendment clarifies the definition of 'improvements' to ensure that in the case of a port, the construction, reinforcement and extension of breakwaters, berths, wharfs, aprons, canals and associated works are treated as improvements for the purpose of ascertaining site value.

Previously, if those port-related structures were developed by the Crown, they would not have been considered improvements. However, if the structures were developed by an owner or occupier in a port they were considered improvements to a site. This amendment removes the anomaly to ensure consistent treatment when calculating site value in a port and when determining a potential land tax liability.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

SUPERANNUATION ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purposes of the bill are twofold. Firstly, it completes the reform program outlined by the government in its first term. Secondly, the bill ensures conformity with certain commonwealth legislation as well as implementing changes required under commonwealth legislation and the agreement between the commonwealth and Victorian governments which covers the prudential supervision of public sector superannuation schemes.

Superannuation reform has been a major program of this government. The bill completes the reorganisation of schemes administered by the Victorian Superannuation Board. Specifically, the Transport Superannuation Fund and the State Employees Retirement Benefits Fund are being merged into the State Superannuation Fund. Each of these defined benefits schemes was closed to new members on 31 December 1993. This merger will not change the eligibility for membership or any of the entitlements of members compared with the existing situation.

The bill also merges into the Victorian Superannuation Fund — an accumulation scheme — three closed accumulation schemes. Two of these schemes are for the associates of the Supreme and County courts, while the other is for former employees of Holmesglen Constructions. These mergers are designed to facilitate administrative savings for the board as, for example, the number of sets of accounts and annual financial statements will be reduced. Efficiency gains in investment should also be achieved by pooling the assets rather than separately investing the assets of each fund.

The Insurance and Superannuation Commission (ISC) has issued rulings that limit the period in which people can continue to contribute to a superannuation fund while on leave without pay and the circumstances where a fund can continue periodic payments to a person who is classified by the trustees of a superannuation fund as no longer disabled and is or becomes gainfully employed. The bill makes amendments to incorporate those rulings.

An exemption under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1992 expired on 1 March 1996. That exemption allowed a superannuation fund to exclude from cover for death or disability any person with a pre-existing condition at the time of joining the fund. This exclusion must now be confined to cases where insurance cover is not

available at reasonable cost having regard to actuarial and medical statistics. The bill will ensure the rules of the new accumulation schemes are modified accordingly.

Our defined benefit schemes do not have this problem as there are provisions to offer restricted benefits with the right of the member for a review of his or her medical and actuarial classification. However, our defined benefit schemes charge members a uniform rate irrespective of their age, medical, or actuarial ratings when they are on leave of absence. The bill inserts amendments to require the board to charge a member based on an actuarial assessment.

In 1993 there was agreement in principle among the commonwealth, state and territory governments that public sector superannuation schemes would be exempt from the operation of the Commonwealth Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993. Regulations were made granting that exemption until 30 June 1996, pending the completion of a written agreement between those governments.

Such an agreement has since been signed — one that recognises the high level of supervision and accountability of our superannuation schemes. The bill enables the implementation of the agreement and repeals a number of redundant provisions. The bill will enable the designated public sector superannuation schemes to be exempted from compliance with legislation administered by the Insurance and Superannuation Commission. These designated schemes will thus, pursuant to the agreement, be exempt from supervision by the ISC from 30 June 1996.

Conversely, a total of five superannuation schemes will be transferred to operate entirely under commonwealth legislation and the ISC's supervision. The rationale for these transfers is that:

- (a) employees and employers in these schemes are predominantly engaged in commercial activity; or
- (b) the employer is predominantly financed by the commonwealth government; or
- (c) the employer receives money from the Victorian government in the form of a grant.

The bill contains amendments to enable the trustees of five selected superannuation funds to make a valid election to become regulated by the ISC from 1 July 1996. After that date and a valid election has been made, those funds can no longer be subject to

any direction or oversight by Victoria. The bill provides for certain employees or beneficiaries to be moved between funds before 30 June 1996 so that they are in an appropriate fund.

The bill makes a number of changes to the parliamentary superannuation scheme. Consistent with the agreement with the commonwealth government, the organisational structure of the trustees has been changed so that it operates like the governing body of any other superannuation fund. Under current arrangements, the annual contribution to the fund from the consolidated fund — the employer's contribution — is actuarially calculated every 3 years on a 25-year horizon. This arrangement rolls forward the date of full funding so that it is never achieved while the fund remains open. The bill sets a specific date — 30 June 2015 — for full funding and thus stops the roll-forward effect. Once full funding is achieved, an annual contribution will be made to maintain that status.

Those members who reach the point of 20.5 years service do not receive any further retirement benefits for service beyond that point and under the bill will be excused from further contributions — except that related to any salary as office holder. The current entitlement to a pension arises only after 15 years service unless good and sufficient reason applies. Under the bill a member can now receive a pro rata entitlement after 12 years provided that such a retirement does not require a by-election — except one coinciding with a general election.

The bill also broadens the regulation-making provision of the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968 to allow regulations to be made for the purpose of providing articles, vehicles, equipment or services to members of Parliament.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

VICTORIAN MANAGED INSURANCE AUTHORITY BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill establishes the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority. The authority will replace the Managed Insurance Fund and continue the reform of risk management in the budget sector commenced in 1995. The authority will also become the successor in law of the State Insurance Office, thereby assuming responsibility for its residual assets and liabilities. The major businesses of the State Insurance Office were sold in 1992 and the office will be abolished by this bill.

In March 1995 the government took steps to reform the management of both insurable and non-insurable risk in the Victorian budget sector. The budget sector is exposed to a range of risks which create exposures to the consolidated fund. These risks include:

- public liability claims for injured third parties;
- professional indemnity claims from third parties;
- property losses from defined events such as fire, storm and tempest; and
- environmental site impairment.

Prior to the reforms initiated by this government the only insurance purchased centrally was insurance for public liability and property loss catastrophe policies. An independent review of these programs found that they were unresponsive to the business needs of the departments and inhibited the state assuming greater levels of self-insurance that it had the capacity to manage.

The government had two objectives in reforming risk management in the budget sector. Firstly, it intended to ensure departments were identifying their assets and risk exposures and developing risk-management strategies. Improved risk management in the budget sector will result in reduced claims and cost savings. Through the development of risk-management strategies the state will have a profile of the total risk in the budget sector and be able to better assess its insurance needs.

Secondly, it was intended that the budget sector rationalise its insurance arrangements and improve its handling of claims by establishing a central budget sector insurance agency. A key role of the authority which will perform this central agency function will be to self-insure part of the budget sector's risk. In coordinating the purchase of insurance and claims handling through a central agency and self-insuring or assuming part of the

risk, the government is following well-established practices adopted by major private sector organisations.

The Managed Insurance Fund was established as a trust account of the Public Account in 1995 and has been the focus for a range of initiatives designed to deliver these reforms. The initiatives, together with other corporate governance initiatives, include:

- a program under which departments were assisted in profiling their risk exposures. This was the first step leading up to having departments develop and adopt risk management strategies. Nearly all departments have profiled their risk and over 50 per cent have adopted risk management strategies;

- the introduction of a system of insurance declarations requiring departments to declare exposures and to develop asset registers. Departmental management are now more aware of the business risks associated with their assets and operations as well as the need for accurate valuations of their assets; and

- the state has moved to self-insuring the first \$50 million of losses arising from property and public liability at a cash saving of \$9 million.

The next stage of the reform program is to consolidate the reforms to date and continue the risk management improvements of the budget sector's insurable risk. For these reforms to be implemented it is essential that a statutory authority subject to appropriate prudential, corporate governance and accountability frameworks be established.

The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority established by this bill will have five key functions. These functions are to:

- assist departments and participating bodies to establish programs for the identification, quantification and management of risks;

- monitor risk management by departments and participating bodies;

- act as insurer for, or provide insurance services to, departments and participating bodies;

- provide indemnities to officers of state corporations and departments; and

provide risk management advice to the state and provide risk management advice and training to departments and participating bodies.

The authority's clients, departments and participating bodies will be required to develop risk management strategies which will be monitored by the authority and arrange their insurance through the authority. There will, however, be a discretion for the minister to exempt the authority's clients from arranging their insurance with the authority.

To ensure that major risks that can impact on the budget sector and the consolidated fund are captured, the bill gives flexibility to the minister to vary coverage of the act and the authority to include bodies funded by the consolidated fund. These bodies are referred to in the bill as participating bodies. With the exception of directors and officers insurance which will be provided to directors and officers of bodies within the broader public sector, it is not intended that the authority will provide insurance or risk management services outside the budget sector.

As with other statutory corporations the affairs of the authority will be overseen by a board of directors. While the board is to be serviced by a small staff it is intended that the authority will contract with the private sector to provide risk management services. To ensure appropriate oversight of its activities the authority will be required to prepare a three-year strategic plan on an annual basis and report to the Treasurer against its plan at regular intervals. The authority's risk profile will be controlled by requiring the authority to specify the quantum of risk it proposes to self-insure and to comply with prudential guidelines set by the Treasurer.

The establishment of the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority is an important financial management initiative which will improve risk management in and provide financial benefits to the budget sector.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

WATER ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill continues the important process of reform in the water sector in both metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria. Many of the provisions are of an essentially housekeeping nature and I shall concentrate on the main reforms being proposed.

Part 2 of the bill contains amendments to the Water Act 1989. The most significant of these concern floodplain management. Under the current provisions, only the full set of floodplain management functions listed in the act can be assigned to a waterway management authority. However, an authority may only have the resources to carry out part of the suite of functions; it may have the resources to carry out works but not the ability to assess planning applications and give flooding and development advice.

By giving the minister the flexibility to assign only those powers which are appropriate to the circumstances, the amendments enable the minister to tailor floodplain management responsibilities to an authority's resources and the local community's needs.

Clause 9 gives the minister the ability to declare the active flow-carrying part of the floodplain a floodway. Under existing legislation, to control buildings which may control or divert floodwaters the minister must declare the total area banded by the floodline of a one-in-a-hundred-year flood. However, in most cases it is unnecessarily expensive and time consuming to identify the whole area liable to such flooding.

The power to declare a floodway will enable resources to be focused on defining the area of most concern to floodplain managers and ensuring developments in those areas are appropriate.

The other amendments contained in part 2 are designed to streamline and improve the administration of the Water Act, including removing the need for waterway management authorities to serve notice on each individual property owner for the purpose of declaring land to be serviced and liable to a rate, and also dealing with the publication

WATER ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

187

of bulk entitlement orders which at present have to be published in full.

The current procedures for dealing with these matters are unnecessarily cumbersome and expensive. The more usual commercial practice of placing notification in local newspapers is to be adopted, while notice of the bulk entitlements orders will be published rather than the full order.

The operation of the act will be enhanced by:

facilitating the smooth transfer of land to give effect to a restructuring order made under the act. This and other consequential amendments are outlined in clauses 6 and 7;

clarifying the respective roles of the minister and an appointed committee in relation to the preparation of water management schemes;

allowing the minister to give a delegate the ability to subdelegate so that the relevant authority can organise which officers are to be responsible for different duties without the need for the minister to delegate to individual positions.

The amendments to the Water Industry Act 1994 contained in Part 3 of the bill build on the structural and regulatory reforms which have been made in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The reforms have laid the basis for an efficient and effective water industry and the three retail water businesses are already demonstrating their commitment to better customer service and better customer performance. The bill will allow the government to continue to regulate the prices charged by the retail businesses, together with wholesale water and sewerage prices. It is important that the government continue to regulate these prices to allow it to manage the transition to more cost-reflective pricing for water services.

As members will recall, in June 1994 the government announced that domestic charges for water and sewerage services in the Melbourne area would increasingly reflect a customer's use of the service and decreasingly reflect the municipal valuation of his or her property. Greater reliance on consumption-based charging has enjoyed bipartisan support in Victoria and is a key aspect of the strategic framework endorsed by COAG for the reform of the Australian water industry. It is a fairer system and, by encouraging water conservation, is also more environmentally friendly than current pricing arrangements, which fail to penalise waste.

Significant progress has already been made and the government will continue the work of pricing reform.

In 1994 the government froze prices for domestic water and sewerage services in the Melbourne area. This freeze will remain until at least 1 January 1997 as announced. The amendments contained in clause 13 will allow the government to regulate prices after that date until pricing oversight is formally transferred to the Office of the Regulator-General. Once the Office of the Regulator-General issues a pricing order in relation to a particular price or charge, the ability of the Governor in Council to make further orders in relation to that price or charge will cease.

Clause 16 will enable the employee of a retail water or sewerage business to enter land — excluding a dwelling house — to investigate non-compliance with the act without having to give seven days prior notice, provided that the licensee is satisfied on reasonable grounds of that non-compliance.

The current requirement to give seven days notice before entering a property affords a person time to remove any evidence of non-compliance, making it almost impossible to prove a case of deliberate pollution. Seven days notice will continue to be required, however, where access to residential premises is required.

Clause 19 of the bill brings Melbourne Parks and Waterways into line with other bodies charged with the management of Crown land by giving it the power to grant leases and licences for activities affecting the beds and banks of waterways.

The disaggregation of Melbourne Water Corporation on 1 January 1995 was a mammoth undertaking, and some amendments need to be made to the allocation statements made at the time. Clause 21 enables such amendments be retrospective to the date on which the transfers took effect to reflect the reality of dealings since disaggregation, provided there have been no past dealings which adversely affect the interests of a third party.

The other changes being made to the Water Industry Act 1994 are housekeeping measures, such as bringing the billing period of rates levied by Melbourne Parks and Waterways into line with the billing period of rates and charges for water supply and sewerage services.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

188

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

Part 4 of the bill contains amendments to the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958. These are essentially of a housekeeping nature and consequential to other changes being made. The power to levy rates for floodplain management purposes in clause 26 will make clear that floodplain management will continue to be funded from the drainage rate, as occurs at present.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BRACKS (Williamstown).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The major reform of Victoria's workers compensation system, beginning in December 1992, has resulted in a dramatic improvement in performance. That improvement is exemplified by the elimination of a \$2100 million unfunded liability, reduced incidence of claims, improved return-to-work rates and higher benefits for injured workers, and an annual premium saving to Victorian employers of about \$500 million.

Victoria, once a workers compensation basket case under Labor, is now recognised as having Australia's best system — the Workcover system established by this government. The Workcover scheme is operating successfully, but there are certain practices developing which, if left unchecked, could harm the integrity of the scheme. There is also room for improvement of the scheme in a number of more technical areas.

The bill has four primary aims. First, to address the inappropriate use of legal processes which are being used to generate substantial lump sum maim transaction costs, and also to reduce abuse of Workcover by some allied health service providers and by some employers who are not complying with provisions in the act. Second, to alter the basis of calculating the period of a worker's entitlement to long-term weekly payments so as not to disadvantage incapacitated workers who return to work. Third, to provide workers compensation

coverage for DEETYA trainees and confer the protection of the act on both trainees and their host employers. Fourth, to implement existing government commitments in a number of areas. Finally, the bill makes a number of technical amendments to the Workcover legislation.

Prevention of legal abuse and reduction of maim payments transactions costs

There are increasing delivery costs and backlogs at the medical panels and County Court associated with claims for lump sum compensation for permanent impairment under the table of maims. This has occurred as common law work for lawyers has substantially dried up, with the table of maims now becoming their focus of activity. It is also instructive that New South Wales has recently experienced a blow-out in table of maims payments as litigation has significantly increased in this area.

For every \$1 of compensation paid in this area an additional 60 cents is paid in transaction costs — mainly legal costs — through the use of legal and other processes associated with the settlement of the claim through the courts. In most cases these costs are incurred without the case ever actually being heard in the courts.

In the six-month period from March to August 1995, 59 per cent of County Court writs were resolved for amounts actually within the Magistrates Courts' jurisdictional limit of \$25 000 and should properly have been dealt with in that jurisdiction. That claims are processed through a higher court means added costs and delays. This elevation in jurisdiction is, very often, simply a device to attract higher legal fees. The average cost of a case at the Magistrates Court is approximately \$3500, compared with \$7000 at the County Court. In 1995, more than 1600 Workcover matters were lodged in the Magistrates Court and more than 2300 Workcover cases were resolved. At the Melbourne County Court, more than 2400 Workcover matters were lodged, and only approximately 880 matters were resolved. It is very clear that most matters currently before the County Court may be reasonably dealt with in the Magistrates Court — with less expense and less delay, and in the interests of injured workers.

The bill contains new provisions relating to claims for lump sum compensation under section 98 and/or section 98A of the Accident Compensation Act 1985, which will:

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

189

strengthen existing provisions by providing for mandatory exchange of final medical information between parties at the claim lodgement and initial decision stages;

strengthen the role of conciliation officers in resolving disputes before allowing access to courts — disputes must be referred for conciliation, and court proceedings can commence only after the conciliation officer issues a certificate certifying that all reasonable steps have been taken by the worker to resolve the dispute;

maintain the discretion of conciliation officers to refer medical questions to medical panels, but repeal the existing compulsory referral of these claims to the medical panels by workers prior to court access;

require that, if conciliation does not result in the resolution of the claim, the insurer must make a final offer, consistent with any medical panel's opinion. If the worker then proceeds to court, he or she must better that offer to be entitled to the payment of costs and avoid liability for the defendant's costs;

empower the minister to issue directions governing the procedures for the resolution of disputes in relation to claims for lump sum compensation which are binding on all parties and their representatives; and

increase the jurisdictional limits of the Magistrates Court both in relation to lump sum compensation — from \$25 000 to \$40 000 — and weekly payments — from 52 to 104 weeks arrears of payments — to facilitate earlier and lower cost outcomes.

Allied health services abuse

Hearing aid providers

There has been an increasing incidence in recent years of substandard or inappropriate hearing aids being supplied and of aids being fitted by poorly skilled and untrained persons, mainly as a result of the activities of a small number of entrepreneurial firms who have cultivated a practice of exploiting workers in the pursuit of Workcover claims for loss of hearing.

Apart from the inherent undesirability of these practices they can, in some circumstances, actually result in further hearing loss or injury.

To address these problems the bill introduces a provision which requires that in order for the provision, repair, adjustment or replacement of a hearing aid to be compensable under the act both the person or class of persons who provides the service and the type of aid must be approved by the Victorian Workcover Authority.

Hearing loss assessors

As a further measure to deal with problems associated with claims for lump sum compensation for loss of hearing, the bill will provide a more stringent framework for the approval of persons who provide conclusive determinations of diminution of hearing for the purposes of these claims.

Health service providers

The bill introduces an amendment to the Accident Compensation Act 1985 which will require that among the matters to be considered when determining the reasonable costs of medical and like services are any guidelines issued by the Victorian Workcover Authority in respect of the relevant service or provision.

Strengthening employer compliance

The current provisions require strengthening to ensure employer compliance. Accordingly, the bill will:

strengthen the capacity to enforce employers' existing obligations to provide pre-injury or suitable employment to injured workers by instituting a procedural framework within which enforcement of the relevant provision is to operate, including the imposition of a time limit within which an employer is able to satisfy the Victorian Workcover Authority that it was not possible to offer such employment and thereby escape the operation of the provision;

ensure that directors and principal officers can be held liable for offences committed by a body corporate where it is proved that the offence was committed with the consent or connivance of the director or officer, or that the commission of the offence was attributable to any wilful neglect of the director or officer. This amendment would

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

190

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

also apply to offences committed by, for example, service providers which were bodies corporate; and

extend prosecution time limits for certain employer offences from one year to three years in line with other provisions of the act. This extension is warranted since, in many of these cases, the circumstances giving rise to the prosecution come to light only after the expiry of the existing time limit, or too late to allow proper investigation before the expiry of that limit.

104-week incapacity limit

Section 93B(3) of the current legislation provides that a worker's entitlement to weekly compensation ceases after the worker has been incapacitated for 104 weeks, unless the worker has a serious injury or is totally and permanently incapacitated, in which case the entitlement continues in accordance with the act to retirement age.

This basis of calculating a worker's long-term entitlement to weekly payments is perceived by some as a disincentive for workers to return to work, particularly on modified or alternate duties.

Facilitating an early and effective return to work for injured workers is one of the primary goals of the Workcover scheme. It is important that any disincentives, or perceived disincentives, for workers to return to work as soon as practicable after the injury be removed.

Accordingly, the bill now provides that a worker's entitlement to weekly payments under that section ceases after the expiry of an aggregate of 104 weeks, whether consecutive or not, in respect of which a weekly payment has been paid or is payable to the worker, unless the worker has a serious injury or is totally and permanently incapacitated. This will remove any perceived disincentive for partially incapacitated workers to return to work on alternative duties during the rehabilitation process.

Coverage for DEETYA trainees

There has been a proliferation of commonwealth training programs for the long-term unemployed that involve both workplace-based training and a host employer and off-site training. The status of these trainees as workers while they are undertaking the workplace-based training is uncertain. The host employers are currently at risk of unrestricted common law proceedings if the trainees are not

workers, and many are simply not prepared to run that risk.

The bill contains a provision which will empower the Governor in Council to make an order which will have the effect of deeming participants in declared training programs to be workers for the purposes of the Workcover scheme. For the purposes of the Workcover legislation the provision deems such workers to be employed by the persons who provide the workplace-based training.

The provision also provides for the order to deem a class of payments specified in the order to be remuneration paid or payable in respect of the persons deemed to be workers for the purposes of the Workcover legislation. The commonwealth government has agreed to fund the insurance costs for these trainees at the industry rate for the period of the program.

Government commitments

The bill also implements previous government commitments to:

allow limited access by a worker to the contribution component of his or her rolled-over superannuation lump sum for the purposes of approved capital expenditure without affecting the worker's weekly payments;

mirror recent changes to the Transport Accident Act by extending the medical and like compensation payable under the act to include in the case of deaths the payment of the reasonable costs — not exceeding \$1530, the current TAC equivalent — of family counselling provided to family members of the deceased worker by a medical practitioner or registered psychologist. In addition, the bill extends this proposal to cover the family members of workers who have suffered prescribed injuries; and

amend the secrecy provisions of the Accident Compensation Act to permit the release of information to the Commissioner of State Revenue.

Technical amendments

The bill also makes a number of technical amendments to both the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Accident Compensation (WorkCover Insurance) Act 1993. The most important of these involve the insertion of

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

191

provisions which are intended to give full effect to the government's original intentions in relation to certain aspects of the common law provisions of the Accident Compensation Act 1985. To this end, clause 32 of the bill amends section 135A of that act so as to make it clear that, except as provided in the amended section, a worker must not commence common law proceedings to which section 135A applies without first obtaining a determination of the degree of his or her impairment for the purposes of that section by the authority, authorised insurer or self-insurer and, if required, complying with the preliminary procedures outlined in the section.

Decisions by the Supreme Court and, more recently, the Court of Appeal have held that the existing provisions of section 135A do not achieve the government's original intentions and the amendments are intended to ensure that these are achieved. The amendments will apply in respect of all proceedings commenced on and after the date of their commencement, which will be the date of royal assent to the bill.

In addition, clause 33 of the bill amends section 135A so as to make it clear that a decision by the authority, authorised insurer or self-insurer that a worker has a serious injury for the purposes of section 93B of the act — which relates to a worker's entitlement to weekly payments — is not to be taken to be a determination of the worker's degree of impairment for the purposes of section 135A unless the decision specifically states that it is to be taken to be a determination for those purposes.

It was never the government's intention that a decision that a worker has a serious injury for the purposes of section 93B would automatically be taken to be a determination of the worker's degree of impairment for the purposes of section 135A. Nevertheless, the Court of Appeal has recently held that to be the case. This means an assessment made for a different purpose, and often before the relevant injury has stabilised, will give the relevant worker access to common law remedies irrespective of the level of permanent impairment resulting from the injury. For these reasons the government has decided to make these amendments retrospective to 1 December 1992, excepting only proceedings commenced and determined before the date of the second reading of the bill.

The amendments made by both of these clauses necessitate amendments to section 63 of the Accident Compensation (WorkCover) Act 1992 and to the Constitution Act 1975. However, as these

involve direct amendments to the Constitution Act 1975, a statement for the purposes of section 85(5) of that act is not required.

Other important technical amendments are:

clarification of the types of pensions the receipt of which will affect a worker's entitlement to weekly payments;

the imposition of an obligation upon workers and employers to give the compensation payer certain information relating to any pension or lump sum amount which may affect a worker's entitlement to weekly payments;

the introduction of a requirement that if a direction of a conciliation officer is revoked by a court an order for costs must be made in favour of the worker;

the introduction of measures intended to ensure that if in any County Court proceedings under the Accident Compensation Act 1985 an outcome is achieved which could have been achieved in the Magistrates Court any party-party costs payable to the worker must be at the relevant Magistrates Court scales;

the extension of an existing power under warrant issued by a magistrate to enter and search premises, take possession of records and other documents and retain those records and other documents for certain purposes, which is currently able to be used only for the purposes of premium, to permit its use for the purposes of determining whether any of the provisions of the Workcover legislation are being contravened; and

amendments which improve the protection afforded the convenor and members of medical panels, including extending to them in the performance of their duties the same protection that is afforded to a Supreme Court Judge.

Conclusion

Victoria now has the lowest cost, fully funded workers compensation system in Australia through the provision of safer workplaces and better return-to-work and compensation rates for those genuinely unable to work as a result of a workplace injury.

We will not rest, however, until we are among the world's best, and the government will continue its

reform agenda and remain ever vigilant to achieve this objective. Through our vigilance and commitment to continuous improvement we will ensure that Victoria's workers compensation scheme is able to meet the real needs of employers and workers and that it is not subject to attack from those who would abuse the system for their own gain.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr MICALLEF (Springvale).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Members will be familiar with the restructuring of the electricity supply industry, which has led to the creation of a dynamic group of companies, focusing on commercial principles and customer service.

We have already seen benefits flowing from these reforms, and from the privatisation of the five distribution businesses and the first generation company, Yallourn Energy. These benefits include a significant reduction in the state debt, increased customer choice, and the establishment of a sound regulatory framework to protect customers from anti-competitive practices, to maintain service standards, and to ensure that a fair proportion of the efficiency gains achieved by the restructured industry are passed through to customers.

This bill is essentially administrative. It follows the Electricity Industry (Further Amendment) Act 1995 which was passed in the last session of Parliament. The main purpose of that act was to rationalise land titles in the Latrobe Valley held by the generation companies under the Electricity Industry Act 1993, in particular the land required for the operation of the Loy Yang A power station and the Hazelwood power station. That act also provided for the appointment of a deputy administrator of the State Electricity Commission to assist in the administration of residual assets and liabilities of the SEC, conferred powers on the Chief Electrical Inspector in relation to electrical safety, and made

miscellaneous amendments to other acts as part of the electricity privatisation process.

This relatively short bill deals with a number of further miscellaneous amendments to the Electricity Industry Act 1993 and other acts. Part 1 of the bill states its purpose, commencement dates and identifies the Electricity Industry Act 1993 as the principal act. Part 2 contains a number of amendments to the Electricity Industry Act 1993.

The bill extends the operation of section 17 of the act. Section 17 authorises Victorian Power Exchange to give directions to electricity industry participants when necessary for electricity system security and safety. This section currently has a sunset date of 30 June 1996. When that sunset date was included in the act, it was assumed that the national electricity market would have commenced by then and that national market regulation would have overtaken section 17. This will not have occurred and the bill effectively extends the sunset date to 31 December 1997.

The bill repeals section 34 of the act, which requires the electricity corporations and VPX to submit annual estimates of receipts and expenditure to the Treasurer. This requirement duplicates part of the corporate planning procedures contained in the Act and is considered an unnecessary administrative burden. The bill also includes a new provision requiring the electricity corporations to comply with their respective corporate plans.

Sections 42B and 46 of the act confer certain rights in relation to the acquisition of land and the payment of municipal rates on 'generation companies' as defined in the act. Both sections are amended by the bill to confer the same rights on entities that are not 'generation companies' because they have been exempted from the requirement to hold a generation licence. The provisions will apply only where an associated entity of the generation company does hold a licence to operate the relevant generation facilities.

The bill substitutes a new section 53 in the act, which authorises the Treasurer and minister to give directions to the administrator of the SEC. The new section requires details of all directions given to be included in the SEC's annual report and also requires copies of the directions to be available for public inspection, subject to confidentiality requirements. These provisions replace an existing power to give directions which does not contain a publication requirement.

A significant feature of the bill is that it establishes the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector as a corporate body to carry out the functions and exercise the powers of the Chief Electrical Inspector. At present the Chief Electrical Inspector is an individual rather than a corporate body. These provisions of the bill will improve the administration, accountability and reporting requirements applicable to electrical safety regulation.

The bill includes an exemption of specified things from the operation of the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act 1974. This provision replaces the broad exemption currently contained in the Electricity Industry (Trade Practices) Regulations 1994. A principal purpose of this authorisation provision is to ensure that the Victorian wholesale electricity market can continue to operate, without the prospect of challenge under the Trade Practices Act, during the transitional phase to a national electricity market. The authorisation also will ensure that the regulation of electricity prices through to the year 2000 put in place by the government last year will be able to continue without the prospect of challenge under the Trade Practices Act.

The cross-ownership restrictions contained in part 13 of the act are amended by the bill so as to permit a person to hold a controlling interest in two or more licensees where the Office of the Regulator-General is satisfied that the interests are held as passive institutional investments only. At present this exception applies only to the holding of substantial interests.

Part 3 of the bill contains transitional and consequential provisions.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LONEY (Geelong North).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

LEGAL PROFESSION PRACTICE (DIRECT MORTGAGES) BILL

Second reading

Mrs WADE (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill will repeal section 5 of the Legal Profession Practice (Amendment) Act 1995, the amending act, which would have inserted section 40AA into the principal act. Section 5 is due to come into operation on 1 July 1996.

Section 40AA provides that a solicitor must not receive any payment or repayment of principal under a direct mortgage entered into on or after the commencement of section 5 in any form other than a cheque drawn by the lender or the mortgagor or a bank cheque or bank draft payable to the order of the mortgagor. Further, it requires a solicitor who receives such a cheque or draft to pay it forthwith to the person to whose order it is payable or as such person directs. Contravention of the section is an offence carrying a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units, unless the contravention is with intent to defraud, in which case the maximum penalty is 2 years imprisonment.

Section 40AA arose out of the government's deliberations last year on how to deal with the financial crisis of the Solicitors Guarantee Fund. Before the amending act was passed by Parliament, Law Institute representatives expressed concern about the operation of the proposed section 40AA and agreed to put their objections in writing. To allow due consideration of these objections, the commencement of section 40AA was delayed until a day to be proclaimed, but no later than 1 July 1996. I note that no official written objections to section 40AA have been received from the institute. Nevertheless, well-reasoned objections to section 40AA as drafted have been received from several bankers and the property law section of the Law Institute, which does not purport to represent the views of the institute.

While the objections to section 40AA could be overcome by amendments, circumstances have changed since the amending act was passed. At that time, it was understood from information provided by the Law Institute that, while most defalcations arose out of contributory mortgage practices, direct mortgages not involving financial institutions were also a not insignificant source of defalcations. After the act was passed, however, officers of the Law Institute informed the government that they were not aware of any defalcations arising from a direct mortgage transaction in the past 12 years and that defalcations arising from direct mortgages are highly unlikely.

The government has also taken into account the fact that section 40AA would reduce the income of the

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL

194

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

Solicitors Guarantee Fund to a significant extent. At the time section 40AA was proposed, the Law Institute could not provide an estimate of the total amount of money tied up in direct mortgages involving private lenders. It has since informed the government that the amount is somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. The effect of section 40AA would be to reduce significantly the annual flow of funds into solicitors' trust accounts and, therefore, the income of the Solicitors Guarantee Fund.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HULLS (Niddrie).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mrs HENDERSON (Minister for Housing) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to remove regulatory duplication in respect of building standards and to bring the current legislative framework into line with modern legislative developments in the areas of building and health controls.

The first Housing (Standards of Habitation) Regulations were made in October 1939 under the Slum Reclamation and Housing Act 1938. The regulations prescribed standards, and non-complying houses were declared to be unfit for human habitation. The Slum Reclamation and Housing Act resulted from a report prepared by the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board of Inquiry, which was set up in September 1936 to examine the standard of housing conditions in Victoria and to propose ways of improving the unsatisfactory health and housing conditions which were prevalent at the time.

The standards of habitation provisions proposed to be discontinued predate the Health Act 1958, the Residential Tenancies Act 1980 and the Building Act 1993.

The original standards of habitation provisions were later incorporated into the successive housing acts and the relevant regulations upgraded and redrafted over the years. Currently, the provisions regarding

standards of habitation are included in part VII of the Housing Act 1983, and the Director of Housing is responsible for the enforcement of those provisions.

In the absence of any other legislation in 1938 relating to building standards, to public health standards and to the rights and duties of landlords and tenants, legislative provisions defining the minimum standards of habitation were required to improve the general quality and safety of housing stock and to provide safeguards for the rights of renters. However, since then, the legislative and regulatory framework has changed significantly. The objectives of the standards of habitation provisions in the Housing Act are now part of specific legislation, namely the Health Act 1958, the Residential Tenancies Act 1980 and the Building Act 1993.

Under the provisions of the Health Act, the municipal council is the body responsible for remedying all nuisances in its municipal district, including nuisances arising from any building or structure.

The provisions of the Building Act set the standards for the construction and maintenance of buildings together with a system for enforcing building and safety matters and for resolution of building disputes. Under the act, municipal councils have specific responsibility for administration and enforcement of safety and building standards in their municipal district.

The Residential Tenancies Act defines the rights and duties of landlords and tenants, including the requirement to keep the rented premises in good repair. The Residential Tenancies Tribunal deals with landlord-tenant disputes, including matters in relation to property conditions.

The current legislative and regulatory framework, the changes over the years in the role of local government, and the principles of micro-economic reform provide compelling reasons to discontinue the habitation standards provisions in the Housing Act. This course of action is also in line with the government objective of minimising the extent of regulation and other imposts on businesses and individuals and avoiding duplication of functions and responsibilities.

The proposal to discontinue the habitation standards function requires transitional arrangements to deal with the existing notices and charges on the titles of

DOMESTIC BUILDING CONTRACTS AND TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

195

land. It is proposed that the Director of Housing retain a power to recoup money owed and to remove a charge from a title once the amount is repaid, and that councils will be able to take action in respect of directions issued by the Director of Housing before the commencement of this act.

In respect of properties with a notice on the title relating to the standards of habitation provisions, it is proposed to empower municipal councils to carry out a property inspection and to notify the Titles Office when the notice is no longer required. Associated costs for this action can be recovered in line with the consequential amendment to the Local Government Act.

Given the councils' responsibilities in relation to health, safety and building standards in their municipal districts, these inspections would allow them to deal with all issues relating to property conditions. As there will be no new notices, these provisions would be only transitional, allowing for a progressive removal of the existing notices and charges from the titles of land.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms KOSKY (Altona).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

DOMESTIC BUILDING CONTRACTS AND TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr MACLELLAN (Minister for Planning and Local Government) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This machinery bill serves two main purposes: firstly, it amends an inappropriate proclamation of one section of the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 and ensures that no person is adversely affected by that proclamation, and secondly, it makes a number of procedural amendments to domestic building-related legislation to improve the operation of the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995.

The Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 was proclaimed to come into effect on two dates. Parts 4, 5 and 8 were proclaimed to come into effect on 1 April 1996 with the remainder coming

into effect on 1 May 1996. This dual proclamation was made in order that the preliminary matters could be finalised before the whole act came into operation, for example the physical establishment of the tribunal, appointment of its chairperson and officers and so on.

One section of the act, section 158, should have been proclaimed from 1 May but was inadvertently proclaimed from 1 April. The amendment in this bill rectifies that proclamation and ensures that no person or body who commenced building work (or undertook certain other activities in relation to the Housing Guarantee Fund Ltd) during this one-month period is disadvantaged in any way compared to those who commenced building work prior to 1 April 1996. Those persons who commence building work after 1 May 1996 of course come under the provisions of the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 as was originally intended.

There are a number of additional minor amendments proposed in the bill, the combined effect of which is to facilitate the operation of the domestic building regime introduced by the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act.

These amendments include, first, the revision of the definition of prescribed building practitioner and recognised person to include building inspectors registered under the Building Act 1993. The purpose of this amendment is to enable these inspectors to conduct inspections under the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 and also to enable such people to make reports in relation to owner-built houses which the owner-builder proposes to sell within the applicable insurance period.

The second amendment will increase the membership of the Building Practitioners Board to enable domestic builder representation in recognition of the board's increased involvement with domestic builders following the passage of the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995, for example by its registration of such builders.

The third amendment will create a new regulation-making power to exempt a person or body from all or some of the provisions of the act. The amendment would provide greater flexibility in the operation of the act by, for example, exempting the builder from certain obligations where the government or professional body acting as the owner is in control of the contractual documentation

and is not in need of certain protections afforded by the act.

Representations have been received by government to the effect that there may be some ambiguity in the ability of developers of large domestic high-rise properties to sell off the plan before they have entered into a construction contract with a registered builder. While the government has received legal advice that there is no such ambiguity, the government is anxious to put the matter beyond all possible doubt and is therefore proposing a minor amendment to section 137e of the Building Act 1993.

I believe that this small series of minor technical amendments will significantly improve the efficiency of this major area of reform for the government. I am certain all Victorians and particularly home owners and the building industry will benefit from the dramatic improvements the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act 1995 is bringing to this sector.

I commend the bill to the house.

I deviate from my speech to say that I am advised that whereas it was anticipated that some 15 000 domestic builders would register as they were obliged to by 1 May, the present number is a little over 7000. If anyone can find the missing 7000-odd builders in Victoria we would be grateful for their names and addresses so we can give them the appropriate prompt to ensure they register by 1 May.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr DOLLIS (Richmond).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 30 May.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr DIXON (Dromana) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr JENKINS (Ballarat West) — I rise to speak on the address-in-reply to the speech given by the Governor at the opening of the 53rd Parliament two days ago. My congratulations to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on re-election to your commission as Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker. I trust you will have another enjoyable term. I also congratulate the Premier and the coalition on their re-election. It was a terrific effort and an

encouraging message from Victoria about where we are going and where we have been over the last term of Parliament. I congratulate new members on both sides on their election to this chamber.

I thank the electors of Ballarat West for their confidence in re-electing me. I thank my electorate team, my wife, my staff and my family for their support.

I take this opportunity to make a few comments on the tragedy of Port Arthur and how that hit the City of Ballarat. Sadly, two of the victims of the Port Arthur shootings were from the Ballarat area. I refer to the late Merv and Mary Howard of Dunnstown. Merv and Mary Howard were two very well-known identities in our community. Merv was well known right throughout the sporting world, especially through football and the Victorian Country Football League, where he was executive secretary; he was very strongly associated with football right throughout Victoria. I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Ballarat community was greatly distressed by the tragedy and the loss of this very popular couple. The tribute paid to them at their funeral was outstanding.

I took the opportunity to visit the Howard's five children, aged between 27 and 18, on the second day after the tragedy, which was something that will always be in my mind and heart. The sadness that came upon that family so suddenly is unique and I do not think any of us can contemplate it.

The Treasurer recently gave his autumn economic statement, which was basically a report on the last term of the Kennett government and the plans for the 53rd Parliament and the new term of the government of Victoria.

I must make a few comments on the past term and what an outstanding term of government it turned out to be because there is no doubt, despite all the pressures and hard decisions that were made and the reaction to those, that Victoria is certainly on the move. That is as a result of great leadership and sound policy.

My electorate and my community — and the area includes Ballarat East, Ballarat West and surrounds — have responded magnificently to the direction given by the Kennett government. As the big ship has now been turned around and is moving forward once again, industry is on the move. When we arrived in government in 1992 industry and commerce were dead and slow, and trade was

dormant. The community was just dawdling along. Once steam was built up in the boilers of the great ship, away we went and we are moving forward. A massive turnaround in confidence has taken place.

The years between 1993 and 1996 will go down in history as the time of the rebirth of our community. We had our gold rush in the early days, and I can assure you that Ballarat is on the move again now. We have recently elected a very good new council and it is moving into top gear to get the amalgamation structure into place and present a united front, and it is working well. I congratulate the mayor and councillors, the executive and the team there on what they are doing for the Ballarat area.

Mr Maclellan — They may up the rates!

Mr JENKINS — Yes, they may up the rates but we will work on that, Minister.

The new economic development board is active and is attracting industry, which I will speak on shortly. The tourism board has been established and we are seeing the results of its promotional efforts as many tourists come into our area to visit Sovereign Hill. Tourism is constantly increasing with local, state, interstate and overseas visitors.

Our new university is flying along and we are looking forward to full cooperation between the university and our community as they move into the technological area through information technology. The previous Kennett government put Ballarat forward as an IT centre and I must report the success of the first stage of that process. The ISSC consortium has established a magnificent new complex at Mount Helen, which is up and running efficiently and is undertaking Vicroads-PTC-government contracts along with contracts throughout Victoria, Australia and Asia. The staff are settling in very well after their relocation. It is most encouraging to see this magnificent new complex alive and alert and operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year as it is processing the data transmitted through high-speed technology. It has been a long haul to obtain the turnaround of the ship. There have been many sacrifices during that time, but the results are on the board.

During its last term the government took up the challenge and the Ballarat electorate appreciated the decisions made by the government. With regard to

the way we are heading in the future, the Governor stated:

The government will strengthen its Rural Victoria 2001 strategy under which all ministers, departments and agencies are required to develop ongoing initiatives that contribute to the future of country Victoria.

Further, he said:

Our technological capacity will draw further development in its own field, as is being evidenced with the growth of the Ballarat Technology Park. This same technology, and the networks which provide its infrastructure, will be used to develop sophisticated international investment promotions for Victoria's world-class food industry for wool, resources and regional manufacturing.

As we face the challenges of the late 1990s and move towards the year 2000 there is no doubt that Ballarat is taking up that challenge and taking it up in a forceful way.

Where does the future of Ballarat lie? It lies in the development of information technology, industrial development, education, health, retail and service industries, goldmining, rural production, including clean food, sound municipal planning and coordination of authorities, tourism, hospitality, and sport.

The Minister for Industry, Science and Technology yesterday announced a \$2 million grant towards the establishment of a business enterprise centre at the new technology park. There are some brilliant companies in Ballarat that are vigorously introducing technology and modern techniques. Those companies are already established in Ballarat and keen to progress. I compliment the university in Ballarat for its help and cooperation in this exciting venture. Ballarat will become the silicone valley of Australia over the next decade, and I look forward to taking part in that interesting development.

An interesting development is being undertaken by Northgate Communications, which will cable the Ballarat area with a high-speed data transmission network. That private company will spend \$20 million on the project. Another company, Bendix, has celebrated its 40th year in Ballarat and is about to establish a new handbrake manufacturing technology that will increase employment by 185 personnel. It is an exciting project and the company will be one of only five manufacturers in the world to use this technology for the automobile industry.

There are other component manufacturers for the automobile industry, including Miric, K & K Fasteners and CMI Consolidated Metal Industries. Those companies are expanding and are flat out trying to keep up with the manufacture of parts.

Another interesting fledgling company which has shown initiative through the policies of the Kennett government is Athlogen, which manufactures massage tables and podiatry chairs. That company is exporting its products overseas as well as for use in Australia. Recently I visited the company and was impressed with the technology it is using. Over the coming years that company will grow into a great one.

Another initiative in the Ballarat area is a company developing low-cost housing for third world countries. It recently negotiated a deal to manufacture 3000 kit homes for the Philippines. The homes are Third World standard, designed to be cyclone and tropical proof. The company is also negotiating for another 10 000 kit homes yet to be manufactured. It is a great opportunity for local initiative and production as well as local employment. I wish the company well in its venture.

A recent announcement by the Premier during the election campaign, after many months of negotiation, is the establishment in Ballarat of a Japanese noodle manufacturer, Hakubaku. Why would a Japanese company come to Ballarat? Because it is the best place to make noodles. Primary industry will have the opportunity to grow products for processing through that plant — such as buckwheat, which is a new product in the Ballarat area. I compliment the Premier on taking time during the election campaign to make that announcement. At almost the same time the Premier was announcing the new developments for Ballarat and the creation of new jobs and new industries, the Leader of the Opposition came to Ballarat and played football.

Another exciting announcement yesterday was the signing of a contract with Libra Holdings to establish a factory at the Ballarat Industrial Park. It took a team effort with my Ballarat colleagues, the Ballarat Economic Development Board, Business Victoria and others to get that established. We got together and attracted Libra Holdings to Ballarat. It is a large international company which currently has four new factories. On Monday last I met with the directors of Libra Holdings and they announced that they will build an additional nine or ten factories. That is exciting for Ballarat. The company will

produce light globes, airconditioners and plastic and building products. Many of those products will be used in Australia and many will be exported. It is pleasing to have companies establishing their manufacturing plants and bringing modern technology to Ballarat. I understand that until now there has been only one light globe manufacturer in Australia, at Newcastle. This new plant will produce modern, fluorescent, long-life, low wattage light bulbs to industrial requirements. Additional factories will be opened.

One of my greatest concerns is that Ballarat will not have enough trained people to fill the jobs over the next two or three years. We must ensure that our training programs are up to scratch because industry demands skilled employees. Why are these companies coming to Ballarat? It is because of our bracing weather, sunshine and, more importantly, because Ballarat has a stable work force. Many employees in Ballarat have been in the same place for 30 to 35 years whereas in some parts of Melbourne employees do not stay in one place for very long.

One initiative of the City of Ballarat over the past three years has been the establishment of an office in Hong Kong, where Mr Wai Man Woo and his wife, Connie, represent Ballarat. Mr Wai Man Woo is an investor and developer in Hong Kong and China who has adopted Ballarat as his Australian base. He has also encouraged 130 business people from Hong Kong, China and other parts of Asia to visit and consider investing in Ballarat in the future; and Libra Holdings managing director, Mr Chan, is one of those 130 businessmen. Ballarat has also enjoyed the support Mr Anthony Go, who is with the Victorian government office in Hong Kong. Anthony has been a great performer for Ballarat and we are now seeing the results of his efforts and those of Mr Wai Man Woo in getting people to establish new factories in Ballarat.

The state is open to encouraging industrial and commercial trade with countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and India. Recently my colleague from Ballarat East and I have been negotiating with an Indian gentleman who is keen to commence trading in the Ballarat area, and his two requirements are dairy products and wool. I am continuing negotiations with him so I suggest that those in the dairy industry should be alert to opportunities for trade with India.

Ballarat is also on the move in education and health, but I will leave discussion of those topics to my colleague the member for Ballarat East. The goldmining industry is undergoing a resurgence in Ballarat, and I can assure the house that another gold boom is about to occur in Victoria.

Retailing services have already responded to the challenges of the Kennett government, and shopping centres and other service industry facilities in Ballarat are being upgraded. It is also encouraging for me to learn that tradespeople are very busy — especially after having left my trade!

Rural production has always been important to Ballarat and much of the land in the area is producing good, clean food for local and overseas consumption. All of these good results have come about through sound municipal economic planning.

Mr Hamilton — You might even get a council one day.

Mr JENKINS — We have a good council: the councillors have been elected and they are already into it.

The good results are a consequence of the tremendous cooperation of the government, and we look forward to that continuing. Another factor attracting investment in Ballarat is the tourism industry's proposal to build a new \$35 million, four or five-star hotel. Ballarat has never had a hotel of that size, but there is obviously now a demand for such a complex. I look forward to the final negotiation of that development.

Sport is also another attraction in Ballarat. We have always had great sporting facilities.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr JENKINS — I assure the member for Morwell, who came from Ballarat, that I will be mentioning the North Ballarat Football Club. I know that he was a footballer and that he was suspended a few times. Ballarat has a strong racing industry as well as being well known for its attraction to the sport of rowing. Lake Wendouree was the venue of the 1956 Olympic rowing events, and that course is still used regularly. Basketball is also a popular sport — it is almost an industry in Ballarat.

Mr Cooper — You're a bit parochial!

Mr JENKINS — I am very parochial. Football is another popular sport, and at this stage I must compliment the North Ballarat Football Club on its success in having a team in the Victorian Football League.

Mr Traynor — Have they won a game?

Mr JENKINS — They've won a couple of games, but I think they were beaten by a team from the Latrobe Valley when they played at Traralgon. I guess they couldn't breathe because of the pollution down there!

North Ballarat Football Club has the most senior and junior teams of any club in Australia, and although it does not have the most supporters in Australia I am sure it is heading in that direction. Nevertheless, it has the largest number of teams, from the juniors right through to the seniors in the VFL. If any member wants to challenge that statement, he should do so now, because we are going to crow about that, particularly as we are known as the Roosters. I wish the North Ballarat Football Club luck as it takes up the challenge of succeeding in the Victorian Football League. I have no need to ask the Minister for Sport, who is at the table, for any funds for their success.

It is also worth noting that Ballarat High School, a government school, is one of two Ballarat schools showing initiatives in sport. The Ballarat High School is responsible for educating two members of this house.

Mr Hamilton — One better than the other.

Mr JENKINS — Yes, and one more educated than the other. The Ballarat High School has become a sporting high school and this year has started a program of excellence in sport. The program developed by the high school will be recognised by other Schools of the Future as a leader in the field.

The other school taking on a similar program is Sebastopol Secondary College, which has the support of the Minister for Education. In the lead-up to the establishment of the Ballarat High School program, both the honourable member for Ballarat East and myself visited schools in Sydney to study how their programs worked. That resulted in the implementation of an outstanding program for the Ballarat High School. So we can look forward to more future sporting champions coming from Ballarat as a result of those initiatives. Of course, we are all very proud of Ballarat's top sportsman, Steve

Moneghetti, who is still making his mark throughout the world based on his success in marathons.

In conclusion I can only say that Ballarat is alive, alert and moving forward with great enthusiasm and gusto. Much of it has to do with the direction taken by the Kennett government in the last Parliament and with the one that is now in place. We look forward to the continuing movement forward of this great state. It is my pleasure to continue to provide service to the electorate of Ballarat West, Ballarat and the state of Victoria.

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I am proud and honoured to have the opportunity to stand here in the Legislative Assembly representing the people of the Mildura electorate. This is not the first time an independent has represented this electorate in its history. It is 40 years since the last true independent, Mr Mutton, rejoined the Labor Party in 1956.

Congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your elevation to the chair, and similarly to the Deputy Speaker.

I am not sure whether being the last of the new members to speak is a good position to be in, but nonetheless the opportunity is well received. I am pleased to have this opportunity to make my first speech during the debate on the motion for the adoption of the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech made at the opening of the 53rd Parliament. In 1993, when I was sworn in as the new shire president for the Shire of Mildura, I had the honour of having His Excellency and Mrs McGarvie present during the formalities. I recall that His Excellency gave one of his excellent spontaneous speeches to conclude the ceremony.

I acknowledge the efforts of my predecessor, Mr Craig Bildstien, in the two terms that he served this Parliament and the Mildura electorate. It is also of some importance that I recognise former parliamentarians, Milton Whiting and Ken Wright. I have always had enormous respect for Milton Whiting, who represented Mildura from 1962 until 1988, a total of nearly 25 years. Equally I acknowledge Ken Wright who represented North Western Province for nearly 20 years until his retirement in 1992. In terms of parliamentary commitment and community involvement those two parliamentary representatives are unparalleled and have been an inspiration to me.

After 26 years service in the police force it was with some regret that I submitted my resignation upon successfully contesting the seat of Mildura. I am sure that my parliamentary colleagues who are likewise former serving members of our state police service would readily recall their own regret at the permanent cessation of duty. Without a doubt Victoria has the best police force in Australia. It is a professional and highly motivated organisation to which some of the finest men and women of this state belong. Those same police professionals will lay down their lives for our respective communities and historically have done so on many occasions.

The Victoria Police Force of 1970, when I joined, was not the same organisation it is today. The undeserving focus on trivial events or mistakes tends to detract from the realities and the overall excellent service given by more than 10 000 members of our state police service. I would do it all again with little change if I were 19 again. I recall the occasion 25 years ago shortly after I joined when I was relegated to the solitary duty of guarding Parliament on a cold winter day. The columns and steps in Spring Street have little to offer during a windswept day, so I am therefore very pleased to have this opportunity to participate inside this forum.

I congratulate the Premier and the Deputy Premier for standing firm and resisting an unnecessary royal commission into the Victoria Police Force. The vociferous clamour by a few fringe elements was not reflective of the true community sentiment. Some of these unelected and unrepresentative groups and individuals appear more interested in promoting anarchy rather than truth and justice. Victims of crime certainly appear to be a low priority or irrelevant to their rantings.

The Mildura electorate is the third largest in Victoria with 26 050 square kilometres. The region extends from the historic Beulah dog fence to Yelta, Lindsay Point, Morkalla and other localities that I am sure you are all familiar with. My electorate has significant diversity of primary industry from dry-land farming, such as wheat, wool, fat lambs, together with irrigated land for production of citrus, dried fruits and wine grapes.

As well as geographic differences there is significant diversity among the people within my electorate. At a recent council restructure information night that difference was well described by an Ouyen farmer and local identity, Mr Michael O'Callaghan, who said, 'We are different here in Ouyen. We have dust

running in our veins whereas in Mildura you have red wine'. Tourism is also an important factor in the lifeblood of my electorate, which contributes significantly to the wealth of Victoria.

I chose to stand for election to the Legislative Assembly because I was dissatisfied with the standard of representation of my predecessor and I have a strong commitment to work for the community. We are fortunate to live in a country where such equality and opportunity still exists.

One unhappy aspect of my journey here was being the subject of a significant and continuing campaign of character assassination and blatant lies by one, Max Thorburn, the owner and editor of the *Mildura Sunday Independent Star*. Max Thorburn is a survivor and not a friend of mine. Unfortunately, he is one of those people who cannot be sued successfully, extorts money from some of his advertisers and can be described as a blackmailer. The Australian Press Council and the Country Press Association seem unable to deal with this person.

What do the people of the Mildura electorate want? They want equity of service and funding to the same extent as our city counterparts. Mildura is one of the most remote and disadvantaged electorates in Victoria. Until Echuca achieves the return of its passenger rail service, Mildura will be the only remote location with railway tracks but no passenger service except Bairnsdale.

In 1988 the retention of the *Vinlander* was an election promise by the former member for Mildura and the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier. The community universally hates the alternative bus service for a number of valid reasons. Country people are not different to city dwellers, and we deserve the same degree of consideration. If a service is withdrawn in the city it is possibly less noticeable than it is in the country because it is absorbed by many more services.

Case mix has not been equitable for the Mildura Base Hospital because it does not take into account the tyranny of distance and the resultant extra costs. It is not acceptable to close wards in country hospitals so that our elderly people are shunted off to die in distant locations such as Ouyen. For example, in March this year an 83-year-old totally and permanently incapacitated veteran, the holder of the Order of Australia, was sent to Ouyen to die and therefore cut off from his elderly wife and family. On the basis of fairness and justice I hope

that good government will address some of these issues.

When I scanned through the interim parliamentary handbook I noted there are some obvious similarities among members of the Legislative Assembly. Service in local government is obviously a common thread and starting point for many members, and many members of the teaching and legal professions are represented. However, a new trend is developing now and the election of former members of the police service may rectify the imbalance of represented professions.

I thank my wife and family and all my friends for making the sacrifices necessary to enable me to take a seat in the Legislative Assembly. I also want to thank the people of the Mildura electorate for placing immense trust in me by electing me as their representative. I shall do my best by working for my electorate with this assembly for the betterment of every Victorian.

Democracy is alive and well and there are some lessons to be learnt by all the parties from my election. Thomas Edison once said, 'If you do half the things you are capable of you will truly amaze yourself'.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you and my parliamentary colleagues for the warm welcome I have received here. I also thank the staff of Parliament for their continued and valued assistance and friendship.

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — Firstly, Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your high elevation to the office of the Speaker. I also congratulate the new members on their election to this house. I look forward to their future contributions to debate.

I will focus my contribution to the address-in-reply debate on the economic development of the state, examining not only information technologies but also the underpinning of this government's so-called economic revival. One of the things I want to question is the idea of a business-like government. The idea of government simply being a business is false and a mystification of its role. Government must be removed from the affairs of business; its role must clearly be separate. Issues of government ethics and probity are important. It is an idea that we need to focus on because it has certainly come to the fore in recent days.

The weakness of much of the government's introduction of so-called economic efficiencies is its focusing on reproducing a small-business mentality because it has been at the cost of the long-term viability of the state. In the past three and a half years the Kennett government has exerted considerable energy in unleashing market forces. In doing so it has sought to deregulate the labour market, privatise public utilities and enforce free market discipline. But in the so-called process of returning to the market there has been a loss of the notion of citizenship — that is, what is important to our social wellbeing. The effects of that will be reflected in the state's long-term economic performance. What we may gain from the introduction of short-term efficiencies we will lose as a result of the long-term effects on the efficiency and viability of the economy.

The government's attacks on community and citizenship have included its budget cutbacks, its closures of schools and hospitals, and the way it has treated local government. The government has undermined the very notions of community and civic tradition that have been so highly regarded in this state. It is no coincidence that the areas in which there were significant swings against the government in the recent election included country Victoria and the established suburbs of Melbourne, where there is a strong sense of community and civic participation. There were much weaker performances in areas near the city's periphery, where notions of community are still weak and still to be established.

The unleashing of market forces by itself does not necessarily contribute to a stronger economy in the longer term, and, more importantly, it can also deeply divide society. That not only worsens social problems but also increases the likelihood of an underperforming economy. If we are to build an effective and educated society, which the Governor referred to in his speech, we need to be more inclusive. We have to combine the ideas of competition and cooperation.

There is certainly a great deal of evidence around the world to show that a combination of competition and cooperation is an important element of the fabric of well-performing economies. Recently I read a book by Robert Putnam — *Making Democracy Work* — that is an empirical study of what he calls civic community. He selected well-performing economies and identified the reasons for their success. Not surprisingly he found that one of the things which is fundamental to their economic

performance is a strong sense of civic pride and community participation. To have a functioning economy people need a healthy level of trust and cooperation. In a sense we should already know that. We cannot have a market economy in which buyers and sellers cannot trust each other and cannot trust the transactions they make.

Trust and cooperation are important, regardless of which way you frame your economic analysis. Given the research work that is being undertaken at the moment it is obvious that they are a fundamental part of a strong economy. However, state and federal Liberal governments want to attack the labour market. They want to make people feel insecure. They want to force people onto contracts, create job losses, put pressure on families and local networks, cause social destruction and attack the community. That is fundamental not only to the deregulation of the labour market but also to the overall way in which cuts in government expenditure have been enacted.

Today unemployment is no longer the only major measure of social inequality. There has been an enormous increase in part-time and casual work and contract and temporary labour. The industrial relations moves that have been made by the Victorian government — the federal coalition has foreshadowed similar changes — have contributed to increases in inequality, which has harmed workers who are not protected.

Britain has gone through a long period of what has become known as Thatcherism, and in that country there is now talk of a 30-30-40 society. The first 30 per cent are the long-term unemployed, the people on the margins who cannot get jobs. The Labor Party believes governments have a role to play in bringing those people back into the work force, yet we recently heard that the federal coalition government wants to cut programs designed to get those people back to work.

The second 30 per cent consists of people who, although they are employed, are structurally insecure; they are the people who live off part-time, temporary, and casual work. The so-called reforms to industrial relations and the deregulation of the labour market have created that 30 per cent. When we think about that in gender terms we realise that there are significantly more women than men in that category — and the same is true of certain ethnic groups. We are creating a society in which people are extraordinarily insecure and unable to make long-term investments — such as buying homes or

household goods. That has undermined and continues to undermine important sectors of our economy, the most obvious of which are housing and construction.

The 40 per cent category comprises people who have jobs and who enjoy some level of economic certainty. They are a minority, but a significant minority nevertheless. Increasingly we are seeing governments that want to play up to that minority, putting the people in the other categories at risk.

What are the risks in a 30-30-40 society? First of all, the bottom 30 per cent are marginalised and excluded; they do not and cannot become part of the civic society because they are on the fringes. When you have a government that is not committed to bringing them back into regular work, the only future they have is one of complete marginalisation. No wonder increasing numbers of young people are turning to drugs or having problems with living, not just for the future but for today. Young people fear for the future because they do not have much hope. Governments must play a role in creating in our young a sense of the future.

What happens to the insecure 30 per cent, those who are increasingly affected by the changes in industrial relations, which will deny them the protection enjoyed by full-time workers? What happens to those who have been affected by contracting out and the compulsory competitive tendering we have in local government?

Firstly, they are bad for the economy because they cannot spend money on long-term investments. They provide savings for the particular companies that employ them, but they actually undermine the overall economy. The justification for contracting out and deregulating the labour market is that it improves efficiency. The argument is that it is efficient for firms to cut costs, to privatise welfare, and to smash union power and therefore smash the capacity of unions to protect workers' rights. Yet all that does is heighten people's sense of insecurity, their sense of risk and their sense of uncertainty. It also undermines our economic viability — in fact, it leads to an underperforming economy. It also leads to firms making some fundamental mistakes such as we have seen in the United States. During the 1980s many firms shed their skilled workers, and they are now being forced to re-employ many of those workers.

Downsizing and contracting out reduces investment in the work force, increases inefficiency and reduces

the government tax base. As the number of marginally employed increases, the economy contracts, firstly because the employment of part-time labor or temporary staff reduces the tax base, and secondly because people have no desire to purchase consumer items or make long-term commitments, which creates a downward cycle in demand.

We are already seeing the consequences of those policies in the United States, which commenced the process of downsizing before Australia. Many firms in the US are now reinvesting in the labor market to develop their skill base or are spending more on infrastructure developments. The supposed economic gains of the Reagan period, when the bureaucracy and private firms shed labour by the millions, are illusory.

The housing and construction sectors need people to commit themselves to long-term investments such as mortgages. Those industries are being affected by the increased uncertainty caused by the economic and industrial relations practices of the Liberal government. The black and cash economies will increase and more people will become reliant on social security benefits.

The Labor Party must oppose the development of the 30-30-40 type society that I described before, where more people are on the margin of society facing increasing uncertainty for their future while a significant minority benefit. This process has developed because of the policies of the government and the globalisation of the Australian economy through the demands of world competition. Nevertheless, on the basis of equity, social justice and the economic performance of this nation, we should oppose it.

Robert Putnam found that economic performance was strongest in regions where there were strong links between cooperation and competition. That should not surprise us at all. The United States philosopher, Kenneth Arrow, has argued that virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust and certainty, just as any transaction conducted over a period of time. It can be plausibly argued that much of the economic backwardness in the world can be explained by the lack of mutual confidence. It is important to think of trust in terms of ensuring cooperation. Robert Putnam believed it was something we should invest in or develop in the community through networks and social relationships. It is not something that just occurs, it is created over time.

Many country members know the level of trust existing in country communities and they also know that the trust has been damaged during the past few years, perhaps because a school or hospital has been closed, or local councillors have been sacked with no explanation. People feel they have lost power or are not in control of their communities. That feeling pervades most of Victoria and is a reason for the lack of cooperation and trust — it is undermining the nation.

People accept public policy and the economic blitzkrieg of the right partly because of their knowledge of economics. We are dealing with the economic man in competition in the market place — people are prepared to cut each other's throats. That notion undermines trust and cooperation, which is fundamental in the economic performance of the country.

I refer now to the developments in information technology or the digital revolution to which the Governor referred. I have a keen interest in this area because I am the opposition's spokesman for multimedia. Many years ago computers were stored in multi-story buildings. They were huge and were worth millions of dollars. Today I have on my desk in my office an extremely small and far cheaper computer. This revolution has no parallels in modern society and has been driven by competition. The competitive nature of the industry has driven down prices and increased the power of computers.

The computer industry has developed so quickly because of the trust and cooperation that exists in the industry. I use the example of the Internet, which was established by the United States Department of Defence to link its super computers. It wanted to ensure that if a nuclear war occurred its computer system would still be intact. The defence department allowed universities to tap into the system to spread the information system. It meant there was not one central computer storing all the strategic information; it was spread throughout the country. This system worked only with the cooperation of the community. More people were allowed to join the network to allow the enormous cost of the program to be spread among the private and public sectors. This system can now be used at nominal cost to the community. To keep driving the digital revolution we need cooperation and we need to accept that we can learn from each other. This competition along with cooperation will drive innovation and change.

I was pleased to hear the Governor say that the government will invest in information technology

and network systems. The government has done a good job in this area. The Victorian network project is world class; the networks in schools are world class. These developments are not only important to our economic performance but enable communities to feel empowered. Increasingly we are dealing with people's ability to be empowered by the information they can obtain. It is a test of governments — the Kennett government and the opposition — to ensure the community has access to policies that underpin these networks and encourage freedom of information.

The United States of America is well advanced in the level of information that is made available, and would be concerned about the scrutiny of governments. The Victorian government has yet to allow the network to be fully scrutinised to achieve the full potential of the Internet.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Richardson) — Order! The honourable member for Coburg will have an opportunity to continue his remarks when the matter is next before the Chair.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

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

The SPEAKER — I advise the house that I have given permission for still photographs to be taken from the press gallery during question time today. No additional lighting or flashlights will be used.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I refer to the Premier's comment on 3AW yesterday when he said he was offered a prospectus to invest in the Guangdong Corporation. Who made this offer and when was it made?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I can't remember the actual date on which it was made. I think I indicated to the house yesterday or the day before that I had, to the best of my memory, two meetings with the people from Sino Securities. The first one was an initial meeting to see whether I would meet with the people from Guangdong Corporation when they came to Melbourne at a later date when the shares were listed, at which stage I said yes. At some stage between the two, after the first, I got the prospectus.

I can't remember on which date I got it, but I think it came from Mr Li, who I think is the chief executive officer of Sino.

Carers strategy

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — Will the Premier outline to the house the steps being taken by the government to implement the Victorian strategy for carers, which is a great initiative in its second term of office?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — One of the great social challenges of this period, not only for the next 4 years but probably the next 20, is the way the community in Victoria and around Australia will come to grips with the large number of people in society who have been looking after people with disabilities all their lives. These are invariably family members — sometimes their children — who as carers are reaching the age where they are no longer able to look after those they have been caring for for the majority of their lives.

There are estimated to be some thousands of these people. They look after people with not only physical but also mental disabilities. The government has decided — and it announced this during the election campaign — to try to run a consistent program over the next four years to give such people some relief so that they can enjoy a period of comfort themselves. That relief can take place in two ways: firstly, the caring parent or family member can place the person who needs the assistance in a respite home; or secondly, the community can provide people to move into the family home to care for the individual in his or her own environment. It also involves the government reviewing the practices in place at the moment to find out in what other ways it can assist.

The government has provided \$25 million for each of the next four years for this program; that is on top of the money that is already provided. Quite a number of programs are currently in place. I believe the program we announced about eight weeks ago is a real and positive initiative to assist many members of the community who are themselves ageing and are simply not able to look after people who are in need of help.

The program will be put into place as soon as possible. It will be the result of consultation with various interest groups. As I said, it will involve \$100 million. If we can develop programs that are of value there is no reason why those programs will

not continue beyond the end of this four-year trial period.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I refer the Premier to his statement that there is no conflict of interest in the purchase of shares in his wife's name in the Guangdong Corporation. Why does the Premier believe that is so, given that the shares were purchased with the assistance of Mr Bruce Mathieson at the same time as the government was making major decisions about the gambling industry in this state?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — As I said yesterday, I welcome the honourable member to the Parliament because he continues a long run of contributions by politicians on the Labor side who, firstly, get the facts wrong and, secondly, act in a way that indicates that the party of which the honourable member is a member is absolutely devoid of policy.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — What did Pete Steedman say about him?

Mrs Wilson — Who gives a continental?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — The honourable member for Niddrie is wrong in saying that I got the shares through Mr Mathieson. I did not.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — There was no assistance. I responded to a prospectus — and that has been put on the public record on a number of occasions over the past few days. In terms of there being no conflict of interest, if you look at the register of interests requirements you will see that it is not required.

Electricity industry: privatisation

Mr SPRY (Bellarine) — Will the Treasurer inform the house of the impact on the budget of the government's electricity privatisation program and its distribution sector on state debt?

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — I thank the honourable member for his question because I know he and other government members share an interest

in seeing Victoria's finances resurrected from the disastrous legacy of the Labor years.

It was suggested when the government commenced its electricity privatisation program that the sale prices would be insufficient to generate public sector benefits that would offset the loss of dividends from the companies that were privatised.

Indeed, in the so-called financial management key principles statement delivered to the Victorian ALP state conference on 15 October 1994, the Honourable Theo Theophanous from the other place said:

... it is highly unlikely that the state government will receive a sufficient price directly from the sale of state-owned enterprises to offset the reduction in dividends which those enterprises currently pay or are expected to provide in future years to the state.

Indeed, he was not alone in that belief because on 9 February 1995 the Leader of the Opposition said:

... the dividend, which is, as I said, \$300 million, next year even more, and without that \$300 million, there will have to be cuts to spending programs in schools, hospitals, police ... if the government doesn't want to cut spending in those areas, it will have to put up other taxes ...

Yesterday we saw the budget judgment on those predictions. Far from making cuts in spending, the government has actually delivered significant improvements in the delivery of services and the resourcing of service delivery to the people of Victoria. Far from increasing taxes, we have begun the process of winding back taxes to remove Victoria from the status of highest-taxing state in Australia which Labor put it into. Far from not offsetting the dividends, we have given a careful documenting in yesterday's autumn economic statement of the net benefit to the budget sector.

After the sale of just one generating company and the distribution sector, the net benefit to the state budget is \$103 million in the current year, 1995-96, but next year when we get the full-year effect of that the net benefit after the replacement of dividends will be \$473 million.

We know the Leader of the Opposition has cursed himself with the honourable member for Williamstown as his economic and financial adviser — a man who was an adviser to the Cain and Kirner governments. We know what sort of advice he gave them. We can read that in the history

of Victoria as the very nadir of Victoria's financial performance. Yet the Leader of the Opposition has welcomed him as this new, fresh, Guilty Party face. Not only did the Labor Party put him into Parliament as a reward for the sound advice he gave the Labor Party, but he has now been elevated to have direct responsibility —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer is straying from the question.

Mr STOCKDALE — He has now been elevated to have direct responsibility, and in case he is the economic illiterate that the record would suggest, I refer him to page 117 of yesterday's autumn economic statement, which carefully documents the net benefit to the state and how it was arrived at.

As a member of the government with the ambition of continuing to serve the people for a long time, I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition because not only is he our greatest asset but he has made sure — by putting what the Guilty Party would do if it were ever put back in charge of the state's finances — that we will be secure here.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — In light of the advice dated 13 September 1993 from Sino Securities International Ltd to the Australian Stock Exchange that the directors of Guangdong Corporation would be unlikely to accept any further applications for shares, how does the Premier explain that an application for shares in his wife's name was received, processed and accepted after this date; and indeed, is it not a fact that the only reason this occurred was because of the influence exerted by the Premier's friend and gaming machine king, Bruce Mathieson?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — As I said earlier, I welcome the new thrower of mud to the Labor Party's frontbench. These were the tactics employed so unsuccessfully by the former member of the other place, David White, in the past three and a half years but overwhelmingly rejected by the public because it was clearly indicated that the people of Victoria were more interested in results and, obviously, policies that provide for their future.

I can only suggest to the honourable member who has made these wild allegations that he ought to take it up with Sino Securities rather than with me. After the prospectus was filled in and sent in, it was for that company to handle, and the honourable

member's allegations of interference by anyone else is, like most of his other questions today, ill formed and incorrect.

Koori Heritage Trust

Mr LEAN (Carrum) — Will the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs inform the house of the government's level of commitment to the operations and development of the Koori Heritage Trust?

Mrs HENDERSON (Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs) — I thank the honourable member for his question about a very important Aboriginal organisation in Victoria. The Koori Heritage Trust collects, maintains and exhibits Victorian Aboriginal cultural items. The heritage trust has a very important collection of more than 30 000 items. These indigenous cultural materials are unique. Many of those artefacts have been repatriated from overseas. The trust also aims to promote and educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people about Koori culture. It certainly gives a wonderful opportunity for the Koori community to embrace, learn and teach their own culture to other people. Recently I had the privilege of visiting the trust's collection at Museum Victoria. I was very surprised at the breadth of the collection which is stored in every nook and cranny at Museum Victoria.

The Koori Heritage Trust level of accommodation has been unsatisfactory for quite a long time. As others do, I believe it is important that the trust's collection be housed in an appropriate place — preferably in the central business district of Melbourne. Therefore, the Victorian government has provided grant funding to the trust of just over \$1 million to purchase a very important building in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, which will allow the trust to operate and develop the centre there. An additional \$1 million has been approved for the refurbishment of this building. That work will start shortly.

I had the pleasure of visiting the new building, which has enormous potential because it is a magnificent property. The purchase will allow the trust to move its administration and research facilities into the new building and develop a new cultural education centre, and will provide it with temporary and permanent exhibition space, an art studio, storage facilities which are appropriate for this fine collection, and a resource centre and retail outlet.

This purchase in Lonsdale Street will be most important in promoting Victoria's cultural heritage to the wider community. It will give the Koori Heritage Trust a great opportunity to be involved in mainstream tourism and will attract many visitors from overseas and within Australia to this significant development. It will give us a first-class cultural heritage centre for Melbourne. It is very important that it be run and operated by the Aboriginal community.

This is an appropriate time to put on record my tribute to the previous minister, the honourable member for Bendigo East, for the work he has done in this area.

Guangdong Corporation: government shareholdings

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I refer the Premier to his comments in the house yesterday that the government does not have any dealings with the Guangdong Corporation and to the fact that the Victorian Superannuation Fund and the Workcover Authority both have large shareholdings in the Guangdong Corporation. Why did the Premier not tell the truth about this matter yesterday?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — Mr Speaker, it is true that the Victorian Superannuation Board and the Workcover Authority do have shares in Guangdong Corporation. I think my answer yesterday was that the government doesn't do business with Guangdong Corporation. I think they were the actual words I used. You can check it out — you may have changed them to suit your argument here today!

It is very much the same circumstance, as both those authorities have a very large share portfolio. What the board normally does is set guidelines and appoint an investment committee. The investment committee then appoints fund managers and the fund managers go out and fill their requirements based on a balance of shares.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KENNETT — Yes, I do have detailed knowledge because we knew that this question was coming, thank you very much.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — You're so predictable. It just shows a basic misunderstanding by the honourable

member of how these things work. If a person has shares in BHP — if it were the honourable member's mother — she does not herself do business with the company; she doesn't enter into contracts; and she cannot influence their policy and change it. In the same way, we here in government do not involve ourselves in the purchase of shares, and the very fact that these two organisations have a position in these particular companies does not mean that they do business with Guangdong Corporation.

That happens to be the reality of the situation. It is still true, as I said yesterday, that the government doesn't do business with Guangdong Corporation.

Mr Brumby interjected.

Mr KENNETT — The Leader of the Opposition, who is obviously a bit like Kim Beazley, a bit at sea in this period of opposition and looking around for someone else to lead the party, asks have I spoken to the funds. Which funds do you mean?

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier to ignore the interjection.

Mr KENNETT — The super fund? The answer is no. Is there anything else you'd like to ask?

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr KENNETT — This man goes gibber, gibber, gibber and now asks the question over the table did I give them any advice. I have no relationship with any of the super funds except for a period of time when I was on the parliamentary super fund as Leader of the Opposition, but since then have not been involved with any, and certainly neither a government nor a minister gives any advice to any fund based on their investment portfolio.

Whether you come to grips with government and start to understand it — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT — The honourable member and the Leader of the Opposition have something in common — they both lost their seats in the federal Parliament because they were deemed by the electorate to have passed their use-by date. Both of you failed, and you will continue to fail here. You have got nothing to offer unless you can start to show the people of Victoria that you are about policy, rather than continuing to direct all of your attention to personalities.

Port of Geelong: sale

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — Will the Treasurer outline to the house the benefits to the Geelong region and Victoria in general of the recent sale of the port of Geelong?

Mr STOCKDALE (Treasurer) — Last week the government was able to announce the most recent success in its privatisation program in getting better commercial discipline into both the operation and, particularly, the ongoing development of Victoria's ports.

Following a highly successful privatisation of the port of Portland, where a local transport operator and a major international infrastructure fund acquired the port, giving it both expertise in port operations and access to capital coupled with a proven track record in the region, the port of Geelong has now been sold to another majority Australian-owned joint venture. In this case the joint venture consists of the major transport operator TNT Australia and Infrastructure Investment Corporation — another infrastructure investment fund, not related to the stakeholder in Portland — which hold 30 per cent and 70 per cent respectively. The day-to-day operation of the port will be conducted by TNT.

There could scarcely be better news for Geelong than the tremendously important developments in the port of Geelong. Geelong is the gateway to Victoria's Western District, a massive producer on an internationally efficient scale, a manufacturing centre in its own right and, potentially, an adjunct to the transport hub, with effective road and rail connections through Melbourne. To have TNT invested with the incentive to actually make Geelong a major transport hub is tremendous news for the local regional economy. This development reflects the modern trends in transport, such as vertical integration in ownership, as in this case, integration of transport modes, close cooperation and the development of door-to-door delivery capacity, which is one of the keys in making modern transport really effective.

The port of Geelong has suffered for a long time in the shadow of the port of Melbourne. Indeed, during its period in office the Labor Party actually brought the ports together, and at one stage proposed to bring them together into a single entity, so that all of Victoria's ports would be under the vested interests of the port of Melbourne.

It has always been in the interests of the Victorian economy, and particularly in the interests of the exporters and importers who use the ports, that there should be strong competition across Victoria's ports to maximise the effectiveness of investment and development and to give the ports a real incentive to provide better service for the users of those ports.

Having an aggressive firm like TNT come in with a clear financial and business incentive to make a success of the port of Geelong is not only tremendous news for the regional economy but great news for exporters and importers right across Victoria, because the direct benefit in Geelong is only part of the story.

The fact that we now have two aggressive and proven operators running the two regional ports puts pressure on not only the port of Melbourne but also other Australian ports. As the ports are progressively connected by upgraded road infrastructure, complemented in Melbourne by the City Link project, and linked by the National Rail Freight Corporation, the costs of land bridging goods between ports and between major population centres will be reduced, thereby ensuring that Geelong and Portland will be in a very good position to compete with Melbourne and the other major ports around the country.

This privatisation is also important because in common with many, many other areas of government activity it demonstrates the Kennett government's capacity to work constructively with unions. At the very time when the Maritime Union of Australia was torpedoing the privatisation plans of ANL, this government was negotiating with the union an effective memorandum of understanding, which not only committed the union to the privatisation of the port but actually harnessed its efforts to work positively to capture the benefits of reforms for the general public interest. There is in place an effective regulatory regime, with 22 per cent reductions in port charges locked in through a pricing order through to 2000. Together with a deepening of the channel, that represents the opening of a whole new era in the development of the Geelong regional economy and the western region of Victoria.

This is extremely good news. I compliment all the local members on the government side who have taken such a positive attitude in pointing out the benefits of these developments for the Geelong community. I cannot include the honourable

member for Geelong North in that, because he has engaged in the usual carping criticisms, showing yet again that the Labor Party is unable to comprehend the massive opportunities this reform opens up for his area. I think he serves his electorate very badly indeed in not pointing out to people in Geelong that this is a brand new era, with a new dynamic operator driving one of the major assets in the regional economy. It is very good news for Geelong.

Premier: pecuniary interests

Mr HULLS (Niddrie) — I refer the Premier to comments made by Mr Bruce Mathieson on the *Today Tonight* show that he has never in his life approached the Premier or had any discussions with him in relation to shares. I refer also to the letter the Premier faxed to Channel 7 on Monday afternoon in which he states that Bruce Mathieson approached him in 1993 about the public float of the Guangdong Corporation. Who is telling the truth, the Premier or Mr Mathieson?

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — You are really having a bit of trouble reaching into the barrel now, aren't you? What a stupid question! I have said over the past two or three days and I said again in the house today that the first contact we had about this matter was some time in September or thereabouts and that we followed up when the company came to Melbourne to list. That stands on the public record and remains the case.

In respect of any query you may have about Mr Mathieson, I suggest that you ask him directly. And if you cannot approach him and speak to him, do as Channel 7 did — go to Duttons and falsify the reason you want a car so you can position that vehicle for or against the story you are running. Unfortunately much of the conduct of Channel 7 has displayed in putting this story to air has not been honest. I can only suggest to the honourable member that if he has any queries at all he ought to take them up with the person who made the comments he is querying.

Mr Hulls interjected.

Mr KENNETT — Through you, Mr Speaker, I say to the honourable member for Niddrie that he is asking me about a comment Mr Mathieson made. If he is asking —

Honourable members interjecting.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

210

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like interjections from my left to cease, otherwise I will go to the next question.

Mr Micallef interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Springvale should know by now that he does not speak when the Speaker is on his feet.

Mr Micallef — Sorry.

The SPEAKER — Order! Not even to say sorry. Some people are slow learners.

Mr KENNETT — As I was saying, the question was about comments I have made, and I have explained that. The honourable member for Niddrie has asked me a question about answers Mr Mathieson gave. I cannot answer those and I cannot say anything further. I suggest that the honourable member go to the person who provided those words.

Police and court complex, Sunshine

Mr TRAYNOR (Ballarat East) — Will the Minister for Police and Emergency Services inform the house about the future of the police station and court complex at Sunshine?

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the honourable member for Ballarat East for his question and congratulate him on a great win by a margin of 27 votes! Magnificent! Of course, the honourable member has long had an active role in and been a strong supporter of the Victoria Police Force. He has a specific interest in making sure the facilities for police around the state are up to the mark.

Yesterday morning the Attorney-General and I went to Sunshine to make the announcement about the new 24-hour police station and court complex which will be built there over the next three years at a cost of some \$23.4 million. As a matter of interest I checked the department's files and found that requests for a new complex have been made since 1983. Even though Labor was in government for the next nine years the complex never became a reality for the people of the western suburbs. One would have thought the former Labor government would have made sure it provided appropriate facilities for not only the police and court personnel but also the constituents.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr W. D. McGRATH — Don't worry about the past four years, what about the nine years of Labor? Don't come here barking about the previous four years; we are talking about the present. Honourable members may have read in the May economic statement that over the next three years some \$63.4 million will be allocated to the justice portfolio, \$11.7 million of which will be spent in the 1996-97 financial year. I have told the Brimbank municipality, which is the major municipality in the area, that it may assist with the selection and purchase of the site in the 1996-97 financial year. The site for the complex should be the most appropriate, with the best services.

This is a significant breakthrough. I know Danny Walsh, the Secretary of the Police Association of Victoria, is delighted that the project is forthcoming, and that police personnel are very relieved the government is taking a pro-active role in ensuring police and court complexes in the western areas of metropolitan Melbourne provide the best and most efficient means of dispensing justice in that area.

The court complex, which falls within the jurisdiction of the Attorney-General, will contain six Magistrates Courts, two Children's Court courtrooms, a Sheriff's office and a community corrections office. We anticipate it will be constructed over a three-year period, and will be completed toward the end of 1999.

This initiative is undoubtedly an enormous breakthrough. After a wait of nine years without any recognition by the former Labor administration the facility will be made available by the coalition government, which takes the interests of all Victorians into consideration. I might say that very little representation from local members was noted in the files on requests for this facility.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr DIXON (Dromana) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I return to the issue of the Internet and the government's commitment to it. Vicnet and other initiatives taken by this government have effectively made available the basic infrastructure for the Internet.

However, I have some concerns and I think we can learn from the United States, the leader in freedom of information, on the type of information available on the Internet, particularly that which allows greater scrutiny of government activities and public authorities. For example, many contracts between public and private entities in Victoria are subject to commercial-in-confidence regulations, yet they are made available. So contracts are made available in Victoria — we cannot get our hands on them, but they are available on the Internet.

Contracts for the privatisation of electricity utilities are available at the Securities Exchange Commission in the United States because under American corporate law those sorts of contracts have to be registered in the interests of shareholders so they can scrutinise the dealings of large companies.

Parallels can also be found within the American government administration — key documents are made available for scrutiny, and are available on the Internet.

The United States is ahead of other countries in this matter. I believe this house should think about the issue of what we make available and how we make it available and allow for greater scrutiny. We now have the potential to do that in a way that has not been possible before; it is there, and we should not hide behind issues of commercial in confidence when we are dealing with the propriety of government or the potential influence of conflict of interest. That information should be readily available.

It is also in the area of the digital or information revolution that we can talk about the importance of cooperation and competition. As I pointed out earlier, the reason we now have such a revolution is competition and the fact that a number of companies internationally, particularly in the United States, have driven prices down and have increased the performance of information technologies.

At the same time, the issue of cooperation really comes to the fore, for a number of reasons: one is that the very nature of the Internet is based on cooperation; but cooperation is also important in the whole sense of where innovation has occurred and how it occurs, and the ability to get information and disseminate it.

With the government's commitment to information technology, we can look at the move in this direction in terms of job growth not only in new multimedia

industries but also in existing industries. In my electorate, where we have a significant printing industry and a significant clothing industry, the industries are increasingly — —

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr CARLI — We still maintain a significant clothing industry. It is now internationalised and is involved not only in my electorate but overseas — and that is made possible by information technologies. We are also involved in important design work for the products. While it is constrained by the number of employees, the industry is certainly world-class and able to export in a number of areas.

The major national training college for the industry, the Melbourne College of Textiles, is also located in my electorate. In the past few years there has been a rapid move towards the use of information technology throughout the whole college, particularly in the design elements.

So basically the move towards job growth and innovation through multimedia is not only about new industries but also its effect and impact on existing industries.

Another important point related to the impact of government cutbacks on the community is that the Internet and information technology will allow us to strengthen community networks. It is now possible to make the technology more readily accessible and drive up the skill level in the community, to use it as a way of creating networks of another type, but certainly ones that can be based very much on a defined location. The technology hit us initially as giving us the capacity to make contacts internationally or nationally, but I think its capabilities are increasingly being driven home along the lines of the possibility of improving the interrelationship of locations, the information that moves in those locations, and the understandings — encouraging people to basically be more involved and to have a higher sense of civic community participation. So the capacity is there to use it as a model of communication — as a way of improving democracy in a fundamental way.

The capacity is there and it should be exploited. It is really a question of: are we serious about it? The seriousness really is a question of getting it straight — not only how we ensure broad access to the technology but also how we ensure that the quality of the information that is made available,

particularly the information that is made available from public institutions, is there and is of a certain quality, not only for issues of scrutiny but also in terms of basic movements of information and participation.

So in that area of activity, which was certainly a major aspect of the Governor's speech, there is enormous capacity to drive change, improvements and innovation, not only in terms of job growth but also in terms of the general sense of the community and civiness of society.

It is very much a question of cooperation and trust. I think it is an issue which will test this house and which will certainly test the government on whether it is sincere in making all that possible.

The reason I want to put that on record is that it seems to me that, given our experience of the past three and a half years of the coalition government, the emphasis has been very much on the market and on neo-Liberal economics. Basically the emphasis has been that social welfare, or welfare, or general good can result only from the interplay of supply and demand. It is a very simple and basic level — and I think a very flawed level — to understand the functions of an economy, which is not to say that the markets are not important and that competition is not important, but certainly there are other elements that make an economy work, which are social and cultural.

The emphasis has been on issues of deregulation, privatisation, attacks on unions or the power of unions, and attacks on the community sector — on churches and on critics of this government, basically the very elements that we should be empowering. But we have seen the government assault or attack those constituencies. So for the past three and a half years we have seen the government committed to undermining the very things we need to use to develop trust and cooperation, on the basis of trying to emphasise market forces.

Now we have to, not so much confront issues of the market and the crudity of that neoclassical model, but talk about how we ensure long-term successful economic performance. It seems to me that is only possible by maintaining a genuine commitment to social cohesion and a very much inclusive society. So rather than seeing ourselves as a society of forcing people onto the margins, forcing them onto starvation wages, forcing them onto welfare or forcing them for cash money, we are looking at a much more inclusive society — if you like, a

shareholders' society in which people can genuinely believe that they have a part and a role in that society. Certainly information technology has an element of that, but it is about the broad thrust of government policies. It really is a question about going beyond issues of this great affection for and obsession with the private sector, self-regulation and voluntarism and going back to the ideas of building up cooperation and trust through our social institutions. It is really about respecting the institutions in society, strengthening those institutions in the various ways possible and taking them seriously so there actually is a dialogue and we do return to a pluralist model of society in which the various elements can interact and negotiate. It is not simply about governments with a supposed mandate dictating from the top their ideas of the future. It is about an inclusive society, a participatory society and a society that really does emphasise social cohesion.

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

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — In joining this debate I congratulate the Speaker on his election to that very important role, and also you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your re-election to the task of being Deputy Speaker of this house. I wish you both well over the next four years. I will do whatever I can to cooperate with both of you within the bounds of my capacity, which sometimes gets badly stretched, as you would be aware.

I also pass on my regards and those of my electorate to His Excellency the Governor and say to him and to his wife, Mrs McGarvie, that my electorate certainly appreciates the excellent job they do as representatives of Her Majesty in Victoria. Any time the Governor and Mrs McGarvie wish to visit Mornington and the Mornington Peninsula they will be made most welcome in our part of Victoria.

Before I commence I will make a brief comment regarding the contribution to this debate by the honourable member for Coburg. I listened to his remarks, particularly with regard to the work of this government on computers and the onset of new technology. I am sure all government members appreciated his comments, particularly regarding the work the government has done over the last three years or so in dealing with new technology.

As I said to the honourable member when the sitting was suspended for lunch, it would not really matter who had been in government over the last three

years or so — whether it was Labor, Liberal or the coalition — whoever it was would have been put in the situation of having to deal with new technology. It just happens to be a task that this government had placed in front of it, and I hope the government has done the job well. I believe it has so far, and I support the honourable member and I believe he is quite right when he says the challenge for the government in the future is quite extraordinary, as technology marches forward at an enormous pace.

The challenge will be there for all members of this house, regardless of their political party, to ensure that we help the process along because if we do not we will be putting this state on the back foot. No matter how partisan we are on many issues, on this issue partisanship needs to be put to one side and we should all be doing what is best for our state and, in doing that, what is best for Australia.

With regard to the state election, and in particular what happened in the electorate of Mornington, I am delighted to report to the house that on 30 March, quite obviously, I was returned to this place. I am also delighted to be able to report that although there was, I suppose understandably, a swing against the government of an average of somewhere in the order of 3.8 per cent around the state, the swing against me was considerably less. My primary vote declined by the very small figure of 0.5 per cent, so I am rather pleased at the result and very happy that the people of my electorate continue to support me strongly.

I am sure all honourable members have examined the results in their electorates and are looking for answers as to what happened in particular polling booths and so on. I am coming to terms with the fact that in polling booths in my electorate those four or five booths which have traditionally given stronger support to the Labor Party — Crib Point, Bittern, Hastings, West Park and Tanti Park — returned significant swings to the Liberal Party of the order of 8 to 12 per cent.

I have to say that I am quite willing to claim the credit for those swings because my campaign team and I put a significant amount of work into those areas. However, perhaps the answer is not quite as simple or personally acceptable as that. It might well be that the people in those areas responded to the excellent campaign mounted statewide by the Liberal Party and by the Premier, Mr Kennett, and also passed judgment upon the campaign of the Labor Party, and particularly the performance of the Leader of the Opposition.

It is important for every honourable member to reflect upon the results in their own particular electorates, but in my electorate I am heartened by the fact that areas that might once have been considered to be strongly pro-Labor and certainly blue collar in their definition have swung to the Liberal Party in considerable numbers, and I am looking forward to continuing support in those areas.

I suggest to the Labor Party that if it wants to do better in Mornington — or should I say if it even wants to continue trying because it will be a waste of time if it does — it might think about selecting candidates who have some kind of contact with the electorate and some ability to campaign sensibly.

An Honourable Member — Which faction does that?

Mr COOPER — I am not sure, but whoever was in my electorate didn't do it very well.

I would also like to thank my campaign team. In particular I thank the following: my electorate chairman, Jeff Tully; my campaign director for the third time, John Howard — not the Prime Minister; Ron Harrison, my campaign Treasurer; Jan Shepherd, my electorate secretary; and the presidents of my very strong and active branches throughout the electorate.

In addition, I would like to thank all of the branch members and all the Liberal Party supporters who came out in their numbers to man polling booths, doorknock and do all of the work that is so necessary in a campaign. I also thank very much a number of people who phoned me, describing themselves as traditional Labor voters living in my electorate, and who turned up to hand out how-to-vote cards for me. I thank them because obviously they had originally made a choice as to which party they supported, but they said there was no way they could support what they described as a shambles of an opposition.

I also thank my upper house colleague, one of the members for South Eastern Province, Ken Smith, who was re-elected with an increased majority. Ken is now the upper house whip for the government, and he'll do an excellent job in that position. His next eight years in this Parliament will be vigorous ones as he works not only for Parliament but also for the betterment of the province he represents.

On a local note, to my neighbours in the north and south, the honourable members for Frankston and Dromana — both new members in this place — I say congratulations. They have long careers ahead of them and their maiden speeches show that they have the talent to match their long careers. I look forward to watching their progress through the new ranks and ultimately, I hope, into a future coalition ministry. I am sure they will achieve whatever it is they wish to achieve in this place. Through the preselection process the Liberal Party has once again demonstrated that it can get talented people to represent it, and that has certainly happened in the seats of Frankston and Dromana.

The electors of Mornington showed they were not going to be taken in by a lot of nonsense. They went for substance rather than shadows; and they went for policies rather than the campaign the ALP mounted prior to and right through the election campaign of personal abuse, misrepresentation and innuendo.

During the last campaign the ALP was a policy-free zone. It threw policies out; it didn't worry about that. When it did produce something that it purported to be policy we had conflicting statements coming from frontbenchers of the Labor Party with some saying, 'This is a policy', and others saying, 'No, it is just a statement of intent'. That was the case with its transport policy. I hope to go into a lot more detail on that on another occasion. Certainly the alleged transport policy of the ALP was being repudiated right, left and centre after it came out and particularly after it was exposed by the government as a document with very little substance indeed.

I refer to that august journal, the paper I read carefully every day because I always like to see what it has to say — the *Age*. In an article dated 18 April John Cox said in part, discussing the City Link and public transport:

The greatest wonder of all was the Labor Party's promise to remove tolls on the City Link, renegotiate a \$1.7 billion contract down to \$550 million and pay for this cut-price City Link with a metropolitan fuel tax that is already committed for several years.

Not only did this policy not work in marginal seats adjacent to the City Link but this all-gain no-pain approach must have reinforced a reputation of financial mismanagement in all other seats of the electorate.

Indeed, Sir, that is about the best summary I have read in any paper or magazine about the ALP members' approach to this election. They thought that if they argued with some sort of simple, populist policy the electorate was so stupid that it would swallow it and go away and vote for ALP candidates. The truth of the matter was that the ALP significantly underestimated the intelligence of the electorate once again. Once again the ALP has done it. It has gone out there with very little substance in whatever it happens to have as policy, thrown it out with a big fat bit of bait on the end of the hook and expected the electorate to snap it up and swallow it! Here in this article, Sir, that has been described succinctly as one of the major reasons why the ALP did not do well in electorates where it thought it was home and hosed.

The electorate of Frankston East, close to my electorate, was one the ALP thought it was going to bolt home in. The ALP thought it had the honourable member for Frankston East on toast; he was not going to come back here. We all recall that during the days of the last Parliament whenever the honourable member for Frankston East got to his feet to give his thoughts during some debate in this place or to ask a question or raise a matter on the adjournment debate the catcalls would come from members over there, 'You're gone; you're a oncer; you won't be back'. They did it all the time, and didn't he prove them wrong? He did it by something that is anathema to the Labor Party: hard work. He went out there and campaigned. He went around his electorate and got to the people who were going to make the decision and convinced them. Here is a man. The member for Frankston East is a true representative of the electorate he represents in this Parliament. He is a hard worker; he is a goer; he is everything the Labor Party should have and probably would love to have but doesn't have.

We have them over here. The true believers and the true workers are on this side of the Parliament, despite what Labor would like to have and thinks it might have. ALP members do not know what work is about. They still have not woken up in the first three days of this Parliament to the fact that they need to have policy. They haven't got any policies. They are still on the same track they were on before the election: personal abuse, digging around in the dustbins, trying to dig up the dirt and thinking that the people of this state are actually going to be interested in what they are doing. If the penny has not dropped by now in the poor simple brains of those that sit on the opposition benches in this

Parliament that they are not going to get back into government until they actually start to act like a responsible group of people and have policies and deal with the issues that are important to the people of this state, they are destined to stay over there as a rabble and as a rump for many decades to come. It is about time some of them woke up.

I think there are a few people over there who do understand it, but they have been consigned to the middle benches or the back benches on their way out, not on their way in. They have already been exposed to the general public and the newspapers of this state as the people who are on the hit list. We have people in the ALP who are quite willing to go out there and tell journalists, 'This one has gone; that one has gone'. The people they are going to get rid of are people who might well have the ideas but also have the effrontery, in the Labor Party's opinion, to actually admit that the government produces some credible policies. But who are these people who are going to get whacked by the smart alecs? They are the people who have something decent to say about the government's performance — who acknowledge the government's performance in some respect. After his speech today the honourable member for Coburg has probably gone on the hit list because he actually said the government had done something right.

I refer to that wonderful journal, well read by everybody and on everybody's mailing list, the *Melton-Bacchus Marsh Express*. In an article dated 10 April 1996 the member for Melton, Mr Cunningham, is quoted as saying that he wants more public transport to service Melton and he gives the reason as the increase in economic activity, new jobs being created, especially in Melton, and the great diversity of sporting and cultural events now taking place in the city. The honourable member for Melton is saying that over the past three years this government has actually done quite a lot that is right and has produced this kind of result and he now needs more public transport to service his electorate. He is on the hit list, too, because he has acknowledged that the government has been doing something right.

There are those on this hit list who are there for other reasons, and I give an encapsulated view now. Let us run through this hit list, starting over there in the middle row with the honourable member for Preston. The honourable member for Preston has been named as one who will be tipped out of here by the time of the next election. I know from internal ALP sources that the honourable member for

Preston is on the list, and it has been in the paper. Go and read your paper — the *Age* — and talk to Mr Steedman. I notice the honourable member for Preston is taking this threat so seriously that he has grown a beard. He is trying to hide from them behind his beard but he is not going to get away with that. I said to him last Tuesday, 'You won't get away with it. You can still be recognised. You are still ugly and you won't get away with it'.

Next to the honourable member for Preston is the honourable member for Dandenong North. Mr Peter Steedman said some very unkind things about her. I do not want to repeat what Mr Steedman said, but he is saying that the honourable member for Dandenong North, having survived the holocaust of the election of 1992 and come back into this Parliament with a slightly increased majority, is apparently gone, according to internal ALP sources where they are brawling away and knifing each other in traditional Labor Party ways.

Moving over the aisle we now come to my good friend the honourable member for Melbourne. I am sad to say that the honourable member for Melbourne is on the list as well. I find that personally very sad indeed. I am not saying that with a smirk on my face. Perhaps it is more embarrassing for the honourable member to be in here when I am about to say this than it would be if he were outside, but I am going to say it anyway. I think that what has been done to the honourable member for Melbourne over the past couple of years by his colleagues is nothing short of a disgrace. The way he has been treated by the people in his party is a disgrace. The people who are at the forefront of it — and one entered this Parliament at the last election — should be ashamed of themselves and should not be able to look at themselves in the mirror. Nevertheless, it is not going to change the fact that the list that has been circulated of the ALP victims who are going to be tipped out of Parliament at the next election includes the honourable member for Melbourne.

I suppose that in years to come after the next election the honourable member for Melbourne will probably, like most of us, reflect on his years in this place and remember the good times, but he will have less to reflect on than most of us because of the actions taken against him by the people in his own party. That is a sad thing to happen to that man.

We move down the line to the honourable member for Northcote, who is now clearly becoming an embarrassment to his party. He will be sent out of

the room permanently because the ALP will not want to see him feature in the coalition television advertisements at the next election. It is a matter of sadness to us because we would like a rerun. I believe he is one of our best pluses, but he is also on the way out.

Next to the honourable member for Northcote sits the honourable member for Mill Park, but at the moment he is sitting at the table. I came to this place in 1985 with the honourable member for Mill Park and well remember that he used to sit on this side and I sat over there. We had a few goes between us because there was a man that we mutually knew who I defended and the honourable member for Mill Park attacked, or was it the other way around? Between 1985 and 1992 we would nod to each other in the corridor, say hello and be polite, but in this place there were words between us.

In 1992 we were both appointed to the Public Bodies Review Committee and over the past three years he and I have come to know each other a lot better. I do not know what he is prepared to say about me, but over those three years we have generated a level of respect. When the committee went to Sydney to inspect fire service facilities the honourable member came into his own on the night we were looking for a good Greek restaurant. We said to him, 'You had better deliver, Alex', and he did. We had a rip-snorting night in the restaurant that he was able to find for us in Pitt Street. He was an asset to that committee! I think he will be sadly missed.

Having run down the middle bench, I shall jump over to the back bench because we know the honourable member for Sunshine has beaten the gun in regard to this matter. He has already announced that he will fall on his sword because he is not waiting for the chop — or could it be on the broken neck of a bottle! Whatever it is, he is leaving us at the next election. I well remember his maiden speech. He sat up in the corner on this side of the house where the honourable member for Bayswater is sitting. He stood up to make his maiden speech and, I must say with due respect to everybody in this place, and those who are not here but may be listening, that it was the best maiden speech I have ever heard. It was brilliantly delivered and he did not read from notes. He delivered his speech without any abuse of the opposition, not like some of the speakers we have unfortunately heard in the past couple of days.

The honourable member for Sunshine showed that he was a man of capacity and of the future. He

quickly rose through the ranks of the government and became a minister, but, unfortunately, ran foul of Joan Kirner and has since then run foul of the present Leader of the Opposition. That is a great loss for the people of Victoria because the honourable member for Sunshine, despite my having significant philosophical differences with him, is a person of capacity and a person who could be doing significant things for the people of this state. His departure will be a loss to his party. The Labor Party can ill-afford to lose people with that kind of intellect.

It appears that the honourable member for Keilor is also about to go to the political never-never. He has obviously lost his job as opposition whip. He will get the chop, as will the honourable member for Melton after beating the factions against the odds during the last preselection round. He kept his preselection but the next time around he will not make it.

Having gone down the backbench, I will talk now about the front bench. I start with the honourable member for Geelong North. We all remember that he came into this place in 1992, having inherited the seat from Nipper Trezise. Geelong North is regarded as a safe Labor seat. There is no doubt that Nipper built it up into a safe seat and the honourable member inherited a margin of 16 per cent. Since that time the honourable member for Geelong North has excelled: he has turned the 16 per cent margin he acquired into an 8 per cent margin! We are now confident at the next election that this safe Labor seat will become a Liberal seat. We hope that the Labor Party keeps him on. We would not want to lose him, but it appears he may be on the hit list. If the Labor Party has any brains he will be recognised as a big loser and dump him or it will see the seat handed over to the Liberal Party. That will close off that top neck of the Bellarine-Geelong area and we will then have the whole lot in that area.

Sitting next to the honourable member for Geelong North on the far side, the side nearest the door interestingly enough, is the honourable member for Springvale. The word is out on him — he's gone. It is not a case of Fast Eddie — it is a case of Loser Eddie. This may come as sad news for him, but he is on the hit list. Intelligent sources say that he is on the way out.

Moving down a touch from the honourable member for Albert Park is the honourable member for Niddrie, a newly elected member. On my diagram of the seating arrangements in this Parliament is

drawn an arrow going from the seat of Niddrie to the seat of the Leader of the Opposition. The arrow is not only drawn on paper, it is actually on its way. The honourable member for Mordialloc said yesterday in his speech that the Leader of the Opposition has had a steel back inserted into the chair in which he sits. The honourable member for Niddrie is going over the top of the chair and is aiming at the back of the neck. It is clear that he has designs on the position of Leader of the Opposition and will get him at some stage or other.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition might go in the daily double when that happens. When one adds up the numbers, there are 29 opposition seats and some 12 to 14 have large question marks over them between now and the next election. The ALP will lose close on half of the people it currently has in this place at the next election. About half of the members representing the ALP in the Parliament will be in the land of the missing, and we will have a new group of gonzos coming in to represent the ALP. It is a sad reflection on this once-great party, the ALP, but it is good news for the coalition.

Mr COLE (Melbourne) — I am not sure whether I should attack the member for Mornington in an attempt to save my preselection or to praise him for saying such nice things. Whatever I do will be wrong, so I will not overly worry about it. Some coalition members must be congratulated on their success at the election. The honourable member for Ballarat East, who got back by 27 votes, should be praised for his brilliant efforts against a very good opposition candidate. I am sure there are times when he has thought that he would have been better off if he had stayed in the police force as a senior sergeant.

I congratulate the honourable member for Mildura who is a reminder of the thing they tell us about during preselections — that is, unless we are very careful, it may not matter very much! I also congratulate the honourable member for Narracan on his success. He brings the number of policemen in Parliament to five. We only need one more to be classified as a police station and entitled to an inspector.

I do not know who is up for preselection in the member for Mornington's seat, but I was surprised when he thanked just about every member of the Liberal Party in his electorate. Perhaps he has a few problems in that direction — and if that is the case I had better thank a few of my electorate colleagues also. I thank the campaign director, Martin Foley,

and all those others who helped me, and my mum and dad, because it was a really good effort.

The things that have happened since the election have inspired me, but I am not sure which hit list the honourable member for Mornington is talking about. There are three, and I thought I was on all of them — and I am the only one who is. I do not know whether I am the lowest common denominator in the equation or just the most hated.

Be that as it may, the Labor Party had a great result in Melbourne. In spite of the general swing against Labor across the state, support for the party in Melbourne increased substantially. Although that result could be simply interpreted as a vote for the ALP, I found that some constituents supported me personally. I appreciated the kind gestures of those people who let me know that.

I also take this opportunity to point out that, as many people may already know, I suffer from a mental illness. I raise the matter — I will try never to raise it again — for two reasons only. The first is to thank those fellow sufferers and carers for putting a great big advertisement in the *Melbourne Times*, my local newspaper, about me and my condition. I appreciated very much the effort they made to do so. The second reason I raise the matter publicly is to point out that although it did not attract any votes, it did not prevent me gaining any votes. I consider that to be a great step forward for mental health awareness for Victoria and Australia — and I am sure that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, also appreciate the value of that.

I received many funny responses to the publicity of my condition, including concern about my putting on a bit of weight. The only one I want to draw to the attention of members is the response of a person who normally votes Liberal but who barged into the North Melbourne Town Hall and, after asking for a ticket to vote Labor, said, 'I am voting for Neil Cole. He is the only honest one among them because he is prepared to admit he is mad!' I appreciate all the support I received throughout the campaign, particularly from my parents and my former wife.

Yesterday we heard some excellent maiden speeches. I enjoyed the speech of the first-ever Asian member of this house — a great achievement. The member for Werribee also delivered an extremely good speech that detailed her involvement in the union movement and her reasons for coming to this place. She also told us that her greatest achievement in life is her children, and that made me think of

how little we reflect on those great achievements. Over the past couple of years the things that have kept me going have been my job and my children, and I now take this opportunity to acknowledge my two children, Eamon and Declan.

I also noted with interest the content of the speeches of the members for Caulfield and Prahran, because they referred to a topic that I speak about each year — I usually deliver exactly the same speech and people call for me to sit down. The issue of federal-state financial relations is probably one of the most crucial issues this state must confront now and in the future. The honourable member for Prahran knows all about council amalgamations — more's the pity. But I must acknowledge that although I disagree with the establishment of commissioners and the carving up of the City of Melbourne, council amalgamations have been an important step forward in improving federal-state financial relations. We should all acknowledge the importance of those changes in the state's development, even though we may disagree with the way they were made.

My interest in federal-state financial relations was also heightened on an overseas trip during which I had the opportunity of studying the British model. Perhaps that model of a regional government is better than our local government model, and in time we might be given an opportunity to follow that model. I would not want to exacerbate the problems of local councils by arguing for their being given more power and responsibility, but I think the present relationship between state and local governments is troubled. We will have to look seriously at the powers we are prepared to devolve to local councils.

I note that the Minister for Planning and Local Government is at the table. He will probably disagree with me, but I think there will come a time when the cord will have to be severed. It is my hope that one day state parliaments will not be needed — preferably after I receive my superannuation! We need to consider which system is the best for running the country — that is, one that ends federal government financial restraint.

My first speech to Parliament came in the wake of the Walsh Street shootings. At that time, I was unfortunately required to go to the police station with the family of Graham Jensen, who had been killed. That was a most unpleasant experience, and that incident and others that have occurred since are sad and unacceptable. The government has

attempted to address the issue of police shootings, but the problem of violence in the community continues. There could be no more graphic illustration of that than the Port Arthur massacre. We can do nothing to bring back those who lost their lives in that tragedy, but we can adopt, and I think we have adopted, the most mature approach to guns — that is, getting rid of automatic and semi-automatic weapons. All the people involved in that initiative, particularly the Prime Minister, deserve to be praised for their actions.

During the campaign the Premier floated a proposal to reintroduce school cadets. I do not know whether he did that to keep some other issue off the front pages of the newspapers or whether it was just a whimsical idea that came to him during a bout of nostalgia about his own time in the cadets, but I am concerned by the notion that we would attempt to turn back the clock.

I was a member of the Air Force cadets for some time and subsequently a member of the Army Reserve for three years when I was attending university. In spite of that, I am opposed to militarism; the more we can do to reduce militarism the better. Today we do not need to introduce a program that has children marching up and down learning military activities. We need to spend every cent we can on training children to prepare them to enter our complex world. It is a tough time for many people, and I do not believe we should be spending our resources on cadets. I do not accept that military-style discipline is the way we should go.

This year I marched in the Anzac Day parade on 25 April. For the first time I wore my grandfather's medals, which my father got from the Department of Defence, and marched for him. I have marched before with my father, but he is unable to march now. Marching was important to me because my grandfather, although he was a conscientious objector, served as a stretcher bearer in the First World War. He was severely wounded and gassed, and marching on his behalf gave me an eerie feeling.

I sincerely believe we should push for Anzac Day to be declared our national day. The emotions of that day are so profound and so important to us that it is the most important rallying day for our nation — probably for all the wrong reasons! My grandfather would have liked my marching for him.

It was sad to see that only four members of the First Division of the AIF were left to join the march because all the others have died. It is sad that there

is so little memory of what happened in Gallipoli and France. I do not take it lightly because two of my uncles died from war injuries; my father is a totally and permanently incapacitated pensioner; my other grandfather's brother was killed at Gallipoli; and his other brother won the Victoria Cross. As I said, we should consider making Anzac Day a national day for our country.

The honourable member for Mildura has made a major contribution to the debate, and he will make us all aware of many issues. Some independent candidates ran against me. What happened to the former member for Mildura, Craig Bildstien, could easily have happened to me or any other member of the house because we live in volatile times. When things are not so polarised we will see a lot of changes. I hope the contribution of the honourable member for Mildura will be listened to and not rejected simply because he does not have the backing of a political party.

Electorates are a hard row to hoe at times. People expect a lot from their local members, but they also give them a great deal of support and provide an enormous amount of information about what is going on. My electorate encompasses the central business district and business issues concern me. Business, particularly the retail trade, in my area has reduced considerably. The city is suffering substantial problems. It is amazing to think that a department store as important as I believed Georges was has closed down.

Business in the city is just not kicking on in the way it should. At the moment the major facilities are pinball parlours and theatres. We have problems. It should not be forgotten that the heart of the city has moved to the other side of the river at Southbank. It concerns me greatly because important areas such as Chinatown, the Greek precinct, Russell Street and other areas have been left vacant. Places such as Lygon Street, the Victoria Market and other areas are suffering a substantial decline in the retail trade. I do not blame the government for that because it may be just a structural change, but I do get upset when I hear it said that things are good out there, because I do not believe they are.

The greatest changes have been caused by the casino and poker machines, and their effect on our retail sector has been disastrous. I can only go on what I have seen and those I have spoken with. Most people I know say that business is down 20 to 30 per cent in the retail and restaurant industries. I am concerned that major changes are taking place and

the only areas that are doing well are the high-tech areas such as mobile phones and computers.

I am concerned about the casino mentality. The Premier has contributed too much to its advance. I do not believe he should be so close to the licensees of the casino; he should be at arm's length from them. I am sure in years to come that the Premier's involvement in securing the casino licence for Hudson Conway will be revealed.

I am also concerned, as I believe we all are, about the level of gambling in the community. The amount of money going through the casino is obscene and the amount of money people are spending on poker machines is equally obscene. When I agreed to the casino and poker machines I did so because I believed people should have a right to do as they wish, but it concerns me that there is so much compulsive gambling. I am reliably informed that if a person wants to be voluntarily banned from the casino he or she has to get the opinion of a psychologist as well as the opinion of the psychologist at the casino. I am prejudiced against gambling and I do not like the share market. I come from a different perspective. It has got out of control. I have been down to the casino a couple of times and my concerns about the way the place operates have not been allayed.

Mr E. R. Smith — Did you win?

Mr COLE — No, I did not bet and I did not take any of the freebies that were offered. Freebies are offered to people to get them into the casino so that they will gamble. I wonder whether that is the way to go.

The final issue I shall talk about is drugs. Whatever the results of the phone-in or ballot box on drugs held by the honourable member for Tullamarine — —

Mr Finn — I got another write-up this week.

Mr COLE — I got a write-up this week too; a young person in Fitzroy overdosed on impure heroin. I fervently believe we should have controlled-use programs for heroin users so that we do not have these problems.

Apart from anything else, the Premier's initiative in establishing the Premier's Drugs Advisory Council was brilliant. Some people have questioned his motivation, but I do not care what his motivation was because it is a foundation report. It may be a

point of contention; we may debate the issue and not get anything through, but at least the debate will be held in this place one way or the other.

We can say quite frankly that the drug issue is a big problem. We cannot turn away from it; we have to confront it one way or the other. I should not say of the conservative side and the government that they are not prepared to do what I would do because I know my own colleagues would probably not be prepared to do it either. I make it clear that I support the Penington report 100 per cent. I know the member for Glen Waverley and I have had these arguments before, but I support the legalisation of marijuana; I support the right of people to grow it; and I certainly support the controlled supply of heroin under programs that allow GPs and other assigned persons to carry out the task.

Regardless of whether we are talking about growing or smoking marijuana, or using heroin or ecstasy or all the others drugs, the crucial issue is whether prohibition works. I find myself in a real conundrum because I support the prohibition of guns. I would prefer not to because I know many people like to go out hunting or whatever, but I do not know what else we can do — and I mean that sincerely. We must at least try to prevent the massacres and reduce the number of killings that have occurred.

That brings me back to the point that we have to decriminalise or lift the prohibition on drugs because prohibition is not only not working but substantially exacerbating the problem. We have no control over what kids and adults pump into themselves, yet if we controlled it, as the Penington report points out, we could give them steady levels that would reduce the demand for the illicit supply.

When I went to England I visited Liverpool and saw the effective program that that city runs. Marijuana is a non-issue, anyway; people are smoking it and growing it in their backyards. Most of the time the police do not charge them for doing so, and if people do have to go to court they only get bonds. It is something we should not be wasting time on. Why don't we just recognise what is happening? I accept the argument about the message that decriminalisation could send. We do not want to encourage the use of marijuana. I certainly do not smoke the stuff because it makes me feel sick.

Mr Maclellan interjected.

Mr COLE — We have to tolerate the fact that it is going on, as the Minister for Planning and Local Government says — and the point is well made. I cannot see that we have anything to gain by getting up on our high horses and saying, 'You can't do this' or 'This is bad', because it is happening in any event.

I want to make my position clear. However, the most important thing is that we have the debate, because it is important. If we do not have it people will remain unaware of what is going on and the ignorance that is around us will not be overcome. If at the end of the day people choose not to take a certain course because of the message it might send, so be it.

It is a shame that the member for Mornington has left the chamber yet again, but I am sure he will be back. Up to a point the things the Labor Party has to do for the future have been defined by what happened at the last election. Opposition members acknowledge the success of the coalition. We know the task before us is difficult, but we will come together and, in spite of the perceived hit lists and other lists, the government will face a very dogged and very determined opposition on this side, simply because it has strong beliefs on many issues. If there is one task the government has to perform, it is the task of reducing unemployment — and if that is used as a measure of success, to date this government has failed because the problem has not dissipated at all in my electorate.

Long-term unemployment among our youth is alive and well and nothing much seems to be happening. The Howard government seems determined to do even less for the unemployed, and when that is combined with the policies of this government the result is a total disaster. For me that is one matter that stands out among many. I find it upsetting when I hear the Treasurer jumping up and down, saying, 'Everything is all right, the finances are good and Victoria is on the move again', especially when the evidence shows that things are really tough for the long-term unemployed and many businesses. It is one thing to go around saying that, but it is another thing to actually believe it. That is very dangerous!

Mr FINN (Tullamarine) — It is with a great deal of delight and considerable pride that I stand in this chamber as the member for the now traditional Liberal seat of Tullamarine. I say 'traditional Liberal seat' because as members will be aware it first came into existence in redistribution before the 1992 election. I was fortunate to be the Liberal candidate

for that seat — and of course, the government retained the seat on 30 March this year, more than doubling the majority of the vote. I now believe Tullamarine to be a traditional Liberal seat, and it will take a fair bit of talking to convince me otherwise.

I start by reaffirming my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and reaffirming my commitment to fight any moves to foist a republic on the people of Australia. That is probably as dead as a door nail anyway, but I mention that for what it is worth.

I thank the people of Westmeadows, Tullamarine, Gladstone Park, Attwood, Greenvale, Bulla and, indeed, Sunbury for their support. The decision the people of Tullamarine made on 30 March resonated throughout the rest of the state. It was a remarkable endorsement of what this government has done over the past three and a half years. The people of Tullamarine said, 'We are very happy with what the Kennett government is doing for us. We are delighted the Kennett government is there, and we want the Kennett government to stay there'.

Some local issues played a very important role in the victory on 30 March, none more so than City Link. Many people, particularly those in the media — I will get on to them in a minute — regarded City Link as an issue that could have gone against the government in Tullamarine. It was quite the opposite, because 30 March was the day on which the people of Tullamarine said they supported the City Link project. They said they wanted the Tullamarine Freeway fixed and that they believed the government had put forward a proposal that would carry that through.

I often received that message during the election campaign. My opponent, who does not live in the electorate, was obviously not getting the same message. If he was, he certainly was not listening. I say to the people of Tullamarine that they have put me here to represent their best interests, and I will certainly do that. I have always made them my no. 1 priority. I did so in the first three and a half years, and I will continue to do so in the next four years — or for however long they want to keep me here.

Mr Maclellan interjected.

Mr FINN — We had one improvement; I do not wish to be greedy but another 10 per cent would not go astray! I would very much like to thank my campaign committee, which did a mountain of work in the lead-up to the election. Their hard work was

rewarded on the night of 30 March. They did a fantastic job, and as I have said so many times over the past five weeks or so, the campaign we ran on this occasion was the best that has ever been run by either party in any seat north of the Yarra. That is something that gives me considerable pride.

I should also congratulate the team down at Liberal Party headquarters at 104 Exhibition Street. I believe they put together a campaign that was unparalleled in its effectiveness; it was as close to perfect as one could get. They really did a magnificent job! The Liberal Party organisation is paralleled by the performance of the parliamentary party, which has so much talent and creativity. It has so much going for it when compared to the Labor Party.

I thank my many supporters in the Labor Party who again contributed so much to my election win. I was astounded by the number of members of the Labor Party who came to my assistance over the past 12 or 16 months, and I thank them very much for their efforts.

I thank my wife, Cathy, who again was a pillar of strength standing beside me during a stressful and hectic time. In the first six months of our married life we went through a federal and state election campaign, so I think we can survive almost anything.

This is my first opportunity to congratulate the federal Liberal and National parties on their election to government in the March election. It was a tremendous effort on the part of the now Prime Minister, John Howard. I look forward to the new government delivering the sort of government to Australia that the Kennett government has delivered to Victoria. I believe we can turn around the decay in Australia that set in during the Hawke-Keating years and that John Howard is the man to lead the government. I warmly congratulate my federal colleagues on their outstanding victory and the people of Australia on such a fine choice.

Earlier this year I took a quadrella and I am pleased to say that three legs are in. The three legs to which I refer are Howard, Kennett and Finn. I am looking forward enormously to September at the Melbourne Cricket Ground when the Tigers will give me the fourth leg! It will make the year nigh on perfect.

I am extraordinarily proud to be a member of this government. When one considers the state Victoria was left in by the Labor Party in October 1992 after the decade of darkness, when one considers what Victoria was like — the state of depression, not just

economic but the psychological depression everyone was feeling — and when one looks at Victoria today, one would not have to be a Rhodes scholar to know that Victoria is well and truly on the move. One would also not have to be a Rhodes scholar to know that the coalition government, led by the Honourable Jeff Kennett and the Honourable Alan Stockdale, has turned Victoria around in the most magic way imaginable. This state is one that we can all be proud of. As I have said from time to time, Victoria is no longer the laughing stock of the nation. People now look upon Victoria with envy and no longer with pity and ridicule.

Yesterday's autumn economic statement proved to the people of Victoria that they were correct in returning the Liberal and National parties to office on 30 March. I congratulate the new members of Parliament, and I sympathise with those who were defeated. I was particularly upset that my dear friend and colleague the former honourable member for Essendon, Ian Davis, was defeated because he was an extremely hardworking member of Parliament. He cared a great deal about his area and worked very hard for the people of his electorate. It was a great pity that his efforts were not rewarded.

It also caused me considerable sadness to learn that the former Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth Affairs and honourable member for Ivanhoe was defeated because I know how much effort and hard work he put into the youth affairs portfolio. It is with some pride that I can say that the young people of the state progressed considerably when Vin Heffernan had that portfolio, and I regret he is no longer in Parliament carrying out those duties.

I also commiserate with my opponent who sought to be the new member for Tullamarine. I do not believe I will be commiserating with him much longer because I am informed that Mr White is looking for another Legislative Assembly seat and that later this year, after being removed from his position, the Leader of the Opposition will resign from his seat of Broadmeadows and Mr White will nominate for that seat and hopefully return to Parliament in a by-election to be held before Christmas. We are all looking forward to that! I wish he was running against me next time!

I reflect now on the role of the media during the election campaign, particularly the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or, as it is often called, the ALP-BC. The ABC is now totally irrelevant. It is beyond me why a government should be involved in broadcasting. The time has come for the ABC to

go. It is nothing more than a haven for those who cannot get a job in the real world.

Mr Paterson interjected.

Mr FINN — Indeed, as my colleague from South Barwon says, it is a media sheltered workshop. The bias the ABC exhibited and has exhibited over a long period during election campaigns is disgraceful. Any semblance of objectivity went out the window long ago.

Mr Perrin interjected.

Mr FINN — I do not know whether 3AW would act in the same way because it is accountable to its shareholders. The ABC is not accountable to anyone and it is about time it was privatised or phased out. I cannot see any need for it to continue.

I congratulate Channel 7 on its magnificent performance during the past few days because it managed to pull off one of the greatest publicity stunts in the history of Australian media! It is something to concoct a situation where a presenter collapses on air and is rushed to hospital. The program is then promoted on every news service and on the front page of newspapers. The ratings went from 7 to 33 overnight. I am sure it will be worth every cent the station has to pay the Premier after he sues the program for libel because of the publicity it received. Whoever came up with the idea has a great future in the media and in advertising. It was a gem!

I refer briefly to the tragedy at Port Arthur in Tasmania just a few weeks ago. I know everyone was appalled, as I was, at what occurred. There has been a considerable reaction against the use of automatic and semi-automatic weapons in this country during the past few weeks, and the Prime Minister and the states should be congratulated for taking decisive action. However, I refer to something that is of more significance in causing these tragedies than guns themselves — that is, violent videos that have been on the market for some years.

Perhaps I am unable to grasp the detail, but I cannot understand why anybody would want pictures on their television screens of people being disembowelled or having their heads blown to pieces — but that is what you can get at your local video store. That is the sort of thing that inspires mass murderers and the perpetrators of the massacres in Australia and overseas. There is a

proven, definite connection. It is about time governments both federal and state cracked down on violent videos. I want them banned altogether. I am appalled that they are freely available. Until we remove them from our society we will continue to see the sort of tragic event that took place at Port Arthur a few weeks ago. It is time for action, and I hope federal and state governments will act on violent videos in the not-too-distant future.

I move from the issue of violence and people being less than friendly to each other to the very deep and heartfelt concern I feel for my friends on the other side of the house. It is a matter of great sadness to me to see members of the Labor Party in this state turn on each other in the way they have over the past five or six weeks. I was deeply saddened by the dire predictions of the honourable member for Mornington, who said that many members of the opposition are in their last term of office.

It distresses me that the honourable member for Sunshine, whom we all know to be a fine, upstanding and humble man, has been forced to the point where he says of the former Premier, Ms Kirner, that 'the only way to increase the ALP vote is to buy her an one-way ticket to Lower Chad'. It depresses me that he has been put in the situation where he has to refer to Ms Kirner on radio as 'a rotten ol' moll'.

Mr Maclellan — It is unfair!

Mr FINN — It is indeed unfair to Chad and to the moll. It distresses me further when on television the honourable member for Melbourne is forced to say that every fifth member of the caucus should be taken out and shot. That surely must distress every member of the house. Why every fifth one? Why not every second one?

I was devastated when a couple of weeks ago I read in the newspaper that a former member of the federal Parliament of Australia, Mr Peter Steedman, had written a letter to one of his comrades in the trade union movement describing certain members of this house and the federal Parliament. I was shocked at some of the descriptions that were put about by that individual. Indeed, I was so shocked I could not believe my eyes when I read that that man had said those things. I thought to myself: 'This can't be true. Surely nobody would say those sorts of things about members of his own party'.

I felt the necessity to go out and try to get a copy of the infamous Steedman letter, and I was successful

in my aim. I must say that when I read some of Mr Steedman's comments on some of his colleagues I was dumbfounded. Mr Steedman says of Dr Andrew Theophanous:

What can you say about this low-life sexual harasser?

That is just appalling. How can he say such a thing?

Mr Dollis — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, we don't mind the hilarity that the honourable member for Tullamarine is displaying — we will accept the humour of some of the comments he will read from a letter that is reasonably well known to members of this house — but let me remind the honourable member that sexual harassment is a very serious accusation. If he is about to repeat something that is in the dirt sheet he ought to have the decency to repeat it outside the chamber, because I am absolutely certain that Dr Theophanous would take the appropriate action.

Mr A. F. Plowman — What is the point of order?

Mr Dollis — The point of order is that although we will be more than happy to join the house in enjoying the hilarity of the other matters, the honourable member for Tullamarine had better be careful because an accusation of sexual harassment is serious. I warn the honourable member to think twice before he goes into the gutter.

The SPEAKER — Order! I understand the honourable member is quoting from an article. A member must use his own conscience as a guide to what he says in this chamber. There is no point of order, but I suggest the honourable member temper his remarks a little in this instance.

Mr FINN — I certainly understand the sensitivity of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to the comments in Mr Steedman's letter. I understand that Dr Theophanous is attempting to take some form of legal action against Mr Steedman, and I certainly fully support him in taking the matter before the courts, because these are extremely serious accusations. I have been concerned for some time that many scurrilous individuals have been repeating them for some years. It is about time that they put up or shut up. Let's find out the truth about the matter. I look forward to the good doctor's case coming before the courts. It will probably be one of the more interesting court cases of the year, and I look forward to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth coming out.

The Steedman letter goes on to describe Harry Jenkins, a former Deputy Speaker in the House of Representatives, as Mr Dynamic. Mr Steedman says he:

... hides in his office with maps of branch memberships on his walls to watch his numbers.

That is the be-all and end-all of his existence. Of Bob Sercombe, a former member of this house, he says:

I realise he's just got in, but in a safe seat like this we don't need a failure from the state Parliament.

If you get somebody from the Victorian parliamentary Labor Party, of course you get a failure. They are all failures. Mr Steedman goes on to attack some of our colleagues in this house — and I must leap to their defence. He refers to the honourable member for Dandenong North in very unkind terms. He says she is:

... as thick as two bricks.

I don't think that is the sort of thing that members of this house should tolerate. It is appalling. He refers to the honourable member for Melbourne as:

... treacherous and a waste of space.

I think that is also appalling. He refers to the honourable member for Preston, a man for whom every member of this house has such enormous admiration, as:

... lazy and a branch manipulator and stacker.

This is what this bloke Pete is saying.

A Government Member — Do you believe it?

Mr FINN — That is what is written. He refers to our good friend the honourable member for Sunshine and says that since he:

... is going nowhere and obviously frustrated, he should jump.

That is a staggering suggestion from this Steedman chap, because everybody in this house knows that if the Labor Party in this state is ever to go anywhere, the honourable member for Sunshine should be Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Labor Party. Every member on this side of the house knows that, and I have a sneaking suspicion that

deep down and secretly, every single member of the Labor Party knows that as well.

An Honourable Member — Who is this Steedman?

Mr FINN — Steedman? A total ratbag!

He has kind words to say about the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. That's interesting because he is about the only one who gets a kind mention. He says the honourable member for Richmond:

... has a lot to contribute but not as deputy leader —

Mr Steedman has such a high opinion of the honourable member that he must think the honourable member should be leader. That would please us enormously because it is quite a recommendation when it comes from such an outstanding character as Pete Steedman. He talks about the Honourable Barry Pullen as yesterday's man. That is a terrible thing to say.

Finally, he mentions the Honourable Theo Theophanous, brother of Andrew Theophanous. In his letter he says:

You know my opinion on this corrupter of the party's rules, and while he has stacked enough branches to remain an MP he should not be in charge of the upper house.

This sort of letter drags politics into the gutter. It is disgraceful and something we as a Parliament should be condemning. It is something we should investigate. This house should set up a committee of inquiry into the allegations in this letter. I would be more than happy to serve on that committee but, in deference to his years of service, I have already approached the honourable member for Mornington to chair such a committee.

A Government Member — What did he say?

Mr FINN — He accepted immediately. He was as shocked and appalled as I was. He is quite anxious to get his teeth into the job ahead, as indeed I believe we all should because this sort of thing must be rubbed out.

In Victoria we have some great times ahead. Anybody who was at the grand prix in March would have realised the enormous success of that event. The grand prix was far more than a car race; it was more than a marketing exercise for Victoria and

ADJOURNMENT

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

225

for Melbourne: the grand prix was the epitome of what Victoria is doing.

Victoria is growing and blooming; it is blossoming again. As I said, they don't laugh at us any more! We are going places. Those with children now have hope for their future, whereas a few years ago that hope was non-existent. Victoria was on the slump, in the mud heap: it was in a bad way.

I am delighted to see the Premier in the chamber, because he is the man who has led this government and this state into the times that I speak of, from Labor's mire through to what we have in 1996. Victoria is standing on the threshold of true greatness. Government members can take absolute pride in that because it is the Kennett government in Victoria that has returned this state to greatness. I am delighted to be back here as the member for Tullamarine and to be part of the team to continue the job of keeping Victoria as the no. 1 state in Australia.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown).

Debate adjourned until next day.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mrs TEHAN (Minister for Conservation and Land Management).

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs TEHAN (Minister for Conservation and Land Management) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Fresh food exports

Mr LONEY (Geelong North) — I direct to the attention of the Premier a matter concerning comments made by him following his opening of the Farm Vision expo in Geelong about a week ago. The expo was a remarkable success, and credit should be given to the organisers of that event. However, during the opening the Premier referred to the aspirations of the government to improve the volume of fresh food exports from Victoria over the next five to six years with an aim of exporting maybe \$6 million worth of product by around the turn of the century. That is a laudable aim, but it has implications for my electorate where the Avalon Airport has, for some years, been designated as one of the key places in Victoria that could benefit from

increased exports of fresh food, particularly to the Asian markets.

In recent times a proposition that has been highlighted in a number of newspapers, including the *Geelong Advertiser*, has been put forward by an Israeli firm, Meyraz, which wants to use the Avalon area for a significant fresh food development. The firm is talking about thousands of jobs being created with the potential for billions of dollars to flow through the venture. It hopes to grow fresh food under plastic on 100 hectares of land surrounding the airport.

The Premier said he was unaware of the proposal but that he would seek advice and get a briefing about this matter. He said the government had not been briefed.

I know the Minister for Agriculture is now in Israel. I ask the Premier to advise the house whether he has now been briefed on this matter; if so, what is the outcome of such a briefing? Will the Minister for Agriculture visit Meyraz while in Israel and pursue its proposal? Also, because of the enormous significance of this proposal to Victoria and the Geelong region, and while this Israeli proposal is being finalised, is the Premier prepared to put on hold the relocation of the chemical storage facility to Point Lillias?

Buses: Rowville

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — The matter I raise for the Minister for Transport relates to the poor public transport in the Rowville area. For some reason Rowville was left behind when the Labor government was in power between 1982 and 1992. The area had very poor roads, poor services for youth and the schools were bursting at the seams with students.

In the short time the government has been in office the honourable member for Knox and I have been able to achieve the building of a new secondary school, the long overdue duplication of Wellington Road and the provision of sensible youth services. That has been tremendous, and the people of Rowville showed their appreciation in the way they voted at the recent election.

However, we still have a problem with public transport. At the moment people who want to travel from Rowville to the city have to travel by road or travel away from the city to Ferntree Gully or Dandenong to get to a railway station. If they go to

Glen Waverley they face the problem of trying to find a parking place. We need a bus link from Rowville to Glen Waverley. At the moment people who want to go by bus need to catch three different buses.

In 1993 Rowville community leaders approached me about trying to solve the transport problem. We have been working with one of the local bus companies, but there is a problem with government subsidisation. The government has been unwilling to put up money to enable the bus service to go ahead. As a result the bus company surveyed a particular area of Rowville, letterboxing 7000 survey forms, and received 2000 responses from people who are desperate to get this bus service up.

I ask the Minister for Transport to support the application made to his department by the bus company. Once the application is approved by the PTC and the minister and an announcement is made the bus company can put the service in place almost overnight. The timetables are already up. The bus service will benefit people in the Rowville, Wantima, Wheelers Hill areas in my electorate and the Glen Waverley area in the electorate of the honourable member for Glen Waverley by providing a more efficient bus service that will not cost the taxpayer 1 cent.

Rail: Lalor station

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) — I direct the attention of the Minister for Transport to the physical condition of the Lalor railway station in my electorate. It appears that for much of this year the standards of cleanliness at the station have gradually and systematically declined. I am referring to the platform itself, the waiting rooms, the toilets, the surrounding car parks and the pathways.

I have been approached by a number of constituents who are regular users of the public transport system and they are, quite frankly, fed up with and disgusted by the state of the station and believe it requires urgent attention from the government. I call on the minister, who may not be aware of the problem, to undertake the necessary investigations to find out what has gone wrong — it is obvious that something has — and to take the appropriate steps immediately. My impression is that a change occurred this year which has resulted in a gradual decline in standards. Cleaning can be described as non-existent, haphazard or, at best, intermittent.

In a letter to me a constituent, Mrs Farrugia, indicates the seriousness with which she regards the situation:

Over the last month the platform and surrounding area are littered with papers, empty beer bottles, drink cans, vomit and even excrement. The state of the station is even worse after the weekend ...

As a member of the public who utilises the public transport system every day, I am concerned that this matter also involves serious health issues.

This description is not a dramatic overstatement on my part, it is the personal experience of someone who uses public transport every day to get to and from her place of work. People have noticed the deterioration, and Mrs Farrugia tells me it is a common complaint among people who regularly use the train from Lalor station.

South Eastern Arterial: noise barriers

Mrs McGILL (Oakleigh) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place an issue that presents a major problem to constituents whose homes bound the South Eastern Arterial in the Mount Waverley area.

It has become evident that the normal expectations of a peaceful night's sleep or the ability to entertain family and friends in your own home or backyard is becoming increasingly impossible for those constituents. The minister should be aware that previously I have made representations on the issues of sound attenuation and the noise levels emanating from the South Eastern Arterial. Indeed, I am very pleased with the \$1.4 million worth of work currently nearing completion along the South Eastern Arterial.

I have sympathy for the plight of the constituents, and I ask the minister to respond speedily to their request to ensure that funding from Vicroads is made available as a matter of priority for noise attenuation barriers for the southern side of the South Eastern Arterial along a stretch of some 350 metres in the Therese Avenue-Catherine Avenue area of my electorate.

Mount Hotham: development proposals

Ms GARBUTT (Bundoora) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management the development proposals for Mount Hotham. There was a recent announcement of a

\$60 million project to expand the skiing area to more than three times the current area — that is, from 150 hectares to 500 hectares, including a \$15 million, 60-home residential village. I have concerns about the planning process, about public consultation and about the need for an environment impact assessment. I seek the minister's assurance that she will carry out all those processes very thoroughly.

I was extremely concerned to read in the latest annual report of the Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC) for 1994-95 the comment that planning permit applications have been dealt with, and that listed under the projects that have already been dealt with at Mount Hotham was a ski-run development in the Basin. I certainly hope that is not a reference to that project being pushed ahead.

I have major concerns about the government's lack of policy for alpine resorts. It appears that it is allowing the commission free rein to do as it likes. There has been no official response from the government to the ARC review, and there appears to be nothing in place that resembles a strategy or a policy for future development of alpine resorts across Victoria. I seek assurances from the minister that she will respond to the review and will prepare a strategy for all resorts before she allows developments to go ahead piecemeal.

The same annual report also refers to the development of a draft Mount Hotham development strategy. There has been no public consultation in that process, and it appears that it is still only an ARC document which the government has not approved. I ask the minister to give an assurance that she will not give approval to it without public consultation. Obviously a massive expansion of this size will have a major environmental impact and we need an assurance that proper processes will be followed, including public consultation.

The great danger with no overall strategy being in place is that we may see open-slather competition between resorts. How, for example, will this project impact on the Mount Stirling proposal and others that may well be in the pipeline that we don't know about? We risk destroying rare alpine environments, oversupplying the market and leaving great white elephants in a destroyed environment.

Ambulatory care centres: Cranbourne

Mr ROWE (Cranbourne) — I raise for the attention of the minister representing the Minister

for Health in another place the election promise made by our government in the last election for the provision of ambulatory care centres in the Berwick-Cranbourne corridor.

Under previous administrations the people of Cranbourne have long been denied the delivery of health care. The previous Minister for Health, together with the current Minister for Youth and Community Services when he was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, came up with the concept of ambulatory care centres.

The concept was readily embraced by the Cranbourne community and the local health centre, of which I am a board member. I am raising the matter because the southern network of hospitals identified that the Cranbourne Civic Centre would certainly be an ideal place for the establishment of an ambulatory care centre. It is a relatively new building and is located within easy reach of public transport and close to the Cranbourne commercial district.

My concern is that the City of Casey has been tardy in its correspondence with the southern network and seems to be playing games in wanting people to bid for this building. I ask that the minister come to Cranbourne to look at the building with a view to having discussions with the southern health network, to expedite negotiations with the City of Casey and ensure that this long-awaited service is delivered to the people of Cranbourne as soon as possible.

An innovation such as this will be of great benefit not only to the people of the Cranbourne township but also to the people of the Gippsland West area, including Berwick, Lang Lang, Tooradin, Koo Wee Rup, Cannons Creek, Blind Bight, Warneet, Pearcedale, and the surrounding areas. I ask that the minister make time in his diary to visit the areas, just as the previous minister did on a number of occasions.

Roads: Werribee

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Transport, who is the representative of the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place. Honourable members will recall that yesterday I stated that during the election campaign the Premier and a number of ministers visited Werribee. On their visits they were extraordinarily generous in a number of their promises, and honourable members will recall that yesterday I also indicated it would be

on my agenda to ensure that those promises were delivered.

The specific issue on which they made promises was roads and ports. There is nothing more important to the constituents of Werribee than road safety, and specific promises were made and recorded in a number of newspapers. I will quote some of those promises as reported in the *Werribee Times*:

\$1.5 million grant for stage three of the Derrimut Road upgrade between Parakeet Road and Warringa Crescent.

\$1.5 million towards building a road connecting the Shaws Road bridge between Greaves Street and McGrath Street.

\$500 000 towards the cost of the Princes Freeway's western interchange to create a new exit for traffic from Melbourne.

\$900 000 to widen the Werribee Street bridge and add traffic signals at the Geelong Road and Werribee Street intersection ...

A number of other specific promises were made but they all related to an effective, positive and cooperative working partnership with the commissioners in the Wyndham council.

These matters are a high priority for the constituents of Werribee. There is a huge demand for the projects; a sense of anxiousness has been created by the promises, and I seek time lines from the minister responsible for their delivery.

Platypus habitat protection

Mr LUPTON (Knox) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management an article in the *Knox News* recently which reported that a family of six platypus had been discovered in one of the local creeks in the Rowville area.

Members of the local community are concerned that these platypus will eventually move out. I spoke with the Australian Platypus Conservancy to discuss ways of endeavouring to ensure that the platypus family stays. However, in discussions with members of the conservancy they said they thought the platypus would stay there but that we could do something to assist to establish the habitat.

A lot of indigenous growth and introduced species have come into the area. The creek banks are collapsing, and the conservancy people believe that if they were able gradually and with a great deal of professionalism to remove some of the introduced species, plant native species and do other works in the area the platypus would remain.

The area is not generally known to the public because if people became aware of it no doubt they would go there in great numbers and probably frighten the platypus away. It is a concern to the community, and I am requesting the minister to give consideration to funding works through which we could in a gentle manner gradually replace the introduced species, upgrade the creek and maintain the purity of the water so that the platypus will stay there.

The platypus are very close to residential properties; they are within 28 kilometres of the CBD and close to private homes. Anything the government can do to ensure that the platypus stay there would be a great benefit to the area. It certainly would be a feather in everybody's cap to think that at last we could have these native animals right back at our doorstep. It would be a great advance.

Essendon Airport

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier and in his absence the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, who is at the table, about the future of the land that is currently used for the Essendon Airport. Although it is fairly painful for members on this side of the house to remember the federal election, if they go back to the federal election campaign they will recall that the then Prime Minister suggested the relocation of flying operations from Essendon Airport and the redevelopment of the site as an arts complex. What was suggested then was a multimedia area of significant detail. Obviously there is a huge space there, particularly the area used for hangars, which would be very suitable for the filming industry.

I heard the Premier on the radio at the time, against his will, support this initiative. In his own words, referring to the former Prime Minister, Mr Keating, the Premier said:

If he is serious we'd like it, we'd want it, we'd welcome it ...

I can assure you he would not welcome it as much as the residents of Essendon and Strathmore would. This controversy has been a great nuisance and has been going on for nearly as long as *Blue Hills*. It is no longer appropriate to have an airport at this site. Apart from the fact that it is uneconomic and loses a substantial amount of money each year, there are many other reasons why it is inappropriate. The site is environmentally unfriendly, it causes a great deal of air and noise pollution and most of the operations have already been relocated to other airports.

In the circumstances it would be much more appropriate to use it for some purpose that is far more environmentally friendly to the residents of the area and far more economically beneficial to Victoria. It is obvious that many other much more suitable activities could be put on the site.

In view of the Premier's previous expressions of enthusiasm for arts complexes and film studios on this site I ask him to work with his federal colleagues now in government to seek a change in the operations at the site as soon as possible and get a suitable operation that would be much more financially beneficial to all the residents of this state.

Hampton beach renourishment

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management the commitment to provide \$8 million for beach renourishment works along Victoria's coastline. The Hampton beach renourishment program was given a funding commitment to the value of \$3 million. That was as a consequence of extensive works carried out by the bayside councils around the perimeter of Port Phillip Bay. The councils had prioritised their own projects according to the level of need.

Earlier works were undertaken in McCrae. As a result of economic cutbacks some years ago, some of the work was suspended for a brief period by the former Labor government. When this government came to office it made a commitment to conservation and environment in a way that enabled programs and projects to be prioritised in an appropriate manner.

In addition to the Hampton beach renourishment program having the support of the Bayside Councils Association, a number of community groups and individuals have taken a long-standing interest in the works being redeveloped. They include Colin Downie, a long-standing contributor to local issues

over decades; Michael Burke who revived the Hampton Foreshore Residents Association; Graeme Disney, a local historian, and other members of the Sandringham Yacht Club who were concerned about wave refraction as the waves hit the wall at Hampton and bounce back into the Sandringham harbour.

As a consequence of extensive representations a decision was made by the Treasurer to fund the renourishment of the Hampton beach. The specific issue drawn to my attention concerns the nature of the groynes that will be constructed along Hampton beach. If the harbour to the south subsequently has sand washed into it, the groynes may have to be relocated. If they are made of a timber structure they will be in a form where they can be relocated, but if they are of stone they will be there in perpetuity and the structures would interrupt the wave pattern of the northward or southward drift of sand along Port Phillip Bay.

Will the minister ask her department to carefully review the materials that will be used to construct the groins so they will not, in the event of the Hampton beach being washed to Altona or south back to Sandringham, have a negative impact?

Optus: overhead cable

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Conservation and Land Management the installation of the cable network by Optus Vision in the western suburbs, particularly in the City of Brimbank where Optus has been ruthless in pruning trees — if one can call it pruning. As the newspaper headlines say, they are butchering them.

Will the minister examine this matter because of the constraints placed on how much money the councils can spend, unlike other municipalities that have taken the issue to the Supreme Court to stop the network cabling industry from butchering trees. Many of the trees on the nature strips have been nurtured by school children and residents.

Mr McArthur — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Keilor is wasting the time of this chamber because, as he well knows, the Optus program operates under the protection of federal legislation.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Keilor is raising with the minister a legitimate matter.

Mr SEITZ — Will the minister use her good office to convince Optus to train the people how to properly prune the trees and to consult the residents before they move in and butcher? Will the minister examine what different methods can be applied because in some areas in the City of Brimbank the cables have been put underground. The federal act says that where there are underground cables, all cables should go underground. Will the minister make a public statement and become involved in the matter? Some 18 councils have already united to campaign to have the cables put underground because of the damage that is being done to the environment.

Other councils have joined in this debate. The Darebin — —

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

At this point I remind members that when raising matters concerning federal responsibilities they should indicate how they would like the state minister to respond. I acknowledge the legitimate role of state ministers in these matters, but it would help the Chair if honourable members indicated how a state minister can respond to their concerns. Members should not raise federal matters unless the minister has responsibility for it or the minister can take action.

Responses

Mr BROWN (Minister for Transport) — The honourable member for Wantirna referred to the need for the introduction of a new bus service into part of his electorate — that is, a bus from Rowville to Glen Waverley, a very busy part of Melbourne. As the member quite rightly said, in the past three and a half years this government has made many improvements, including new school services and the effective duplication of part of Wellington Road. Many millions of dollars have been spent on transport and many other works.

Some time ago the National Bus Company was the successful tenderer in taking over the bulk of the metropolitan bus fleet, and it is worth mentioning that it is running a substantial number of services at a much lower cost to the taxpayers of this state. As a result, this government now wants a similar outcome for other suburban areas, in particular, a successful outcome for the city of Melbourne, where better bus services at a lower cost are needed. We have no doubt that that can be achieved. Jim

Kennan, a former transport minister, tried to achieve it, but his plan failed dismally, as has happened with so many Labor ministers.

This government plans to achieve the gaol, and I am delighted to inform my colleague that not only is a bus company prepared to run this service at no cost to the taxpayer but also I have been told only today that a second company is prepared to run the bus service on a no-cost-to-taxpayer basis. That is something the Labor Party could only have dreamt about, but it is a reality under this government.

More than one company being interested in providing this service means that the community will potentially receive the best of all outcomes. As many companies are competing for the business we will not unilaterally give it to one because we want the best outcome possible. The current round of negotiations with the industry will be addressed in the very near future.

I know my colleague has taken a keen interest in this matter for more than three years because he drew the matter to my attention when I visited the area. He showed me the problem on the ground and I admitted that it was a disgrace. Public transport under Labor was in a pathetic state. I am delighted to assure the member that any new service will be an excellent gain for his local area.

My colleague the honourable member for Oakleigh referred to the extension of the excellent noise attenuation measures being undertaken on the extension of the South East Arterial. That was another graphic example of the Labor government caring nought about the communities along the roads it built. It built what some thought was a half-baked freeway, but it was not even as good as that! It was called a link road but the community called it the South Eastern Car Park.

The government is now righting all the wrongs by providing grade separations at busy intersections along the South Eastern Arterial at Toorak Road and Burke Road and fixing a raft of other intersections that this incompetent mob left in place after it was thrown out of office nearly four years ago.

One of the concerns that was expressed at the time by the community was that noise abatement measures should be put in place to relieve the very distressing circumstances for those living along the freeway. The government has cleaned up messes in health, education and many other areas and now it is spending millions of dollars on this area. My

ADJOURNMENT

Thursday, 16 May 1996

ASSEMBLY

231

colleague asked that consideration be given to further work in this regard. Accordingly, I will refer that matter to the Minister for Roads and Ports in another place who has the responsibility for that work.

Two other matters were raised for my attention. The gall of members of the Labor opposition seems to have no limit! Both issues raised resulted directly from the incompetence of the former Labor government. As a result of the honourable member for Thomastown receiving a letter, my staff and rail staff who clean the station will be aggrieved because he made a callous and outrageous attack on them. Those people are decent, hard working citizens, but they were castigated by the honourable member for Thomastown. He will probably find that they live in his electorate. He said the cleaning was 'non-existent'. That means they never do it. The *Hansard* record will show that the honourable member for Thomastown has made an untrue claim about non-existent cleaning at the Lalor railway station. It is a blatant untruth. The station is cleaned regularly, unlike the situation when the Labor Party was in office.

I am told in constant telephone and personal representations that the government has cleaned up the system. The system we inherited was graffiti-ridden from front to back. The honourable member says the cleaning at the Lalor railway station is non-existent when it is done on a regular basis.

Mr Batchelor — How often?

Mr BROWN — It is done daily. The honourable member says the work people who live in his community are paid to do is non-existent. I will pass on that information to my staff who were castigated today by the honourable member. He said the station was never cleaned. The term he used was 'non-existent'. He also said the cleaning was haphazard and intermittent. If it is non-existent I cannot see how it can be haphazard or intermittent. It is like saying that some people stagger to the back bar of the Markillies Hotel!

The honourable member is pulling things out of the air. He does not care that he is besmirching people's reputations. He will say and do anything! Tomorrow I will tell my staff about this unmitigated attack on them. I am sure they will be concerned that their good work has been brought into disrepute by this man, but when they find out who he is they will not be so concerned!

I have no doubt that the people who do the work of cleaning that station — including removing the graffiti that the former government left in place all the time — will be aghast to hear these unfounded allegations from the member for Werribee. Talk about gall! Trish Vejby is known as the real member for the area. She is the one who has got the results down there over four years. Yet this new member of Parliament stands up and says she wants money spent — —

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr BROWN — Are you saying your new member is a failure! That's what you said! Let the record show that the honourable member interjected saying, 'She's a failure' — and I am talking about the new member — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Batchelor — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Minister for Transport is deliberately misleading the house.

Mr BROWN — You said it!

Mr Batchelor — He is deliberately misleading the house and I ask him to withdraw the remark.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member cannot say the minister is deliberately misleading the house. I suggest to the honourable member that if he wishes to interject across the table he is inviting an aggressive response. If the cap fits he had better wear it, but I ask the minister to ignore interjections and complete his remarks.

Mr BROWN — I will do my best, Mr Speaker. I am trying to give a measured response on these important issues, yet I get nothing but constant interjections from the other side. It is most distressing.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will give you all the protection I can.

Mr BROWN — I will handle it to the best of my ability. The new and present member — until the next election — is asking us to pick up the tab for the roadworks, which the former Labor government should have done but did not. I make it clear that the government is spending twice the amount of money on roads that the former Labor government spent. The entire community — the 1.5 million members of the RACV, the people who use

road-based public transport or the people who just use the roads for themselves, including the kids in the area — knows that the Labor government let road funding grind down until it was only a patch-and-repair-potholes situation.

That is how it was, and the opposition well knows it. I even hear words like hallelujah when government members are thanked for what they are doing for roads, because, as is the case with so many other issues, they care. The government is not like the Labor Party, which has no compassion. The government is fixing up the roads, the poor state of which was another legacy left by the Labor government. As I said, we are pouring twice the amount of money into Victoria's road system, and people see evidence of that wherever they drive. They know the government is fixing up the mess left behind by Labor.

Trish Vejby will ensure that the roadworks that Labor left undone for a decade will be carried out. There is not one undertaking Trish Vejby has given that will not be honoured to the letter. I already know that the people in Werribee realise the tragic mistake they made in choosing the wrong person, a member of the Guilty Party, who will get them no result of any kind whatsoever. I look forward to working with Trish to make sure that come the election in four years time she is in her rightful place — not on the opposition side but on this side of the house with the government of the day.

Mr KENNETT (Premier) — I thank His Excellency for answering the question. The Minister for Transport is more interested in Government House than anything else. You will be surprised what will happen in a few years time!

I endorse the minister's comments regarding Trish Vejby and I confirm that the government will honour all those commitments made by Trish Vejby. She will be opening each and every one of those developments as they occur, which is an indication of the esteem that the government has for her efforts.

The honourable member for Geelong North raised for my attention an Israeli organisation that has been in Australia for some time. It is represented by two people who have been moving among the community looking at various sites to establish a major operation. The honourable members for Bellarine and Geelong raised this issue with me before the election. The difficulty is that the two individuals are looking for funding. They have a great concept, but they have no funding for their

commercial operation and they are looking for financial support from the government. At this stage they are seeking almost total funding. That is not the way we work and I am sure it is not the way a Labor government would work, given what has happened in the past.

Suffice to say, we have had calls from a number of people from Werribee and the surrounding district, market gardeners and the like, who want to export their produce overseas in the same way that the Israeli delegates want to do it with our community funding.

The production of vegetables has boomed not just in Werribee, but around Mildura, where hundreds of broad acres once used for grazing are now being used for the growing of carrots and other vegetables — they are developing new industries and are exporting vegetables to Japan and our north.

The government has been examining the issue for some months and I reassure my colleagues on this side of the chamber, just as I reassure the honourable member for Geelong North, that if it were anything more than a pipedream the government would be the first to pick it up, but we cannot fund an idea or their commercial operation. If the circumstances change, they are only a phone call away.

The honourable member for Essendon raised the Essendon Airport. She asked about the former Prime Minister's election promise of relocating the airport and developing the site as an arts complex for the film industry. If you ever saw a desperate election promise by a desperate Prime Minister, that was it, because he flew into Melbourne made a promise and flew out again without providing any funding.

Ms Gillett interjected.

Mr KENNETT — The difference is that we are in government and Keating is not in government or in the federal Parliament. The former Prime Minister was dishonest when he made that promise.

Mr Batchelor interjected.

Mr KENNETT — You are getting back into printing, are you? The government believes that Essendon Airport is coming to the end of its useful life because its traffic flow is minimal. It could be developed as a centre for the export of freight, but the difficulty is that to export fresh vegetables you need high volume and large plane capacities.

Mr Haermeyer interjected.

Mr KENNETT — You will never be in government while I am in Parliament!

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Yan Yean should cease interjecting, especially when he is out of his place.

Mr KENNETT — We believe Essendon Airport is coming to the end of its natural life. I believe there are other options, such as Avalon, that should be considered. In the long term, into the middle of the next century, we should also be considering some other provision on the other side of town, perhaps near Cranbourne, where the population is moving quickly. If we were able to do something at Avalon and we had Tullamarine and perhaps an airport at Cranbourne we would have a very good air infrastructure not only for passengers but also for freight.

My first and primary concern is freight. Passengers will be well catered for at Tullamarine, but if we are to be competitive into the 21st century we need to be able to generate food and then export it from a new facility, and I hope that will happen over the next dozen years.

No time frame has been set for the relocation of Essendon Airport. It is not an easy decision. However, the hardest part is actually making the decision to relocate and that will have to be done in conjunction with the federal government. We have already had discussions on it at a very early stage. As the new federal government settles into office we will continue those discussions, but at the same time we will take into account the rights of those who are currently at Essendon.

I will keep the honourable member informed and I hope she will not raise the expectations of the community too high too quickly. If we are to manage this well it will be a process that involves the state and federal governments. We will then consider the provision of the infrastructure at Avalon and decide what to do with the Essendon site. I don't think it will be used as a film site. We have had discussions with a number of people but I don't think that is a possibility. Of course, there was no funding under the previous government. The government will keep the honourable member and the house informed with the passage of time.

Dr NAPHTHINE (Minister for Youth and Community Services) — The honourable member

for Cranbourne referred to a health care centre in the Cranbourne area. In his usual manner he was very forthright in raising matters of concern to his constituents. It is easy to see why he was returned to this place with such a significantly increased majority.

Health care centres are an excellent concept designed to bring health services to the people in new and growing suburbs. The coalition health policy issued during the 1996 election campaign under the previous Minister for Health, now the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, announced that six health care centres would be built in the growing suburbs around Melbourne — Sunbury, Lilydale, Knox, Berwick, Cranbourne and Melton — at a cost of more than \$50 million. Those health care centres will take health services to the people. They reflect the new approaches to health where more health services can be delivered in these ambulatory care, walk-in, walk-out situations.

Some five years ago about 20 per cent of our surgery was day surgery and that figure is now over 40 per cent. By the year 2000 — only four years away — about 60 per cent of surgery will be day surgery. There are now lots of opportunities to do what was previously done in hospitals and hospital beds out in different settings, both day care and day surgery settings, where the people live. People will be able to have the convenience of attending those centres in their own communities. We will be able to provide up-to-date, modern diagnostic facilities in those areas.

Many of the outpatient services and day surgeries that are currently available only in centralised Melbourne hospitals or at Monash Medical Centre will be available in those centres. I shall provide a simple example of what can be done. Recently a young boy in the country fell out of a tree and onto his skull. He was taken to a nearby centre where, through the use of modern medical technology, he had a CAT scan by a technician at that centre and a visual image was projected on a screen many kilometres away where it was examined by a radiologist who was an expert in the area. He was able to identify a fractured skull but also say there was no blood clotting or aneurism, so the boy was able to be treated within his own community rather than have to be flown or driven to the Royal Children's Hospital or another Melbourne hospital.

That is the sort of thing people will be able to do in Cranbourne, Berwick, Lilydale and Sunbury rather than being forced to visit some of our major

metropolitan hospitals. That is taking health services to the people, which is what we are trying to do with our health delivery system. I know the honourable member for Cranbourne and the Cranbourne Community Health Centre people have been at the forefront in trying to ensure the Cranbourne community is first cab off the rank in having one of those facilities established there. I am sure the Minister for Health in the other place will ensure that Cranbourne is high on that agenda.

The honourable member for Cranbourne referred to siting the facility at the Cranbourne Civic Centre; he said the Southern Health Care Network has identified that as a possibility. I will pass that request on to the minister and I am sure he will seek to pursue the matter through the Southern Health Care Network and will, if necessary, negotiate with the City of Casey to ensure a facility is established where it is required at Cranbourne as soon as possible.

Mrs TEHAN (Minister for Conservation and Land Management) — The honourable member for Bundoora raised with me the proposed development of the snowfields and attendant development attached to the snowfields at Mount Hotham. I presume she was relying on the media information published at the weekend, which I also read, suggesting the establishment of a major development there to the tune of about \$60 million; that would certainly enlarge the skiing facilities on the mountain.

The honourable member raised the necessity for planning processes that would take into account the sensitivity of the alpine area where this development would take place. I agree with the honourable member that any development on any of our mountains needs to go through a process that takes into account the need for sensitive and appropriate development.

However, there is no doubt that for many years — perhaps even 50 years — Mount Hotham has been recognised as an established snowfield to which people travel for recreational purposes. There is no doubt about the attraction of the mountain for skiing and its attendant uses in summer and other seasons for recreational purposes.

As I understand it, the proposal has been put to the Alpine Resorts Commission, but certainly no permits have yet been issued. I will ensure that appropriate environmental studies are conducted

and that environmental issues are taken into account in any process prior to the granting of permits.

The honourable member may be interested to know that in recent days the Alpine Resorts Commission has published an environmental management strategy document. It is the first time the commission has set out a framework for the development of the snowfields; it stresses the need for development to occur within an environmental strategy. That strategy will certainly be a part of the requirements for compliance in any proposal for development at Mount Hotham.

I propose to establish a working party, including people in the department with the appropriate expertise, to work with the Alpine Resorts Commission to ensure we have a consultative process that carefully examines the environmental impact on the proposed development. We will carefully watch the development, and before any permits are granted we will need to address environmental issues as they come forward.

There is no doubt that the vast majority of Victorian skiers and the increasing number of people who use the snowfields will welcome the development at Mount Hotham. The mountain has not had a major development for many years, even though it is an established snowfield. I have no doubt that the development will advantage the recreational use of the snowfields in future years.

The honourable member for Knox raised with me the question of platypus found in the Knox area. An article in the *Knox News* of Tuesday, 9 April, carried the most interesting headline 'Webbed wonder wades in', heralding the fact that six platypus had been discovered in the Knox waterways. The find startled experts, who had not expected the freakish mammals to be so close to suburbia.

I am as delighted as the honourable member for Knox that we now have rivers and streams in metropolitan Melbourne of sufficient clarity and quality to entice the platypus back to what I do not doubt many years ago was its natural water habitat. The platypus left those areas because of disturbance and development but some are now coming back. During the election campaign, I was pleased to be with Geoff Williams of the Australian Platypus Conservancy when he presented the results of a study he had done in the Whittlesea area — a little bit further out — on the return of the platypus to some of the rivers close to settled areas.

The honourable member for Knox has written to me suggesting that the government might be able to work with the City of Knox in its efforts to manage its environmental projects, for which it has an excellent reputation. Knox has a number of projects but there is a particular need for the revegetation of waterways and other linear open space to be given a high priority so that we can not only maintain the platypi that are there but encourage others to come back and increase the number of animals in that outer part of Melbourne.

As I said, Knox City Council has an excellent reputation for managing environmental projects, and its annual urban forest program involves revegetation of waterways and other linear spaces. The city is also in the process of conducting a botanical survey of all the creek lines in Knox. The information provided by the survey will be used to establish a geographic database on vegetation types, condition, weed infestation and so on to enable the information to be readily accessed and used in management projects on the ground.

I advise the honourable member for Knox that the council has a number of funding sources for revegetation available to it, and has already had access to some Melbourne Parks and Waterways and departmental conservation grants. I have asked the department to work with the City of Knox to enable it to continue its excellent record in environmental projects, but particularly to ensure that our webbed wonders continue to wade in and around the creeks of Knox.

The honourable member for Sandringham raised the issue of the funding announced yesterday in the Treasurer's excellent May economic statement for beach renourishment around Port Phillip Bay — that is, the \$8 million that has been set aside and will be spent over the next 12 months or so. The matter was raised with the honourable member for Sandringham by Mr Geoffrey Goode, who is the secretary of the Port Phillip Conservation Council. Mr Goode is well known to me by reputation and I met him when I was formerly involved with the conservation portfolio. He is well known around the Port Phillip Bay area for the work he and his council — a federation of 15 conservation organisations around Port Phillip — have done over many years.

There will be an allocation for the renourishment of Hampton Beach, the restoration of which is a high priority. The matter specifically raised by the honourable member for Sandringham relates to the

groynes that will need to be used in the renourishment of the beach. Mr Goode has suggested that consideration be given to the use of timber groynes instead of the traditional groynes, which are normally made of dumped boulders, because if and when there is no need for the continuing renourishment of the beach timber groynes can be removed more easily than the permanent boulder groynes.

No doubt a number of matters would have to be taken into account, but I will ensure that, as the program for the Hampton Beach renourishment is developed, proper consideration is given to the proposal put forward by the council. If it is not practical or it is too expensive we will inform Mr Goode through the honourable member for Sandringham that we have considered his proposal and made a decision for what should be the right and proper reasons.

I thank the honourable member for bringing the proposal to my attention because I know that he and the conservation council, the members of the new Coastal and Bay Management Council and all the people who use Port Phillip Bay will be delighted that funding has been provided, as is mentioned in the May statement, and that there is an ongoing program of beach renourishment in the bay area.

The honourable member for Keilor raised the matter of lines being installed in the western suburbs and referred particularly to Optus lines. As he said, the Optus proposal for underground cables or overhead lines is predominantly a federal matter and has federal legislative protection. However, I agree with the honourable member that, be it Optus, the former SEC or one or other of the new electricity corporations and be it in the city, a suburb or a country area, some of the pruning mechanisms used in the process of installing new lines leave a lot to be desired. Trees take a long time to grow and they beautify streets. The people who use those streets find it heartbreaking when great swathes are cut through trees or when trees are cut back more dramatically than is necessary. It would not be beyond us to bring pressure to bear so there is proper pruning in areas that need to be cleared. Fire prevention is one of the main reasons for lopping in country areas, but I think it has to be a matter of balance.

I suggest that the honourable member liaise with the local council, with the support of the minister, to try to get a more sensitive approach to the lopping of our trees. That philosophy should permeate all the

ADJOURNMENT

236

ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 May 1996

authorities and municipalities that are responsible for tree lopping, because nothing is more incensing to people who have watched trees grow than to see them insensitively cut back when it is not necessary. I will keep an eye on that, and I exhort the honourable member to speak to his local council to see whether it can be addressed at that level.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 5.25 p.m. until Tuesday, 28 May.