

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

4 June 2002

(extract from Book 9)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

JOHN LANDY, AC, MBE

The Lieutenant-Governor

Lady SOUTHEY, AM

The Ministry

Premier and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. S. P. Bracks, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Health	The Hon. J. W. Thwaites, MP
Minister for Education Services and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. M. M. Gould, MLC
Minister for Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Ports	The Hon. C. C. Broad, MLC
Minister for State and Regional Development, Treasurer and Minister for Innovation	The Hon. J. M. Brumby, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Workcover	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Senior Victorians and Minister for Consumer Affairs	The Hon. C. M. Campbell, MP
Minister for Planning, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. M. E. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation	The Hon. S. M. Garbutt, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. A. Haermeyer, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. K. G. Hamilton, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Manufacturing Industry and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Minister for Education and Training	The Hon. L. J. Kosky, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. J. J. J. Lenders, MP
Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Commonwealth Games	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Employment and Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. Pandazopoulos, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Community Services and Minister assisting the Premier on Community Building	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Small Business and Minister for Information and Communication Technology	The Hon. M. R. Thomson, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet	The Hon. Gavin Jennings, MLC

Legislative Assembly Committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Cooper, Mr Holding, Mr Hulls, Mr Loney, Mr Maclellan, Mr Maughan, Mr Nardella, Mr Plowman and Mr Thwaites.

Standing Orders Committee — Mr Speaker, Mrs Barker, Mr Jasper, Mr Langdon, Mr McArthur, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Perton.

Joint Committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables B. C. Boardman and S. M. Nguyen. (*Assembly*): Mr Cooper, Mr Jasper, Mr Lupton, Mr Mildenhall and Mr Wynne.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables R. F. Smith and E. G. Stoney. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Ms Duncan, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Lindell and Mr Seitz.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables E. J. Powell, G. D. Romanes and J. W. G. Ross. (*Assembly*): Mr Hardman, Mr Lim, Mr Nardella and Mrs Peulich.

House Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President (*ex officio*), G. B. Ashman, R. A. Best, J. M. McQuilten, Jenny Mikakos and R. F. Smith. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Kilgour, Ms McCall, Mr Rowe, Mr Savage and Mr Stensholt.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables R. H. Bowden, D. G. Hadden and P. A. Katsambanis. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Ms McCall, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Library Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, E. C. Carbines, M. T. Luckins, E. J. Powell and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Duncan, Mr Languiller, Mrs Peulich and Mr Seitz.

Printing Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, Andrea Coote, Kaye Darveniza and E. J. Powell. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Gillett, Mr Nardella and Mr Richardson.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables D. McL. Davis, R. M. Hallam, G. K. Rich-Phillips and T. C. Theophanous. (*Assembly*): Ms Barker, Mr Clark, Ms Davies, Mr Holding, Mr Loney and Mrs Maddigan.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Andrew Brideson and E. C. Carbines. (*Assembly*): Mr Kilgour, Mr Langdon, Mr Plowman, Mr Spry and Mr Trezise.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables M. A. Birrell, Jenny Mikakos, A. P. Olexander and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Carli, Ms Gillett, Mr Maclellan and Mr Robinson.

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

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

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

Hansard — Chief Reporter: Ms C. J. Williams

Library — Librarian: Mr B. J. Davidson

Joint Services — Director, Corporate Services: Mr S. N. Aird
Director, Infrastructure Services: Mr G. C. Spurr

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. ALEX ANDRIANOPOULOS

Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees: Mrs J. M. MADDIGAN

Temporary Chairmen of Committees: Ms Barker, Ms Davies, Mr Jasper, Mr Kilgour, Mr Loney, Mr Lupton, Mr Nardella,
Mrs Peulich, Mr Phillips, Mr Plowman, Mr Richardson, Mr Savage, Mr Seitz

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. S. P. BRACKS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. W. THWAITES

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

The Hon. D. V. NAPHTHINE

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

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of the Parliamentary National Party:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary National Party:

Mr B. E. H. STEGGALL

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Leighton, Mr Michael Andrew	Preston	ALP
Allen, Ms Denise Margret ⁴	Benalla	ALP	Lenders, Mr John Johannes Joseph	Dandenong North	ALP
Andrianopoulos, Mr Alex	Mill Park	ALP	Lim, Mr Hong Muy	Clayton	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
Ashley, Mr Gordon Wetzel	Bayswater	LP	Loney, Mr Peter James	Geelong North	ALP
Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman	Hawthorn	LP	Lupton, Mr Hurtle Reginald, OAM, JP	Knox	LP
Barker, Ms Ann Patricia	Oakleigh	ALP	McArthur, Mr Stephen James	Monbulk	LP
Batchelor, Mr Peter	Thomastown	ALP	McCall, Ms Andrea Lea	Frankston	LP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Tullamarine	ALP	McIntosh, Mr Andrew John	Kew	LP
Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip	Williamstown	ALP	MacLellan, Mr Robert Roy Cameron	Pakenham	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield	Broadmeadows	ALP	McNamara, Mr Patrick John ³	Benalla	NP
Burke, Ms Leonie Therese	Prahran	LP	Maddigan, Mrs Judith Marilyn	Essendon	ALP
Cameron, Mr Robert Graham	Bendigo West	ALP	Maughan, Mr Noel John	Rodney	NP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Maxfield, Mr Ian John	Narracan	ALP
Carli, Mr Carlo	Coburg	ALP	Mildenhall, Mr Bruce Allan	Footscray	ALP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Cooper, Mr Robert Fitzgerald	Mornington	LP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	Portland	LP
Davies, Ms Susan Margaret	Gippsland West	Ind	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Dean, Dr Robert Logan	Berwick	LP	Overington, Ms Karen Marie	Ballarat West	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Wimmera	NP	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
Delahunty, Ms Mary Elizabeth	Northcote	ALP	Paterson, Mr Alister Irvine	South Barwon	LP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Dromana	LP	Perton, Mr Victor John	Doncaster	LP
Doyle, Robert Keith Bennett	Malvern	LP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	Bentleigh	LP
Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese	Gisborne	ALP	Phillips, Mr Wayne	Eltham	LP
Elliott, Mrs Lorraine Clare	Mooroolbark	LP	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane	Melbourne	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann	Evelyn	LP	Plowman, Mr Antony Fulton	Benambra	LP
Garbutt, Ms Sherryl Maree	Bundoora	ALP	Richardson, Mr John Ingles	Forest Hill	LP
Gillett, Ms Mary Jane	Werribee	ALP	Robinson, Mr Anthony Gerard Peter	Mitcham	ALP
Haermeyer, Mr André	Yan Yean	ALP	Rowe, Mr Gary James	Cranbourne	LP
Hamilton, Mr Keith Graeme	Morwell	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian	Gippsland South	NP
Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Savage, Mr Russell Irwin	Mildura	Ind
Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Seitz, Mr George	Keilor	ALP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Springvale	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
Honeywood, Mr Phillip Neville	Warrandyte	LP	Smith, Mr Ernest Ross	Glen Waverley	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Spry, Mr Garry Howard	Bellarine	LP
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Steggall, Mr Barry Edward Hector	Swan Hill	NP
Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar ²	Burwood	ALP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	NP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton	Sandringham	LP
Kennett, Mr Jeffrey Gibb ¹	Burwood	LP	Thwaites, Mr Johnstone William	Albert Park	ALP
Kilgour, Mr Donald	Shepparton	NP	Treize, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Frankston East	ALP
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Warrnambool	LP
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Wantima	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo	Sunshine	ALP	Wilson, Mr Ronald Charles	Bennettswood	LP
Leigh, Mr Geoffrey Graeme	Mordialloc	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Resigned 3 November 1999

² Elected 11 December 1999

³ Resigned 12 April 2000

⁴ Elected 13 May 2000

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 4 JUNE 2002

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>Crime: statistics</i>	2019, 2021
<i>Sport: violence</i>	2019
<i>Nurses: rural Victoria</i>	2019
<i>Hospitals: government performance</i>	2020
<i>Schools: parent satisfaction</i>	2022
<i>Attorney-General: conduct</i>	2022, 2023
<i>Housing: Latrobe Valley</i>	2023
<i>Biotechnology: government assistance</i>	2023

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS2020

PETITION

<i>Prisons: Frankston</i>	2025
---------------------------------	------

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS

COMMITTEE

<i>Alert Digest No. 6</i>	2025
---------------------------------	------

BLF CUSTODIAN

<i>55th report</i>	2025
--------------------------	------

PAPERS2025

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

<i>Program</i>	2025
----------------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Belgrave bypass</i>	2029
<i>John Lockett</i>	2029
<i>Whelan family</i>	2030
<i>Echuca Musical Theatre Company</i>	2030
<i>Werribee Vision project</i>	2030
<i>Local government: rate concessions</i>	2030
<i>Schools: Mitcham</i>	2031
<i>Ann Henderson</i>	2031
<i>Mount Baw Baw resort</i>	2031
<i>Sorrento: settlement display centre</i>	2032
<i>Soccer: Burwood clubs</i>	2032

MAGISTRATES' COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2032
<i>Third reading</i>	2037
<i>Remaining stages</i>	2037

GAMING LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2037
<i>Committee</i>	2071, 2076
<i>Remaining stages</i>	2084

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (RESOURCE EFFICIENCY) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2084
-----------------------------	------

APPROPRIATION (2002/2003) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	2093
-----------------------------	------

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Taxis: multipurpose</i>	2112
<i>Disability services: western suburbs</i>	2112
<i>Bail justices: Wimmera</i>	2113
<i>Mickleham–Barrymore roads, Greenvale:</i> <i>traffic control</i>	2113
<i>Monash Medical Centre</i>	2114
<i>Ansett Australia: assistance package</i>	2114
<i>Kangaroos: control</i>	2114
<i>Petrol: terminal gate pricing</i>	2115
<i>Planning: Mornington Peninsula</i>	2115
<i>Greater Dandenong: councillor</i>	2115
<i>Geelong hospital</i>	2116
<i>Wy Yung: Berry Street Victoria house</i>	2116
<i>Beach Road, Beaumaris: traffic control</i>	2116
<i>Responses</i>	2117

Tuesday, 4 June 2002

The SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Crime: statistics

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded crime data for 2001, which reveals that serious crime has soared since the election of his government, with armed robbery up 66 per cent, unarmed robbery up 34 per cent, motor vehicle theft up 33 per cent and property theft up 15 per cent. Will the Premier now admit that the Labor Party has failed to ensure community safety and that Labor's election policy of no more excuses on crime is nothing more than spin from this do-nothing government?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I am happy to report to the house that Victoria has the lowest crime rate of any state in Australia — 20 per cent under the national average — because this government has put 800 extra police on the force. When the former government came to office it promised to employ 1000 extra police, but set about sacking 800. Not only does Victoria have the lowest crime rate of any state in Australia, it is also the safest state of any state in the commonwealth.

Sport: violence

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — Will the Premier advise the house what action the government is taking to help minimise the growing incidence of aggressive — sometimes violent — behaviour by parents at their children's sporting events?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for Coburg for his question. The unveiling of the monument to sportsmanship yesterday would have made every member of the house proud. Thanks to the cooperative efforts of the *Herald Sun*, the Herald and Weekly Times and the government of Victoria, the statue recognises the selfless act of assistance given by John Landy to Ron Clarke when Clarke fell in his race at the 1956 Australian championships.

That is the sort of sportsmanship we want and expect of our young sportsmen and women. Regrettably, this is not occurring everywhere, and in some junior sport areas the ugly parent syndrome is very apparent. We have resolved to take action on this matter and will take it by contacting every parent in the state and ensuring

that they comply with a new code of practice that will be developed by the sports minister.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member for Mordialloc to cease interjecting!

Mr BRACKS — We will also have a significant advertising campaign for spectators, for players, for officials and also for clubs. We want the clubs themselves to regulate this behaviour. Ninety-nine per cent of spectators want to see fair and open sport being played without aggression, but unfortunately there is a small percentage of ugly parents who do not in fact uphold that level of sportsmanship and that level of participation in sport without aggressive behaviour.

This month we will also have a forum called Fair Go for Officials that will work with officials, umpires, sporting administrators and others to ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities in administering junior sport in Victoria. We do not want to go down the route Queensland has gone down, where you can no longer barrack — you can simply clap, but no longer cheer. We want passion, but we want to ensure a safe environment for young people to play sport in.

These measures will, I believe, assist enormously to ensure that the notion of sportsmanship is enshrined in everything we do in junior sport in the state.

Nurses: rural Victoria

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I draw the attention of the Minister for Health to the fact that numerous country hospitals are now going into deficit because of the unfunded nurses enterprise bargaining agreement entered into by the government and ask: will the government meet the shortfall as it promised it would or is the government's intention to force country hospitals to dip into their reserve funds?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — I thank the honourable member for his question and indicate to the house that right across country Victoria our hospitals have been receiving very significant budget increases in the last year — more than \$100 million of extra funds! That is why we are seeing more nurses, some 800 extra nurses, in our country hospitals, which are able to provide a better quality of care, treat more patients and do something that under the previous government could never have been done — namely, provide an incentive for more nurses to come into country hospitals.

We are seeing our hospitals right across country Victoria performing extremely well. I have received letters from hospitals right across the country saying that now they are able to do what they could not do before — that is, provide an adequate level of care. I might compare that to the previous government and the honourable member. Where was he when Eildon, Koroit, Macarthur, Clunes, Elmore, Mortlake, Lismore, Beac and Birregurra hospitals were all closed?

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to please return him to that which I asked him.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am not prepared to uphold the point of order raised by the Leader of the National Party.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr THWAITES — For example, there is a letter here from Horsham, from the Wimmera Health Care Group, that says in reference to previous correspondence:

I wish to advise that with some continued goodwill from our nursing staff, it appears that the revised allocation —

of nurses —

should be sufficient to approximate the ratios that form part of the nurses enterprise bargaining agreement. Given that I previously wrote to you expressing my disappointment over the initial allocation, I feel compelled at this stage to acknowledge the work of yourself and your departmental colleagues in negotiating a satisfactory outcome which should enable us to redirect our attention to our core business activities.

Let's even look at the honourable member's own seat, Gippsland South.

Mr Ashley — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the question the minister is answering is obviously quite detailed, but it certainly is not the question put by the Leader of the National Party.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Bayswater. The question posed by the Leader of the National Party asked the minister to provide information about how the government is addressing hospital deficits in country Victoria. The minister was providing information in that area, and I will continue to hear him.

Mr THWAITES — In the honourable member's own electorate the Central Gippsland Health Service — I refer to the *Gippsland Times* — has had its nursing

staff bolstered with a state government announcement of an extra 18.5 nurses allocated to the hospital. If I can quote the chief executive officer of the hospital:

We are pleased with that increase.

The previous government slashed 2000 nurses from our public hospitals; we have put 3300 back, paid for by the Bracks government. And the hospitals are grateful for it.

Questions interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the next question, it gives me great pleasure to welcome to our gallery today a distinguished delegation of New Zealand members of Parliament, which is led by Mr Chris Carter, MP, the Government Whip. The delegation is here as part of the political exchange program. Welcome to you all.

Questions resumed.

Hospitals: government performance

Mr VINEY (Frankston East) — My question is for the Minister for Health. Will the minister explain to the house how the latest quarterly hospital statistics show that the government is turning around Victoria's public health system?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — I thank the honourable member for his question. The *March Hospital Services Report* does indeed demonstrate that the Bracks government is turning around the Victorian public health system. It clearly demonstrates that ambulance bypass is now significantly below the figure we inherited when we came to government.

We have spent the last two and a half years repairing the damage that was done to our health system by those opposite in a time when 12 hospitals were closed, when 2000 nurses were sacked, when 1000 beds were closed, when waiting lists increased by some 22 per cent — the last two years of the Kennett government. We have taken the necessary action — that is why we have employed 3300 extra nurses.

In the 2001–02 year we have put \$1.1 billion into our health system as part of our hospital demand management strategy. We have commenced \$900 million worth of capital works — the biggest capital works program in Victoria's history. In our first two years in government we have committed more to

capital works in our hospitals than the Kennett government did in six!

The latest March quarterly report indicates that the hospital bypass figure of 189 now is 68 per cent lower than the figure for the quarter we came into government, when it was 588. So that is 189 compared to some 588 in the December 1999 quarter, when we came into government.

In terms of waiting lists, they have reduced again by some 5.5 per cent. I remind the house that under the previous government waiting lists increased by 22 per cent in its last two years. The reduction has been achieved despite the fact that we are now treating more than 5 per cent extra patients and despite some 12 per cent extra emergency admissions in major metropolitan hospitals.

I am pleased to say that our senior clinicians are very supportive of the hospital demand management strategy. Dr Peter Cameron, who is the head of emergency at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, congratulated the government on bucking the national trend and achieving a reduction in occurrences of ambulance bypasses and in waiting lists.

Mr Doyle interjected.

Mr THWAITES — The shadow minister says, ‘That was last time’. That is right! Exactly! He has been behind the strategy which we have adopted. We have adopted the strategy that the senior clinicians have recommended and it is now being successfully implemented.

I am very pleased that we as a government have been able to turn around the health system after the terrible damage of the Kennett years.

Crime: statistics

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to his comments on 31 May this year relating to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics crime data, in which he states, ‘Problem areas such as aggravated burglaries, robberies and car thefts are improving’, and I ask: given that this report shows massive increases in aggravated burglaries and motor thefts, were the minister’s comments wrong or was he just lying?

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I have to say that members of the Liberal Party getting up and talking about crime rates and law and order are like the habitual bed-wetter complaining to mum that there is no fresh underwear!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAERMEYER — What a rabble! The Leader of the Opposition has got about as much control over his party room! Unbelievable!

In the last week two sets of statistics have become available. One set, that from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, covers the calendar year from January 2001 to the end of December 2001. What those statistics show is that Victoria is by a country mile the safest state in Australia, with a crime rate 20 per cent below — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HAERMEYER — It shows also that in almost every category we have the lowest crime rate. However, we have more recent statistics than that. They are the official Victoria Police year-to-date statistics to the end of April. What those figures show is that finally, after a decade of rising crime, Victoria is turning the corner.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAERMEYER — These are the official Victoria Police statistics. I know they will hurt those people opposite because they hate the police. That is why they sacked 800 of them!

What those statistics show is a reduction in the overall crime rate of around 2.5 per cent.

Mr McArthur — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I put it to you that the minister is now debating the question. This was a very specific question which related to comments that he made only last week. It asked the minister to clarify whether he was wrong or whether he was lying.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Monbulk that the minister was debating the question. I will continue to hear him.

Mr HAERMEYER — Those official Victoria Police statistics show that the overall crime rate is headed for a reduction of 2 per cent to 2.5 per cent and that for the first time in a decade our robbery figures have turned around, declining by 7.6 per cent. Our rate of home invasions and aggravated burglary, which was going up by hundreds of percentage points under the previous government, for the first time is down by

6.6 per cent. For the first time residential burglaries are down by 8 per cent.

I come to theft of motor vehicles. Under which government was the stolen motor vehicle squad abolished? That lot opposite! Of course motor vehicle theft went through the roof! Finally the rate has turned around. We are now looking at a 6.1 per cent reduction in motor vehicle thefts.

In almost any area you care to look at there is good news. That is not to say we do not have any crime. There are big inroads to be made, and there is a big job to be done undoing the damage that occurred after we had a cut of 800 police in this state. You really need to plot and have a look at the correlation between the declining police numbers under the previous government and the rising crime rate. And now that police numbers are back to where they should be you have to look at how the crime rate has tapered off and is starting to turn around.

This government is delivering the goods in getting the police on the streets, and that is absolutely the fundamental prerequisite to turning around a rising crime rate. It is no good getting out there talking tough about sentencing if you do not have the police to make the arrests and you do not have the jails to put those people in. What absolutely breathtaking hypocrisy that is from the opposition!

Yesterday the *Age* editorial actually talked about how desperate this opposition was trying to suddenly beat up law and order. It is not just desperate. Given its history on law and order — cutting police, overcrowding our jail cells, doing nothing and letting the crime rate go through the roof — it is not just desperate, it is dumb.

Schools: parent satisfaction

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I ask the Minister for Education and Training to explain to the house how the latest parent satisfaction statistics show the government is turning around Victoria's state school system.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Education and Training) — Yesterday the *Age* published results from the Saulwick *Age* poll which were very pleasing for government schools. I know that government schools around the state are very pleased with the results that were published yesterday.

The poll showed a very high level of parent satisfaction with government schools. It is pleasing because it confirms that what we are doing as a government — delivering on state school education — is in line with

what parents want, and the message from parents is loud and clear to this government.

The poll indicates that in government secondary schools 77 per cent of parents are satisfied that their child's school provides high-quality teaching, 78 per cent of parents are satisfied that their child's school is giving young people a good set of values and 91 per cent of parents are satisfied that their child's school provides a broad range of subjects.

We on this side support government schools, and we have supported them so much that we have invested an additional \$2.75 billion since coming to office. We have not done that just to invest dollars in schools; we have done that to increase the numbers of teachers and extra staff in the education system. Over 3000 additional teachers and staff have been put back into the education system since we came to office, with 925 more teachers to be appointed following the recently announced state budget. In contrast to that, when the state opposition was in government it sacked teachers and closed schools — in fact, 9000 teachers were taken from our schooling system.

It is very pleasing that these results show not only that we are turning around the educational outcomes occurring within our schools but that we are turning around parents' perceptions of our government schools here in Victoria. The parent opinion poll shows that government schools are meeting the academic and social needs of the students and are offering a range of successful education and training pathways.

I would have thought the opposition would now be thinking about how long the Leader of the Opposition can survive another bad survey. If he cannot, the question is which other opposition member will become the unluckiest raffle prize winner in Victorian political history when it is drawn by his state office some time in September. I wonder if the opposition's spokesperson for education has his eyes on that prize!

Attorney-General: conduct

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — I refer the Premier to his decision to allow his Attorney-General to take a \$42 000 taxpayer-funded overseas trip shortly after coming into office and I ask: was the Premier aware that the Attorney-General intended to spend thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money to divert from his schedule and go to the races in Los Angeles?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — First of all, it seems safe for the honourable member for Berwick to get up now that the Pakenham issue has been fixed. The opposition leader could not fix it for weeks and weeks and the

honourable member for Pakenham was threatening to resign. It is a safe ticket up and a rehearsal for the future in three months time.

I would have thought it was appropriate for the racing minister to go to racing events. I would have thought that was entirely in keeping with the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Racing. I am sure that what we see here is one of the best racing ministers we have ever had in this state!

Housing: Latrobe Valley

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — Will the Minister for Housing inform the house of what action the government is taking to turn around public housing in the Latrobe Valley and what spin-off opportunities this will deliver for the local community?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Housing) — Last year the Premier appointed a special ministerial task force — the Latrobe Valley task force — to look at a number of possible initiatives in the Latrobe Valley to turn around the years of destruction and devastation that that area of Victoria had been experiencing. Under the leadership of the Treasurer, late last year \$105.8 million of new initiatives were announced. Those initiatives are now being delivered in the Latrobe Valley and making a difference to people's lives and futures there.

The Latrobe Valley neighbourhood renewal strategy, which is part of the housing initiative in that part of Victoria, is delivering real jobs and real skills for the local community. It is part of \$17 million of new state-only money that will transform public housing in the Latrobe Valley over the next three years. As part of that \$17 million, the \$2 million Latrobe city urban renewal project is now employing 240 young people to renovate 20 former public housing properties in the Latrobe Valley before they are sold. Under this strategy over 100 participants have completed training to restore former public housing properties in Moe and Morwell. Of these long-term unemployed people, more than 50 are fully employed in either full-time or part-time work, and 5 have returned to study.

These are very exciting initiatives. For example, two houses in the valley that were previously valued at \$23 000 and \$32 000 recently sold at auction for \$52 000 and \$50 000 respectively. Any profits from those sales are reinvested into the project. Not only are we providing employment opportunities for young people in the valley and not only are we transforming social housing but we are actually adding value to the properties in the valley and providing real hope for the future. The neighbourhood renewal program is a very

successful program. It is turning around the public housing system in these and other communities across Victoria, and is helping to build stronger communities at the same time.

Attorney-General: conduct

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — My question is again to the Premier. I refer to a letter from the Attorney-General to the Premier of 30 August 2000 in which the Attorney-General requests extra taxpayers' funds for his overseas trip as a result of an underestimation of personal allowances and his trip to the races in Los Angeles. Why did the Premier agree that the taxpayers should foot the bill for the Attorney-General's overspending his personal allowance and taking a 1600-kilometre day trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles just to go to the races?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I will take that as a serious question. Because he was the racing minister he was invited by the board of the racing club to go to promote, as you would as the racing minister, what is one of the best horseracing industries in the world here in Victoria. We should be promoting that internationally. The racing minister has been doing a great job on that very task.

Biotechnology: government assistance

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — Will the Minister for Innovation advise the house about recent developments in the government's successful strategy to make Victoria a world leader in biotechnology?

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr BRUMBY (Minister for Innovation) — We will come to you in a moment, Victor!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member for Doncaster to cease interjecting and the Minister for Innovation to cease responding.

Mr BRUMBY — Today I attended a function to launch a significant new partnership between Melbourne's Bernard O'Brien Institute of Microsurgery and Onyvax Ltd, a London-based biotechnology company.

The Bernard O'Brien institute is one of our leading research institutes and is certainly internationally renowned for its pioneering work in tissue engineering and replantation surgery.

The partnership launched today will see up to \$1 million directed at research of cancer of the breast and cancer of the prostate through the development of vaccines based on human cell line research. It is just one example of the huge steps forward being taken by Victorian biotechnology and medical research institutes.

I am delighted to say that the collaboration between Onyvax and the Bernard O'Brien institute is a direct result of an introduction which occurred at Bio 2001 in San Diego last year. This agreement was brokered by Biocom International and is self-funded by the Bracks government under the technology commercialisation program. Today we are pleased to see this great collaboration come together. Last year at San Diego the Premier led a delegation of 143 Victorians, the largest delegation from any Australian state.

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — One of the pretenders to the leadership throne keeps interjecting. You can hear her singing 'I'll stand by you' to the Leader of the Opposition!

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

Mr BRUMBY — The honourable member for Malvern sings 'The talk of the town'!

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair just asked the minister to come back to answering the question!

Mr BRUMBY — The honourable member for Doncaster is certainly not on the list. Of course, the honourable member for Hawthorn sings 'Brass in pocket'.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, this is a consistent pattern by this minister: he disregards your rulings by getting up here with his prepared script of second-rate jokes and continues after you have brought him back to order. Mr Speaker, you have no choice but to sit him down immediately if he continues on this occasion.

The SPEAKER — Order! The point of order raised by the honourable member for Doncaster is very similar to his previous point of order. The Chair had just called the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr Leigh — Have you still got that knapsack?

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the honourable member for Mordialloc!

Mr BRUMBY — This year the Bio 2002 conference will be held in Toronto, and again the Premier will be leading the delegation. We expect more than 16 Victorian companies and institutes to attend. There will be more than 150 Victorian delegates, which again will be more than any other state and will show the phenomenal growth in and support for biotechnology that is occurring in Victoria.

Last week fantastic news was announced for our state — that is, that Victoria would be the headquarters for the national Biotechnology Centre of Excellence, the Centre for Stem Cells and Tissue Repair. The federal government has given \$46 million and \$10 million has been contributed by the Victorian government. Victoria was chosen because we are the best at biotechnology.

Last week saw the launch of ES Cell International in collaboration with Monash University. Again, that was built around Professor Alan Trounson's outstanding work and again puts Victoria on the map in terms of biotechnology. Last month's budget provided \$100 million for the national synchrotron facility at Monash University. Two years ago we provided funding for Bio21 at Parkville. We have also been successful in seeing the establishment in Victoria of the National Neuroscience Facility, which was funded in the first instance by a grant of \$13 million from the Bracks government.

The fact of the matter is that this industry in Victoria is going ahead in leaps and bounds. It is supported generously and strongly by the Bracks government taking a strong leadership position. Looking at some of the statistics in relation to biotechnology, one-third of the nation's biotechnology companies are now located in Victoria. We have 54 per cent of the biotechnology market by market capitalisation, and over the last 18 months 4 out of 10 of all new biotech start-ups in Australia have been based in Victoria.

We have a great industry. We have a biotechnology strategic plan, which we funded with \$27 million in the recent budget. We doubled the money for medical research funding in the recent budget by \$35 million. If you speak to anybody in this industry in this state you will find that they will say the industry is growing rapidly. It has a huge potential for major medical breakthroughs, for improvements to our quality of life and for economic benefits, and we are backing it

100 per cent. The leadership which has been provided by the Bracks government is generating substantial new investment opportunities for our state.

PETITION

The Clerk — I have received the following petition for presentation to Parliament:

Prisons: Frankston

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the people of Frankston and Mount Eliza sheweth their concern over a proposed correctional facility being established in Frankston.

Your petitioners therefore pray that no mini-jail be established in Frankston.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Ms McCALL (Frankston) (607 signatures)

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Frankston be considered next day on motion of Ms McCALL (Frankston).

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 6

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) presented *Alert Digest No. 6 of 2002* on:

**Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill
Magistrates' Court (Amendment) Bill**

together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

BLF CUSTODIAN

55th report

The SPEAKER presented report given to him pursuant to section 7A of BLF (De-recognition) Act 1985 by the custodian appointed under section 7(1) of that act.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General — Performance Audit Reports on:

Management of roads by local government — Ordered to be printed

Managing Victoria's air quality — Ordered to be printed

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

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — No. C51

Knox Planning Scheme — No. C9

Maribyrnong Planning Scheme — No. C28

Melton Planning Scheme — No. C20

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Nos C18, C29

Moreland Planning Scheme — No. C1 Part 2

Stonnington Planning Scheme — No. C21

Wangaratta Planning Scheme — Nos C8, C9 Part 2

Wodonga Planning Scheme — No. C8

Wyndham Planning Scheme — No. C20.

Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research — Report for the year 2001

Youth Parole Board and Youth Residential Board — Report for the year 2000–01

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were laid upon the Table by the Clerk:

Public Notaries Act 2001 — Whole Act on 6 June 2002 (*Gazette G22*, 30 May 2002)

Stamps (Secondary Mortgage Market) Act 1988 — Section 6 on 31 May 2002 (*Gazette G22*, 30 May 2002)

Trustee (Amendment) Act 2001 — Remaining provisions on 31 May 2002 (*Gazette G22*, 30 May 2002).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6(3), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, 6 June 2002:

Magistrates' Court (Amendment) Bill

Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill

Appropriation (2002/2003) Bill

National Parks (Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries Bill (No. 2)

Appropriation (Parliament 2002/2003) Bill
 Criminal Justice Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
 Domestic Building Contracts (Conciliation and Dispute Resolution) Bill
 Liquor Control Reform (Packaged Liquor Licences) Bill
 Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill

In putting forward the government business program for this week I point out to honourable members that the time for the implementation of this resolution is 4.30 p.m. on Thursday rather than the traditional 4 o'clock. I just want to bring that to members' attention so they can factor it into their departure plans, because they will be a bit late leaving that night.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The Liberal Party will not be opposing this business program, and I will briefly go into the reasons for that later on. However, we object to the government's mishandling of its legislative program during the autumn sitting, which is consistent with its performance over six consecutive sittings.

This week the house will deal with nine bills, including two budget bills and the very important Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill and National Parks (Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries) Bill (No. 2), so it will be a very crowded week. I imagine that we will be sitting late on Tuesday night and Wednesday night. If the Leader of the House were being honest he would admit that it will be difficult to get these things all discussed appropriately by 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, so we could well be going later than that.

I do not see any good reason to keep members or staff here after the standard 10.00 p.m. adjournment, but it looks as if we will sit well after midnight for the next two nights. I advise the house that in the first seven weeks of this autumn sitting the government successfully concluded debate on only 21 bills, most of which could be appropriately described as tiddlers or small fry. I refer to matters of such riveting importance as the Governor's salary bill, when 30-odd members spoke endlessly on an issue that everyone had agreed on. That is 21 bills in seven weeks — an average of three a week. In the last two weeks the government has sought to push through 27 bills. After the objections of the house last week and negotiations leading up to this week — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Mr McARTHUR — Just quiet down! The government has dropped 11 of those 27 bills, so 11 will lie over to the spring session, and honourable members

will at least have something to deal with when they come back then. However, there has been a completely botched handling of the autumn session — 21 bills in seven weeks — and then the usual mad rush and logjam of 27 bills in the final two weeks, including the budget, the marine parks and gaming legislation and other important bills. That is a completely unreasonable way to proceed, and one which denies honourable members the opportunity to properly debate legislation, particularly the budget.

So far honourable members have spent 11 hours 12 minutes debating the budget this session. That is completely inadequate. We should be spending at least 20 hours on the budget, and I seek leave to have a table incorporated in *Hansard*. It is the same table I had prepared last week which the Leader of the House has seen and which Hansard has approved the inclusion of.

The SPEAKER — Order! That has been cleared with the Speaker's office. Is leave granted?

Leave granted; see table page 2119.

Mr McARTHUR — Thank you, Mr Speaker. The table clearly shows the amount of time and the number of members who have spoken on the budget since 1992. Under the Kennett government there were two appropriation debates in the early 1990s and around 40 hours of debate on the various budget bills. When we got back to an autumn-sitting-only budget, honourable members had 25 or so hours for budget debate each year.

Under the Bracks government budget debate has been severely curtailed. There has been very little examination of the budget. We had 16 hours debate in 2001 and 15.5 hours last year; we will be lucky to get that amount this year. We should be spending at least 20 hours on budget debate and probably more. However, that is going to be impossible because of the bad management by this government and this Leader of the House.

It is a sad situation where members of the cabinet are unable to get their legislation in order when the house is in recess because they are all heading off to Europe on their holidays. The Premier is flying out on Friday morning and the Treasurer is going with him. They have not taken the honourable member for Gisborne because they cannot find enough woodchips to fit in her bag! However, every other government member is bolting out of the Melbourne winter and going to the Northern Hemisphere summer. The government is not

going to be able to get its legislation organised again in time for the spring sitting.

Mr Stensholt — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Monbulk implied that all government members were going off overseas, and I wish to dispute that.

The SPEAKER — Order! That is clearly not a point of order. The honourable member for Monbulk's time has expired.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — The National Party will not be opposing the government's business program, but I also want to make some comments regarding the way that legislation has banked up in this last couple of weeks. It is absolutely crazy that in this last sitting week honourable members are dealing with two of the most important pieces of legislation that have come before the house this session. I am talking about the gaming and marine parks legislation, both of which are important pieces of legislation and need to have plenty of consideration and debate. Added to that we are dealing with the appropriation, and I share the views of the honourable member for Monbulk. It is absolutely appalling that members have limited time for debate on the budget bill, which deals with all areas of government activity.

In the first seven or eight weeks — I had a list with me last week, but I have not brought it in — there was one week when we dealt with one bill — one single bill for that particular week — and week after week honourable members had two or three bills to debate and we were padding out time with speaker after speaker on relatively minor pieces of legislation. Now we are dealing with this very important gaming legislation which the government railed against when it was in opposition, and the marine parks legislation, which by any stretch of the imagination is important legislation. The Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill is important legislation that concerns local government, particularly in country Victoria, and one could go on about the legislation before the house.

Honourable members are being limited with the time they have available to make a contribution to debate on the legislation. I welcome the 4.30 p.m. finish on Thursday afternoon so that at least country members can get home in reasonable time. Clearly the government will not sit beyond that because the Premier and the Treasurer are going overseas. I have no problem with that — so they should — but there is a clear lack of direction in getting the government's business program through: ministers were slack in

getting their legislation up and before the house in the early part of the session.

It is going to be an interesting week. I dare say we are going to be sitting fairly late tonight and on Wednesday night to deal with this important legislation. The National Party will not oppose the government business program but I ask the government to try and lift its game a bit in the spring session of Parliament to see if we can have a more even flow of legislation through that sitting.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I also wish to make a couple of comments about the government's business program and indeed the government's management of business throughout this session. I wish to point out the numeric evidence of the slow flow of bills early in the session and obviously this bank-up of legislation that has occurred later in the session.

In the week starting 26 February we debated 4 bills; in the week commencing 19 March, only 1 bill; in the week of 26 March, 4 bills; in the week of 16 April, 3 bills; in the week beginning 23 April, 1 bill; in the week of 7 May, 6 bills; and in the week beginning 14 May, 2 bills — and last week, without a government business program, we dealt with, I believe, 7 bills. In this final sitting week the government now proposes to deal with nine bills, two of which are the very important budget bills, and there a number of other significant bills as well.

I find it glib of the Leader of the House to simply draw the house's attention to the fact that the completion time on Thursday will be 4.30 p.m. — an extension of half an hour from the usual time — when all the members of this house know that this week we are going to sit for incredibly extended hours, well into the night and possibly into the early morning. When the manager of opposition business made reference to the fact that we expected to sit long hours due to the government's mismanagement of its legislative program, the Leader of the House and Minister for Major Projects nodded.

I will address, in particular, the issue of these ridiculously extended hours. When one is elected as a member of Parliament one quite reasonably expects to work at night, because various meetings are held at night and Parliament sits at night. However, — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

Ms ASHER — The honourable member for Narracan probably should not interject, given his performance on late nights. What we are seeing at the end of the sitting is the expectation that Parliament will sit for an unreasonable amount of time. I am even

prepared to go along with the 10 o'clock adjournment, which normally has the house up at 11.00 p.m. However, I do not think it is reasonable, and I do not think the public regard it as reasonable, to sit these extended hours.

Indeed the government does not regard these extended hours as reasonable. I refer to a document called 'Making Parliament work', which was put out by the Labor Party in May 1997, being printed and authorised by one J. Lenders of 23 Drummond Street, Carlton South. That J. Lenders is now, of course, the Minister for Finance, who may be expected to have some influence around the cabinet table.

Mr Lenders — No!

Ms ASHER — 'No', he says, which is fairly frightening!

The document addressed the issue of having a more family-friendly Parliament. I find it difficult to come to grips with the concept of Parliament being family friendly. Notwithstanding that, the Labor Party promised in this document to make Parliament more family friendly by using two measures, the second of which was:

... changing the sitting hours to ensure that the Parliament adjourns at a reasonable hour each evening, except in extraordinary circumstances.

Such extraordinary circumstances, I would contend, do not include the government failing to manage its business program properly throughout the sitting. One possible definition of 'extraordinary circumstances' could be 'things arising that are unforeseen'. The government, when in opposition, then went on to say:

Sitting hours are currently subject to sessional orders which fix 10.00 a.m. as the starting time and the adjournment debate at 10.00 p.m. ...

It then goes on to say:

... except when a motion is moved for extension of the sitting. Such motions are invariably supported by government MPs, no matter what their private misgivings. Decision making and debate deteriorates by the end of such long days.

I agree, and I think the honourable member for Narracan also possibly agrees, that decision making and debate deteriorate at the end of long days. I think it is very important that he too add his voice in his caucus to the cause of achieving a more reasonable approach to sitting hours.

I simply draw the house's attention to the fact that all this bluff, bluster and commentary — led principally by the Minister for Education and Training when she was

in opposition — has come to nothing because the government has failed to manage its business program.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — This government legislation program is the last chapter in what can only be described as a disastrously organised sitting. In fact, it is the most disorganised sitting I have ever witnessed in all my time here.

The early part of the sitting was wasted by the government's filibustering to get through three sitting days with no legislation to speak of. As has been said earlier, we had one remarkable week when we had one bill to deal with — one bill in three days! We had the gross spectacle of government ministers and members coming up with all kinds of weird and wonderful tricks to fill the time in. We could see ministers, particularly the Leader of the House, praying for 10 o'clock to arrive so he could see the sitting day brought to an end.

Last week we had the remarkable spectacle of a possible government business program for the final two sitting weeks that comprised 27 pieces of legislation plus the budget. That is what the Leader of the House and the government planned for the final two weeks. It is no wonder that at this time last week, when it came time to move the legislative program, the Leader of the House stayed firmly seated because he knew very well that he was going to be met with a barrage, not only from the Liberal Party and the National Party but also from the Independents.

The penny has finally dropped for the Independents that responsible government disappeared out the door in late 1999. This mob of incompetent amateurs, who have been masquerading as a government, have now been revealed to be what they are. They could not organise a banana cart; that is literally what it boils down to. Therefore, over the three sitting days of last week the Leader of the House was running around trying to negotiate with the manager of opposition business, the Independents and the honourable member for Rodney to get some kind of legislative program together that might be acceptable.

The news of the fate of those 27 bills hit like the news of the *Titanic* sinking. Ministers were being jettisoned all over the place, and bills were flying everywhere. You only have to look at the notice paper under government business to see that. You have to read all the way down to item nos 20, 21 and 22 to find the bills about which ministers on the other side of the house were holding up their hands and saying, 'These are important, we have got to get them through'. Suddenly, they are no longer important. And the Leader of the House no doubt was using his authority with ministers by saying to them, 'Sorry, you won't be able to get

them up. The best I can do is 7, 8 or 9 bills'. The reality is that we have seven pieces of legislation this week, plus the two budget bills.

As the honourable member for Monbulk said, the opposition is not going to oppose the government's legislative program but simply wants to make the point that this is the final chapter, as far as this sitting is concerned, of an absolute unmitigated disaster by this government. It is exposed for what it is: hopelessly and totally incompetent. It could not organise anything if you gave it six months notice, and I would hope, now that it has a few months notice, that it might actually be able to improve on this in the spring sitting.

We are not expecting anything up to the standard of the Kennett government in the way the house is organised — because it was organised properly then, when we had a decent Leader of the House and a decent cabinet — but we would expect this government to at least improve on the shambles that it has imposed upon this Parliament in this current sitting. It stands condemned as a hopeless mob of incompetents!

Mr VOGELS (Warrnambool) — I would like to voice the disappointment that I will be experiencing this week. The bills that are on the notice paper are very important bills, and a hell of a lot of constituents have come to see me in my office on some of these bills. I had hoped to put a lot of their points of view into debate. Mainly, these bills were the Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill, the National Parks (Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries) Bill, about which recreational and commercial fishermen have been coming in and out of the door; the Liquor Control Reform (Packaged Liquor Licences) Bill, and operators of hotels and bottle shops and licensed grocers have been very concerned about some of the issues in that bill; and the Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill, which will have a huge impact on local councils and perhaps, into the future, agricultural industry.

I had hoped we could all make a contribution and sit reasonable hours, because when you are walking around this place at midnight or one o'clock in the morning everybody looks as if they should be home in bed, and it is very difficult to add to the debate. So, I would just like to voice my disappointment with the program, and hopefully in the spring sitting we will manage it much better, so we can all sit reasonable hours and actually get up and debate the bills which we have a vital interest in.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Belgrave bypass

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — I call on the government and the Minister for Transport — who is currently here in the house — to reconsider the decision to reject the Belgrave deviation or bypass project and to provide appropriate funding for what is a very worthwhile and much-needed traffic project in my electorate and which benefits the electorate of the honourable member for Pakenham.

This issue has been hotly debated in the Belgrave community and throughout the Dandenong Ranges for well over a decade now. A significant number of options have been put forward, considered and dismissed. However, recently representatives of the Belgrave Traders Association, the Shire of Yarra Ranges and others — I was one of them — put a proposal to the government for a deviation which would not require the compulsory acquisition of any private land and which would, we believe, resolve the traffic problems in Belgrave.

That was examined by John Piper Traffic consultants — its report went to the minister last year and he sat on it until very recently.

However, the report clearly states that:

... it is feasible to consider a bypass option as proposed by the Belgrave Traders Association as the majority of existing traffic movements are likely to benefit.

That is far from the description the minister supplied of it only providing local benefits.

John Lockett

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — Last week Bendigo lost four very special members of its community, to whom I wish to pay tribute.

Australia's oldest man, John Lockett, known as Jack, passed away peacefully in his sleep on 26 May 2002, aged 111. Jack was a treasured member of the Bendigo community who achieved international fame when he carried the Olympic torch unassisted and lit the cauldron in Bendigo in July 2002.

Jack displayed many great qualities, including vitality, humbleness and generosity of spirit, and my sympathy goes to his large extended family.

Whelan family

Last Wednesday, 29 May, Julie McDonald and her teenage daughters Kellie and Ruth were killed in a tragic car accident. Their untimely deaths have rocked the Bendigo community, and I pass on my deepest and sincerest sympathy to her husband, Laurie Whelan, his daughter, Kate, and the extended McDonald and Whelan families.

Until March this year Laurie had served six years as a councillor with the City of Greater Bendigo, including one term as mayor in 2000–01. During that time I had the pleasure of getting to know him and his extended family. Ironically Laurie made the decision in March this year not to renominate for a term on the council to spend more time with his wife and family.

Also by coincidence it was during Laurie's term as mayor that he shared the international stage with Jack Lockett as Jack lit the Olympic cauldron.

These were four very special people who contributed greatly to the Bendigo community. They will be sadly missed and long and fondly remembered by many.

Echuca Musical Theatre Company

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I bring to the attention of the house a magnificent production of that wonderful musical *Les Misérables* by the Echuca Musical Theatre Company. This talented group of people has been producing fine musicals for the last 27 years, but all who were fortunate enough to attend this year's production agreed that *Les Misérables* was the best of them all.

Staged to packed houses in Echuca's Paramount Performing Arts Centre from 16 May until 1 June, the performance delighted all who saw it. It demonstrated what wonderful talent there is in Echuca and Moama and the Shire of Campaspe. Barbara Higgins directed a cast of 80, all of whom were excellent; but outstanding performances were given by Russell Sweetman, Clem Furphy, Caroline Ferguson, Paul Denham, Kellie Banks, Matthew McLindon, Dan Sexton and Kara Sweetman. The musical directors were Nancy Ferrier and Gwynneth Harris. The music, the sets and costumes were all superb, as were the sound and special effects, which were attended to in his usual professional manner by Bruce Adderly.

I congratulate the Echuca Musical Theatre Company president, Graeme Watson, the secretary, Rosemary Fraser, the director, Barbara Higgins, and the cast and all associated with a very professional and outstanding musical production.

Werribee Vision project

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — I place on the record my sincere gratitude and the gratitude of my community now and into the future for the announcement by the Minister for Environment and Conservation and the Minister for Innovation and Minister for State and Regional Development last Friday, as part of the water summit, of their vision for Werribee. It has taken many years and much imagination for this vision to be announced and, very shortly, to become a reality.

It is the intention of the government that Werribee will become the setting for an internationally renowned, sustainable development region following an announcement by the Bracks government that it will call expressions of interest for the multimillion dollar Werribee Vision project.

This will be such an enormous benefit to my community — which is in a growth corridor with the second-highest population growth in Victoria — to have a coordinated approach to its social development, its economic development and its environmental development. I congratulate the government on its vision for Werribee and on the vision that it displays for all of Victoria's regions in providing for sustainable development based on sound social, economic and environmental principles.

Local government: rate concessions

Mr PHILLIPS (Eltham) — I criticise the Bracks government, especially the Minister for Local Government and the Treasurer, for not increasing the pensioners rate rebate, which is currently only \$135. This has not increased for about 15 years. I suggest that the government should seriously look at increasing the rate rebate.

Rates, as we know, have escalated under this government. Values of properties, which the rates are now calculated on, have escalated. I am suggesting that this government seriously looks at trying to help pensioners throughout Victoria, many of whom are living from week to week to help pay their rates.

If the rebate had increased in line with inflation, it would be somewhere round about \$324. This is reimbursed through the federal government, so I am suggesting that the Bracks government speak to the federal government to ensure that it is compensated so that it can in turn increase its share of the rate rebate. I ask the government to look at this urgently so that my local councils can afford to give their people a rebate.

Schools: Mitcham

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I commence by endorsing the remarks made by the honourable member for Bendigo East regarding the unfortunate circumstances confronting the family of Laurie Whelan, the former mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, following a terrible accident last week. The Whelan family has been well known to my family for many years, and I can only begin to imagine the enormous angst they are feeling at this time.

On a brighter note, I congratulate, in particular, Blackburn High School student, Mark Treloar, who was recently named Nunawading Youth of the Year by a local service club. I understand this is the third occasion on which a student from that excellent high school has won that award.

Also deserving of congratulations are David Jewell and the staff and students at Blackburn Lake Primary School, which put on a fantastic and inspiring official opening for the new facilities last Friday. They have wonderful new buildings and can be justifiably proud of the work that has gone into them over the past 18 months to two years.

Congratulations are also in order to the teachers and students at Blackburn Primary School, Nunawading Primary School, Nunawading South Primary School, Mitcham Primary School and Rangeview Primary School, who recently visited Parliament House during Education Week for tours and for a students Parliament. This is the first time I have participated in one of those with local school students. They demonstrated great interest in the Parliament and the way it works. It was a great pleasure to have them in this building.

Ann Henderson

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — I pay tribute to my colleague and friend Ann Henderson, who died this morning.

Ann was passionate about Geelong before, during and after her parliamentary career. She gave great service to the people of Geelong in a variety of roles, including as a member of the National Trust, Legacy, Deakin University, Do Care, the Port Fairy Music Festival and the Geelong Art Gallery Foundation.

She also showed extraordinary leadership in the development of Geelong's waterfront. Her interest in Geelong lasted well after she left Parliament, and I would often receive phone calls from her about local issues.

In her maiden speech to Parliament back in 1992 she spoke about how she often looked up at the spire of St Patrick's Cathedral, behind this Parliament building. She told Parliament that the original spire on St Patrick's had been built by members of her family. Two brothers, both masonry craftsmen, came to Australia many generations ago to lay their own foundations for a large and diverse family. She said that the principles and ethos by which she lived were the result of the values that had been handed down to her from a family that based its successes and failures on hard work, adventure, challenge and opportunity.

Ann was brave to the end, and I will miss her deeply. My sympathies go to her children, Sarah, Jodie and Andrew and family.

Mount Baw Baw resort

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — I wish to congratulate all those who have prepared the Mount Baw Baw resort for the upcoming season. The resort has been overhauled in the last two years, with many improvements being made across the mountain.

Mount Baw Baw is an affordable, family-friendly resort. It offers a great choice of downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing, snow tubing and snow play, or just relaxing on the mountain. This is the closest resort to Melbourne, making it very easy to access. It certainly provides the best value for money of all the resorts across the state, which of course is based on its strong family focus.

I look forward to attending the opening of the ski season this weekend and hope there will be some snow to be enjoyed. To quote from the fantastic brochure that was put out by the Mount Baw Baw resort, it has:

35 hectares of gentle sloping terrain

five lifts

increased snow-making facilities

improved even graded ski lift towlines for beginners

friendly and helpful staff

home runs that allow an easy return to the village (ski in ski out)

The Mount Baw Baw resort is clearly a resort for the whole family. It is the closest to Melbourne. I certainly urge not only all honourable members and everyone in my electorate but everyone across Melbourne and Victoria to come to the best mountain we have in this state, which I am proud to have in the electorate I represent. It is a fantastic mountain, and I am sure we

will have plenty of snow this season for the best possible skiing for the whole family.

Sorrento: settlement display centre

Mr DIXON (Dromana) — The information and display centre at Victoria's first settlement site at Sorrento had to close down a fortnight ago because it is literally falling into Port Phillip Bay from its cliff-top location. The surrounding 1.2 hectares of land around the settlement site is currently owned by the Rand family and is available for purchase. This presents a golden opportunity for this government to celebrate the bicentenary of Victoria's first settlement on 18 October 1803 when we celebrate it next year by purchasing this land and providing a new display centre. The current display centre is managed by Parks Victoria and its advisory group and also a friends group.

About 25 000 people visit this first settlement site each year. The area also contains some very important Aboriginal middens, so it is an important site in the history of both white and Koori Victorians. Because of the loss of its display centre, the friends group has had to put many maps, models, books, displays and paintings into storage, and the future is uncertain.

I implore this government to grab this opportunity to celebrate Victoria's bicentenary next year by purchasing the land and also providing a new display centre for the first settlement site.

Soccer: Burwood clubs

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I would like today to pay tribute to some of the soccer clubs in my electorate, particularly now that the World Cup competition is on. Locally I commend the Riversdale Soccer Club, which has its home at the Hartwell reserve in Glen Iris. It has boomed in recent years with many new junior teams and last year had its grounds upgraded by the Boroondara City Council at a cost of close to \$100 000.

Another great local soccer club is Old Scotch, Waverley, which has its grounds in Sixth Avenue in my electorate. I was honoured on one occasion to be the guest speaker at the president's lunch. This is a state league club with a proud history.

I also commend the Ashburton Soccer Club — for which two of my daughters have played. People like Jenny Check, Barry Poulsen, Ian Haviland and Will Howard have done a marvellous job in building up this club, which has both indoor and outdoor programs catering for around 600 players. It has senior teams and women's teams as well as the league teams from the

Victorian Soccer Federation and the local churches. Recently it received a grant of over \$20 000 to help it with training lights at Warner Reserve at Ashburton.

I commend these clubs and all other soccer clubs in Victoria and hope they all enjoy the World Cup and the world game. Unfortunately we cannot say, 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie' this year, although with our multicultural society there is enormous support for and interest in the World Cup.

MAGISTRATES' COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 30 May; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Loney) — Order! As the required statement of intention has been made pursuant to section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975 I am of the opinion that the second reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority.

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — Penalty enforcement by registration of infringement notice — see, I know what PERIN stands for, but not many people do. Basically the PERIN system is a good system. It was introduced to try to contain the cost of enforcing fines, sometimes of a reasonably small nature — not small to the person who has been fined, I can tell the house, being a person who has been down that path. But if you have to go through a full hearing and a full enforcement procedure the costs of enforcing, say, a \$150 or \$200 fine are actually greater than the fine itself. So the PERIN system, which I believe was a Kennett initiative, although it may not have been; I will have to wait until — —

Mr Robinson interjected.

Dr DEAN — It was already in, was it? It started in 1986 but certainly it was amended by the Kennett government to streamline the process and make it work.

I think both sides of the house agree that the PERIN system is a good idea. I know that not everyone agreed at the time, because it does shortcut all the open procedures that are normally available to people when they have orders made against them by the Crown or by authorities. But nevertheless I think all parties on both sides of the house agree that it is an indispensable part of maintaining law and order in relation to such things as our road laws and traffic infringements.

Imposing penalties for traffic infringements can become quite an important means of controlling driving habits. I believe we still have a way to go in determining how best to use this penalty weapon as a means of curbing behaviour. We have to remember that that is the purpose of these fines. When a government reaps, as this government does, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and perhaps even more, from a system where the police and others are kept busy with cameras bringing in the fines and making huge profits out of that process, you have to wonder whether or not perhaps sometimes governments get addicted to the wrong side of the equation, which is the money side of it. It is certainly quite easy to place cameras in all sorts of positions that are more likely to reap financial rewards rather than effecting behavioural changes in people.

Hopefully this government will use great caution on that score and remember that the purpose of road fines is to change behaviour. The whole process is meant to change behaviour.

I might put on the record that I believe one day we will reconsider the way we operate on the roads with traffic signs and traffic limits. Rather than taking the whole approach of lowering the speed limit below what we believe is the safe speed limit because we know everyone is breaking that limit — so if we lower it hopefully they will end up going at the speed we want, with fines attached — I hope we will do a scientific study of exactly what the maximum safe speed limit is and then put cameras everywhere so that everybody knows they are going at a realistic and reasonable speed and people do not have to feel they are being cheated as to how fast they can go. In return for that they will know that no matter what they do they will be fined because they will be seen — the cameras will catch them.

I must say, having been caught by speed cameras a couple of times — it was my own fault, and I apologise to everyone for having been so caught — it does affect you very much. It makes you very cross with yourself for being so stupid — and poorer. It is important that when you look at the infringement notice you acknowledge, 'I was travelling at an unrealistic speed'. I do not see why we really have to have the concept where there has to be a person with a camera at the time. I believe we ought to move on at some stage, and if the camera is checked and working properly at the time, then cameras can be everywhere. Basically you will know that if you are on a suburban road or on a highway there will be a camera checking your speed and you will therefore travel at the correct speed and at a realistic speed.

However, we are moving in the direction of more cameras and more observation of speed limits, and that is slowly changing driving behaviour. The PERIN system is a very important part of that change, because if we get bogged down in the costs of recovering these fines we will not want to do it — it will all become messy and people will realise that even if they do get fined they may never have to pay them because the police do not have the resources to follow them through. In addition, the PERIN system has its safeguards, as we know, which is also very important.

What has happened is that when the latest set of amendments to the legislation were made under the Kennett government, a schedule was put into the act which set out those authorities that were entitled to use the PERIN system. Basically, that meant that those authorities would provide evidence in the form of unpaid traffic infringement notices which are signed by the appropriate person and sent in to the registrar of the Magistrates Court who looks after the PERIN system, and then the machinery of the system takes over. People receive notices and if they do not turn up at court then fines are automatically determined by the court and posted out to them to be paid.

What has happened is that as toll roads have been established and as other more sophisticated ways of collecting fines have been devised, the authorities who were given permission in the schedule to use the system have set up special agencies to do it on their behalf, and those agencies have been given different names. If you are unlucky enough to be fined on our roads you will now find that the notice comes not from Victoria Police, as provided for in the schedule to the act, but from its agency, which will be the collector of fines body — or whatever it is called. There is another body in relation to toll fines as well.

The problem is that some very bright and enterprising barrister went down to the Magistrates Court and said to the magistrate, 'The evidence provided for this fine comes from this agency called the collection of fines agency, and that body is not mentioned in the schedule; therefore, it does not have the authority under this act to use the PERIN system. The Victorian police do, but not the collection of fines agency'. The magistrate said, 'You are absolutely right. If we have an act of Parliament, we cannot be allowing people to use it who are not in the schedule'. I do not know what happened to that fine — it was probably found to be void — but he said that all previous decisions with this problem were voidable.

What that meant was that basically everyone who had received a fine from that collection agency could turn

up to court and say, 'I would like that reversed, thank you very much' — and wouldn't that be a fine old thing, with queues forming outside the Melbourne Magistrates Court! We know how people feel about fines — and what a wonderful way to get their money back! That could cost hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, so something had to be done about it.

Legislation is just a set of words that human beings put together to try to cope with a particular situation in law. The English language is imperfect and human beings are imperfect — well, some are — and as a consequence it does not surprise me that sometimes statutes are imperfect. When they are, we have to come together as a Parliament, re-cover that ground and fix that mistake. When people say that politicians are always opposed to each other and that they only care about their own personal matters and not about anything else that goes on, that is not true. Here is an example of the opposition and the government agreeing to come together quickly — a week earlier than would otherwise have been the case, because it is normally a two-week process — to get this situation fixed up. The Liberal opposition will support the amendments to get the PERIN system working properly.

That is one of the aspects of the way Parliament works that is not often published by the media, and perhaps it should be. I am glad there are people in the public gallery who can see us being nice to each other across the table and cooperating in this way — although if they wait a few moments for the next bill they will see the exact opposite! Nevertheless, the Liberal opposition is certainly cooperating on this bill. It is important that the legislation be fixed up because it is an important system which is designed to change people's behaviour on the roads, which we all want.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — On behalf of the National Party I would like to join this serious outbreak of niceness by confirming that the National Party supports this legislation.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr RYAN — Thank you, Minister; that is very kind of you. This is sensible and necessary legislation in all the circumstances. I might add that PERIN stands for penalty enforcement by registration of infringement notice. In essence, unpaid infringement notices that are issued under the Magistrates' Court Act are registered with the PERIN court. The PERIN court then issues a court order, which is termed an enforcement order, demanding payment of the penalty plus costs, and

failure to pay that enforcement order leads to the issue of a warrant.

What has emerged, as the shadow Attorney-General has explained, is that with the passage of time some confusion has developed as to who ought properly be listed in the schedule to the act as being the appropriate entity to issue these notices in the first place, so there is a confusion of terminology which needs to be dealt with. If that is not done, many fines that have been rendered in the past would be at risk of being voided, and it would also mean that in time to come the whole system of the rendering of traffic fines would be thrown into terrible confusion because all the computer systems and other bases whereby the mechanism within the PERIN system operates would have to be changed to reflect this plethora of names which are presently caught up in this state of confusion. So it is that we have a bill before the house which addresses the problem of past fines and prevents the problem from arising in the future, and on that basis the National Party supports it.

I agree with the comment made by the honourable member for Berwick that the use of the PERIN system is necessary, and I acknowledge that the use of speed cameras has become an important part of the way speed limits are enforced in Victoria and indeed in other states.

However, there are elements of the system that cause me ongoing concern from my perspective as representing country Victorians. I do not think we have yet got the balance quite right between the use of speed cameras and the operation of the system generally. Very often the travel conditions facing country Victorians are extraordinarily different from those that face motorists in metropolitan Melbourne or, for that matter, in the major regional centres.

Let us take, for example, a car towing a caravan during a typical holiday period on a country road with a single lane each way, and with a line of traffic developing behind it. For reasons of safety the car towing the caravan may be travelling at 90 kilometres per hour, and over time and distance a queue of vehicles will form behind it. I emphasise that the driver of the car is doing nothing wrong and is travelling at what he or she believes to be a safe speed in all the circumstances. It might well be that the tow bar arrangements are such that the driver does not feel confident to travel at more than 90 kilometres per hour. There could be a plethora of reasons why the vehicle would be travelling at that speed. Nevertheless, the net result is that it is holding up a line of traffic that would otherwise be seeking to travel at a speed that was within the speed limit but in

excess of the speed at which the lead vehicle is travelling.

Herein lies the difficulty: a straight stretch of road comes up and the second car in the queue decides to overtake. This is an issue of road safety that remains unresolved in terms of our road laws and the way we enforce them. The issue is: in what way should the driver of the vehicle that is overtaking — and doing so perfectly legally in the sense of the manoeuvre itself as it is, after all, an open road — go about the process of overtaking in a way that is safe to all concerned?

There are many points of view on that issue. One view is that the driver should not travel at more than 100 kilometres per hour. Therefore, in overtaking the vehicle ahead that is towing the caravan the driver of the overtaking car cannot legally travel at more than 100 kilometres per hour. The inevitable consequence of that, even with my layman's understanding of mathematics, is that a lengthy distance will be travelled before the overtaking manoeuvre is completed. That in itself is potentially dangerous to other road users. The manoeuvre is not illegal, but there is a danger from oncoming traffic.

Another point of view is that for the purpose of being able to overtake, and when executing an overtaking manoeuvre, a driver should do so as quickly and as safely as it can possibly be done in all the prevailing circumstances; and that in so overtaking the driver should occupy the wrong side of the road for as short a time as possible.

Immediately that point of view is explored complications potentially arise because a person otherwise travelling at a perfectly legal speed in a line of traffic finds himself or herself going over the 100 kilometres per hour speed limit to ensure they resume the correct side of the road in the minimum time and minimum distance, but unfortunately, in executing that manoeuvre the driver exceeds a speed of 100 kilometres per hour. The speed may be 105 kilometres per hour or a little more, but the point is that the strict application of the law as has recently been enunciated is that the discretion afforded by police is now down to about 3 kilometres per hour. In those circumstances I wonder whether we have the balance right.

This is not a question of advocating for people to exceed the speed limit but a question of how the passage of traffic on country roads can be best done to ensure the safety of all concerned, having regard to the totality of the contributing conditions.

I highlight that situation from the perspective of country Victorians. This is much more than a simplistic consideration of a single car travelling down a dual highway at 100 kilometres per hour. Many more complications invariably arise in country travel and are not accommodated by the strict notion of simply saying, 'If you do more than 100 kilometres per hour or a small margin over it, that of itself will mean you should be fined'. I put that into the mix on behalf of country Victorians because it is an important issue.

There is also scope for the government to consider an expansion of the system that entails the PERIN court to the extent where considerations over some of the basic street offences ought properly be looked at as being appropriate to this form of punishment. I think of, for example, the drunk and disorderly charges which at the moment entail police having to exhaust their efforts in accommodating whatever the problem may be by way of community disobedience in the street — that is, the person being hauled off to the police station and being held in the cells, or the variations on that theme.

It well may be that the PERIN system could be more appropriate in that the police can hand out an on-the-spot fine and the individual can even be driven home. Certainly if it is in a country location it may well be that the person is known to the police. The long and short of it is that the issue could be dealt with in a way that offers a more constructive outcome than is necessarily the position as the law now applies. As an intimate part of that, the PERIN system could play its part in bringing about better outcomes. The National Party supports the bill.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I support the Magistrates' Court (Amendment) Bill, and I thank the honourable member for Berwick and the Leader of the National Party for their contributions. As the honourable member for Berwick said, a number of these bills pass through the house with relative harmony and speed. This is yet another example of cooperation that occurs across party lines in this Parliament.

The purpose of the bill is to deal with an issue that has arisen concerning the enforcement of unpaid infringement notices. Perhaps over the journey we have all had our share of interactions with the process and indeed, the PERIN court itself. I well recall a time when I held public office in another place.

Mr Ryan — You were the mayor.

Mr WYNNE — Indeed. The council for some reason felt inclined to book me in my residential street

about 15 times. Obviously it was seeking to be even-handed in its response.

Mr Ryan — Did you write a letter?

Mr WYNNE — No, all fines were personally paid by me. The PERIN court is well known to us. It is an important aspect of the process, and the opportunities for unpaid fines to be dealt with in a relatively efficient way is very important. That is one of the bases of the court.

The bill amends the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 in relation to the procedure for the enforcement of unpaid infringement penalties, and to validate past actions arising out of those enforcements. The procedure for enforcing unpaid infringement notices includes registration for enforcement with the PERIN court.

As was indicated in the contribution by the honourable member for Berwick, a case was brought to the attention of the authorities where the relevant enforcement notice was in the wrong name. Rather than the matter being dealt with by the court, the relevant authority withdrew the matter and it became clearly evident that an administrative oversight had occurred. Hence, the bill before the house rectifies that situation.

One of the circumstances faced as a result of the discovery of this technical problem was that the toll enforcement office had been seeking to have unpaid infringement notices registered for enforcement instead of an individual police officer doing it, as is required under the act. The obvious administrative oversight is straightforward. As I said earlier, once it was brought to the attention of the relevant authorities, remedy was sought. Our court system allows for legal challenges from time to time, and amendments to the legislation obviously result.

The potential of this procedural action was that it may have dated back to 1985. The bill rectifies not only the present problem but also past actions. While we have not been collecting through the PERIN court for a period, that revenue has not been lost as a result of the problem being identified. However, there has been a deferral of income to the government through the PERIN court system at the extraordinary rate of about \$670 000 a week. That is a substantial amount of money coming into the government from the PERIN system.

About 21 000 enforcement orders are made on unpaid fines per month, representing close to \$3 million in fines. It is important that the problem is sorted out quickly. The legislation enjoys the support of both sides of the house. The legislation corrects what is clearly an

administrative error. I welcome the contributions from both sides of the house and wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr SMITH (Glen Waverley) — When the Leader of the National Party earlier gave the example of a motorist travelling at a normal speed and having to speed up to overtake, the usual situation that a driver is forced into while overtaking is when the driver being overtaken suddenly decides to speed. This situation ought to be taken into consideration because this is something that happens a lot.

I travel down the South Gippsland Highway quite often. It happens frequently that as you are overtaking a car, its driver suddenly decides to increase speed. If oncoming traffic is approaching it is necessary to speed up to get around the car being overtaken; otherwise, there could be a head-on collision.

I ask the minister to consider that situation when he also considers the situation mentioned by the Leader of the National Party.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this important debate. I also thank the opposition for its consent to bring this matter on earlier than it would normally have come on. When this technical error was discovered there was a fair amount of goodwill on both sides of the house to correct it and no blame was thrown around the place. This technical error dated back to 1989, or perhaps even to 1986, so it has been in existence for some time and it is important that it be fixed.

I am sure all honourable members would agree that we are reluctant to bring retrospective legislation into this place and we do so only in exceptional circumstances. This is one of those circumstances. If this error were not corrected retrospectively it could lead to all sorts of legal challenges in relation to fines that have been collected legitimately, or so it was thought, and it may well throw into doubt our whole PERIN system.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions and I certainly wish this bill a very speedy passage.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Loney) — Order! As this bill is required to be passed with an absolute majority and there is not an absolute majority of the members of the house present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

GAMING LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 14 May; motion of
Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming).**

**Government amendments circulated by
Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming)
pursuant to sessional orders.**

**Independent amendments circulated by Ms DAVIES
(Gippsland West), Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) and
Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) pursuant to sessional orders.**

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — After two and a half years the government has arrived at its great wave of gaming reforms. After two and a half years in government and seven years in opposition, this is the result. Down the great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo, and this is the result — this is where we have arrived. This is where the government has led us. These are the self-declared new gaming reforms to make Victoria — depending on the date of the week — a world leader or a national leader, and described by the minister in February as the most comprehensive set of measures to combat problem gambling in Australia. Announced in February at the start of this parliamentary session as the government's major agenda for the autumn session this year, it has only just arrived — weeks and weeks we had to wait. Given that the government announced it the day before the parliamentary session began, obviously it must have been only then that it got around to putting a bill together.

The Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill is actually a grab bag of measures. There is something for everyone, and a range of issues are included. The measures include some so-called harm minimisation measures, but with exceptions. Secondly, the measures include some new probity measures, so-called, on casino exclusions and raffle suspensions. Thirdly, they include a requirement that clubs match hotels with an

equivalent community contribution and submit annual community benefit statements. Fourthly, they include changes to the restrictions on Tabcorp shareholding. Fifthly, they include public lotteries measures; and finally, a range of other minor changes of a miscellaneous nature.

One has to smile and contemplate what does this really mean; what is going to change as a consequence? Let there be no illusions: this is a political exercise, not an exercise in policy delivery. There is no clear rationale for this bill. Some of the measures have some currency and do make some sense, but essentially the bill is a tick-off of cosmetic measures from a government that continues its pattern of cosmetic surgery in gaming and does not address the real issues.

There is no research to back up the so-called harm minimisation measures. Interestingly, there are no performance measures included on these measures or on those the government formerly introduced. Will there be fewer problem gamblers as a consequence of this bill? Unlikely. Will there be less tax take as a consequence of this bill? Unlikely. Will anything change tomorrow? Unlikely. In fact the principal measures implementation date stretches us out to 2008 — and we can only hazard a guess as to how many elections will occur between now and 2008. Essentially this bill is more of the same from a government that has been indulging in cosmetic exercises since it came to office. In many ways the measures are harmless.

The opposition will not be opposing the bill, but does not imagine the changes to the legislation will make any startling difference to the real issues in gaming. Such that any of the measures do make some administrative sense, I am more than happy to point them out. It is worth reminding the house, as I have on previous occasions, about the history of gaming in Victoria. The reality is that every principal initiative aimed at the introduction of new gaming operations in Victoria has occurred under the hands of a Labor government strapped for cash. That is a precise and clinical history, in very snapshot form, of gaming in this state.

Essentially the Labor Party has long been a supporter of gaming and gambling. Many in the Labor Party would acknowledge that the roots of the Labor Party are probably steeped in gambling! However, there was in opposition a brief interval in Labor's commitment to gaming. Labor saw political expediency and opportunity when most recently in opposition in having a crack for about two and a half years at the gaming and gambling industry, and it was selective about it. The

Labor Party selected the gaming industry and said, 'We are going to make political capital out of this'. That is what it sought to do. At the time Labor never expected to win government. It thought it could promise the world; it thought it could promise anything. The reality is — —

Mr Hamilton — You didn't think that, either!

Mr BAILLIEU — Many people didn't think it would win government. The minister laughs. Indeed here is the minister, and I am on this side. As one of my colleagues said last week, 'Yes, that hurts, but I think it probably hurts the Victorian people more than it hurts us'.

One of the principal promises of Labor in opposition was issued in a September 1999 policy document. I quote:

Labor will reduce the state government's reliance on revenue from gambling.

That was a principal promise of a government in opposition. Certainly it was not a silent promise. It was flogged at every opportunity. The now Attorney-General, who at the time was Labor's gaming spokesman, made that promise loud and clear to the Victorian people. He waved it around Victoria like a dead cat and at every opportunity. He used it to beat up the then Kennett government and anybody associated with the gaming and gambling industry. It is fair to say that when this government came to power the Victorian people believed it would honour its promise. Interestingly, that is not what has happened. Why are we surprised, because all the promises concerning gambling made by this government when in opposition and coming into the election were a sham, and they have been proved to be so.

A few figures can remind us. Over the four-year life of the Bracks government — if it is going to go four years — the estimated total additional gambling taxes in Victoria over and above taxes raised over the last four years of the Kennett government extend to a staggering \$1.78 billion. That is not, as promised, a reduction in the state government's reliance on gambling revenue but an increase of \$1.78 billion.

Gambling taxes in the last year of the Kennett government amounted to \$1.44 billion and this year's budget shows that the figure has increased to \$1.89 billion, a rise of \$0.45 billion — not a reduction in reliance on gambling revenues but an increase of over 31 per cent! That is an extraordinary figure and an acknowledgment in the budget that the government has all but abandoned its principal promise in gaming.

The reality is that 75 per cent of the government surplus this year is funded by gambling taxes that are additional to those collected by the former Kennett government. With some of the other financial manoeuvres in the budget one wonders what would have happened to this government if it had honoured its commitment. The government came to office with a swag of promises and has since demonstrated nothing but cosmetic hypocrisy and proved yet again what a sham those promises and policies were. It has been a case of, 'Stuff the promises, take the money'.

From the opposition's point of view, we believe the gambling and gaming industry in Victoria is well run, well managed and here to stay and we believe it is popular and has a future in this state. The outstanding issue in gaming in Victoria is problem gambling and the outstanding challenge on the issue of problem gambling is identifying the problem gambler and then enlisting appropriate intervention. In that regard the opposition issued a discussion paper in late January or early February of this year in which we set out what we thought offered potential systemic change in the gaming industry to address the problem, the outstanding issue and the outstanding challenge, and to take us forward in a way that did not damage the industry but resolved the problems as they stand.

We believe there are clever alternatives and that opportunities exist. We are disappointed that the government has chosen in two and a half years to do nothing but tackle cosmetic issues and tick off a grab bag list of things it promised in opposition would solve the fundamental problem of problem gambling and the question of the reliance on gambling taxes. It never intended to, it has not done so and the Victorian people are rightly seeing it as grossly hypocritical on this issue.

Some other measures in the bill may be regarded as side issues, with which the opposition has no quarrel at all. I will mention them briefly: casino exclusions, Tabcorp shareholding restrictions and non-cash prizes for lotteries. Clause 10 of the bill, which deals with casino exclusions, makes provision for chief commissioners around Australia to have the opportunity to effectively enforce exclusions from casinos around Australia. On advice from the Chief Commissioner of Police those provisions are both reasonable and appropriate. Given the nature of the exclusions that apply in casinos — there is only one in Victoria but some states have several — the casino market needs some sort of interstate control, and this is a measure that reasonably resolves the issue of those exclusions. It is supported by the other states and we also are happy to support it. Again, however, it is not an issue of immense consequence.

The Tabcorp shareholding issue, which is addressed in clause 20, is at present restricted to 5 per cent of shareholdings for any single shareholder and to 40 per cent for all foreign shareholdings. Ordinarily that is not an unreasonable provision. It was put in place as the industry was being established in Victoria and was designed to be a probity measure. Time has moved on and now gaming companies in Australia see it as a restriction that does not apply to companies elsewhere. Looking at the way shares are traded internationally and, in particular, indexed and valued, companies are rightly looking to international indexes and investors also look to those indexes.

The Morgan Stanley capital index is one such index that has currency in investment markets around the world and investments are a widely based on its assessments. That capital index has changed its basis and now, rather than basing its weighting on institutional investment provisions, it is weighting on the basis of shareholding available for foreign investment. That change has had the effect of making Tabcorp slip down the Morgan Stanley capital index. It is no fault of Tabcorp and no material change; it is just in the nature of the calculation of the index. Hence an adjustment at this end in terms of the availability of foreign investment in Tabcorp is not an unreasonable provision.

There are those who would say, 'Hang on a minute; we will end up with a potential for shareholders to come in and take over the world and treat Victorians and Tabcorp with contempt'. For reassurance they need look only to the Foreign Investment Review Board restrictions and the capacity of the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority to monitor shareholders anyway.

So there remains a capacity to keep an eye on that from that perspective.

The 5 per cent single shareholder restriction is proposed to be lifted to 10 per cent under clause 20, and again that 10 per cent applies in other companies, and this puts Tabcorp on a similar footing to those other companies in Australia. Again, the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) and Foreign Investment Review Board restrictions apply. So we do not have any problem with those Tabcorp shareholding changes.

The non-cash provisions for public lotteries under clause 62 are a simple issue. At the moment, public lottery provisions in this state require lotteries to provide cash prizes. Lottery providers, in particular Tattersalls, would like to be able to offer non-cash prizes — a car, for instance, or some other non-cash

item. This change simply allows this to occur, but also, I note — and I think it is important to note — allows somebody winning such a prize to have the option of taking the prize at cash value rather than the prize itself.

I want to also mention clause 9, the foreign currency provisions in the casino, which is a simple matter of allowing foreign currency to be used in certain circumstances at the casino. Perhaps the interesting thing about this clause is that it actually recognises in legislation the phrase 'junket player', and it is almost a curiosity to have the word 'junket' mentioned in Victorian legislation.

Mr Robinson interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — In the regulations, but it is a nice curiosity to have it in legislation.

There are other minor issues in the bill which cause us no concern, but we smile and think about what the current Attorney-General, then shadow gaming minister, would have said about these measures: that they are deemed to assist gaming operators in their day-to-day operations. Clause 7 deems approval of the role of suppliers in table games so that they only have to be approved, and I imagine that the now Attorney-General would have said, 'There's a direct assist to the casino — how outrageous that is!'

Similarly, clause 34 goes to the matter of the approval of machine provision contracts by the VCGA — a technical matter for the sake of Tabcorp, Tattersalls and their relationship to their venue operators. Some would say that that is an assistance to the gaming industry, and I imagine that the previous Labor shadow gaming minister would have said that that is an outrageous proposition as well. We do not believe it is; we believe there is a degree of sense in it.

Equally, clause 36, which provides more power and flexibility to the VCGA in approving machines, might have been regarded as an assist. We believe it makes sense and is not an unreasonable provision.

Clause 49 relieves the director of an obligation to assist the gambling research panel when requested. Some would argue that warrants concern as well; we do not share that view.

There are, however, some other side issues which we wish to raise concerns about, and there are three things I want to talk about in terms of raising some concerns: these include raffle promotions under clause 53; the entry costs of trade promotions, which is dealt with in clause 54; and the matter of the class of racing clubs in terms of their capacity to operate gaming venues.

Clause 53, on raffle provisions, is an interesting issue, because it goes to the matter of the inspection, prosecution and delivery of outcomes by the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority and the Office of Gaming Regulation in regard to trade promotions and raffles in particular. The director of the Office of Gaming Regulation is particularly in the gun on this issue. It is tucked away in a small clause in this bill and we are not meant to pay a great deal of attention. But this clause is here to cover the government's arse — excuse my language, but it brightened up the debate — and in particular to cover the bum of the director of the OGR, because the reality here is that the government has failed to adequately prosecute what turned out to be illegal raffles in this state. As a consequence of the failure of the director to act and as a consequence of not having done — —

Mr Pandazopoulos — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, whilst I am happy to hear the honourable member for Hawthorn on this matter, it is my duty to remind the house that this issue is sub judice. There is a court case going on at the moment, so motives behind that can be certainly prejudicial to the court case. I am just reminding the house of that unresolved court case.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! As the minister has reminded the house about the issue of sub judice, I caution the honourable member for Hawthorn.

Mr BAILLIEU — I am happy to be so cautioned, Mr Acting Speaker, and I recognise the dilemma the minister is in on this particular issue. All I will say is that there was a raffle and there was a considerable amount of money lost. It is my contention that remedies were available to the government and could have been taken and I think there is evidence that they could have been taken. In including this clause as a part of this bill the government is perhaps unnecessarily taking a step to clean up something which it did not need to clean up — because the powers existed, put it that way. If I have stayed away sufficiently from the court case, Minister, I am happy, but I do note that I think there is a concern there.

The second matter — and it is a minor matter — which I want to express some concerns about runs to the issue of trade promotion under clause 54. Trade promotion entry costs are the issue here. Essentially, this runs to an issue which I raised with the minister more than 12 months ago. It has, I know, been raised many times with the government. Again the director has shown a lack of interest in this issue — the irony being that we are now creating a situation where the concerns that had been raised can be resolved. Perhaps this is the way of

the government saying, 'Hang on a minute. We did not like where we were being taken by the office and we want to acknowledge the problems which existed'.

All of that may sound like gobbledegook, but essentially this is an issue about telemarketing competitions and call centres, many of which are based in Victoria. Honourable members and the Victorian public will know about things like the Mark of the Year competition on television, where the general public can ring in and enter a competition for things like Mark of the Year, Classic Catches — —

Mr Robinson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! The honourable member for Hawthorn will not encourage the honourable member for Mitcham to make comments across the table.

Mr BAILLIEU — But it is your intervention, Mr Acting Speaker, which has caused his comments to be recorded.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton) — Order! Just get on with the bill!

Mr BAILLIEU — Essentially under the regulations a limited price can be charged for entry into such competitions. Those call centres and operators or managers of such competitions have over the last two years, particularly since the GST changed the price structure, been very keen to see that limited price adjusted. But the government, through its officers, would not act and as a consequence call centre operations have been lost to Victoria and some of these competitions are now run from interstate.

We raised the issue in good faith with the government. The operators have raised the issue in good faith with the government. Nothing has happened. They were told to take a walk. Perhaps in recognition that that was a bad idea, we now have a proposed change to the act. So I want to note that the government's intransigence would not last forever and an earlier intervention with some rational behaviour would have ensured that these call centres were not lost to Victoria and jobs were not lost.

I want to also deal with clause 28(2) of the bill, which essentially deals with racing clubs. Clause 28(2) seeks to amend that portion of the Gaming Machine Control Act which establishes what type of licensed venue can have a poker machine or gaming machine. Currently there are two classes of licences which are eligible in terms of the Gaming Machine Control Act and in terms of the minister setting, by ministerial direction, the

proportion of the machines which can be distributed to those licences.

Essentially the ministerial direction power under the Gaming Machine Control Act says that pubs can have so many machines and clubs can have so many machines. At the moment there is a ministerial direction in place — which I believe was put in place by the Honourable Roger Hallam from the other place, who was the previous minister — —

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — Who, as the honourable member for Gippsland South says, is not only a good man but was a very fine minister — —

Mr Ryan — He was, right across his portfolio.

Mr BAILLIEU — Of the highest calibre, and did an extraordinary job in gaming. He continues to do a good job, as well.

Clause 28(2) of the bill is fascinating because this is not mentioned in the second-reading speech or in the introductory notes to the bill. It introduces a third class of licence. We go from one class, pubs; a second class, clubs; to three classes, basically to include racing clubs. I have raised this matter with those concerned. I have raised it with the clubs, the hotels, and the operators. Essentially this is only one line in the bill.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — You have to watch the one-liners! It had not raised great concerns. It is my understanding that there has been a suggestion that this is only a minor change to reflect the reality that some clubs get their capacity to be a club available to receive a proportion of machines by dint of their racing club licence situation.

That would be fine if this provision was included as a part of the second class of types of venues — those with club licences — but it has not been included as a subset of the second class; it has been introduced as a third class. It is a highly technical issue, but the reality is we currently have, under the ministerial direction, four classes of venues and venue machines. There are club machines, pub machines, Tatts machines and Tabcorp machines. Splitting the two, we get four classes. If machines are to shift from one place to another, they have to shift within their class.

By introducing a third class here, the government is effectively creating six classes. There will now be Tatts and TAB, and pub, club and racing club. That means, if

you shift from the current regime of four into a regime of six, that you are getting a machine shift in a way that I believe was not anticipated by the clubs, the pubs or the operators.

It requires there to be a new ministerial direction. Whereas the ministerial direction currently says 50:50, you cannot have a ministerial direction which says 50:50:0, because some of those racing clubs have machines. Therefore there has to be a new ministerial direction. What will it be? Will it be 50:25:25? Will it be 33:33:33? If it is to be 33:33:33, give or take a bit, perhaps the hotels might have liked to have known a little bit more about that.

If this is an innocent change to reflect the technicalities of some licensing arrangements, fine, but if it is I suggest the government should consider an amendment to include a subset of a second class of licences while the bill is between houses. Alternatively, if it is a backdoor method of changing the proportion of the distribution of machines, the government owes the operators, clubs and pubs a more detailed explanation.

There are nevertheless some major issues of concern in this bill. The first one I want to deal with is the matter of clubs under clauses 47 and 48 of the bill. This is essentially the issue of determining that clubs are legitimate community organisations and pubs are hotels. Over recent years there have been suggestions that some of the so-called hotels have started to look more like 'pubs' — half clubs, half pubs — and as a consequence those pubs, masquerading perhaps as clubs, have enjoyed the benefit which is extended to clubs in terms of the way taxes are taken from gaming machines.

Essentially there is a one-third, one-third, one-third split of net revenues. For any gaming machine venue operator a third of the net revenue goes to the operator, be it Tatts or TAB, a third goes to the government, and a third goes to the venue. For pubs, 25 per cent of their third goes essentially to the Community Support Fund. But because they have a community structure, clubs have been deemed to essentially be complying with the community component equivalent to what pubs do in providing money to the Community Support Fund. The fund has done a great job for Victoria over the years and has provided facilities which are much appreciated by all Victorians. But quasi-clubs have taken advantage.

Clause 48 of the bill requires all clubs to submit an annual community benefit statement, and clubs have no problem with that. I do not think the opposition has any problem with that either. The content of that

community benefit statement is yet to be determined, but we take it in good faith that it will actually set out how the clubs contribute to their community, particularly locally, and ensure there is an opportunity for the public to assure itself that they are genuine community clubs and therefore they ought to be entitled to the different taxing arrangements.

But the interesting thing is that through clause 47 the government is saying to the clubs following the submission of an annual community benefit statement, 'Once you have submitted then we will be making a decision as to whether you have complied with a set of rules yet to be determined, so that if you have not complied then for the sake of the taxation arrangements you will be deemed to be not a club any more but a pub. Therefore you will be contributing 25 per cent of your net revenue receipts to the consolidated fund, not the Community Support Fund'.

The first thing is that the clubs were not consulted. Clubs Victoria was not consulted on this measure. The Returned and Services League, the biggest operator of community clubs with gaming machines, was not consulted. Quite rightly they were very concerned, particularly the RSL clubs, because many of them run on a shoestring, rely on voluntary labour and operate in circumstances where many of their other expenses are contracted out, and many of them run on a deficit base. For their futures to be in the hands of a yet-to-be-defined set of rules essentially under regulation was of great worry to those clubs.

It is interesting to note the approach on this measure. The government is saying in terms of every club, 'We assume that those clubs are not complying and then we expect those clubs to prove that they are', when it would have been a far more reasonable approach to assume that the clubs are complying and through the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) take an interest in the ones that it believes are not complying. But the burden has been put on clubs by saying, 'All right, it is time for you to make these annual statements' — no-one gives a hoot about that; there is no beef about making an annual community benefit statement — 'but thereafter the burden is to prove that your expenses are legitimately distributed in the community'.

I note that the government has now offered the RSLs an amendment. That amendment has come late in the process. It basically says to the RSL clubs, 'In compiling your community benefit statement you can account for your voluntary labour', and therefore those RSL clubs will be required to go through essentially an artificial accounting process to account for their

voluntary labour in order to ensure they comply with a regime imposed on all clubs, including the RSL clubs. That will probably resolve the issue for the RSLs, but it will impose a burden on legitimate clubs and RSLs which they ought not to have to bear, and it will impose a burden which is relieved only as a consequence of an artificial mechanism. No-one can persuade me that that is a good law.

It is unfortunate that in seeking to resolve this matter with the RSL clubs the government has not chosen to take an approach of a more comprehensive nature where it would have been instead taking an interest in only those clubs about which it had a concern.

There are a number of measures in this bill under the title of so-called harm minimisation measures. As I said, the opposition believes the outstanding issue in the gaming industry is problem gambling. The outstanding challenge is intervention and the identification of problem gamblers. The opposition believes there is a future in the adaptation of technology and our unique operator system in Victoria. It does not believe the measures suggested by the government here will make any significant difference. However, I want to walk through them briefly.

The first matter I want to deal with is loyalty schemes. There has been a suggestion from some honourable members that loyalty schemes are not in the best interests of players or of the general public. The opposition does not share that view. It believes that loyalty schemes, adapted correctly and with a little bit of foresight, can offer a solution to the identification and intervention of problem gamblers. The opposition is pleased the government has chosen to recognise loyalty schemes and not to ban them. They offer a potential to be part of the solution. In fact, I suspect the government has actually lifted some of the ideas from the discussion paper the opposition put out earlier in the year.

The opposition believes the recognition of loyalty schemes is good; establishing some rights under those loyalty schemes is good; an activity statement on a regular basis is a good idea; and the opt-out provisions are reasonable.

We do have concerns because the government has suggested that under these loyalty schemes there will be an opportunity for gamblers to establish their own limits, but on a 24-hour basis. Our concern is that it is difficult to realise any gains in addressing problem gambling on the basis of a 24-hour limit. We also note that under the loyalty scheme proposal those in the loyalty schemes are not obliged to set limits but they

have an option to set limits, and the bill states that players 'may' set limits rather than 'must' set limits. We also note that the information collected under those loyalty schemes is available to be used by the minister, and there is an element of Big Brother in that provision.

Mr Pandazopoulos interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — The minister says the information is used by the research panel, but the research panel effectively responds to the government, so the government minister will effectively have the capacity to use that information. There is a measure of Big Brother about that, and I do not believe adequate discussion has been had on the way that information should or could be used. It should be used only for the purposes of establishing profiles of problem gamblers, but the way these provisions are structured in the legislation they could be used for more than that. Ministerial direction applies to these loyalty scheme provisions in the bill. The rights under loyalty schemes are yet to be established and they will be established by ministerial discretion.

The loyalty scheme provisions are connected to other measures in the bill. As I mentioned at the start of my contribution, the harm minimisation measures include exemptions. They are fundamentally linked to the operation of loyalty schemes but we do not believe that the government has taken steps to ensure that those links are sufficiently well defined to give any great comfort. Essentially, the nature of those exemptions is not spelt out. At least under the exemption provisions players must set the limits, but again the details of how that will operate are yet to be spelt out.

The bill contains provisions relating to access to cash in gaming venues, and again these are very much cosmetic changes. They limit to \$200 the amount that can be withdrawn from an automatic teller machine (ATM) at a gaming venue, but not in a gaming room. That in itself is not an onerous provision but it should be understood — and it is an explicit understanding because everybody has been briefed on it — that under this bill players will be able to take \$200 out of the ATM then spin around, put the card back in and take another \$200 out; and then spin around, put the card back in and take out yet another \$200. The restriction is effectively artificial.

The provisions proposed to be inserted by clauses 15 and 40 will ensure there are no credit cash withdrawals from an ATM in a gaming venue, but that really just reflects the existing situation. In terms of cash accessibility, they will also ensure that winnings over \$2000 must be paid by cheque and that any winnings

must be paid by cheque if requested by a player. That is pretty much what happens now, so there will essentially be no great impact. These changes will not take effect until January 2003, so again we are not expecting that they will make much of a difference.

Further to the harm minimisation measures contained in the bill, the government is proposing under clauses 8 and 38 to ban \$100 notes from note acceptors on machines, but the reality is that not many players now play with \$100 notes. The government is proposing under the same provisions that spin rates of games be allowed to be no faster than 2.14 seconds, which is the speed of the current fastest game for existing poker machines in Victoria. It is interesting that when the New South Wales government was considering potential measures the fastest spin rate it was looking at was 3.5 seconds, so limiting games to 2.14 seconds in Victoria is hardly an onerous provision.

The bill also proposes banning autoplay, but again, most venues in Victoria do not currently allow autoplay anyway. The bill proposes under clauses 7 and 28 that a bet limit be set by ministerial direction. The bet limit is proposed in the second-reading speech but not in the bill to be \$10; the reality is that the vast majority of players do not place bets above \$10 anyway.

I mentioned before that there are exemptions to these measures, but I also mentioned that none of these harm minimisation measures take final effect until January 2008, so we are not talking about an overnight revolution here. Any new machines will have to have these provisions in place by January 2003, but the reality is that the gaming industry can leave everything in its place as it currently stands — although that might bore a few players — and there will be no change as a consequence. We will see no material difference in the life of this Parliament or, arguably, in the life of the next Parliament on those measures.

As I said, there is not much rationale provided for this bill, and after two and a half years we have arrived at this position where the government is simply ticking off some items it knows will not make any difference because it knows it will allow it to collect the enormous sums of money that are being collected. One would have imagined that the measures the government has put in place over the past two years would have been subject to some performance measures, but the reality is that there are none. The sad reality is that when we asked at the briefing whether any of the measures being introduced would be subject to any performance measures we were told: no, they would not be.

On 24 May the minister attended a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing and acknowledged that no performance measures were to be put in place. Last year the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's recommendation 15.8 on page 531 of its recommendations to the Department of Treasury and Finance stated:

- (a) review current performance measures in terms of assessing the achievement of key principles within the responsible gambling legislation.

Response? One word: 'Reject'. Under the 'Comment and action to date' column, the committee said:

The government has adopted a whole-of-government approach to addressing problem gambling; therefore it is not appropriate for Department of Treasury and Finance to have performance measures related to problem gambling. The government has reported some of its achievements with respect to addressing problem gambling within its *Growing Victoria Together* publication against the outcome of Building cohesive communities and reducing inequalities.

In other words, 'There are no performance measures, and we don't intend to have any'. Under the heading 'Further action planned' in response to this recommendation from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee chaired by a government member, the government said:

No further action is planned for this recommendation.

So the extraordinary admission from the government is that it is doing these things but it does not intend to measure whether they have any effect. The only measure we do have to judge the government on its operations — and how can we judge the government? — is total tax take. As I said, total tax take since the government came to office has increased by more than 30 per cent — in fact, it is up 31 per cent. Gambling taxes in Victoria will soon be over \$2 billion annually, and the government continues to hide that by concealing the GST component in the budget documents, all of which returns to the state government.

They are the performance measures. What about the research of these items? Where is the research which suggests that these measures are going to make any difference and are worth implementing? Indeed, where was the research on the previous measures that the government has introduced? The reality is that there is none. When we had a briefing on this bill we were at pains to ask on a number of these measures: where was the research which supported the measures being undertaken?

We were told by the officers that there was none. In fact, that is not strictly true, because the officers said there was only one piece of research and that suggested, in one case, that one of the measures would have an adverse effect on problem gambling. The sad reality is that the government is not embracing the research on these items, and it is certainly not embracing performance measures to consider them.

There is something of a war of words surrounding research into gaming. The Victorian Local Government Association, through the Victoria University of Technology and doctors Doughney and Livingstone, has produced substantial documents on the gaming industry, a lot of which has been reasonably constructed.

It is perhaps made difficult by the fact that they refer to a whole lot of different research components and analyses of problem gambling, too much of which is inconsistent to a casual reader. However, the New South Wales government has commissioned a report for the gaming industry operators group by Professor Blaszczynski among others. He has done some research on some of these proposed measures and has actually suggested that in some cases they are not effective. Tattersalls has embraced research on a range of measures, and it records outcomes that add to the mix of such available research. However, the government is not saying or doing anything. In the meantime, the tax take rolls on.

It is interesting to contemplate how much that tax take is affecting the decisions of the government. Labor seems not to care about the problem it claimed to have identified when in opposition — that is, problem gambling — because it is more interested in taking the dollars and ticking off the promises. It is worth contemplating the measures that have been taken. The introduction of clocks has been described by those perhaps simply described as antigambling groups as an irrelevant measure. What has the imposition of clocks done for problem gambling in Victoria? Nobody can point me to any evidence that suggests it has made any difference other than to create a burden for venues and operators.

Provisions relating to natural light were to have been introduced, but the government turned them into provisions concerning lighting levels. The levels that have been imposed have been difficult to implement, and nobody can point to them making any difference. They are an unreasonable burden on many venues and operators. Earlier I mentioned the Returned and Services League branches that operate on a shoestring — and some run on a deficit. Complying

with the lighting levels has cost nearly a million dollars. What has been gained as a consequence of that change?

Similar things can be said about the change in unrestricted areas, which now drops out as a consequence of this bill. That change has not resulted in effective outcomes, but it will be ticked off on the government's list of things it has done. The only judgment to be made about what the government has done is that it has made no effective difference. The government promised to introduce regional caps in Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo. That was a key government promise, but it has not happened. Nobody can point to any evidence that the four operative regional caps have made any difference.

Ultimately the government did not expect to make a difference with those measures, just as it does not expect that the measures introduced in the bill will make a difference, because it is really interested only in the tax take. It has been propping up what I described last week as an unsustainable taxation regime. It is interesting to understand that many of the changes that are being made here or have been made previously now rest in the hands of the Minister for Gaming. I am pleased that the minister has stayed in the house for the duration of my contribution.

The minister will now have a discretion on a range of items that include declared exemption areas in gaming venues for smoking, bet limits and loyalty programs, as well as percentages of venues and percentages of operators. The government will use its discretion to bag the bucks here at the same time as it will be bucking those who make a genuine effort to assist problem gamblers. As I said earlier, our interest is to identify problem gamblers and intervene appropriately.

We are not opposed to this bill. We do not think it will make any significant difference in terms of harm-minimisation measures, but we are quite content with a number of the measures on what may be described as side issues. We believe it is unfortunate that the government chooses to continue without performance measures.

In conclusion, I quote from page 532 of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's recommendations from last year. Recommendation 15.8 states, in part:

- (b) ensure performance measures are developed to determine the government's success in minimising problem gambling ...

The response to that was, 'Reject'. As to further action on that valid and simple recommendation, the government has said, 'No further action is planned'.

After two and a half years in office, and after seven years in opposition — much of that time spent bagging the previous government — we have reached a situation where the government is all tax and no responsibility.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — The National Party does not oppose the bill, but we are in effect debating a charade. I shall read to the house the policy of the Labor Party leading up to the last election. I refer to its 'Responsible gaming' policy document, page 5 of which, under the heading 'Government and the gambling industry' and the subheading 'Dependence on the gambling dollar', states:

Revenue from gaming and the casino has formed an increasing proportion of state budget income. While this situation is allowed to continue, either by the conscious choice of the state government or because of the inadequacy of the state's revenue base, government is compromised in its role as the responsible regulator of the gambling industry.

It further states that the government would be seeking:

... a fairer revenue deal from the federal government to reduce the state government's reliance on revenue from gambling.

That statement is to be contrasted with the government's forward estimates, as set out on page 155 of budget paper 2. Under the heading 'Note 2: Taxation' there is reference to what the government estimates will be its income from gambling.

For the year 2002–03 the figure is \$1.455 billion; for the year 2003–04 it is \$1.536 billion; for the year 2004–05 it is \$1.620 billion; and for the year 2005–06 it is \$1.708 billion. I emphasise that these are the government's own figures as set out in its budget paper. Those figures, if they are right, mean that over the period of this budget and the next three years there will be an increase in gambling revenue coming to the government of \$253 million, which represents an increase of about 17 per cent over and above the amount that this year's budget contemplates.

I might put into the mix the fact that historically the actual increase in gambling taxes has been greater than the amounts which were set out in the forward estimates. So far the only argument the government has mounted in the face of the concern which has been expressed over this issue has been a half-baked attempt by the Treasurer to produce a chart reflective of the famous J-curve which purported to demonstrate that the taxation revenue flowing to the government was

growing at a lesser rate than might otherwise have been the case. So far that has been almost the highpoint of what the government states as being its achievements.

We are dealing with a charade. The Labor Party's pre-election policy clearly said that it was going to play merry hell with gambling issues. It said Labor was going to distance itself from gambling and would set out into a brave new world by trying to negotiate some new arrangement regarding federal taxation income which would see it not having to rely upon gambling. On the contrary, we have seen a growing reliance upon that source of income, and that has been the case for the past two and a half years. Based on the government's own forward estimates, it is absolutely and inevitably the case that it intends to increase its take from gambling revenue over the three financial years after the current one.

It is a commentary on the Labor Party that such a circumstance should apply, having regard to the position it put before the last election. You can but say it is nothing new in a general sense. How many instances have there been where the government has utterly and completely ignored statements it made prior to the last election or indeed taken action that completely flies in their face? It truly is an appalling state of affairs, which is highlighted by this issue, because it is one that tends to draw an enormous amount of public commentary.

The charade is all the worse, because in the view of the National Party the proposals in this legislation do not go to the core issue — that is, the identification of the problem gambler. The whole commentary surrounding the industry and the measures proposed to be taken in the public domain relates back to the problem gambler. This is opposed to the position put by this government when in opposition, which apparently was that it would cut the nexus between the gambling industry and the reliance of government upon income derived from that source.

As I said, the focus within the community is on dealing with the problem gambler, and this is the additional part of the charade. There is nothing in this legislation which goes remotely near the problem gambler. I intend to deal with that issue in particular, because from the perspective of the National Party, that is the key element of this basket of proposals.

I make particular reference to the work which was done at the University of Sydney by the gambling research unit. The result of that work was a report produced in November 2001 by Alex Blaszczyński, PhD, Louise Sharpe, PhD, and Michael Walker, PhD, all three being

members of the unit. The history of the study arose from the fact that in November 2000 the Liquor Administration Board of New South Wales recommended a series of provisional determinations relating to proposed modifications to the legislation that applies in New South Wales. I pause to say that ours applies in an environment where the number of machines is capped at 30 000 — that is, 27 500 between the two operators, Tattersalls and Tabcorp, and 2500 machines in the casino. In New South Wales the figure is of the order of 100 000 machines; nevertheless, it is now recognised as a problem in that state.

The New South Wales Liquor Administration Board made three principal recommendations. It wanted to alter the position regarding the high-note acceptor machines so that \$50 and \$100 notes were no longer acceptable, with further consideration to be given to the removal of note acceptors altogether. That was the first issue.

The second issue was to consider slowing the speed of the machines to add a few extra seconds to the length of individual games. A minimum wheel spin time of 3.5 seconds was contemplated, with a minimum time of 1.5 seconds in idle mode during which at least one of the standard data blocks would have to be transmitted. Again, this is reflected in the proposals that are before the house. The third element was limiting the maximum bet size on stand-alone machines to \$1, on a trial basis.

In response to those provisional determinations, gaming industry operators approached the gambling research unit at the University of Sydney and requested that it conduct a funded, independent and objective research project to evaluate the impact of those changes on problem and recreational gamblers. I pause again to say that in the course of discussion on this issue I would hope that all concerned, regardless of their points of view on the matters surrounding this whole discussion, would accept that the gambling research unit of the University of Sydney can truly be classed as independent.

I would hope that that is not an argument that has to be rebutted and that this organisation comes within that category. Having made that point, I will move on.

Over the succeeding 12 months or thereabouts the University of Sydney Gambling Research Unit went about the process it had been engaged to undertake. In its report of November last year it set out a variety of findings. They highlight the fact that a lot of what was contemplated by the proponents of the changes simply

did not materialise when subjected to the severe scrutiny imposed by the unit.

From the document you can see that the unit used substantial numbers of people for the purpose of reaching its determinations. In one instance there were 634 people; in another instance there were 514; and in another instance there were 497. These numbers were reasonably reflective of the general community position.

The project findings are set out in the document, but time being precious I do not intend to go through them here. Instead I will move to the conclusions and recommendations, because they are most informative to the current debate.

The first conclusion at page 8 of the report is:

A review of the literature reveals a paucity of empirically derived information describing effective harm minimisation strategies that may inform and guide policy-makers. While many strategies have been proposed, very few have been systematically evaluated over the short or long term. There is an imperative need for governments and industry to develop a coordinated national strategic plan to carry out systemic independent research on proposed harm-minimisation interventions.

That is an absolutely damning conclusion in terms of this government's conduct, and I will return to that later. The second conclusion is:

The present study found evidence to support the view that the reduction of maximum bet size from \$10 to \$1 on electronic gaming machines would be a potentially effective harm minimisation strategy for a small proportion of players. In the present study, it is important to note that relatively few participants bet in amounts greater than \$1. Overall, therefore, only a small percentage of players would be affected by this proposed modification. However, if the data accurately reflect the number of players who do make bets greater than one dollar, then the impact on revenue is likely to be small. On the other hand, if the proportion of players who bet in excess of one dollar is underestimated due to recruitment biases, then the effect on revenue would be greater, and so would the effectiveness of the modification as a harm-minimisation strategy.

I pause to say that there is a small argument for reducing the maximum bet to \$1, but basically that is meaningless in the scheme of things. No. 3 reads:

The reconfiguration of machines to accept denomination notes of \$20 or less was not found to be an effective harm-minimisation strategy. This modification appeared to have the greatest impact on revenue.

Again I pause to say that changing the note acceptors from \$100 down to \$20 was regarded by this study as being meaningless in terms of harm minimisation. No. 4 reads:

Evidence did not fully support the adoption of slowing reel spin speed to 5 seconds as an effective strategy. The results of this study suggested that the introduction of this modification could potentially result in unintended harmful consequences of gambling to a small group of patrons without intended benefits. This modification might prolong the duration of gambling sessions.

That comes from a respected source and, I venture to say, flies in the face of what is contained in this bill and in the amendments which now seem to fly around this house with greater rapidity as the 'me too' principle takes over in certain quarters. There are a couple of other recommendations, but I refer particularly to no. 7, which says:

This study provides preliminary evidence regarding the effectiveness of three proposed harm-minimisation strategies. However, it is the first study of its nature. In conducting this study, it became apparent that there are many gaps in our knowledge surrounding factors that contribute to the development of problem gambling at the individual, structural and social levels. There are significant areas of deficit in our basic understanding of the patterns and characteristics of play by problem and recreational gamblers: the proportion of problem gamblers —

and I emphasise 'problem gamblers' —

using various bill acceptors and high denomination machines, credit-by-line combinations and preferred strategies of play. It is clear that a strategic collaborative research plan involving relevant government, gaming and academic bodies be undertaken with the specific aim obtaining necessary basic information and evaluation of proposed interventions to guide and inform policy decision-makers over the long term. To obtain robust information requires the cooperation of government, gaming industry and academic organisations to allow ecologically valid research to be conducted in real-life settings with actual gamblers in which all key variables are systematically manipulated.

The findings conclude with recommendation no. 8, which reads:

It is recommended that the government in collaboration with the gaming industry support the establishment of an independent academic research group whose terms of reference are to evaluate specific harm minimisation strategies, patterns and characteristics of gambling among problem and recreational gamblers and the effectiveness of treatment interventions.

Interestingly enough, that led to an editorial that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 11 March, bearing in mind that the media in New South Wales have expressed concerns similar to those which have been expressed in media of various sorts throughout Victoria. The editorial in this instance read, 'Hit and miss on problem gambling', and in part says:

Owners of the state's 100 000-odd poker machines are breathing more easily after the Carr government decision to

drop three 'harm minimisation' measures suggested by the Liquor Administration Board.

The editorial goes on to say:

The decision will not please church groups, welfare organisations and others concerned to see the government committed to diminishing the social harm of poker machines. But the real reason for concern is to be found in the report that led to the decision to dump the proposed 'harm minimisation' measures.

The persistent theme in the report, by the well-regarded Sydney gambling research unit in the University of Sydney, is that researchers, regulators and lobbyists who advocate curtailment are stumbling in the dark, putting guesswork ahead of empirical evidence. 'In conducting the study', the report says, 'it became apparent that there are many gaps in our knowledge surrounding factors that contribute to the development of problem gambling at the individual, structural and social levels'.

After decades of concern about the damage done by problem gambling, next to nothing is known about its causes or possible cures. An estimated 300 000 Australians are problem gamblers, according to the Productivity Commission's 1999 study. The consequences of their habit often extend to family and friends, and sometimes lead to crime. Yet it seems there is no clear evidence whether measures against problem gambling so far tried are effective.

The editorial concludes that we have to come to grips with identifying the problem gambler in the ways advocated in the Sydney University report.

Therein is the nub of the problem. Before us is legislation which I believe this government laid before Parliament in circumstances where it knew, firstly, that it would have absolutely no effect on its revenue stream, and secondly, that it would have absolutely no effect on the people most impacted upon by the biggest difficulties associated with the industry — namely, problem gambling.

I make that assertion insofar as the first is concerned because the figures are evident from the government's own forward estimates, and insofar as the second is concerned because to this date, as evident from the material provided to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on 24 May by the minister who is still at the table, the government has done absolutely nothing to address the issue of who the problem gambler is. The minister was asked what action had been taken following the recommendations of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee last year, and in practical terms the answer was 'Nil'. The minister was asked, 'What sort of data have you got in relation to these issues?' and the answer was, 'Nil' but the government would be looking to initiate appropriate measures once this legislation had passed.

Mr Pandazopoulos interjected.

Mr RYAN — You can get up and correct it in due course. The totality of the minister's evidence to the committee on behalf of the government was that it had not advanced at all on the crucial, pivotal issue of identifying problem gamblers in the community. If put in any forum this legislation would amount to saying to an alcoholic, 'We can solve your problem by reintroducing 6 o'clock closing'. The material from the Sydney University report highlights that nothing contained in the legislation will touch on the person that the legislation is purportedly designed for and the community is trying to help, and that is the problem gambler. Worse still, there is nothing that could be regarded as a genuine initiative coming from the government, taken in concert with the industry, to identify those people who are the focus of the problem.

I highlight the point by the government's own television advertisements. What do they seek to portray? I think of the one of the young bloke who starts off having a win — in a Pubtab or something — but who then ends up caught in the grind of gambling and is eventually cut out of his circle of mates. His life gradually slides and he is in terrible trouble. However, in the advertisement he ultimately recognises that he has a problem and it is when he admits he has a problem that the measures to assist him to resolve that problem cut in.

Another advertisement shows an elderly lady — a grandmother, I think — who misappropriates money from the home accounts and is eventually caught out. There are graphic scenes of the daughter coming to the home and saying she will refuse to bring the little grand-daughter around any more, and the elderly lady who is the focus of all this is absolutely devastated. The point of the advertisement is that she ultimately comes to accept that she has a problem and makes the phone call that initiates the process of getting assistance.

That is where the government's focus should be in concert with the industry, just as the Sydney report recommends. The legislation will not address that critical issue, and until we address it we are not going to resolve the problems which apply to the problem gambler in Victoria. That is why the National Party thinks the legislation is a charade, although it is not opposing it.

Initiatives are around that can be built on by the government to enable us to get better outcomes. To its credit, the industry in various forms has attempted to address this problem. The industry itself says it needs to do more. But, by Jove, in addressing the problem the government is coming from a long way back when you have regard to its pre-election statements, its forward

estimates and the content of this bill. It has a million miles to go.

In fairness to the industry sector, initiatives have been pursued by the Australian Hotels and Hospitality Association (AHHA), Tabcorp, Tattersalls and the casino. I refer to a document obtained from Tattersalls — which talks about initiatives such as the self-exclusion program funded by Tattersalls, Tabcorp, Clubs Victoria and the AHHA. The program is run by the AHHA, on behalf of the industry, and provides a person who recognises their gambling problem with an option to exclude themselves from gaming venues. Having worked together Tattersalls and Tabcorp have introduced child safety signs in gaming venue car parks and entrances, reminding people not to leave children unattended in a car at any time. There is Gamblers Help material and a variety of other things. The document provided to me shows they are about a dozen in number.

We have seen some government initiatives including clocks on machines, extra lights, and initiatives to do with the capping of machines in regional areas. However, all of this is going nowhere because the government, on its own numbers, derives an ever-increasing amount of money from the operation of the industry, and that is evident from the budgetary figures.

What the government has to do now, rather than work around the edges of the legislation, is to prepare itself to undertake initiatives to bring about the outcomes suggested by the Sydney University research unit. It will be interesting hardball for the government to play, and it will be interesting for us to see how it goes about that over the next 12 months, particularly in light of the material provided to the minister by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

It is a question of balance. All too often there is a tendency to express a one-way argument. The Victorian hotels sector — not just its gaming sector, but the whole industry — employs over 80 000 people. About 12 000 jobs have been created in the gaming sector since the introduction of gaming by the previous Labor government and its development through the life of the former coalition government. About \$600 million has gone from the hotel industry into the Community Support Fund. Other participants in the industry have also made contributions in their various ways, and they continue to do so, not only in employment but particularly through taxation, to which I have made reference several times.

We are trying to strike a balance between the operation of an industry that contributes much to the state in a variety of ways and making certain that we do the best we can by the people who are in the grip of the industry and who are being caught out by its operations to the extent that their lives are being destroyed. I readily acknowledge that instances of that are happening on a near-daily basis. Through the operations and leadership of government we must now undertake appropriate research and policy initiatives that will actually address the issue. To achieve those outcomes we will have to do a heck of a lot better than what we can do with the government's proposed amendments or, indeed, with the proposed amendments circulated by each of the three Independents.

The bill contains two essential categories of legislative amendment: the first is intended to better protect the community against the effects of problem gambling; and the second introduces some industry housekeeping measures. As far as purportedly protecting the community against the effects of problem gambling goes, the bill proposes, for example, to modify the design of gambling machines so they no longer accept \$100 notes; to restrict the spin rates to those that now apply; to ban autoplay to the limited extent it now applies; and to set bet limits — although that element is not actually in this legislation even though it is referred to in the second-reading speech. The latter initiative allows for the granting of various exemptions, as set out in the legislation.

The second of the first group of provisions restricts cash accessibility. Automatic teller machines (ATMs) at venues are to be limited to allow only transactions of no more than \$200. That is an artificial provision, because a person can make withdrawals as often as the machine permits. ATMs have a daily limit, so someone with a personal limit of, say, \$800 or \$1000 can make four or five withdrawals one after the other, each within the limit provided in the bill. This aspect of the bill, in other words, is meaningless, because if someone is really intent on getting more money, this provision allows no counter. No credit facility will be available from the ATMs in those venues, and winnings of \$2000 are to be paid by cheque. Cheques will not be cashable at the venues.

The third element of the first group concerns the regulation of loyalty schemes. These provisions are intended to provide players with appropriate warnings, to allow the setting of losses and time limits, and to identify and bar self-excluded gamblers. In that latter provision there is at least something that comes near the basic principle to which I have been referring, because some help will be available for people involved in

self-exclusion programs. The last element of the first group of provisions is about tougher restrictions on advertising and venues signage.

In summary, therefore, the National Party believes the provisions in this first group of measures are simply window dressing and a charade. The government needs to do a lot more work on identifying problem gamblers and then introducing appropriate mechanisms to assist them, as opposed to going through the sort of legislative initiatives we see before us.

The second group of amendments concerns industry housekeeping measures, including a national scheme of casino exclusions. Going back to my first point, this is at least one step towards addressing problem gambling. Another proposed amendment in this group involves the powers of the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority to suspend certain raffles. Even allowing for the complications referred to by the honourable member for Hawthorn, the principle behind that provision is reasonable.

The third element concerns individual Tabcorp shareholders. When Tabcorp was being privatised the now Treasurer did his level best to talk down its value. At the time it was generally recognised by the industry that it would cost something of the order of \$100 million to \$150 million, but if my memory serves me correctly the value of the float was \$625 million — and had it not been for the Treasurer and his contribution, it would have been much more. Initially there was a 2.5 per cent limit on shareholdings, which was ultimately increased to 5 per cent. The initial limit was imposed to give mum and dad investors an opportunity to participate in the float — and to that extent the aim was laudable. As a result, a lot of small investors became engaged in the process, and that was welcome.

Now the limit is being lifted to 10 per cent. It must be said that in time to come there might be sound arguments for that figure being increased again, because of course — and this is pertinent to the second aspect of this amendment — with the passage of time Tabcorp has become one of those highly sought after investments, which therefore means cash flows into it, particularly from offshore sources. They might ultimately be more interested if they were able to achieve a holding of more than 10 per cent. That is perhaps deserving of consideration in time to come.

The existing 40 per cent foreign ownership rule is to be abolished. In this day and age I think that is a reasonable position. With that restriction in place Tabcorp is not able to compete in the marketplace in an

unfettered way. By removing that restriction — particularly with regard to the capital raising issues — Tabcorp will be able to conduct its operations in a manner more befitting its current place in the scheme of things as opposed to that which applied when it was initially floated all those years ago.

The fourth and last element of this second group concerns the publication of the annual community benefit statement and the additional tax on clubs whose community contributions do not meet the statutory hotel tax rate. Isn't that a little gem? The government has made an absolute botch of it, and not surprisingly, the clubs around the state are very concerned. The idea originally was to accommodate the situation where quasi-clubs were seen to be getting a benefit from not being exposed to the same sorts of taxation regimes as the pubs. So in some eyes we saw some strange developments around Victoria. The aim here was to try to bring the two into line, if you like, in terms of strict numbers: clubs were to be required to contribute a proportion of their share of the drop in the same way that pubs were required to make that contribution to the Community Support Fund.

But the best laid plans — such as they were — have gone awry somewhat, because the government's approach to all this has been ham fisted. That has meant — as I said, not surprisingly — that the clubs have raised grave concerns about it. Clauses 47 and 48 have the capacity to give effect to all this in time to come. When you examine those two provisions carefully — and it was done pretty conclusively by the honourable member for Hawthorn, so I am not going to analyse the whole thing again — you can see that elements of uncertainty have been introduced to this which are causing grief in the clubs section of the industry, in particular.

Not the least of their concerns is constituted by this notion of a community benefit statement. This is an issue that was raised by the minister when he appeared before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on 24 May. When he was asked by the Honourable Roger Hallam in another place, the former minister for this portfolio, what constituted a community benefit statement — which term appears in the legislation before the house — not surprisingly Mr Hallam and the other members of the committee were concerned and surprised to hear that the minister had absolutely no idea. His first response to the question put to him by Mr Hallam was that he simply did not know, that they would make it up in due course, and that the clubs would hear in the fullness of time.

That is a great way to do business. In circumstances where clubs have invested hugely across the state of Victoria, where there is so much dependent upon them in the sense of the employment they offer, where there is a benefit that they return to communities, here we have the minister proposing to make a savage inroad into their income. He was not able to tell the Parliamentary Accounts and Estimates Committee what is constituted by a community benefit statement. He did say, though, 'We will let you know in the fullness of time'. Now we have his amendment.

Mr Pandazopoulos interjected.

Mr RYAN — Don't get excited!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kilgour) — Order! The Leader of the National Party should ignore interjections across the table, which are disorderly.

Mr RYAN — Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Now we have his amendment. What he says is that he intends to amend clause 48 in terms of this issue by inserting:

... the value of any non-financial contribution to community purposes (for example, voluntary work) by or on behalf of the venue operator in the financial year, expressed as a percentage of the venue operator's gaming revenue in the financial year; and

So we are going to have to take into account the extent of the voluntary work contributed for the purpose of the operation of the club. It says it is not confined to that, but it is given as an example of what could be taken into account.

I do not know that the clubs are really any further advanced in relation to this. Certainly the sentiment of concern has been put to us, not only by the RSL clubs around Victoria but by various other organisations around the state.

I have before me correspondence of 27 May from the Mooroopna Golf Club directed to my colleague, the honourable member for Shepparton, and signed by Mr Barry West in his capacity as the licensed club manager. He commences his letter by referring in paragraph 1 to the fact that they have concerns. In paragraph 2 he says:

The area that concerns me deeply is the proposed 'community benefit statement and the required community benefit contribution'. It is my belief from information received from 'Clubs Victoria' that all gaming venues (both clubs and hotels) will be required to show that they have contributed the equivalent of the hotel tax, i.e. 8.33 per cent of the gaming revenue. If they are unable to meet this criterion, then they will be required to make a contribution to the Community Support Fund.

He is not quite right in that sense, but let us not get down to the details. He is worried about the numbers. He then goes on to say:

This has the potential to seriously affect the financial viability of all clubs. A very brief assessment of the Mooroopna Golf Club's situation by using figures in last year's annual report reveals that we had a gross profit from gaming last year of \$684 595.34, this was our 33.33 per cent share of the overall gross profit, the requirement to contribute 8.33 per cent of gross net machine revenue to the Community Benefit Fund equates to 25 per cent of our gaming revenue or \$171 148.83. When we deduct this amount from our operating profit last year of \$60 342.98, it reveals that last year alone this club would have had a net loss of \$110 805.85.

Therein lies the concern. Many of these clubs are faced with the fact that they are now going to have to worry as to how this legislation is going to take effect in terms of their operations. It could well render a lot of them unviable. In circumstances where they are faced with this uncertainty, I believe the clubs are deserving of specific, accurate, well-researched definitions which arise from an extensive consultative process with them by the minister and the government to ensure that whatever decisions are made are made on a basis of fairness and equity to all concerned.

I raise, for example, this concept: why should it not be that a licensed club is able to argue that if money has been returned to the development of its facilities, that therefore represents an addition to the amenity of that club and to the area by way of a capacity for attraction of tourism industries? For example, this being a golf club, that that can be taken into account, or a proportion of that can be taken in an account for that particular club? Could that be done? Would that come within the ambit of the definition 'is contained'?

If it happens to the grounds of the facility, if they are being improved, is it legitimate for that club to argue that similarly a formula of some sort is designed whereby they are able to take into account the full extent, or at least a major part of it or some component of it, which might be regarded as being appropriate for inclusion within the community benefit statement?

These are the sorts of things. You can go on and do them ad nauseam. There are instances upon instances where one can easily think of a situation that could legitimately in the eyes of many constitute a community benefit, and yet may or may not be taken into account by the minister and the government for the purposes of the administration of this particular section of the act.

The club system is deserving of better. I think the Mooroopna Golf Club deserves to know what will be

the specific position which will apply in terms of the impact upon its organisation. The clubs by nature are run substantially on a volunteer basis. The people who make them up are contributing a lot of their own time. It is only fair and reasonable that they are made aware of precisely what is entailed. If you look at it from the other perspective, they as the operators of these entities are required to comply with precision in the way in which they obey the standards of financial accountability. There are all sorts of imposts upon them to make sure they discharge the liabilities they face. I say that is a fair thing.

On their behalf the same thing ought to apply in terms of what the government now intends to impose. It is something that the government needs to give very careful consideration to before the proclamation of this legislation and before it takes effect.

The other thing to be said about this element of it is that what the government intends to do inasmuch as there is an amount of money that does not represent what it believes under the terms of this legislation to be an appropriate distribution, which in effect accords with the same sort of liability that the pubs face, is to take the money in that gap. It goes into the public coffers; it does not go into the Community Support Fund. Unlike the position which applies with the hotels, which over the years have contributed about \$600 million to the CSF, what is to happen is that this money is to come out of the clubs and go back into the public purse. It seems to me that there again we have an issue which quite rightly is of concern to the clubs industry.

The National Party, while it does not oppose this legislation, believes that the bill misses the point as to its essential issue, and that is that this is another example where the government has failed to face its responsibilities on a number of fronts.

The legislation flies absolutely in the face of the pre-election promises. It flies in the face of the government's own forward estimates on the tax take that it will enjoy and, more particularly, in terms of the public concern which is expressed about this industry and its operation. It flies in the face of making any genuine endeavour, indeed any endeavour at all, to identify the problem gambler about whom so many concerns are expressed and to then introduce measures which will accommodate the needs of those very vulnerable people within our community.

It is, as I said when I rose to commence this contribution, a charade.

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — There we have it! After almost 2 hours of debate I think we understand that the opposition parties do not oppose the bill, which is a good thing. It is just a pity that it took us 2 hours — —

Ms Davies interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — It sounded like 5 hours? It felt like 5 hours. Perhaps in a previous life the Leader of the National Party was paid per word delivered in a forum not unlike this, but he seemed to spend a long time getting around to telling us what we needed to know.

I might start my contribution with a brief reference to one comment the honourable member made about advertisements on television. In contesting the view that he and the honourable member for Hawthorn put forward that this government has not done nearly enough, or in fact has not done much at all, I believe TV ads are a useful reference. Indeed, I recall it was under the previous government that some antigambling or problem gambling advertisements were not permitted to go to air; they were thought to be too aggressive. So I think we have moved some considerable way over the past five years or so in trying to be a little more realistic and honest about the impact of problem gambling in particular.

The bill before the house has grown out of ongoing public debate. I do not think there would be a member in this place who is not aware of the continuing concerns about aspects of the gaming industry. It has also grown out of some work the Minister for Gaming initiated in public forums around town. I know a number of public forums were conducted at which people were able to talk to him directly of their concerns about where the industry was going and what needed to be done. I recall on at least one occasion sitting with him in a rather cold and draughty public hall in the eastern suburbs listening to concerns of people — very genuine concerns.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — No, we actually sit in a heated hall.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kilgour) — Order! The honourable member for Mitcham should ignore interjections.

Mr ROBINSON — Absolutely, Mr Acting Speaker. I am easily distracted, as you know.

I congratulate the minister. He would be the first gaming minister in this state who has ever had the gumption to go out and talk face to face with people

who are genuinely concerned about the impact of problem gambling, and that is a good thing.

The bill before the house, as has been outlined in a fraction of the contributions made earlier, does a number of things. It will ban \$100 note acceptors on machines; preserve spin rates at no quicker than 2.14 seconds, although hypothetically the spin rates could go a lot quicker than that; and provide the minister with power to set a maximum bet limit of \$10, whereas it is possible currently to bet up to \$150 a line.

The bill will go further by banning autoplay facilities. Notwithstanding the claim of the opposition that these are not currently permitted or arranged at some facilities, it will actually put in place a ban on those for the first time. It will limit withdrawals from venue automatic teller machines (ATMs) to \$200 per transaction; prohibit cash withdrawals from credit accounts; arrange for winnings greater than \$2000 to be paid by cheque, with the option of doing the same for payments below \$2000; prohibit venues cashing winning cheques; and strengthen the current regulation-making power to enable regulations against inappropriate advertising and signage at venues.

These are not inconsequential changes to the law and regulations given the concerns which have been raised at public forums. Indeed, some of them reflect very closely the concerns which were raised at public forums the minister attended.

A number of probity measures are also provided for. The bill adopts the recommendations of the New South Wales inquiry that police commissioners be given extended powers to exclude nominated persons, that is, criminals, from casinos. It is somewhat surprising that to date that has not been a probity measure ingrained into the act. It will also give the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) power to suspend raffles pending investigation.

There has been some reference by the two previous speakers to community benefit statements. Under the bill before the house all clubs and hotels will be required to provide an annual community benefit statement to the VCGA outlining their contributions to the community, and these will be published. I want to talk for a moment on that proviso. Some time back a representative of Carlton and United Breweries, came to talk to me about his company's interest in gaming legislation, putting forward the company's line on where it believed things ought to go.

I quizzed this representative on what precisely was the community benefit being delivered from two of that

company's larger establishments in the Mitcham electorate, and was told the company made its contribution to a particular charity that had statewide operation — I will not mention the name of it. I said that was no doubt a good cause, but asked what was the particular relevance of that charity to the localities of these two hotels and the communities they served. This industry official looked at me with a very blank expression. I have that sometimes in my electorate office when I am talking to people — I generate the blank expressions.

Mr Mulder interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kilgour) — Order! The honourable member for Polwarth is out of his place and is disorderly.

Mr ROBINSON — He does not need to be encouraged.

It seems that I might have been the first person to suggest to this industry representative that perhaps it might be a good idea that hotels which operate gaming machines in suburban locations make an effort to actually direct some of the proceeds into activities, charitable work and welfare organisations in those same locations. I would have thought that was a commonsense thing for an industry to do, particularly when community attitudes are hardening against the less desirable aspects of its operation. Hopefully that suggestion will be taken up. But it does illustrate the desire of having community benefit statements mandated in an annual form and published.

There has already been some discussion on the fourth group of industry-specific amendments which will ease Tabcorp shareholder restrictions. It is not something that I am overly familiar with, although I understand that in financial circles large public companies like to ensure they have a profile which matches proportionately local ownership and overseas ownership. I am not as familiar with studying company balance sheets as perhaps the opposition spokesperson on gaming is, but I am told that is not an unreasonable requirement.

The bill also contains some changes to public lottery licence-holders. They will be given the power to offer non-monetary prizes and winners will be given a choice. That seems to be a reasonable measure.

There has been some discussion about loyalty scheme regulations. I always find the use of loyalty schemes an interesting concept. It is a little perverse at times that people could be encouraged to have loyalty to a poker machine or a poker machine venue, and it seems to be

an increasing trend in this day and age with businesses that loyalty schemes are used to mask in fact an absence of loyalty in the traditional sense.

I know banks have been prone to using loyalty schemes — they were one of the first — when in fact over many years banks have started to demonstrate a distinct lack of loyalty to their customers, certainly suburban locations that have served them well. Nevertheless ‘loyalty scheme’ is the name commonly used. It is a good thing that we are putting in place guidelines and regulations to govern their operation, particularly as they have a research link, which is something I might talk about in greater depth in a little while.

These initiatives in the bill come on top of earlier government initiatives such as the introduction of clocks, the ban on new 24-hour venues and higher taxes on machines to be directed into the health sector. In that sense they are welcome.

There has been some considerable reference in the debate to date and in public commentary to governments, and this government in particular, being addicted to gaming revenue and that being somehow the reason why the government is afraid or reluctant to take action to reform in any way the regulatory environment in which the industry operates.

This Parliament gave the industry legal licence to operate. Some 10 years ago it gave the industry large discretion as to how it operates. What we have seen is a very substantial growth in the turnover. Industry in this sector and other sectors is encouraged to employ whatever reasonable means it might see fit to use to increase turnover. It is true that the government is reliant upon all taxation revenue that it receives. This government is no different from any other government: taxation revenue received is used for a variety of purposes.

It is true that this government has also imposed additional taxes on poker machines — some \$1533 per machine in two instalments — and that has boosted the figures that can be used to put the argument that this government is addicted to gaming revenue. But much of this revenue is dedicated to the health sector, and it may be no small coincidence that we have seen some improvements recently in things like ambulance bypasses and surgery waiting lists at our hospitals because of the extra revenue that is flowing into that sector.

It is true to say that all of us are surprised about the capacity of the industry to improve and to increase its

turnover. I was looking briefly at some comments in the *Herald Sun* of December 1999 which compared some aspects of the industry between 1980 and 1999. The turn rate of a poker machine in the 1980s, for example, was 7 seconds, but with the adoption of new technology that had been cut substantially by 1999. The industry, in exercising the licence it was given, is seeking to employ measures that will improve its turnover, and there is perhaps nothing so surprising about that.

It is traditional for governments dealing with industries that have antisocial characteristics to take the step of applying heavier taxes. The alcohol industry is probably the prime example of that. We all accept that in the main people enjoy alcohol, that they imbibe in it, but that they do it in moderation and they do it reasonably. There are, however, some downsides to it, and a lot of those are connected with road tolls and road safety issues. We do not assume that everyone is a problem drinker, but traditionally we try to ensure that there is a revenue flow from the sale of alcohol to be able to do socially progressive things.

As I said earlier, the revenue from gaming machines has increased because of the extra taxes that have been placed on them. I would be confident, however, that over time gaming machine revenue will plateau as a proportion of state revenue and that eventually it will lessen. I do not accept that it will be permanently fixed at the percentage it now is. To that end I refer to an interesting article by Tony Harris in today’s *Australian Financial Review* which he started off with a comparison of payroll tax and stamp duty in New South Wales. He went on to make this point:

In the four years to June 2001 in NSW, payroll tax as a share of total revenues fell from 43 to 40 per cent while stamp duties increased from 30 to 42 per cent. In 2000–01, for the first time, stamp duties replaced payroll tax to become the major source of state revenue.

Then he made this very interesting point:

The same sad fate befell death duties which, together with gift duties, once accounted for 12 per cent of state revenues and now account for nought.

There we were 20 years ago heavily dependent upon death duties as a source of revenue, until Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen made his state of Queensland a haven for people facing their imminent and unfortunate but mortal decline, and eventually death duties were abolished everywhere. I put it to the house that over time the government’s reliance upon gaming revenue will diminish.

The claim has also been made that governments are not prepared to stand up to the Department of Treasury and

Finance. Much as all of us would understand, particularly former cabinet ministers, the significant role the department plays in cabinet submissions and in setting government policy, there have been occasions during this government on which the Department of Treasury and Finance did not get its way. I recall one example that had something to do with minimum telephone bets for bookmakers in which the department resisted the proposition that the minimum bet be lowered. Indeed, I think it might have been joined on that front by Tabcorp which, among other things, made it clear that it might spell the end of civilisation as we knew it.

In any event the government did not accept that advice and acted — very successfully, as it has turned out — to impose reductions in the minimum bet on bookmakers. At times governments — and this government in particular — are prepared to take an anti-Treasury line. A more important measure is how governments use revenues derived from gaming, and I would argue that this government has a far better record than its predecessors in investing revenue in services that matter — that is, in the health and education sectors and in police services and problem gaming services.

Certainly this government does not go around actively promoting the industry as its predecessor did. Anyone who wants to compare the statements made by this Premier and this gaming minister with statements made by the previous Premier and previous gaming ministers can look at the parliamentary library's clipping service and they will find there is a clear contrast between the two.

I am conscious of the time and I know a lot of people want to speak on this bill. I accept the statement made in earlier contributions that we need to do more research into the nature of problem gamblers. We are certainly in a position now to conduct better funded research and we are learning more, but there is probably still a great deal we do not know. At all times legislation should attempt to pursue the path that research is setting for us.

We also need to consider very carefully — I cannot overemphasise this point — how we might tackle the question of the extent of poker machine activity. In prefacing this remark I note that poker machines have ingrained themselves quickly into our culture. The claim is often made that governments are addicted to revenue from poker machines, but I am mindful that Australian Football League clubs in this state are incredibly reliant upon poker machine revenue. Most if not all Victorian AFL teams operate social clubs and other facilities with up to the maximum number of

machines, and I anticipate that in every one of those instances the income being derived by those clubs would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. In some instances those clubs operate very close to the bone and, as we all know, they are never far away from being forced into a situation they would much rather not be in. Their futures are by no means certain. In considering the role of poker machines and the revenues derived therefrom, whether it be by government or others, we need to be mindful of the very sensitive role those revenues play in that particular field.

In concluding, I acknowledge that as far as I am aware community attitudes to gambling are hardening, and although the government has tightened controls on poker machines many people feel that further regulation is required. The government reserves the right — as any government would — to revisit this issue, but I suspect that the industry would do well to heed the concerns held by people in the suburbs and to ensure that it is doing more to deliver benefits locally and to try to sell the positive message of gaming in those local settings.

I acknowledge that the Independents are putting forward amendments, but the government does not intend at this stage to accept them because it believes the measures proposed in the bill are appropriate at this time. With those remarks I commend the bill to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member for Mornington.

Ms Davies — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, as I understand the customs of this house it is customary to go from a speaker supporting the bill to one opposing the bill. I am actually intending to oppose at least parts of this bill, and as I understand the position of the opposition it is not intending to oppose the bill. Therefore, I suggest it is the turn of a speaker against the bill to follow the contribution of the honourable member for Mitcham.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! My advice is that the major parties get the call first and that the honourable member for Gippsland West will get the call after the next speaker, whom I have already called — that is, the honourable member for Mornington.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I welcome the forecast by the honourable member for Mitcham that — in his words, as I scribbled them down — gaming revenue will drop one day. I think it is very

courageous of the honourable member for Mitcham to make that statement and to do so in the light of the policy the Labor Party had going into the last election.

I quote from the Labor Party's election policy headed 'Responsible gaming', which states:

Labor will ... reduce Victoria's reliance on revenue from gambling.

On the third page the policy states:

Revenue from gaming and the casino has formed an increasing proportion of state budget income. While this situation is allowed to continue, either by the conscious choice of the state government or because of the inadequacy of the state revenue base, government is compromised in its role as the responsible regulator of the gambling industry.

It is all very well for the honourable member for Mitcham to say that Labor is not addicted to gambling taxes, but the facts show that it is addicted. There can be no argument about Labor's reliance on gaming revenue.

A comparison of actual revenue in the 1998–99 financial year with forecasts for the 2002–03 financial year shows that gaming revenue in Victoria will be up by 31 per cent after adjusting for revenue provided through the GST. A 31 per cent increase in gaming revenue over that period is large. However, percentages can be misleading, so I turn to examine the revenue in actual dollars.

In 1998–99 Victoria received \$1.4 billion in revenue from gaming. The forecast of \$1.9 billion for 2002–03 is evidence of the huge increase in gaming revenue the government will receive into its coffers. In 2002–03 it will receive an additional \$500 million, which does not sit well with Labor's 'Responsible gaming' election policy document. The government's attempt to put the two together is an act of verbal acrobatics that simply does not have much credence on this side of the house or among members of the community.

In the words of the honourable member for Mitcham, the bill has grown out of a genuine concern to deal with problem gamblers. Of course the bill has grown from a genuine concern, because everybody is concerned about problem or compulsive gamblers, whether they are operating gaming machines or betting on horses or the spin of a wheel. Anybody with that compulsion needs to be assisted in every possible way.

The honourable member for Hawthorn said the bill had its origins more than two years ago, when the government set out to try to deal with the problem. It has come up with a whole lot of ideas over that time and has made a few minor changes, but this is the first

major change that has been brought before the house. Yet it seems the government cannot get it right, certainly from the point of view of making amendments to its own bill, as it intends to do. It certainly has not got it right so far as the Independents are concerned, because we will have to deal with a raft of amendments from each of the Independents — the honourable member for Gippsland West, the honourable member for Gippsland East and the honourable member for Mildura. They seem to have concerns about the impact or the direction of the bill and whether it will do what it sets out to do.

According to the government, the bill's primary purpose is to deal with compulsive gambling and problem gamblers. I prefer to use 'compulsive' when describing those gamblers, because it says a lot about what is basically a sickness — and that is what it boils down to. I feel very sorry for people who have that sickness.

Where do we go to? What is the government to do? The bill is Labor's plan Mark 2 to deal with compulsive gambling, but does it address the issue? Will it do more than pay lip-service to the problem? I suggest that there are some real problems with the so-called harm-minimisation measures contained in the bill. Like those who suffer from major sicknesses of a similar kind, problem gamblers will find ways around the rules, and they will find ways and means of getting around the legislation.

To talk about preventing \$100 notes from being fed into machines is to pay lip-service to harm minimisation, and to talk about whether a machine spins faster than the current industry average of 2.14 seconds is to do the same. If we are to deal with people who have problems with putting excessive amounts of money into gaming machines, we must understand that the bill totally ignores one thing that stands out to anybody who has spent time watching people playing machines in clubs, the casino or wherever.

What about the people who play two or three machines at a time? The bill does not address that situation. Anybody who has been in a pub, a club or a casino either here or interstate and has watched people playing gaming machines will have seen that situation time and again. You will see somebody sitting feeding money into a machine as well as putting their cash into vacant machines on either side of them. Earlier this year I actually saw — not in Victoria but at the services club at Mulwala — a person playing four machines at the one time. He needed arms like an octopus, but he was determined to get money into the machines as fast as he could, and he was managing it. Simply his needs were

not being serviced by one or two machines. That would not be a rarity; it has been going on forever and a day.

I happened to have been around, because I am of the age to have been around, when poker machines were introduced into New South Wales in 1956.

Mr Maxfield — I wasn't born then.

Mr COOPER — Somebody has opened the bar! I told them not to open it before about 10 o'clock at night if the honourable member for Narracan is around!

My wife comes from Yarrawonga, so we have spent a lot of time in that part of the world at Easter, Christmas and on other holidays. The Yarrawonga and Border Golf Club, as it was then called, had its headquarters in a house, where there was a bar and a number of poker machines. People would queue up behind the machines to play them. The club would close at midnight, and from 10.30 p.m. onwards the pressure those in the queue applied to the people playing the machines was enormous. They were desperate to put money into the machines. It was a new phenomenon for me to see that kind of gambling desperation.

The situation certainly has calmed down a lot from those days. I do not think I have seen queues behind a gaming machine for many years. Nevertheless, the desires of the people who have the gambling sickness are still there. It is wrong for the government not to address some of the more obvious issues. Instead of preventing \$100 notes being fed into machines or being worried about the spin speeds we should be dealing with people who play more than one machine at a time. Frankly, the measures in the bill — whether they are about \$100 notes, spin speeds or the crazy notion of limiting transactions from automatic teller machines to \$200 at a time, which is a meaningless piece of nonsense — do not address or go to the nub of the issue.

Limiting transactions from automatic teller machines to \$200 at a time is a simple nonsense. As the honourable member for Hawthorn has said, you can put your card in, get \$200 out, take one step back and one step forward, put your card in again and get another \$200. What kind of crazy lip-service is it that says you are going to solve the problem of compulsive gambling by limiting people to getting \$200 per transaction out of an automatic teller machine? It is not addressing the issue; it is simply paying lip-service to the whole issue.

The Leader of the National Party hit the nail right on the head when he talked about self-recognition of a problem. There are those of us who have smoked and given it up. I am one of those people; I gave up some

20 years ago. I notice that you are nodding, Mr Acting Speaker, so you are another one of those good, clean-living people who have tried it and given it away. All of us know that you do not give it up until you want to. How many members of this house have said to people who smoke, 'Why do you continue to smoke? It is a dirty, filthy and expensive habit'. And they have said, 'I would love to give up, but I just can't'. That is just a nonsense! They do not want to give it up; they still enjoy smoking and they just pay lip-service to what they believe is the politically correct line — that is, 'I will tell people I try, but I really can't. It is just too hard'.

The fact of the matter is that between your ears is a thing called a brain and it will control what it is that you want to do, be it good, bad or indifferent. If you really want to do something then you will do it, whether it is good for you or bad for you. People who smoke will smoke even though they might know that it is bad for them. They still like it and will not give it up until they decide that it is appropriate for them to do so. That is the moment in their lives when they will give it up. Some people never reach that moment, and some of them are here in this house.

Compulsive gambling is exactly the same. Legislation, advertising or any other means will not persuade people who have the gambling sickness to give it away. You will never get them to give it away until they recognise they have a problem. That is where the government should direct its energies, and that is where the government should direct the taxpayers' dollar: to educating people to come to that point of recognition. As the Leader of the National Party said in his contribution to this debate, that view is clearly recognised by the government through its advertising campaigns on television. The government recognises that, but it is surprising that it is not paying more attention to directing its energies to that side of the problem gambling issue instead of bringing in this kind of stuff, which penalises a whole lot of people, the vast majority of whom are not problem gamblers, and does nothing to address the issue itself.

I have great difficulty indeed in being able to say something reasonably good about this bill. I know that it meets all the criteria of political correctness and that anyone who stood up either within or outside this place and said that this bill is pretty much a load of meaningless drivel would be accused of not having the best interests of problem gamblers at heart. They would be accused of ignoring the issue when the reality is that, until the problem gamblers themselves recognise they have problems, they will never be cured.

There were all sorts of dire predictions when the previous Labor government brought casinos and gaming machines into this state, but there was also a recognition by the vast majority of the community that, handled properly, gambling could be a good thing for this state. It created jobs and saved a huge amount of revenue which had been disappearing across the borders of this state into New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia. I believe that, in general terms, that objective has been achieved and that a lot of good has come out of all of this.

It is wrong for honourable members to stand up here and try to mount an argument that, somehow or other, problem and compulsive gambling dominates the whole area. It does not! It is a small minority of people who are affected. That is not to say we should not be assisting people who have that sickness, but it has existed since before casinos and gaming machines were introduced into Victoria.

There have been problem gamblers in this state for all of my life and even earlier. Back in the 1960s, not long after I was married, I was a member of a sporting organisation. A guy in that particular club was a painter. He was a young fellow who had recently married and had a young baby. Every week he used to gamble his pay packet on the horses. I remember bumping into him one day when I was at the races. I had received a pretty good tip so I went to Caulfield, followed the tip and won my money. Having gone there for the one race, I was just about to leave when I bumped into this fellow and he asked me for a loan of £20, which was a lot of money in about 1962. He said, 'I've got a sure thing in the next race, but I've done all my dough'. I said to him, 'I will give you £20, but not to bet on a horse. With the 20 quid I give you, you can go home and it will pay for the groceries and the rent'. He said, 'No'. I said, 'I will only give it to you if you leave the track. I will give it to you outside'. He said, 'No'. He did not take my £20; he went scrounging around and found somebody else who gave him the loan. I saw him the following week and he said he had won £100 on the following race. How can people live like that? A lot do. Until they recognise that fact, they will not cure themselves and this bill will not cure them either.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — It is with a degree of sadness that I stand to speak on this so-called Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill. The house needs to note that usually at the start of a bill there is a little explanation of its purpose. While the so-called purpose, as stated, of this bill is to amend the Casino Control Act, the Gaming and Betting Act and various

other acts, it does not do what most bills do, which is, go on and state what it aims to do. I suspect that is very much because it would be dishonest if the bill were to claim that it is an attempt to reduce the impact of problem gaming in this state.

I note the comments made in February by Merrill Lynch, stockbrokers, referring to the government's proposed gaming legislation after the government announcements:

The Victorian government has proposed a small number of changes to gaming legislation in the state.

In doing so, the government has rejected, as was expected, the more onerous changes suggested by Independent Susan Davies.

Those changes are the ones referred to in my private members bill of November 2001, which prompted the government to move on both banning smoking in gaming rooms and these so-called changes to the gaming legislation.

The Merrill Lynch comments continue:

As usual, the changes are expected to have little or no impact on operations in our opinion. Hence no change to our forecasts.

Note TAH's —

Tabcorp Holdings' —

record performance in the first half 2002, despite changes to legislation in the past.

The government continues to protect its tax revenue stream which is a positive for TAH.

...

We continue to view the minor changes to legislation as 'noise' and suggest any price weakness is a good opportunity to buy.

The market has spoken. I also refer to an article in the *Illawarra Mercury* which compares gaming measures and revenue in New South Wales and Victoria. It states:

Victoria has overtaken NSW as the state most heavily reliant on gambling revenue, with almost \$300 collected this year from every person in the state.

Victoria will collect about \$1.4 billion in gambling taxes this financial year, representing more than \$300 for every person in the state, compared with about \$240 per head in NSW.

David Hayward from the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology did a fairly thorough analysis of the budget papers, showing that next year:

... state gambling taxes will:

increase from \$1.37 billion to \$1.46 billion, or by \$82 million

grow by 5.9 per cent (or 3.9 per cent after inflation is taken into account)

increase as a proportion of total taxes from 15.7 per cent to 16.5 per cent.

...

Electronic gaming machine taxes are also expected to grow rapidly. Over the next year, they will increase:

by 7.3 per cent, compared to 5.9 per cent for all gambling taxes —

and —

as a per cent of all gambling taxes (from 66 per cent to 67 per cent).

Further he states:

In 2002–03

...

gambling taxes from all sources will account for 22 per cent of total state taxes.

Those figures and others which I will quote later show very clearly that even though the government continues to make fairly pious comments about the fact that it has slowed the rate of growth of gambling in this state, it has in no sense stopped the growing of gaming revenue and gaming losses in this state.

The consequences of the government's failure to reduce the amount of gaming in this state are very dramatic and very sad for all our communities. I would question whether the numbers of gamblers are increasing with this increasing dollar loss. I wonder whether it is perhaps not that more people are actually losing more.

An article in the *Herald Sun* of 21 May refers to the consequences of the government's failure to reduce gaming to an acceptable level and states:

More than 7200 Victorian children have become homeless because of poker machines since 1992.

The pokies kids belong to the 17 160 gambling addicts who have slept on Melbourne's streets or applied for emergency housing in the past decade.

And welfare agencies are bracing for another 2125 children to lose their homes because of a parent's pokies habit by the end of the year.

Another article in the same paper of the same date refers to a particular 31-year-old who:

has squandered more than \$100 000 during a nine-year pokies nightmare that began in 1994.

That \$100 000 could have provided that man with the very substantial asset of a house; instead, he has become homeless. The article states further:

Stephen, one of 17 160 Victorian pokies addicts to become homeless since 1992, sometimes gambles for more than 24 hours at a time at Crown Casino and inner-city pokies parlours.

The consequences of this gaming addiction are appalling.

I tried a range of tactics aimed at making this legislation somewhat more worthwhile. The Minister for Gaming made no attempt to negotiate with me in the lead-up to this legislation. One of the tactics I attempted was to label these measures as pathetic. The Merrill Lynch assessment of the measures, which I quoted earlier, would indicate a fairly high degree of agreement with that perception.

I also lobbied each minister in the cabinet and engaged in some questioning of the Treasurer at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings. I got a fairly severe snap from the Treasurer at the time, who accused me of wanting to shut down gaming altogether. Contrary to his accusation I do not wish to totally close the industry down, but I would like to see it get smaller. I would like to see it stop growing at the expense of our communities.

Most government income from gaming is coming from people with a problem. Most gaming venues are getting most of their income from people on lower incomes — from the lonely, the troubled, the disenfranchised and the vulnerable — and that is unacceptable. I do not believe that we can afford to have gaming continuing to grow as a proportion of state government revenue as it still is and is planned to continue.

I turn to budget paper 2 at page 155. Gaming revenue in 2002–03 is budgeted at \$1.455 billion. The following year it is estimated to go up to \$1.536 billion, in 2004–05 it is estimated to be \$1.6 billion, and in 2005–06 the estimate is \$1.7 billion. It is budgeted to continue to grow, and I do not believe that we can afford to have that happen.

The worst feature of this legislation is not that the changes it will make to the operation of gaming machines are basically cosmetic — the theoretical changes are that it will hold the spin rates at current levels, there will be a maximum bet limit of \$10, there will be a ban on autoplay facilities and a ban on the \$100 note — the worst of it is that even these cosmetic measures can be avoided provided customers can be encouraged to join a loyalty scheme. This legislation

promotes and enshrines loyalty schemes, which are used as a marketing tool.

I will give you an example involving Crown Casino, which is a very successful user of loyalty schemes and which this bill favours vastly because Crown already has the technology and the means to maximise its use of loyalty schemes. Just to give you an example of the sort of impact that those schemes can have I again quote the *Herald Sun* of 15 May referring to the woman who siphoned \$374 000 from the Australian Football League (AFL) coffers, from her very responsible job, so that she could gamble it all away at Crown Casino's high-roller rooms. The article states:

The former state-level softball player said she was approached by a Crown host in late 1999, offering membership to the exclusive Mahogany Room and free tickets to Derby Day.

The woman later told investigators —

... free meals, accommodation and tickets to major events were all 'part of the trimmings', but prospective members had to spend a certain amount of time gambling in the high rollers room.

The end result of her membership of Crown's loyalty schemes was three years in jail. The AFL is down \$374 000 and the whole community is the poorer. And I think that that is very sad.

In reality this legislation is grossly advantaging Crown Casino to the disadvantage of smaller venues and operators who will have to adjust their machines. Crown will not have to adjust its machines, because provided you join a loyalty scheme you do not have to adjust your machine. Those people who join the loyalty scheme and get the card will be able to use machines to which none of these restrictions will apply, and I think that that is absurd. Some 75 per cent of Crown customers are already loyalty scheme members and it is aiming for 90 per cent in the next year.

The main positive benefit — if one can call it that — from this proposed legislation is that clubs are going to need to provide an annual community benefit statement and ensure that they are donating enough back to their community to warrant their tax exemption. Since too many clubs, I suspect, have been spending too much money just making their gambling facilities bigger perhaps this will encourage them to be more specific in their donations back to the community.

There are other undesirable and, I believe, dangerous features in this legislation that have not been discussed very publicly and which have not been advertised. The individual shareholder limit for Tabcorp will increase from 5 per cent to 10 per cent and the 40 per cent

foreign ownership restriction will be abolished. Both of those changes will increase the probability of a concentration of ownership of Tabcorp into the hands of fewer people, and those fewer people will be the wealthy and the powerful.

Likewise, once upon a time the whole board of the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority needed to make decisions regarding the suspension, cancellation and variation of casino licences or approvals, disciplinary measures or amendments to venue licences. Under this bill that power can be delegated to a committee of three. Again, I would suggest that that is an undesirable concentration of power and information into fewer hands.

The amendments that I have proposed, which are largely at this stage symbolic since neither the government nor the opposition has shown any interest in approving them, involve several measures. One of them was to remove the minister's ability to direct bet limits at the casino and gaming venues. The minister has already had this power; he could have reduced the \$10 bet limit at any time he chose, but he did not choose to use that. So one of the other amendments in the legislation was to introduce a bet limit of \$1 with the intention of allowing people to play longer and lose less.

Another of the amendments was to lower the maximum note accepted from \$50 to \$20. A third amendment was to remove that farcical ability for the casino and gaming machine operators to receive exemptions from the restrictions that are announced in this bill.

Another amendment was to change the limit at which a winning cheque must be provided from \$2000 down to \$500. My original private members bills said that a cheque should be offered when somebody had won up to \$250. I have raised that in this amendment. Again, this so-called measure the minister has announced is a farce. Most venues will offer a cheque at \$1000 already, so announcing that people have to be offered a cheque at \$2000 is somewhat worse than useless.

The last amendment, on which I have sought approval from both the government and the opposition — and neither has given me the courtesy of a direct answer to the question — seeks to ban gaming machine advertising. The minister at the moment has the regulatory power to limit advertising and there are some measures in the bill, but my proposed amendment aims to ban advertising altogether.

The minister, at the time he made his announcement, boasted that this legislation would give Victoria the

strictest gaming controls in Australia. That is not true, and I believe he knows it. New South Wales has no advertising and I believe Victoria should follow. I challenge the government to at least come up to par with the New South Wales legislation as soon as possible.

Neither the government nor the opposition has shown any willingness to reduce this state's reliance on the misery created by gambling. I do not believe it is honest for either side to focus totally on those people who have a complete gambling addiction. Gambling addiction is not a small pocket out at the far end of the gaming industry. What we are talking about is a whole range of people, many of whom spend more than they can afford on gambling. Gambling is a problem not just for a tiny pocket of 2 per cent; there is a larger range of people who sometimes get themselves into trouble and sometimes spend too much. We should be aiming to reduce those people's problems as well.

I would like to urge clubs across the state to remember that they are more than just a business aiming to maximise their profits. The social activities which these clubs used to have as their sole focus are much more important to the community than the shallow glitz of their gaming facilities. I believe some of those clubs need to remember their original purpose for which they were set up and the original focus of their activities, which was to bring people together.

We need to spend time and energy encouraging people to gain a sense of joy and belonging with people, not encouraging them to interact with a machine. This bill will not help us encourage people to be together.

I am pleased with the achievements from the private member's bill I introduced in this house in November 2001. I believe the extension of the bans on smoking will have a very longstanding impact — not just on people's health, not just on workers' health, but also on problem gambling. But the cost of that success has been the loss of any real measures that could have been brought about in this bill to reduce the levels of gaming in this state.

I urge the government and the opposition to take part in the round table discussions that the Premier has proposed and actually get real about doing something effective to reduce the problems associated with gambling levels in this state. I do not commend the bill to the house.

Mr VINEY (Frankston East) — The regulation of gaming is, of course, an integral part of the function of government in forming and supporting a civil society.

We find ourselves in a society where there is a significant amount of gaming, but this is not a new phenomenon — it is something that has existed in communities and in societies for hundreds and thousands of years.

Governments, of course, over a significant time have also raised revenue from the industry. So we find ourselves with the Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill witnessing a continuum of regulation and reform and re-regulation and new reform of the gaming industry. Victoria has, in fact, seen a rapid change in gaming patterns over the last 10 years. It has probably seen a significant change in the patterns of gaming and gambling activity and behaviour in the community over the last 50 years, when significant interest in gaming was probably focused on horseracing and other racing. It moved to the old Tatts ticket, Tattslotto and other numbers games, the growth in bingo, and then over the last 10 years the growth of poker machines.

The bill is the government's second wave of reform to the industry, to continually monitor implementation of the regulations of the sector, which is an important function of government, and to continually look at ways of reforming and improving how the sector and the industry can work in a civil society.

It is disingenuous of the opposition to be criticising this government for collection of gaming revenue. During the period of the Kennett government we saw a substantial increase in the revenue raised through gaming. This government has been keen to ensure that the regulation of gaming is not influenced by the revenue issues that are associated with it.

In my electorate of Frankston East, in Frankston and down the Mornington Peninsula generally, there has been a significant growth in the local gaming industry. Having visited a number of the venues and talked to a number of operators, I believe it is a very responsible industry, but it is not sufficiently engaged with the local community. Too often it is not engaging with local charities, so funding support is often provided more generally than it could be and is perhaps not as targeted as it could be at the local community. So I welcome the inclusion in this legislation of the community benefit statement.

The member for Gippsland West focused on problem gambling and talked about the continuum of problem gamblers, saying that it is not just about the 2 per cent at one end. I think that is quite true, and I endorse those views. This legislation is not designed to deal with just the 2 per cent of people who have a severe problem. It is designed to deal with a whole range of people and is

therefore about dealing with the continuum of problem gambling. I believe the government's record in supporting problem gamblers in this community has been quite exemplary. There has been a two and a half times increase in funding for problem gambling advertising and support programs. For the first time funding for problem gambling service providers is at adequate levels, and that includes making information available in community languages.

As a result we have seen a doubling of the number of people seeking and receiving support through those programs. My time is limited because there are a number of members who wish to speak on this legislation, but I commend the raft of amendments that are now before the house as the second wave of the reform, the first wave having been taken through the Parliament in May 2000.

Mr SMITH (Glen Waverley) — As we have heard from all honourable members to date, the aim of the bill is to try to help problem gamblers. Legislation on gambling comes up regularly in this house — it has been coming up the whole time I have been a member of this place, and certainly for the last 12 or 14 years — but after reading the bill and after listening to the very detailed analyses of it given by the honourable member for Hawthorn and the Leader of the National Party, I cannot see anything in it that is going to help solve the problems faced by problem gamblers.

In my area the churches are continually telling me that their budgets are running out as more people are coming to them because they are reliant on welfare. They are saying that many people are coming to them in desperation. Like the honourable member for Mornington I can think back to the late 1950s, just after the New South Wales poker machines were brought in, when I was teaching in the country.

I can recall an experience in one particular country town, Tarcutta, where there was an RSL (Returned and Services League) club. One very prominent member of society there worked on the main roads, and each second Friday he would come into the RSL club with his pay cheque, put the whole lot through the machine, apart from buying a few drinks, of course, and then go home, obviously to a tremendous reception. Next morning his wife would be down at the RSL club, banging on the back door. Part of the policy of the club in those days was to give this lady what he had lost the night before. But there was a 'but' to it, and this is where I do not think we have learnt anything in the last 30 or 40 years. The 'but' was that on the Monday night he would be up before the committee, which he was

repeatedly over the time I was associated with the club, and he would be suspended for six months.

In those days the hotels in New South Wales did not have poker machines, so for five months and a couple of weeks you could rely on him being at the hotel, running down the club as much as he could, but at least he went home with the full amount of money less the amount he had spent on his drinks, and the family could live on it. Then he would be reinstated, making the big promise that he had turned over a new leaf. Once again, first night in, the gambling addiction got him and he went straight to the poker machines — and it would be the same story again, with his wife going down to the club on the Saturday morning.

We do not seem to have learnt anything. The measures in the bill will do nothing to solve the problems caused by problem gamblers. What the committee did then was lift the man away from the club and give him one-on-one counselling by talking to him about what he had done. He knew what he had done, because he had sobered up by the Monday; and the committee did something about it by stopping it and saving that family.

Today with so many civil libertarians and the like in the community there is no way we could solve the problem in that particular way. Instead what we are doing is talking about the denominations of bank notes you can put through a machine. It is utter nonsense.

It is a bit like the smoking rules in some of these clubs. I go to a couple of RSL clubs, and I am very pleased to be associated with them. But I see from the smoking rules that smoke is supposed to stop at a certain level and not move on to another — in the same way as the restrictions in the so-called loyalty phrases of this bill! They will do nothing to stop problem gamblers. Somehow they have to be literally physically — I am not going to suggest how to the government, because it is the government's job to do that — forced not to play, and that will not happen by someone saying, 'Oh, they should join some scheme'. As the honourable member for Gippsland West was saying before, with problem gamblers such as the woman who was caught and recently sent to jail for gambling away Australian Football League (AFL) money, there is no-one there to stop them. At least in Tarcutta the wife of the problem gambler returned the next morning, because she knew she did not have any money for the following week and she had five or six kids to bring up. In that way she was literally able to stop it.

I believe we have to go down that path and look at that type of approach, rather than these silly provisions. The

fact that 20 per cent of the government's revenue comes from gambling and that \$1.4 billion is being planned for in the forthcoming budget is to my way of thinking just unbelievable, because there are no controls. I am not saying that you should not have gambling, because we have all indulged at some stage. I remember that during that same period I learnt my lesson with poker machines. In one particular week I did half my weekly pay. I vowed I would never play them again, and I did not for about 20 years. Now I cannot remember the last time I did. But the point is that they are there as a choice. As the honourable member for Mornington says, it is about a mental discipline that people have to develop in order to be saved.

On one of my recent visits to a very large RSL club which a friend of mine runs in the western suburbs, I found the people there were really going on about the community benefit contribution. They said, 'This club will go broke if this is enforced'. The minister has come up with a series of compromises, and I am sure the compromises will win. Some of the clubs that I have seen, apart from the one in Waverley, which has a manager who runs it with a rod of iron — and runs it well, I might add — seem to have miles too many staff, but that is because they are genuine community clubs. Even if they are employing too many staff, if at the end of the day they are able to pay their bills through the pokies then they are doing what the community wants. I do not think this community benefit contribution was initially meant for them.

After the incredible reaction from the clubs, the clubs' lawyers and some of those we have spoken to, it was watered down, because the government was after the pseudo clubs — and so it should be. That is what it is about as far as I am concerned. As a Vietnam vet, I am aware of the facilities that they make available. The amount of good that they do is quite incredible. The profits from the poker machines, particularly in the Waverley club, go to so many community projects.

At one stage in the year there is a meeting between a couple of the clergy, a couple of other community leaders and me to come up with ideas about where the money should be spent, just as recommendations — we are not saying that they are always followed through, but at least they are listening; and where we have community problems that is the first place I turn to if we need help for struggling people. But they do not come to members of Parliament, fortunately, because otherwise the paths to our doors would be beaten away.

But there has to be tighter control — not through some of the mickey mouse type suggestions in the bill, because they are there for the spin doctors and it

probably does work for them, but for the real world where you are trying to stop problem gamblers from ruining their lives and those of their families, so you have to have real measures that will work. We saw this guy on Monday night screaming and yelling at the club committee and carrying on about how wicked they were for depriving him, but he accepted it, and for the next five months after his six-month suspension he was clean of gambling because there were no other places for him to go; he could not go to Wagga because it was too far away. So there was a way of doing it.

I think this is the sort of thing that we need to look at; we need to think of remedies rather than the mickey mouse issues that are in the bill before the house today. The figure of 17 000 compulsive gamblers in a community like ours is staggering. I must admit I do not know any compulsive gamblers in the group that I mix with. I suppose there must be, though. Enormous amounts of money must be put through in order to ascertain the average amount that a person in the community would be paying.

I am disappointed with the bill. I am sure community leaders everywhere are disappointed with what the government has done. I believe there has to be a new approach to the way gamblers are helped. There is something in what I said earlier: it needs to be looked at carefully by the minister. I would be happy to help with any experience I have had in these areas.

I believe a bill like this appears — to me anyway, to the honourable member for Hawthorn, who studied it very carefully, and to the Leader of the National Party — to contain nothing that will help problem gamblers in the straits they are in. I find it very hard to give this minister any credit at all for this bill.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I shall make just a brief contribution to the debate on the Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill. The bill undertakes a number of functions. In my view it really does not go a long way down the line of problem gambling, which is a great concern to many, particularly country communities and small towns, which are predominantly low-income areas. The Gippsland East electorate has some of the worst figures on some aspects of problem gambling, particularly things like the level of expenditure on gambling per capita.

When I became a member of Parliament one of the interesting things that came to my attention was the work of the surf lifesaving club in Lakes Entrance. Surf lifesaving clubs do not receive a huge amount of money from governments; they have to raise the funds that they need to operate. They are providing an absolutely

essential service to the community in enabling safe beach access. They used to raise most of their money by fundraising through the local bingo halls. One of the casualties of gaming machines that have spread across a lot of areas has been the traditional fundraising activities.

At Lakes Entrance, for example, almost all the funds were directed to some crucial community organisations like the surf lifesaving clubs. Since the introduction of gaming machines most of the money that used to go to such clubs through the bingo evenings now goes through the golf club and the bowls club. I am not saying they do not put money back into the community; they do, and they provide a good service. However, it has spread the money out over a lot of areas and now the surf lifesaving club really has trouble raising the funds it used to raise and must now rely on raffles and other functions where they do not quite get the money.

The introduction of poker machines has basically changed the way those communities raise funds. A lot of that money is now put into not only government coffers but also the large companies that operate the gaming machines, and the clubs are basically building bigger and bigger venues.

Problem gambling is a real problem in many areas. Anyone that has come across someone who has been hooked on gaming machines recognises the impact not only on their immediate family but also on the wider community. I do not think there is any member of Parliament who would not be aware of one or two examples of real problem gambling that has caused serious family problems and breakdown, debts and crimes such as theft by the gambler to try to prop up their gambling habit. In country areas it is much easier to identify the problem.

One of the things that was often raised with me was the impact of loyalty schemes and the fact that the gaming operators are being required to squeeze more and more dollars out of the venues. They do that by a whole range of loyalty schemes like prize packs in hotels, getting people into clubs and venues, registering their gaming activity and trying to attract them back by giving them bonuses and so on. These are used by the gaming operators, the two main companies, to try to get more money and encourage those venues to get higher and higher return rates on their machines.

It has been put to me that if we can address that and reduce the reliance on those loyalty schemes, that will allow those venues to operate differently. Poker machines are supposed to be an activity for recreation. That is what they were brought in for. The problem is

that they seem to have become more of a revenue-raising operation and it is not necessarily the recreational activity that it is in other countries around the world. In other countries gaming machines are more of a recreational activity. People go to play and the rates are not as high.

We needed to really address the fundamental problems behind problem gambling. Because of the way the loyalty scheme provisions are drawn up in this bill it will not do anything; in fact it will encourage the companies to promote those loyalty schemes to get more people into those venues, to make sure everyone is tied up with the loyalty schemes and attract more dollars out of those people, and the people they are attracting are probably the ones who can least afford it.

The bill does not go far enough. I think any measure we can take to reduce problem gambling must be encouraged, but we should be going much further than this.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill. I do not think anyone in this house does not recognise the issues with the relatively small number of problem gamblers that we have in our community. Hundreds of thousands of people gamble with no adverse effects. They do it as social recreation; they do it as an interest. I myself have gambled occasionally over the years, but mine has been betting on the Melbourne Cup and sharing a Tattsлото ticket with my staff and dreaming and talking about what we will do with our winnings.

I remember that in her latter years my grandmother would bet on a horse each day. She would put sixpence each way on a horse; she would spend hours choosing it and would have a lot of fun doing it. It was one of her main interests in life. On special occasions she would probably bet a little bit more but it certainly gave her a lot of satisfaction.

Gaming machines were not something I had ever been involved with at all — I had never even seen one or sat in front of one — until over 18 months ago when I was attending a conference in Bendigo. The honourable member for Pakenham said to me when we were talking about gaming issues, ‘If you are going to be debating this you need to know how gaming machines work’. I remember going into a gaming room and being absolutely astonished to see that the machines took \$100 notes and to see people sitting there hour after hour playing the machines.

I find it very hard to understand how people could spend all their time in front of gaming machines, but

that is their decision and their choice. The only people we are really concerned about are those who are getting heavily involved in gaming to the extent that it is affecting their whole lives and the lives of their family members. As has been cited, there are cases where people have embezzled funds to fund their gaming habits.

The community does have concerns about problem gamblers, but this bill does not focus on them. This bill actually draws the line on existing gaming practices. It does not really change what is happening now; it does not make any difference at all. It probably penalises people who are not problem gamblers.

The majority of players bet only low amounts — usually \$1 a game — on the gaming machines. As far as problem gamblers are concerned this bill is a charade. It does not help problem gamblers at all. This government is all about taxing with no responsibility. It receives \$1.455 billion in tax from gaming, which will go up to \$1.620 billion in 2004–05 and \$1.708 billion in 2005–06. For the government it is all taxation and no responsibility.

This bill has no impact whatsoever on the revenue stream. It is obvious the government expects nothing to change with this bill. It expects nothing to change with the growth in income from gaming. The government's budget is predicated on gaming bringing in more and more dollars. Recurrent expenditure is putting the budget into the red so the government relies on the money from gaming to put it back into the black. This government is addicted to gaming and it is addicted to gaming tax, and this bill is not helping the members of the community who have an addiction to gambling.

The bill is in two parts: there are measures for industry housekeeping and there are measures protecting the community from problem gambling. The bill will ban the use of \$100 notes in gaming machines, making \$50 the highest denomination note that can be used; it will ban autoplay; it will set bet limits; it will restrict cash availability from automatic teller machines to \$200 per transaction; it will prevent cash from being withdrawn from credit facilities in gaming venues; it will prevent the cashing of cheques; and it provides that winnings of \$2000 or more are to be paid by cheque.

The bill recognises and regulates loyalty schemes. The loyalty schemes are quite interesting, and they are something else I have had to learn about during the past 18 months. The pensioners in particular who control their gambling really appreciate the loyalty schemes and the cheaper meals and all the additional benefits that they receive from them, which add some interest to

their lives. The bill also gives the minister more discretionary powers and more powers of exemption for special machines and special areas. It is a bit worrying that a minister will get more powers under this bill.

The focus of the bill should be on assistance for those with gambling habits. The government could have adopted more initiatives and it could have done a lot more with this legislation. The industry itself has taken initiatives: the Australian Hotels Association, Clubs Victoria, Tabcorp and Tattersalls have all faced up to the issues by introducing the self-exclusion program, child safety signs in prominent areas because of the terrible things that have happened with children left in cars, and gamblers help material. There have been some government initiatives. The introduction of clocks into gaming rooms, extra lighting, and the capping on gaming machine numbers in certain areas have all been good initiatives.

I urge the minister to look at the Sydney University report on gambling. The Leader of the National Party has covered this report in detail so I will not take up other members' valuable time by reiterating what has already been said, but the Sydney University report on gambling is something that should be studied by anyone who is introducing legislation to deal with this difficult problem of gambling.

I urge the minister to read the speech of the Leader of the National Party and the points he made. I also urge him to read the points the shadow Minister for Gaming made in his speech on this bill.

I reiterate that problem gamblers are only a small percentage of gamblers. The vast majority of people who gamble do it purely for pleasure and they control through their own self-discipline the amount they spend.

I realise there are other honourable members who wish to speak and that we have other bills to get through this house, so I will finish by saying that I do not think the bill goes far enough. It does not do anything for problem gamblers and it certainly does not reduce the revenue from gambling. On the contrary, the government's own predictions in its own budget papers show dramatic increases in the revenue from gaming.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I also rise to make a brief contribution on the Gaming Legislation (Amendment) Bill. I will highlight my concerns about the harm minimisation methods that the bill is putting forward.

Other members have already covered quite widely the issue of the government of the day seeming to be fixed to the intravenous drip of the gambling dollar. Yet we know very well how in opposition they attacked — and attacked very strongly — the previous Kennett government in relation to its stance on and its role in gambling in the state of Victoria. What we see in front of us today is a government that has in a very short period increased the gambling take to the tune of 30 per cent.

The government has made several statements claiming that it is going to introduce a whole raft of legislation to assist problem gamblers and to do away with the reliance of the state of Victoria on the gambling dollar, yet the legislation in front of us here today could only be described as laughable. I note that the honourable member for Mitcham asked in his contribution, ‘Why are you not opposing it?’. The legislation needs to be taken through the process, it needs to be debated and we need to be shown exactly what it stands for and exactly what it does — that is, nothing, which is pretty much in line with a host of legislation that the government has put forward, particularly during the last sitting.

I will ask three questions in relation to harm minimisation: first, what does this legislation do for, say, 7-year-old or 8-year-old children waiting at home at night, looking through a torn curtain and a cracked window in a rented house waiting for the lights of their mother’s car to appear down the driveway after being out gambling and possibly losing the week’s housekeeping, the lunch money and possibly the ability to even feed the family? What does this legislation do for these people?

The government of the day claims to have the great social conscience and yet it has a piece of legislation before the Parliament that does absolutely nothing to protect the most vulnerable people within the community. What does this piece of legislation do to protect the interests of the average run-of-the-mill mum and dad or grandma and grandpa who like to whip down the road to have a gamble or a run on the poker machines, if they find themselves in a position of gambling beyond their means? What does this legislation do? It does absolutely nothing.

We have all seen only too often reports in recent newspaper articles about people who have taken on major roles within large organisations which result in them being put in positions of trust where they have the ability to access funds. Many of these harm minimisation methods allow these people to gamble

and they do nothing to protect the very people they should be protecting.

The bill in front of us bans large denominations from note acceptors and it bans autoplay facilities. The bill will provide that a machine cannot take a \$100 note but will allow it to take a \$50 note, and one of the amendments of the honourable member for Gippsland East suggests it should be limited to \$20 notes.

Mr Ingram — The honourable member for Gippsland West.

Mr MULDER — The amendment of the honourable member for Gippsland West suggests it should be limited to a \$20 note. What rocket science is involved in that? What great mathematical formula have the Independents been sitting down with to come up with this method? Is there a bid for \$10? Is there a bid for \$5? It does absolutely nothing! They have joined with their mates in the Labor Party in this hypocritical approach of putting together a piece of legislation that at best can be described as a dog’s breakfast. It is absolutely nothing!

They played their role; they all had a go at this. The Independents have come in here with a number of amendments — one missed out and decided to have another crack at it — but I would like to see the mathematical formula they applied to come up with these great amendments that will supposedly improve the legislation. I assure the house that the bill does nothing.

The bill talks about slowing machine spin rates and preventing machines accepting certain notes, but does the government have any idea of the effect on a family of six or seven of losing \$25 or \$30 a week on gambling? What does the bill do to protect people in that situation? I wonder about the backgrounds of some of the Independents and the government. Do they know or understand what it is like to live in a struggling situation?

When I was being brought up, between my home and another two, 30 people lived in three houses. If you were to put this legislation forward and say, ‘This will assist you and make sure the \$25 for the weekly groceries does not disappear’ you would only get laughter in reply. As I said, the bill does nothing. It is a dog’s breakfast piece of legislation. The Independents have drafted amendments to try to give themselves a touch of credibility. But there is no credibility in any of them, and they will be shown up in the committee stage. As I said earlier, I would love to see the

mathematical formula the Independents used for their amendments to try to give them a touch of credibility.

I will touch briefly on the loyalty scheme, as the honourable member for Gippsland East raised the issue. It could have been used wisely and in such a manner as to enable somebody to make a conscientious and informed decision, if they were not in a casino environment, to say, 'I will put aside \$20 a week as my gambling money. I will lock it into a card system, and once it has gone through the machines, I am out and finished. I cannot gamble more'.

Mr Ingram interjected.

Mr MULDER — You have looked at it the wrong way and have not thought it through. I will close on that note, because the honourable member for Bellarine would like to make a contribution to the debate.

Mr SPRY (Bellarine) — I will make a couple of comments about the bill. It only adds to the complications club directors and management face, particularly the requirement for the clubs to match the hotels with an equivalent community contribution of something like 8.33 per cent of their profits. That amounts to about 25 per cent of the money returning to each club.

I have five of those clubs in my electorate: two are golf clubs, two are bowling clubs and one is the Leopold Sportsmen's Club. Without exception they provide tremendous facilities for the people of their communities. They also go way beyond providing that, providing facilities for visitors. Therefore, the clubs support the tremendous tourism industry on the Bellarine Peninsula, because they provide places where tourists can come and enjoy the area from time to time.

Tonight I have been in touch with the manager of one of those clubs on the Bellarine Peninsula — that is, the Ocean Grove Bowling Club, which is an exemplary facility. You, Acting Speaker, are shaking your head and grinning; it looks as if you may have been there at some time in the past!

I recall in 1993, when poker machines were first introduced to that club, receiving frantic calls from the management of the time, saying, 'We are approaching the summer period, and we do not yet have approval to operate our gaming machines'. At the time the club had about 25 machines; now it has about 45, and it is profitable. I did what I could with the little influence I had with the then minister, the Honourable Haddon Storey in another place. We eventually managed to get that facility up and running for the 1993 summer. Since that time the club has never looked back. As I said

earlier, it provides enormous attractions not only for the residents of Ocean Grove and Collendina but also for the many thousands of people who visit the area, particularly over summer.

The club became an incorporated body in 1953. If the house will forgive me reminiscing for a moment, at that time my father happened to be the president of the Shire of Bellarine. From time to time I have been invited back to the Ocean Grove Bowling Club, generally at the time of the annual men's country fours competition, which is a tremendous event that attracts bowlers from across the country.

On one occasion I was invited back and asked to say a few words. I mentioned that my father had been the shire president at the time the bowling club was beginning its operations. One bloke had the temerity to say to me from the floor, 'Yes, we remember him, he would not give us a brass razoo'. It sat me back on my heels at the time!

Since then the club has gone from strength to strength and provides tremendous entertainment facilities for the people of the Bellarine Peninsula. It was voted Victorian Bowls Club of the Year for 2001, and its manager, Andrew Brettell, was voted Victorian bowls club manager of the year for 2002. The club is in good hands.

Mr Brettell sent me by fax one of the club's itemised operating expense sheets, which shows that it has a net income of nearly \$500 000 from a Tabaret trading account of about \$773 000. That is not chicken feed; it is in the big league. I have no doubt that the other clubs I mentioned earlier are in the same sort of league. I highlight the Ocean Grove club because it is a typical club with gaming machines operating on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Earlier I mentioned that the requirements in the bill add to the complications faced by the management and administration of clubs. The Ocean Grove Bowling Club already substantially contributes voluntarily across the board to a number of organisations, and I will run through a couple of them. It sponsors, among others, the local wheelchair association, the Geelong District Bowls Association, the Royal Children's Hospital, Rotary, the Lions Club, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Victoria Police and the Barwon Coast Committee of Management. I could go on, but I simply want to demonstrate in my brief contribution the sort of work a typical club on the Bellarine Peninsula does for the community generally.

It hardly need be said that it and other clubs are required to account for every cent they spend, so making sure they contributed at least 8.33 per cent of their net revenue from gaming machines would be a bit of a joke.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I thank honourable members for their comments on the bill. A number of amendments have been circulated by each Independent member but not by the Liberal Party or the National Party. Having heard a number of contributions, particularly those from members of the National Party and the Liberal Party, I would have thought they opposed the bill. When you cut through the rhetoric, in effect you see that they are not in disagreement.

I could sense from the comments made by some members that they may have liked to see some other changes that could be seen as supporting more responsible gambling. Everybody has an opinion on gambling, and that is always the hard fact. You can read whatever you like into the research to suit the argument you want to mount.

This government is about getting the balance right, and that is why I am pleased that at least, whilst the opposition is not there, I think the honourable member for Gippsland West said she would oppose the bill. I know she has strong convictions on this area. The only thing I can say about criticisms from the opposition is that if its members have strong convictions that this bill does not help problem gamblers, then maybe they need to question their not opposing the bill, but maybe we will have to leave that for another time.

Many honourable members raised the issue of revenue. The fact is that revenue is not a good indicator of problem gambling. If the economy were to suddenly collapse tomorrow and we had less gambling revenue, would that mean there would be less problem gambling? The simple answer is no. The revenue is a reflection of how willing people are to be involved with gambling as an entertainment product, the health of the economy and the tax rate. The economy is very strong and gaming is very popular. The government is asking people to think about what they are doing, to make choices about how much they want to gamble and whether they want to continue or to stop using gambling products.

The other fact of the matter is that Victoria is the highest taxing state on gambling products, which might be the result of its being introduced much later than in other jurisdictions. The first poker machines were introduced in Victoria in August 1992, and that was

followed by a change of government in October that year. When we got into government, we also increased the tax rate. Why was that? Because there was a national competition policy review, which is a requirement of the Howard federal government, and that review told us that the industry was making monopoly profits. The review recommended that we harness some of those profits and return them to the community and the only way you can do that is through tax.

This government increased tax and created a levy for each poker machine of \$1533, which all goes back into the health system. Because this government is open and transparent, it releases turnover figures and released the national competition policy review document. If we did not take action, I am sure both the opposition and antigambling groups would be critical of the government missing such an opportunity.

At the same time, whilst we have all these things, revenue is quite high. The opposition keeps saying that the government said it was going to reduce our dependence on gambling products. Then it cited percentage figures of the size of earned state revenue. What it does not take into account is that this government has delivered \$1 billion worth of tax cuts. When you take those things into account, it will show that the percentage of gambling revenue is a greater share, but as a percentage of overall government revenue it is a very different story.

I will also comment on a couple of things said by the honourable member for Hawthorn and the Leader of the National Party in relation to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC). The honourable member for Hawthorn was there. In relation to performance measures, he said that I did not have any answers. I did say that performance measures have to be based on research, but he did not mention that in his contribution; he simply said that the government does not have performance measures. One of the things I have mentioned time and again in this house is that there has been no independent research. This government is prepared to have research test what it does. An independent research panel is planning its first research on some initiatives undertaken by this government. We are happy for that research to occur and to be criticised if it is not in the right place, but it is about time we started researching measures that can help people, so that is exactly what we are doing. I will soon be launching a new research plan for the independent research panel for the next financial year.

That is how the government is going to start collecting data and information. The honourable member for

Hawthorn raised an issue of concern about collecting private data as part of loyalty schemes and the exemption of gaming machine areas, but that information will be made available to the independent research panel. At the moment we do not have real-life data of real individuals. I do not want identifiable information about who they are, but we would like it obtained in an independent way so that the research panel has real data so its members can see patterns of how people gamble and try to draw some conclusions from that. That is exactly what I told the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. It is important that when honourable members say things in this house, they give the details and the context.

The Leader of the National Party also raised issues about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and he referred to the community benefit statements. He said that I was asked by the Honourable Roger Hallam in another place, who is also on the committee, about what a community benefit would entail, and he said I did not have an answer. What I did say was that the bill is about an enabling provision. Like all enabling provisions in legislation, if it gets passed then you go and consult with the stakeholders. When you consult with them, because of the ministerial direction you can offer under the bill, you will set what those community benefits standards will be.

The Leader of the National Party did not actually go and explain that information that I made available to the PAEC, but the whole rationale behind the community benefits statement is to try and get back to the basics, that when gaming was introduced in 1991 it was to benefit the community. I know that gaming companies' local venues benefit the community. I think it was the honourable member for Bellarine who commented on how clubs in his own electorate benefit his community. But we do not have a requirement and a benchmark for each gaming venue and the industry to enable them to start providing information that is publicly accessible so that communities can be aware in a collective way of how the industry benefits.

One would think that is something that is good for the industry, that it is worthwhile, and it was raised in our consultations early in 2000 as part of our responsible gambling reforms. The community was saying, 'We want to know! We acknowledge that it happens, but we actually want to know the amounts the venues are contributing'. We had venue operators tell us that they feel they are good corporate citizens, but someone down the road is not. This bill provides a mechanism to ensure there is some benchmarking standard.

There have been community benefit statements in New South Wales and the club sector for many years, and operators of gaming venues in that state can live with it. This government has said it is prepared to give indications to the club sector about the issues that I would consider in setting ministerial directions. I sent a letter to the executive director of Clubs Victoria and also to the chief executive of the Returned and Services League about what those measures will be.

With the courtesy of the house I would like to read a letter I promised I would read in the house so that for future purposes it will be in *Hansard*. I wrote to Margaret Kearney of Clubs Victoria as follows:

I am writing in response to concerns raised by clubs in relation to community benefit statements, and to assure clubs that their importance in the community is recognised.

While precise details of what constitutes a community contribution are being developed, the intention of the community benefit statement is clear. The intention is to provide the public with information on community contributions made by venues and to ensure that clubs are contributing to the community at least the equivalent of the hotel contribution to the Community Support Fund.

The community benefit statement will highlight the strong community focus of clubs. We are developing a workable system that does not create onerous paperwork requirements for clubs.

The community benefit statement is not a new expenditure requirement if a club already contributes to the community. Clubs can demonstrate their equivalent contribution through financial or non-financial contributions that they are already making. Clubs that already make this contribution in kind by providing, for example, voluntary labour or subsidised room use will not have to alter their funding priorities.

The types of activities which will satisfy the community contribution criteria are:

- (a) facilities — including the use of meeting rooms, subsidised use of facilities and subsidised meals;
- (b) assets — including building materials and construction, furniture and equipment;
- (c) donations — including welfare activities and items, sports equipment/trophies/badges, gift vouchers, fundraising activities; and
- (d) sponsorships — including uniforms, sports equipment and fundraising activities.

Community contributions that are for gaming-related purposes will not be claimable. However, voluntary work performed by club members and employment expenses of staff engaged in gaming and non-gaming areas will be taken into consideration for venues, as they will be regarded as a community benefit.

I would also like to inform you that in response to your concerns the government will be proposing two house amendments to clarify the intention that non-financial

contributions will be considered as being of community benefit.

That is, clause 48 as part of the amendments:

The amendments enable a value to be placed on any non-financial contribution (for example, each hour of volunteer work might be valued at \$20). This amount would then be counted towards the 8.33 per cent of gaming revenue required to be applied to community purposes.

Clubs are an important part of the community and community benefit statements are a means of reinforcing this.

That was the letter that was sent to the clubs. I am pleased that Margaret Kearney was appreciative of that, and she assures me that they are satisfied.

In the end we certainly have the best intentions of having venues use a basic standard, whether they are clubs or hotels, so that communities can accumulate in their own area and benefit in a cumulative way.

It was good to see the industry and hear many members make comments about the initiatives the industries take. I am pleased with that. There is no doubt that as part of that debate the government has been encouraging the industry to be engaged in these things.

Out my way in the City of Casey, Tabcorp is running a fundraiser among all its venues to raise dollars for the Biala disabled group in Cranbourne. That is a great initiative. They are the sorts of things I think communities want to see, because that shows in an open way how communities benefit.

One of the other government amendments is predominantly in relation to discussions it had with the RSL. The Returned and Services League notified us that recently it was approved by the Australian Taxation Office as having been recognised as a tax-exempt organisation.

The government acknowledges that if you have that accreditation from the tax office — which is not necessarily easy to do — surely you must be providing some community benefit. The amendment will still require the RSL clubs to produce annual statements, which will be made available to the casino and gaming authority and will be published on its web site, but will not require them to pay the 8.33 per cent. It is certainly not the intention of the government that they pay that 8.33 per cent extra tax. We know that the vast majority already do that, and do more than that. But we need to make sure that because they are clubs they are contributing at least the same amount that the hotels are doing. That is what this process will show us.

The honourable member for Hawthorn raised the issue of some of the provisions in the bill not taking effect until 2008. I thought I should clarify that. It means that from 1 January next year any new gaming machines would have to have certain features attached to them. Why is the government saying up until 2008? That is because it thinks it would be a huge impost on the industry for it to suddenly have to replace 30 000 gaming machines overnight.

The honourable member would be aware that we have published draft player information regulations which would require as well a total replacement of 30 000 gaming machines. Those gaming machines will have to provide information to consumers about their gambling habits on the machines — how long they have been playing, the odds and probabilities of winning, how much money they have put in, how much money they have won — and all those sorts of things. We need to give the industry a reasonable amount of time to turn over machines. That is why we have a provision enabling it to occur up until 2008. But any new machines introduced from 1 January next year have to have those features. I think that is quite fair on the industry.

I think all of us know deep down that while the government has to help people help themselves, in the end people have to think about how to help themselves. A lot of the measures in this bill are really about focusing on and encouraging people to think about what they are doing. If they use up all the money in their wallets and want to access ATM machines they will be able to get out a maximum of \$200. If they have used up all that \$200 and want to continue gambling, they will have to access the machine again.

The fact is, they will have to think a lot more about what they are doing. From research we know that that time allows people to make some choices. In the end, you want people to make clear choices as consumers.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Thank you. I commend the bill to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! The question is that the bill be now read a second time. All of that opinion say 'aye', to the contrary 'no'. I think the ayes have it.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — As I understand that I am the only voice speaking no, I ask that my dissent to this bill be recorded as per standing order 180.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman) — Order! As I believe the honourable member for Gippsland West is the only member to register her dissent, pursuant to standing order 180 I ask that her dissent be recorded.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — Clause 1 deals with the purpose of the bill. I pick up a comment made by the honourable member for Gippsland West as to the purpose of the bill. The honourable member indicated that, apart from the bill's seeking to change some acts, no purpose is recorded in the purpose clause or in the preliminary notes. I presume that for the purposes of the bill we are then dependent on the second-reading speech, in which I note the desire to reduce problem gambling.

Accordingly, I ask the minister whether he could indicate to the house how many problem gamblers there are in Victoria, and as a consequence of this bill by how many over the course of the life of the government he expects the number of problem gamblers to reduce.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — This bill, as well as other measures that have been introduced by the government, is about assisting people to deal with problem gambling. The government has a research plan that will assess that. Research has been done in the past, but broadly our strategy is to assist people at the other end, where we have more than doubled resources for problem gambling services. As I said, this bill is simply about getting people to think about what they are doing so they can make informed choices.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I note that the minister was unable to answer the question on how many problem gamblers there are in Victoria or to establish a target for the reduction in the number of problem gamblers to be achieved by this bill. That is an indication of the fundamental flaw in the bill and in the government's thinking.

In a similar vein as to the government's purposes, I ask the minister to indicate, given that he commented on the revenues associated with this bill, what impact he believes the bill will have on taxation revenues.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — Again, this bill, in making people think about what they are doing, is likely to have an impact on revenue. Gamblers are choosing how they spend their money. The gambling revenue the government gets, as I said, is a reflection of the choices people make and how healthy the economy is — that is, how much discretionary income is available to the public — so all measures will have some impact on gambling. The objective of the government is and has been to help the industry mature at a quicker rate.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member for Hawthorn has already spoken twice on this clause.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) (By leave) — Thank you, Madam Chair. I note that again the Minister for Gaming was unable to provide any target measures for reductions in revenue as a consequence of the passage of this bill. I ask the minister what performance measures he intends to apply in order to assess the success or otherwise of this bill?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — My answers on that are consistent with the information I gave to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. That is, based on the research that is being undertaken on the impact of the measures that have been introduced by government and also, as I said, on the information provided by the independent research panel, we will be able to start collecting some data that is likely to assist in setting performance measures. But again I remind the honourable member for Hawthorn that we have seen the lowest rate of growth in the industry in the last financial year, and that compares very favourably with the 30 and 50 per cent increases that were occurring on an annual basis under the previous government.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member for Hawthorn seeks leave to speak again.

Leave refused.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I move:

1. Clause 2, line 6, omit "50, 52(2), 54, 62 and 64" and insert "51(2), 53, 61 and 63".

This is basically consequential on the main purpose of the amendments that I am moving, and I have 15 amendments that I am proposing to move to change part of this legislation.

The main purpose is to omit the current clause 41 and insert a new clause 41, which would prohibit loyalty schemes. These schemes have been used by clubs, casinos and hotels as a way of gaining more revenue from patrons and to attract more patrons to their venues. The loyalty scheme that is part of the bill is described as a system in which players of gaming machines in an approved venue or casino accumulate bonus, loyalty or reward points or any other incentives or rewards. This amendment removes any provision for loyalty schemes.

There are three options under loyalty schemes: you can have them and regulate them, which I think is the government's view as part of this bill; you can ban them — as I am proposing here — and basically knock them out; or you can let them reign unregulated. My view would be that to have them and regulate them, as we would be doing here, is not good for problem gambling because they encourage it. I think we could get into some major problems if we let them reign unregulated, and we have seen that particularly in some of the major hotels.

My proposal would knock out all loyalty schemes and any regulatory approach that the government is taking. The government will argue that it would use these as a way to monitor gambling use. My strong view is that there is a whole range of other ways that you can regulate, manage, scrutinise and record gambling facts and patterns. Clause 2 is the commencement clause — basically dealing with the dates on which the particular parts of the bill commence — but as this comes up before my main purpose we are testing the guts of the amendments I am proposing.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The government opposes the amendment. Predominantly we think that people who choose to be members of loyalty schemes are giving additional consent. We are ensuring that, as part of this bill, informed consent is actually given, that people are aware of what they are doing when they join up, that they get activity statements about their patterns of spending over a year so they know what they are doing, and that they get choices about setting their own betting limits. We think that regulating is a much better way to go than banning, and that gambling is only part of loyalty programs in venues.

All loyalty programs have other parts to them that might include entertainment, meals, beverage purchases, and so on connected with other parts of a business. They include gaming only as part of their overall character, and we think they can display a reasonable balance. That is what the bill is about. I understand that the honourable member questions those

proposed provisions, but the balance sought by the government is good regulation of loyalty programs and the making of informed choices by people.

We believe that loyalty programs are an appropriate way to go.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I wish to ask the mover of the amendment about the issue he raises to do with loyalty schemes. His proposal is to have loyalty schemes banned. It has been argued that loyalty schemes provide a host of information about the gambling patterns of individuals. The mover of the motion indicated that there are a host of other monitoring mechanisms available that could be used and are available to be used. I would like him to expand on what those other methods are and where he has seen them used successfully for the monitoring of gambling in any other state or country.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I thank the honourable member for Polwarth for his question. The easiest way to answer it is to say that there are a whole range of surveys done in gambling venues that investigate these types of things. A range of research is currently being undertaken to assess problem gambling and gambling patterns; and, while I fully admit that that could be done in a much more thorough manner to gain better information, I do not believe that having a whole range of people signing up and having cards so that all their expenditure can be monitored is the way to do it.

Loyalty schemes are saying, 'You come in here, we swipe your card and while you are spending money we will monitor what you are doing'.

Mr Perton — Don't supermarkets monitor every purchase?

Mr INGRAM — I know I should not take up interjections, Honourable Chair, but at least people go into supermarkets to provide something for their families to eat, whereas — —

Mr Mulder — On a point of order, Madam Chair, the issue I raised and requested a response on was, could the honourable member advise the house as to what other states or countries use different mechanisms for the monitoring of gambling that work successfully?

The CHAIRMAN — Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member is just repeating the question he asked before. Has the honourable member for Gippsland East finished?

The honourable member for Hawthorn should be quicker off his seat!

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I generously offered to let the honourable member for Gippsland West go before me!

The CHAIRMAN — Order! Actually it is the Chair who decides who will speak, not the honourable member for Hawthorn.

Mr BAILLIEU — Thank you, Madam Chair. I note that the honourable member for Gippsland East in his proposed amendment has chosen to define loyalty schemes on a player base: specifically, that ‘loyalty schemes’ means schemes in which players of gaming machines in an approved venue — not the playing of games but players of gaming machines — accumulate rewards. On that basis it would strike me that a loyalty scheme would mean that you could not actually accumulate credits on an electronic gaming machine (EGM) and that, by a strict reading of his proposed amendment, you could not actually win on an EGM.

Some would argue that you cannot win on an EGM anyway, but I invite the honourable member to explain the basis of the definition he has chosen to describe loyalty schemes. At the same time I invite him also to contemplate the nature of loyalty schemes in clubs and pubs and the fact that in those places loyalty schemes are about more than just gaming but also involve purchases and a whole variety of other things. Is it his intention to ban all of those aspects of loyalty schemes?

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — While the honourable member for Gippsland East is pondering the question posed by the honourable member for Hawthorn he might like to give some consideration to the question of why he wants to ban loyalty schemes when, as I see it — and I think the facts support my view — problem gamblers are a significant minority. What the honourable member would be doing, therefore, is taking away from people who go into gaming venues and spend money, whether on gaming machines or elsewhere, that accessibility and that freedom of choice, when they are not problem gamblers. The vast majority of people who go into gaming venues do not have a gambling problem; they go in there for relaxation, and loyalty schemes are part of the attraction of many venues.

The honourable member for Gippsland East appears to me to be putting to the house that we should be supporting an amendment that removes from the vast majority of the community who go into gaming venues the availability of loyalty schemes. He may well advance to the house that for a problem gambler a loyalty scheme will exacerbate the problem; but I make the point again that problem gamblers are only a

significant minority, not even on the radar screen in relation to the overall numbers of people who gamble and who do not have a problem.

They are a small minority. Why is it that he wants to penalise the vast majority of people who go into gaming venues in an effort to try to convince us in some way that loyalty schemes exacerbate problem gambling? I know I have gone about this in a roundabout way, but I hope the honourable member for Gippsland East gets the point, and that is: can he convince me that the vast majority should pay a price for the banning of loyalty schemes when they do not have a problem with gambling?

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I will leave the honourable member for Gippsland East to answer the direct question that he was asked. I would like to register my very strong support for his amendment to ban loyalty schemes. I repeat the example that I gave during the second-reading speech where I quoted a person who has been jailed for three years for ripping off the Australian Football League (AFL) of \$374 000 and who was substantially lured into that terrible fate by the incentives offered by Crown Casino. That is the first reason. So there are people who are encouraged, and that is the reason why we do not let people who are selling cigarettes give little presents with their cigarettes. You are encouraging people to do something which is bad for them. You are encouraging people to join a high-rollers’ outfit when they are not necessarily of suitable income to deal with the kind of bet levels that are available in a high-rollers’ room.

Crown Casino is significantly advantaged by the particular set-up proposed in this legislation, which the honourable member for Gippsland East is attempting to remove. Tabcorp venues are disadvantaged by this measure on loyalty schemes proposed in this legislation because Tabcorp does not have the technology to make use of this loyalty scheme exemption from the restrictions placed on the machines. This measure, that the minister proposes to put in the legislation and the honourable member for Gippsland East suggests we take out of the legislation, advantages Crown Casino, disadvantages smaller venues and smaller operators, disadvantages gullible and vulnerable people who can be lured by the use of these incentives in the loyalty schemes to bet more than they could really afford to, and what they should afford to. Crown Casino will and does use its loyalty schemes as an advertising mechanism. I do not believe that is appropriate.

Instead of encouraging people to be able to say every year as a positive act, ‘I wish to be a part of this loyalty scheme’, now the minister, by one of the proposed

house amendments, is going to make it that you have to take a conscious act to withdraw from such a loyalty scheme. So you go to one venue once, sign up, and then you are going to be sucked into this loyalty scheme, which will be offering you advertising and incentives to gamble, unless you take a very specific step of saying, 'Don't send me this stuff any more. I don't want to be part of this scheme'. I believe having these loyalty schemes as outlined in this legislation is very bad for smaller venues, it is very bad for Tabcorp and it is very bad for individuals, and I will vote against it.

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I would like to pose a question for the honourable member for Gippsland East in respect of those gaming machines on the border. In Albury-Wodonga we have that position where there are 1300 gaming machines in Albury as against a bit under 300 in Wodonga. They have the loyalty schemes operational in Albury. They are an attraction to the gaming population. Until relatively recently all the Victorian funds that would have gone to gaming had gone over the river and therefore into the coffers of the New South Wales government.

It would seem only appropriate that Victoria can at least match what is offered in New South Wales. I wonder whether the honourable member for Gippsland East has considered some means of compensation for those gaming venues in Victoria that directly compete with those gaming venues immediately over the border?

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) (*By leave*) — I will attempt to answer the questions to the satisfaction of those who have made requests. Firstly, the honourable member for Hawthorn questioned the meaning of 'loyalty scheme' in my amendment. I will repeat it for the record:

... "loyalty scheme" means a system in which players of gaming machines in an approved venue or a casino accumulate bonus, loyalty or reward points or any other incentives or rewards.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr INGRAM — This is the second page of my amendments. In clause 26(3) of part 4 on page 16 of the bill there is a definition of 'loyalty scheme', and the wording is similar. The reason why the wording is not exactly the same is that this is designed to also include the system of tracking a player's expenditure. I will read the relevant wording:

... a system, used in connection with the operation of gaming machines in approved venues or a casino, in which the players of those gaming machines accumulate bonus, loyalty or reward points from playing the gaming machines ...

And then it goes on to tracking. These amendments were drawn up by parliamentary counsel and I would not question their expertise in these things. Obviously, they have a much greater understanding of the law than the average member of this chamber. They do a very good job in drawing up amendments at short notice.

The honourable member for Mornington asked about problem gamblers and why I believe this is a way to deal with them, and why we should not just have the loyalty schemes in there.

I point out that by adding up bonus points, a problem gambler, when they are within striking distance of a prize, would be inclined to go that extra distance potentially to gain a prize that is on offer in that venue, and that would potentially cause that gambler to lose more of their money than they can afford to. Also, the aggressive advertising and promotion of gambling where venues are out there advertising saying, 'If you come into our venue, you have the potential to win a barbecue if you gain the bonus or reward', is a very extensive promotion.

I am not a wowser. I occasionally have a punt myself. I have occasionally even put some money through on the gaming tables at the casino. I quite enjoy gambling.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr INGRAM — I would not consider myself a high roller. But that is not the issue here. We are talking about the very aggressive promotion of gaming, not for recreation, but promoting it by saying, 'If you come and play our machines, you will gain this bonus: you have the potential to win a trip out in the bay with Rex Hunt', or whatever it is. It is a really strong promotion.

The honourable member for Benambra raised the matter of New South Wales gaming venues. I am well aware of the situation. I come from East Gippsland and I grew up in Mallacoota. We have always had gaming machines at Eden, at the fishermen's club up there, and at Merimbula. A lot of people from Victoria have forever gone over the border on organised bus trips on their holidays so they can play the gaming machines. I know what the cost has been to the taxpayer in Victoria — the loss that we have sent over the border.

I recognise that as an issue. The town I grew up in, Mallacoota, is still strongly and staunchly gaming machine free, even though it can see the enormous clubs just over the border. However, it can also see the problems gaming machines have caused. I recognise there is a potential disincentive across the border, but I believe that is outweighed by the impact of problem gambling on particular sectors of the community.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I thank the honourable member for Gippsland East for his explanation to the question I posed. I must say that he has not convinced me. Frankly the one or two problem gamblers I have known certainly have not gone into clubs or pubs to punt away on a gaming machine for loyalty program rewards. They have gone in there to try to win the jackpot from the machine. The argument the honourable member is advancing, that the problem gambler will go the extra mile because he might be able to take a barbecue home or whatever, is not believable. The reality is that gamblers gamble for money.

Ms Davies interjected.

Mr COOPER — Don't shout at me. I am trying to have my go. You're very big at blaming other people. Just pipe down and let me have a go. You'll get another go. Just settle down. She is getting a little excited, Madam Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member for Gippsland West will stop interjecting.

Mr COOPER — The reality is that gamblers gamble for money; they do not gamble for barbecues, hot water jugs or anything else. I still have to make the point to the honourable member that the vast majority of people who gamble are not problem gamblers. His amendment would take away from them the ability to participate in reward and loyalty schemes, which are a bonus to them and which in most cases come from many months of going to their clubs or hotels and participating in whatever is going there, including the gaming. I do not see why those people should be penalised for the sake of what seems to me to be a fairly nebulous argument that somehow or other reward schemes will exacerbate problem gambling. I appreciate the answer he has given, but I do not accept it.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I have some concerns about the abolition of the loyalty schemes being attached to a casino or gambling venue, because it has further implications. If you are going to say we should get rid of loyalty schemes or any other scheme where someone either pays to be a member or gets a free membership and is then rewarded with various types of incentives, what happens to someone who signs up to be a member of a racing club, which is actually a gambling venue? He will turn up and get free admittance to the racecourse; as well, different race clubs run happy hours and provide free bus trips to race meetings around the state. All that is part of a reward system that is no different from what the honourable

member for Gippsland East is proposing to knock on the head.

As I said, the honourable member has also not convinced me that abolishing loyalty schemes will do anything at all to assist in overcoming problem gambling. If he is going to take it to the level he suggests, he has to have a look at other forms of gambling. As I say, being a member of a racing, turf, greyhound or harness racing club is no different: you go in there to have a bet, and you are rewarded for joining the club in certain ways at different club functions.

Committee divided on amendment:

Ayes, 3

Davies, Ms (*Teller*)
Ingram, Mr (*Teller*)

Savage, Mr

Noes, 82

Allan, Ms
Allen, Ms
Asher, Ms
Ashley, Mr
Baillieu, Mr
Barker, Ms
Batchelor, Mr
Beattie, Ms
Bracks, Mr
Brumby, Mr
Burke, Ms
Cameron, Mr
Campbell, Ms
Carli, Mr
Clark, Mr
Cooper, Mr
Dean, Dr
Delahunty, Mr
Delahunty, Ms
Dixon, Mr
Doyle, Mr
Duncan, Ms
Elliott, Mrs
Fyffe, Mrs
Garbutt, Ms
Gillett, Ms
Haermeyer, Mr
Hamilton, Mr
Hardman, Mr
Helper, Mr
Honeywood, Mr
Howard, Mr
Hulls, Mr
Jasper, Mr
Kilgour, Mr
Kosky, Ms
Kotsiras, Mr
Langdon, Mr (*Teller*)
Languiller, Mr
Leigh, Mr
Leighton, Mr

Lenders, Mr
Lim, Mr
Lindell, Ms
Loney, Mr
Lupton, Mr
McArthur, Mr
McCall, Ms
McIntosh, Mr
Maclellan, Mr
Maughan, Mr
Maxfield, Mr
Mildenhall, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Naphine, Dr
Nardella, Mr
Overington, Ms
Pandazopoulos, Mr
Paterson, Mr
Perton, Mr
Peulich, Mrs
Phillips, Mr
Pike, Ms
Plowman, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Robinson, Mr
Rowe, Mr
Ryan, Mr
Seitz, Mr
Shardey, Mrs
Smith, Mr (*Teller*)
Spry, Mr
Steggall, Mr
Stensholt, Mr
Thompson, Mr
Thwaites, Mr
Trezise, Mr
Viney, Mr
Vogels, Mr
Wells, Mr
Wilson, Mr
Wynne, Mr

Amendment negatived.

Progress reported.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time appointed under sessional orders for me to interrupt the business of the house has arrived.

Sitting continued on motion of Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport).

Committee

Resumed from earlier this day; further discussion of clause 2.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! As his amendment 1 has been lost, the honourable member for Gippsland East cannot move amendments 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — As amendment 1 has been lost, I withdraw all my further amendments.

Amendments withdrawn by leave.

Clause agreed to; clauses 3 to 6 agreed to.

Clause 7

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I move:

1. Clause 7, lines 24 to 32, and page 6, lines 1 to 7, omit sub-clause (3).

Amendment 1 removes the minister's ability to give directions about bet limits. This is related to amendment 7, which introduces into the legislation a \$1 bet limit, which I will discuss in more detail later. The minister does not make use of his option to give directions as to bet limits at the moment, and I would prefer to have it accepted that there be a \$1 bet limit instead.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The government opposes the amendment.

Amendment negatived; clause agreed to.

Clause 8

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I move:

2. Clause 8, line 8, omit "*and 62AC*" and insert "*, 62AC and 62AD*".

This is a consequential amendment from the amendment moved to clause 7, which also relates to betting limits of \$1.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Gaming in relation to clause 8 and I presume this is the correct time to do so.

Clause 8 inserts proposed section 62AB. Its proposed subsection (3) refers to the application of so-called harm minimisation measures — in effect, the use of \$50 notes rather than \$100 notes, and spin rates of machines — not coming into effect until 2008. What proportion of machines does the minister expect to comply annually until 2008?

I have a further query. Subsection (4) of the same proposed section 62AB refers to exemptions. Those exemptions are subject to compliance with the conditions, if any, as specified given in the notice and published in the *Government Gazette*. These exemptions and conditions are applicable to the casino.

A further provision is included in clause 38, which is a similar provision that in effect ropes in the other operators of gaming machines. I ask the minister to confirm that the conditions that would apply to the exemptions for the casino would materially be the same conditions as would apply to the other operators.

The two questions concern the issue of compliance of machines, and confirmation that the conditions will be the same.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I will start with the last question first regarding exemptions. The same conditions will apply and I will set those rules that apply to everybody.

In relation to the question about proportion each year that will be turned over, it is subject to how many machines need replacing by the industry, but any new machines that replace existing machines from 1 January 2003 will be required to have those new provisions.

Amendment negatived.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! As the amendment has been lost, the honourable member for Gippsland West cannot move her amendment 7.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I move:

3. Clause 8, line 16, omit "\$50" and insert "\$20".

This amendment relates to proposed section 62AB(1) to be inserted by the clause, which states:

A casino operator must not allow a game to be played on a gaming machine that accepts banknotes with a denomination greater than \$50.

The amendment seeks to replace \$50 with \$20 because the most effective way of reducing the amount of money lost through gaming machines would be to have only coin-operated gaming machines. I suppose the limitation down to \$20 is something of a compromise between what we have and what is possible.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — Will the honourable member for Gippsland West say what consultation she has had with venues in her electorate on this matter and what impact does she expect the amendment would have on the venues?

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — Given that the opposition shows no interest in moving any amendments to make the legislation effective and given that there has been absolutely no support from the government, I expect this amendment to have no effect at all because it will not get up. It does not have the numbers and I accept that in this place it is the fact that I do not have the numbers.

I have moved this amendment on the basis of recommendations of the Productivity Commission, and all venues that I have spoken to are not happy to have any changes made to their current gaming practices. It is not one that has wide support. Nonetheless, that is no reason for not attempting to make changes.

Mr WILSON (Bennettswood) — Will the honourable member for Gippsland West say what mathematical formula she has employed to reach the conclusion that a \$20 limit is better than a \$50 limit? Has the honourable member considered the inflationary impact on \$20 in the years to come?

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) (*By leave*) — I pose a counter question: what mathematical justifications were used to allow the use of \$100 notes in the first place? I am not the government, either.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms DAVIES — I have no intention of attempting to justify why gaming machines in Victoria at the moment allow people to put \$100 notes in them at a time. I do not believe that was a good idea, nor is it a good idea to put \$20 notes or notes of any denomination in a machine. As I said in my original contribution, I regard the \$20 note as a compromise.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — The honourable member responded in a curious way to my previous question, which was a simple question about what impact she thought it may have on her venues.

Ms Davies interjected.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member for Gippsland West!

Mr BAILLIEU — I wonder if the honourable member could contemplate the comment she made in her contribution to the bill when she said, I think, she would be moving amendments as a symbolic gesture. I am conscious that I have heard the honourable member in the public arena saying she was unsure of the practicality of the measure she was proposing in her own bill.

Will the honourable member say whether the amendment is symbolic or that it is not practical given that she suggested a moment ago that it would have no impact?

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) (*By leave*) — The comment about the symbolic nature totally relates to the fact that I accept I do not have the numbers on this measure as with the other measures. That is not to say I do not believe they would be useful measures. I put the measures forward because I believe they would be useful. However, I have understood from the beginning of this debate that the opposition has no interest in supporting any measures to reduce problem gaming, and neither does the government.

Honourable members interjecting.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Ms DAVIES — I hope that is the end. I will not seek leave to discuss this amendment any further in view of the fact that I am very interested in continuing this discussion until we get to the end of the amendments.

Amendment negatived.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — Given the fact that my voice was the only voice saying aye, I ask that, according to standing order 180, my assent be recorded.

I move:

4. Clause 8, lines 28 to 33, omit all words and expressions on these lines.

This amendment seeks to remove the ability of the minister to grant exemptions to these restrictions.

Amendment negatived.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — According to standing order 180, I wish to have my assent recorded.

I move:

5. Clause 8, page 7, line 2, omit “(1)”.

This is consequential on amendment 6, which relates to the ability to grant exemption.

Amendment negatived.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! As the amendment is lost, the honourable member for Gippsland West cannot move amendment 6.

Clause agreed to; clauses 9 to 14 agreed to.

Clause 15

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable members for Gippsland West and Mildura have both proposed amendments to the figure contained in line 5, so I ask both honourable members to move their amendments and then we will discuss them.

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I ask that my amendment 1 be withdrawn.

Amendment withdrawn by leave.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I move:

8. Clause 15, page 11, line 5, omit “\$2000” and insert “\$500”.

This amendment relates to changing the amount over which a cheque must be provided from \$2000 to \$500. From discussions with venue operators in my area, I am aware that it is customary for venues to offer cheques when winnings are over \$1000. Therefore I believe the minister’s insertion into this bill of cheques being provided for winnings of over \$2000 is somewhat farcical. The private members bill which I introduced in November last year asked that cheques be provided for winnings over \$250. I had further discussions with venue operators in my area, and given what I was led to believe about the frequency with which there are winnings over \$500, I changed the amount to \$500 to ensure that would not involve them writing out an onerous number of cheques. I do not believe that setting a limit of \$500 would be onerous for these smaller venues.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — The honourable member for Gippsland West has indicated she has had discussions on this issue. Given that those venues would require cross-signatures in order to have those cheques signed, and as a consequence additional staff would be required to be present in order to sign cheques, presumably at a moment’s notice, how many additional cheques would be required in her venues?

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — It was obvious that initially an attempt was made, largely by a person from Clubs Victoria who is occasionally prone to somewhat hysterical outbursts on this issue, to say it would be impossible for venues to have cheques signed by two staff members, which is normal, and that this would be an incredible burden on the venues. It became very obvious later on that already venues are accustomed to having some cheques on the premises which are already signed by one person. It is normal and necessary for all venues to have at least one senior staff member on duty at any particular time, so it was clear that it would not be unbearably onerous for them to be able to offer these cheques at the frequency which would be necessary.

Therefore I do not believe this provision is onerous at all because it is already a practice for them to have cheques on the premises and for them to have been signed by one person and someone there from senior management, who has to be present while the venue is open. That person would be able to sign any cheques that were necessary. I did try to get an assessment of how often these venues would have somebody winning that much in an evening, and it really was not very often at all, so I did not believe it would be onerous.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — Further to the honourable member’s remarks, it is not my understanding that venues carry pre-signed cheques. In fact, the point of having cross-signatures on cheques is to ensure that a cheque with the signature of just one person is not available to meet an expenditure.

I ask the honourable member whether her support for her own amendment is dependent on clubs and pubs carrying a bank of pre-signed cheques for those institutions who require two signatures. It strikes me as not being particularly sharp business practice to have half-signed cheques in a venue.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member for Gippsland West has spoken twice. Does she seek leave to speak again? No.

Ms Asher interjected.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! No, she did not wish to seek leave.

The question is:

That the amendment be agreed to.

All those in favour say aye, those against say no; I think the noes have it.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — Under standing order 180, I ask that I have my vote recorded.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Chairman, as a matter of logic one would expect that the member moving an amendment would vote in favour of it. This constant requirement that she have her name recorded does not seem to be in accordance with parliamentary practice. It was mentioned by one of the members opposite. Were she not the mover of the motion, that would be appropriate. But one would think it fairly ludicrous for the honourable member moving a motion to require her vote in favour to be recorded.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! There is no point of order. The member is entitled to seek to have her name recorded.

Amendment negatived.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I move:

9. Clause 15, page 11, lines 9 to 14, omit all words and expressions on these lines.

This is similar to the previous amendment, which removed the ability to grant exemptions.

Amendment negatived.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! As her amendment 9 is lost, the honourable member for Gippsland West cannot move amendments 10 or 11 in her name.

Clause agreed to; clauses 16 and 17 agreed to.

Clause 18

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I ask a simple question of the minister: why is the clause necessary? Why is it necessary for the authority to delegate to the committee, comprising only three members of the authority, that being the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority, any power or function of the authority under section 20 or 22, which as I recall concerns the investigative power of the Casino Control Act?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I understand that this was done at the request of the Office of Gambling Regulation as part of streamlining its processes. I notify the member that currently there is a three-member committee which presently determines matters relevant to gaming premises, approvals, grants, amendments to venue operator and special employer licences, and disciplinary action against venue operators and gaming operators. This is simply an extension of that at the request of the authority.

Clause agreed to; clauses 19 to 27 agreed to.

Clause 28

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — Chairman, I move that the amendments 12 to 21 tabled in my name be withdrawn. These are similar amendments to the ones we have already voted on. They relate to different acts, but given that the other amendments have failed, in the interests of brevity I seek the committee's permission to withdraw those amendments.

Amendments withdrawn by leave.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

1. Clause 28, line 24, omit "(e)" and insert "(f)".

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — Madam Chair, I ask the minister to address clause 28(2), which seeks to change the Gaming Machine Control Act by adding to those defined groups which are subject to ministerial direction as to the proportion of machines distributed a third category, in subparagraph (iii), being a licence under part I of the Racing Act 1958.

I note that currently there is a ministerial direction which indicates that clubs will receive 50 per cent of distributed machines and that pubs will also effectively receive 50 per cent of machines. By the creation of a third category under this clause of the Gaming Machine Control Act, a new ministerial direction will be necessary. The current ministerial direction cannot be left, because it would be 50:50:0 and therefore deny racing clubs. If the 50:50 direction stayed, it would be illegal for racing clubs to retain their electronic gaming machines. Therefore I ask: when will there be a ministerial direction, and what will be the distribution of machines under that ministerial direction?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — In order to be precise I will quickly get some advice for you.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Of course you guys never did this in government! If you want an answer — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Certainly there will be a need for new ministerial direction, and that will be issued at the appropriate time. I am advised that this is simply a tidying up of the legislation that was overlooked in the past. Obviously I am prepared to

inform the honourable member for Hawthorn in more detail about the circumstances of that, because he is obviously interested in it.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — With due respect to the minister and his adviser, this is probably one of the most important parts of the bill, because it has the potential to change the distribution of machines between pubs and clubs in Victoria. At present there are effectively four categories — pubs, clubs, Tatts and TAB machines. This will effectively create six categories, and a shift of machines from four categories into six does not go.

I would have thought it essential that the minister understood where the proportions will be directed. At present there is a 50:50 distribution. Given that this clause was not referred to in either the second-reading speech or the introductory notes, and given that it is of sufficient significance, I would have thought that the minister would be able to advise the committee what proportion is intended to apply in this case. If it is to be 33:33:33 or thereabouts, then that is a significant shift.

This is only one line among many in a complex bill, but it is one of the most significant. I note the minister is again seeking advice, which was obviously not forthcoming when I raised the matter previously. I invite the minister, if he is able, to give a precise response, because I would have thought a precise response would go with this. I raised the matter in my contribution to the second-reading debate; I would have thought the minister would have had advice by now.

If he is unable to provide advice on this fundamental matter, I certainly invite him to provide it before this bill is considered in another place. To me it is extraordinary that this could be in the bill seemingly without the minister's knowledge and without a firm indication of what the proportions will be. I note that those who run pubs and clubs, particularly racing clubs, will have an acute interest in this clause.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I am advised that the Office of Gambling Regulation suggested that this be included in the bill to provide some certainty. Apparently that is obviously the case, although racing clubs — —

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Members of your own party have — —

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition! The minister, through the Chair.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The advice is that although racing clubs are part of the 50 per cent of clubs, the act in the past did not recognise that racing clubs were there. That is why the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority suggested that this bill be in the house. As I said, I will be pleased, at the right time, to give the honourable member for Hawthorn appropriate advice on that. It is certainly not the intention to change the mix that occurs between 50 per cent clubs and 50 per cent pubs.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) (*By leave*) — In that case can the minister give us an undertaking that those proportions will be provided to the opposition prior to the bill being considered in the other house?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — Certainly.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 29 to 39 agreed to.

Clause 40

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I seek to move amendment 20 standing in my name. This amendment adds proposed section 81C, banning gaming advertisements. It states that a person must not publish or cause to be published a gaming advertisement or any other advertisement that is generally associated with gaming. It does not apply to advertisements that appear in gaming machine industry trade journals or in publications for a trade convention involving the gaming machine industry.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! I think the honourable member for Gippsland West is referring to amendment 21. She has already lost amendment 20.

Ms DAVIES — No. This is amendment 22 standing in my name.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member said 'amendment 20'. Is she seeking to move amendment 22?

Ms DAVIES — Yes.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The honourable member is required to move amendments 21 and 22 together. She cannot move amendment 22 without having moved 21.

Ms DAVIES — I withdrew amendments 12 to 21 because I said that we had already discussed those issues in relation to other acts. So I am moving amendment 22.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! No. The honourable member's amendment 22 does not make sense unless she moves amendment 21, so she is required to move amendments 21 and 22. That is the advice I am given by the Clerk.

Ms DAVIES — I seek your guidance. Amendment 21 reads:

Clause 40, page 33, line 8, omit "units." and insert "units."

That amendment is consequential to the one that I am discussing at the moment, but I will take the Chair's guidance and happily move amendment 21 if that is what the Chair would like me to move.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! Yes. If the honourable member for Gippsland West moves amendments 21 and 22 together, it will accommodate everybody.

Ms DAVIES — I therefore move:

21. Clause 40, page 33, line 8, omit "units." and insert "units."
22. Clause 40, page 33, after line 8 insert —

'81C. Banning gaming advertisements

- (1) A person must not publish or cause to be published a gaming advertisement or any other advertisement that is generally associated with gaming.

Penalty: 100 penalty units.

- (2) Sub-section (1) does not apply to an advertisement that appears —
 - (a) in a gaming machine industry trade journal; or
 - (b) in a publication for a trade convention involving the gaming machine industry.
- (3) In this section —

"gaming advertisement" includes, but is not limited to —

- (a) any writing, still or moving picture, sign, symbol or other visual image; and
- (b) any audible message or sound —

that gives publicity to the playing of a gaming machine, or otherwise advertises or is intended to advertise the playing of a gaming machine;

"publish" means to disseminate in any manner, whether by oral, visual, written or other means, by way of any medium.

Examples

Examples of a medium are printed material, signs, film, video cassette tape, radio, television, voice, loud speaker, e-mail, Internet.".

These amendments relate to banning gaming advertisements and advertisements generally associated with gaming. They detail that a gaming advertisement includes, but is not limited to, any writing, still or moving picture, sign, symbol or other visual images. 'Publish' means disseminating in any manner.

This part of the amendments relates to a claim that was made by the Minister for Gaming that Victoria has the strongest gaming measures of any state. I would challenge the minister at some stage shortly to agree to ban all advertising of gaming, which would bring Victoria into line with New South Wales.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The government opposes the amendments. In the context of saying that the government has a comprehensive program, if this bill passes it will not mean that you will not find particular measures that might have been introduced in other jurisdictions. There is certainly a whole range of measures that this government has introduced that have not been done by most other jurisdictions, so that is why we claim it is comprehensive. But we believe that, being a legal industry, it should at least have an ability to advertise, but this is about further strengthening advertising regulations that did not exist up until two years ago.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I ask the honourable member for Gippsland West about the origin of the definitions of 'gaming advertisement' and 'publish', which she has used in her amendment. The way I read it, under the definition of 'gaming advertisement' it means any sound that gives publicity to the playing of a gaming machine, and that includes any mention and hence any sign in any gaming venue, any spoken word, any public address system and any sign on a door saying 'Gaming venue'. It strikes me as being, in terms of banning advertising, probably as onerous as you could get, and I wonder whether there is a basis for the definitions that she has chosen.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — The basis of the definition is the advice received from parliamentary counsel.

Amendments negatived; clause agreed to.

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — In accordance with standing order 180 I ask that my dissent be recorded.

Clause 41

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

2. Clause 41, lines 29 and 30, omit “in any 24 hour period” and insert “, in any 24 hour period determined by the provider,”.
3. Clause 41, page 34, lines 3 and 4, omit “or in any other period specified by the participant.” and insert “determined by the provider,”.
4. Clause 41, page 34, after line 4 insert —
“(c) if the participant has set a limit under paragraph (b), a limit on the participant’s net loss on games played under the scheme in any year determined by the provider.”.
5. Clause 41, page 34, line 8, after “until” insert “the time determined by the loyalty scheme provider, which must be at least”.
6. Clause 41, page 34, line 18, after “scheme” insert “at a casino”.
7. Clause 41, page 34, line 26, after “provider” insert “who conducts a loyalty scheme at a casino”.
8. Clause 41, page 35, lines 25 and 26, omit “give the participant written” and insert “send the participant, by post, fax, e-mail or other electronic communication,”.
9. Clause 41, page 36, line 17, omit “given” and insert “sent”.
10. Clause 41, page 36, line 29, omit “given” and insert “sent”.
11. Clause 41, page 37, lines 11 to 13, omit “written request for the participant to confirm that he or she wishes to continue to participate” and insert “notice informing the participant of his or her right, by informing the provider, to cease participating”.
12. Clause 41, page 37, line 16, omit “request” and insert “notice”.
13. Clause 41, page 37, line 18, omit “request” and insert “notice”.
14. Clause 41, page 37, line 23, omit “request” and insert “notice”.
15. Clause 41, page 37, lines 24 and 25, omit “does not wish to continue to participate” and insert “wishes to cease participating”.

These amendments relate predominantly to the fact that the original draft bill sought to ensure that in any 24-hour period gamblers would be able to choose their own betting period and the amount of betting they chose to do within that period. This proposed amendment will ensure that the 24-hour period is whatever the provider of the loyalty program rather than the player chooses. That seems to be the simplest way to administer the 24-hour provision.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I ask the minister to explain the basis for the choice of a 24-hour period, rather than a period of any other length.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — What we have chosen to do — —

Ms Asher interjected.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — I would not talk if I were the honourable member for Brighton. She has got such big fans within her own opposition who say such interesting things about her to the papers. If she ever gets a chance to be the leader — —

The CHAIRMAN — Order! Return to the bill.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The 24-hour period is chosen so that within a 24-hour cycle a person gambling will be able to set their own dollar-bet limit within that 24 hours and the amount of time that they can bet. We have also put subclause (c) in there, which also gives them an annual bet limit, so they can choose. If they exceed it — say, \$5000 a year — they have exceeded their own bet limit and therefore, as part of this provision, they can no longer gamble.

Amendments agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 42 to 47 agreed to.

Clause 48

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

16. Clause 48, page 42, after line 12 insert —

“(ii) the value of any non-financial contribution to community purposes (for example, voluntary work) by or on behalf of the venue operator in the financial year, expressed as a percentage of the venue operator’s gaming revenue in the financial year; and”.

17. Clause 48, page 42, line 13, omit “(ii)” and insert “(iii)”.

Clause 48 is about ensuring that in a community benefit test those who have been given a tax exemption by the tax office — for example, the Returned and Services League — will not be required to pay 8.3 per cent of gaming revenue if they do not meet the community benefit standard but will still be required to apply the same criteria to show how they benefit the community when lodging an annual return. Because they have already been defined by the Australian Taxation Office as having a charitable purpose, we would conclude that

they meet the requirements of a community benefit statement. That is a commitment given to the RSL.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I ask the minister to explain how it is proposed to value voluntary work and whether the valuation will include equivalent tax provisions.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The honourable member will recall that in debate on the bill I read out a letter that I have sent to the chief executive officer of Clubs Victoria that highlights the criteria that will be used for determining what is a community benefit contribution. Obviously there will be discussions in more detail with the RSL and Clubs Victoria about the detail of those exemptions, but what we have wanted to do, simply, as I have said in the broader debate, is to be able to go back to showing communities how local venues benefit. The clubs sector and the RSL will have to do that as well.

We simply recognise that the RSL as a charitable organisation under the taxation act should have a different test, and any other provider that makes the same requirement of the tax office will have the same conditions applied to it. We will work with the industry to be able to define how it can best meet the provisions of this proposed clause.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I note that the minister has been unable to say how he intends voluntary work to be valued. The provisions in clauses 47 and 48 impose upon all clubs that have electronic gaming machines the burden of providing annual community benefit statements and then the further burden of ensuring that they value all their contributions such as they comply in order, apparently, to provide the government with sufficient information to single out those clubs which are not acting in the expected way of clubs and, as was said in the second-reading contribution, are therefore ‘plubs’.

Of the several hundred clubs we are discussing, I therefore ask the minister to indicate what order of number of clubs we are talking about and whether it would not be simpler to address those, rather than requiring all those clubs which basically comply now to enter an artificial accounting and evaluation process of their contribution.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I do not agree that there is an artificial process. We actually say that there is value in the community, after some set criteria are met, being aware

of how the club sector benefits communities. We agree that volunteer hours will be included.

The honourable member asked what criteria we would use. We will see the criteria that the Australian Taxation Office, for example, uses about what it values for its own purposes to measure voluntary per hour contributions. I think it is not unreasonable to have that consistent with what the tax office does.

I do not believe the provisions will be too onerous. The same provisions will apply to anything defined as a club, and although there are issues raised about pubs and quasi-clubs, our response to the national competition policy review highlights the fact that we will tackle this area. This is one of the ways to tackle it, and we believe it should apply across the board. As I said in the second-reading debate, I believe just about everyone will meet the test. The objective is to ensure that those who do not meet the test meet at least the same obligation that pubs have — —

Mr Perton interjected.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! Has the Minister for Gaming finished?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — No, I am just trying to hear some jokes I should not be listening to.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! I am sure the minister will ignore the interjection.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — Certainly we believe the provision should apply in every case, whether it involves quasi-clubs or not. If quasi-clubs do not meet the test but are paying 8.3 per cent tax, they will be in effect be paying the same rate that a pub is. Of course, if they meet the community benefit contribution, they do not pay that levy.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) (*By leave*) — I have a quick question, and hopefully a final one. Unless I am misreading it I note that clause 47 requires clubs to make community benefit statements annually. Page 7 of the second-reading speech says that the bill will require all clubs and hotels to provide annual statements. Unless I am misreading it, that seems to be inconsistent. I presume it is the government’s wish to require clubs to make annual community benefit statements, yet the second-reading speech refers to hotels. I do not understand why it would be necessary for a hotel that is actually paying its Community Support Fund contribution to make a community benefit statement.

I suspect that if I keep talking, the minister might have an opportunity to consult the adviser, whom he is engaging in eye contact through the honourable member for Ivanhoe, which is not easy!

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — Again after giving leave to the honourable member so his query can be answered — it is certainly the intention that it will apply to hotels. It is just that clubs have a very specific provision because of the way they are defined by their licences, and that is the extra 8.3 per cent provision.

But we want pubs to also be required to disclose how they believe they are benefiting the community. In that way, all the information is made available to the broader community and will be published annually.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) (*By leave*) — I ask the minister where in the legislation it indicates that hotels will be subject to this?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The standard is provided in there, and I will ask for advice on the particular clause, if that is what he is asking.

The CHAIRMAN — Order! Does the minister wish to seek advice and advise the honourable member at a later date?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — We can do that. There is some discussion going on at the moment. Certainly the drafting instructions were that hotels should also be required to produce community benefit statements, but there will not be that test on them because the test is already provided by the levy they pay into the Community Support Fund. I will obviously give the honourable member a further briefing on this prior to the bill going to the other place. But we will see if we have an answer for him now.

Clause 47(2)(b) and (c) applies to pubs.

Amendments agreed to; clause agreed to; clauses 49 to 64 agreed to.

Reported to house with amendments.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (RESOURCE EFFICIENCY) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 May; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr PERTON (Doncaster) pursuant to sessional orders.

Independent amendments circulated by Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) pursuant to sessional orders.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — This is a very serious and complicated piece of legislation. It is sad that it is coming on in the last week of the Parliament, it is sad that it is coming on at 11 o'clock at night, and it is sad that it has come on with such a rush. So bearing in mind the hour, I shall not make the long contribution that I had planned but instead shall confine my comments to some 15 minutes or so to accommodate the business of the house.

In doing that, I shall not be able to acknowledge the contributions made by the many people who have written and spoken to me about this bill, who have given me very sound advice on the course to be taken.

It is arguable that the principles enunciated in this bill are based on the ideas and innovations that were introduced by the previous Liberal government. The Liberal government between 1992 and 1999 established Ecorecycle Victoria, an organisation which will have a more substantial role and budget as a result of this legislation proceeding. Indeed, the greater role of Ecorecycle and the changes to the waste management structure could have been the centrepiece of one bill, but instead this piece of legislation also contains fairly significant new laws relating to sustainability covenants.

It is said that these sustainability covenants are directly modelled on the national packaging covenant, a concept initiated and pursued by the Kennett government through various national ministerial councils. It was the previous government that introduced sensible landfill levies.

The reason I find this bill frustrating — I think many people find it frustrating — is that it has been brought into this Parliament in a rush. When we move into the committee stage honourable members will see a large number of amendments moved and accepted by this house without dissent. They are amendments that would have been made to this legislation before it came into the house had the government followed the

sensible approach advocated to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the minister's advisers by many of the organisations whose opinions we sought.

Part 2 of this legislation introduces the concept of a sustainability covenant into Victorian law. In our briefings with the department we were told that sustainability covenants would generally be entered into voluntarily. However, only one area of the bill — that is, proposed sections 49AA, 49AB and 49AC — relates to the voluntary nature of the covenant system.

Following that there are many detailed provisions that relate to the compulsory imposition of the covenant regime, under which the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) may require companies to engage in sustainability audits and to take action according to those sustainability audits. A large number of provisions bring these notions of private law into being.

Not so many years ago, in October 1997, the Law Reform Committee of this Parliament, which is a bipartisan committee — at that stage including the now Deputy Premier and the leader of the Labor Party in the upper house — reported on regulatory efficiency legislation. Had that report been applied to part 2 of this bill it would have led to very different legislation. I think members will find that when we move to the committee stage some of the recommended safeguards that are set out in that report for the regulatory efficiency mechanisms could have been applied to sustainability covenants.

The great problem with this part and other worthy parts of the bill is the haphazard nature of the consultation that has taken place. I have received an email from an officer of one of the United Nations agencies, who was quite impressed with the intent of the sustainability covenants. He goes on to say this:

The subject of adequate consultation with stakeholders is quite another matter, of course. It is very hard for me to judge without a deep understanding of the way things work in detail, but if consultation has been genuinely overlooked then I can understand the irritation of some affected parties.

One of the affected parties that was not consulted was the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF).

When the minister's amendments are introduced later in this debate members will find that the primary industries are exempted altogether from these provisions. Indeed, a further amendment which I will move and which I understand will be agreed to by the government will allow the Parliament to disallow the declaration of an industry as having an impact on the

environment and therefore being subject to the compulsory imposition of sustainability covenants.

It would seem to me that any sensible system of consultation on a major piece of environmental legislation which can affect any aspect of industry would have included a simple letter to the Victorian Farmers Federation requesting it to participate in this debate.

In fact, it was not until the opposition contacted the VFF — —

Mr Plowman interjected.

Mr PERTON — Not a word, as the honourable member for Benambra rightly points out. It was not until the opposition contacted the VFF to get its views on this legislation that the VFF was made aware that these provisions were being introduced into Parliament. The VFF's position is so sensible. It says in the instance of farming that farmers are taking up sustainability and that they are using many voluntary sustainability agreements involving the EPA and other agencies. Its position is so sensible that the government will actually move that it be exempted. How much easier would it have been for the community and for Parliament if this had been done before the legislation was brought into the house?

Other organisations that one would have expected to be involved in this process would be major primary industry corporations like Timbercorp, which is a very significant employer in this state. Let me just read this to the house:

Timbercorp wishes to register its concern at the additional powers that are included in the bill which enable the Environment Protection Authority to effectively impose constraints on all industries and processes, not just industrial-type uses such as the plastics and chemical manufacturing industries who are pursuing specific objectives associated with enforcing an industry code of practice for their particular industries. Now, Timbercorp —

which, again, became aware of the legislation only after the opposition contacted it —

entered into discussions with the EPA which said that the intention of the bill is only to regulate industries on a voluntary basis.

But, as Timbercorp says, if all you want to do is enable people to enter into voluntary agreements with the EPA and with the government, why do you need all these additional powers? I would have thought it was one of the fundamental principles of our modern Westminster democracy that if you want to give an agency power to

do something you give it that power and no additional power.

Although in the course of discussions with the government it has conceded the correctness of what we have said on this front — it has conceded that there needs to be transparency on sustainability covenants, it has conceded that there needs to be parliamentary sovereignty in respect of sustainability covenants, and it has agreed that actions under the sustainability covenants need to be reported to this Parliament and to the community — what I find absolutely bizarre is that no effort was made to do this before the legislation came into the house.

It gives you two impressions or alternatives. One is that the EPA just stuffed up the consultation — that, like it has done on other bills that have come to this Parliament, it has consulted very well with those with whom it gets on very well. The Australian Industry Group tells me that it has been involved in this consultation; and the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been involved in this consultation. If those two organisations can be involved it is not a much greater cost to involve the Victorian Farmers Federation.

It is not too much effort to involve, for instance, the Horsham City Council, which is so upset about this piece of legislation that it has written to the minister to ask him to hold it over until the next sitting.

Mr Plowman interjected.

Mr PERTON — Indeed, as the honourable member for Benambra points out, it is not just the Horsham City Council, but as my colleague the shadow Minister for Local Government will point out later, it is also the Frankston City Council, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and a range of others.

Mr Vogels interjected.

Mr PERTON — The honourable member for Warrnambool is indicating that neither of the local councils in his electorate was adequately consulted.

The EPA will say to us, 'We consulted with the Municipal Association of Victoria'. It is not hard to consult with the MAV — its chairman is actually the chairman of its governing council, the Environment Protection Council. The EPA will say, 'We consulted with the Victorian Local Governance Association'. Again, is not really hard to consult with the VLGA, whose director is a board member of Ecorecycle.

Although Ecorecycle has been consulted and is a strong supporter of this legislation, many of the regional waste management authorities, particularly those in the west and in remote areas of the state, indicated they have not been consulted. They are not saying they are against sustainability. As a major corporation which is very critical of the lack of transparency and safeguards in this bill said to me, it will not speak out publicly because to speak against provisions implementing sustainability covenants would be so politically incorrect that it would cause commercial damage to the company.

How much easier would it have been if the EPA had introduced a draft of this bill some months ago? The Liberal Party as well as the National Party and the Independents would have examined it, and the honourable member for Gippsland East would not have to move amendments himself. How much easier would it have been if people could have just pointed out that these sustainability covenants ought to follow the model set out in the bipartisan Law Reform Committee's report? If only there had been time in cabinet for the Deputy Premier, who signed this report, to actually say, 'Hang on, but there's no transparency; hang on, but there's no parliamentary sovereignty'.

One would have thought that the Leader of the Government in the upper house, if she had had her wits about her and had actually read the provisions of this bill, would also have held her hand up and said, 'Come on, let's get this right'.

It is late at night, so I shall not go on at length about this, but I give notice to this government and I give notice to the EPA that this is the second bill that has come on about which major sectors of the community are saying they have not been adequately consulted. It is not weirdos or people outside the mainstream who are saying this, it is organisations like the Victorian Farmers Federation and the distribution standards board. The board acts for 90 per cent of the organisations that deliver pamphlets to letterboxes. They met with EPA officials a week before the bill was introduced. The bill will have a major impact on their businesses, and it has the potential to make them unviable. In the course of the two weeks that have followed that meeting, the EPA has promised that it will make a code of practice under the bill according to which the members of the distribution standards board are to operate. But why was this not done before? Why did it need to be done in a rush?

Why do we now, as an opposition, have to deal with this bill in a rush, and why do our friends from the National Party also have to participate in the speedy

passage of the bill through the Parliament? It is because we are up against a sunset clause. If we do not get this bill through this sitting, the entire system of waste management levies will disappear and a major source of funding for Ecorecycle Victoria, the EPA, regional waste management authorities and local government will disappear. We will let this legislation go through in this sitting, but it is not good legislation even with the amendments.

As I review the amendments and the clauses, I see more and more opportunities for improvement. I make this commitment: when the Liberal Party is elected to government, whether it be this year or next year, it will undertake a major review of environmental legislation. It will have a major review of the Environment Protection Act so that it reads sensibly, so that it achieves the objectives we all desire in the community and so that we do not end up with an almost unreadable bill like this one — with a section 49AA and a section 49AB and so many letters and so many numbers — which is incomprehensible to all but the most experienced legal practitioners in environmental law.

Mr Hamilton interjected.

Mr PERTON — The Minister for Agriculture, in his usual late-at-night state, is shouting at me. If the minister actually had his wits about him in the house — —

Mr Hamilton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!

Mr PERTON — Through you, Madam Acting Speaker, I ask the Minister for Agriculture: did he make sure that the VFF was consulted on this bill?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PERTON — The Minister for Environment and Conservation and the Minister for Agriculture laugh. Did you consult with the VFF?

Mr Hamilton — The honourable member should speak through the Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster did ask through the Chair.

Mr PERTON — I asked through you, Madam Acting Speaker, and I ask rhetorically did you, as Minister for Agriculture — —

Mr Hamilton — You have been here long enough to have learnt something.

Mr PERTON — Anyone in this house and anyone who reads this transcript will see what a nincompoop the Minister for Agriculture is. I asked him the question: did he consult on this bill with the major industry representative group in his portfolio, and all he can do is laugh and giggle insanely.

Mr Howard interjected.

Mr PERTON — The honourable member for Ballarat East — or is it the member for Prahran — —

Mr Howard — You are still on that! It just shows how out of touch you are.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster will return to the bill.

Mr PERTON — The honourable member for Ballarat East may have moved back into his electorate for the purposes of the election campaign. There are three people in this chamber — the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Minister for Agriculture and the parliamentary secretary for conservation and environment — all of whom should have had some purview of the way in which this legislation was developed and introduced and all of whom failed to make sure that significant organisations that ought to have been consulted were consulted. There has been a great failure to do that.

Significant changes are made in this legislation to the way in which waste management is managed through regional organisations, through the role of local government and Ecorecycle. From my purview the increased responsibility for Ecorecycle as a central policy setting agency is sensible. The increased responsibility of the EPA in respect of setting statewide waste strategies is sensible, and to give the regional authorities a greater focus and to make sure they are not competing with commercial entities that are operating within their area are very important reforms.

The work of Cheryl Batagol and those who worked with her in examining the structure of waste is very important indeed. The suggestions that she made, while not universally agreed with across the sector, are viewed by most as very sensible reforms, and they are the reforms that form the basis for most of parts 3 and 4 of the bill.

The next element I will touch upon in this brief contribution relates to clause 35. Clause 35 specifies

how the increased levies are to be allocated and sets out that they will be allocated in accordance with regulations. A fairly explicit document has been distributed advising organisations how much money they can expect under this funding, and there are arguments about that.

My friend the honourable member for Prahran and shadow Minister for Local Government will discuss some of those elements, and some of the other members who wish to contribute during the course of the committee stage, such as the honourable member for Warrnambool and the honourable member for Benambra, will talk about the needs of rural communities seeking to use the most modern waste management techniques, but of course with a low density population they are finding some difficulties.

On the question of consultation again, clause 35 inserts section 70(6B) which sets up the environmental sustainability fund, but what is interesting is that there is a lot of detail set out in the second-reading speech about this fund but almost no detail at all in the bill. In fact, the name of the fund does not even appear in the bill.

We have taken up that point in the course of consultations with the government, and so have Environment Victoria and groups like Ecorecycle and the waste management authorities. I know that people like Don Chambers and Bob Beynon, who are active members of those organisations, have certainly indicated that they want a greater accountability. I am pleased to say that the government has indicated that it will acquiesce to those views and that a structure requiring an advisory committee and guidelines to be set in place for payments of those funds — in fact, guidelines that will have some degree of parliamentary sovereignty — will be introduced during the committee stage.

But otherwise the sustainability fund had all the possibilities of the Treasurer's and the Minister for Environment and Conservation's whiteboard fund. They are coming up to an election, so they are saying, 'Here's a nice cash cow, let's pay some money to various environmental organisations and social organisations across the state'. The amendment the minister has indicated she will introduce with the support of the Liberal Party and the National Party and of both the environmental movement and industry will certainly improve the drafting of the bill. But again, it is something that would have been improved had there been an exposure draft of this bill.

The last set of provisions I will talk about briefly are the litter provisions. In essence, this bill repeals the Litter Act and brings the provisions within the purview of the Environment Protection Act.

Generally, the provisions are not objectionable. The bill includes an increase in penalties. There is great frustration in the community about the lack of enforceable penalties against those who litter. A number of provisions in the bill relate to litter being thrown from vehicles or vessels, so the operation of the act will be improved. Even there, a bit of consultation would have helped.

The first time the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria became aware of the bill was when the opposition contacted it to ask for its impressions. The RACV certainly believes it is a bit heavy handed about the throwing of litter from motor vehicles. It is not a position I have strong views on, but it could have been improved —

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr PERTON — As the honourable member says, it would have been better with some consultation. The Distribution Standards Board met with the EPA a week before the bill was introduced. Had the board's views on the provisions in proposed sections 45L and 45M in particular relating to advertising material being delivered to post boxes been accommodated, the bill would have been better.

Had consultation occurred with the many organisations that have written to me on this issue, including Spotlight Stores Pty Ltd, all of whom have good and reasonable views on this, their views could have been accommodated and the bill would not have needed to be amended or to have new codes of practice.

Mr Vogels interjected.

Mr PERTON — As the honourable member for Warrnambool rightly points out, it is a mushroom job. We have a great respect for the EPA, which was set up by the Bolte government, built up under the Hamer government, improved under the Thompson government and, as the honourable member for Bennettswood said, very much improved under the Kennett government.

One of my great disappointments in my dealings with the EPA has always been on the question of consultation. When I was chairman of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee it dealt with the prescribed premises regulations, and I remember the complete failure on the part of the EPA to comply with

the Subordinate Legislation Act to seek the data and material required under that act.

The last bill we had in this house on waste management was all about amendments being moved and agreed to with the waste companies at midnight in order to get it through. On this occasion companies and organisations such as Visy, BP, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and ARG have been involved in the consultations. They have expressed their support for the bill, but large and important organisations such as the Distribution Standards Board and the Victorian Farmers Federation have been completely kept out of the loop. That is a sad thing for democracy and not a good thing for environment protection.

I will have more to say on this bill during the committee stage. The honourable member for Prahran wishes to make a contribution on behalf of local government. The honourable members for Sandringham, Warrnambool and Benambra will make contributions during the committee stage. Given the lateness of the hour, I conclude my contribution.

Government amendments circulated by Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation) pursuant to sessional orders.

Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton) — The Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill will do a number of things, including introducing sustainability covenants for industries and companies; clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the regional waste management groups; and progressively increasing landfill levies over the next six years. It will also incorporate the Litter Act into the Environment Protection Act, with increased penalties for various littering offences.

This bill is extremely important. I know a lot of work has been done by a lot of people around Victoria to ensure that we look at our waste management in a progressive way and try to reduce the amount of waste we produce. I have no doubt that the results of this bill will make industry look at the costs involved in getting rid of their waste. The National Party will not oppose the legislation. We believe it is necessary to move on, to look at the way we are handling waste to see what we can do about its reduction, and to examine our waste management and resource recovery regimes, because we are all about minimising waste.

We have seen approximately a 30 per cent reduction in municipal waste in the last five years. Frankly we have come a long way in getting people to understand how we should recycle, how we should use our waste and how we should use our available resources. However, it is unfortunate that industrial waste has not been reduced

in that time. It is clear from the bill that moves have been made to try to make companies have a good look at resource recovery.

The bill gives commercial industrial waste planning to Ecorecycle Victoria. In cooperation with the regional waste management groups Ecorecycle Victoria will produce a statewide plan for domestic waste. At present about \$12.4 million is collected annually from landfill levies, which were started some years ago through an involvement with a packaging covenant. We have become used to that, and people will look to see how we might progress those landfill levies. We will certainly do that with this bill.

Ecorecycle Victoria receives about 70 per cent of the money from those levies, the Environment Protection Authority receives 20 per cent and the regional waste management groups receive 10 per cent. Ecorecycle Victoria also provides project funding to the regional waste management groups.

The landfill levy is something that people will have a good look at, because we will see a quite massive increase over the next six years or so. At the moment people in country areas are paying \$2 per cubic metre for both municipal and industrial waste. Those rates will increase over the next six years to \$7 and \$13 per cubic metre for municipal and industrial waste respectively. In the city at the moment the rate is \$4 for municipal and industrial waste; those rates will be increased to \$9 and \$15 respectively.

If they do not get the message that is there I wonder whether industry will ever get it, because in the future the amount of revenue from dumping of waste will increase considerably. If people do not reduce their waste in the next six years they will pay more. It is expected that about \$18.3 million will be collected next year and that that will increase to about \$42 million in 2007–08. A lot of money will be put into waste management, and I know the regional waste groups will be looking at the increases over the years to see what they can do to get the community to come on board to make sure we do what we can to minimise waste.

The funds collected from landfill will be distributed by the amounts described in regulation. In 2002–03 it is proposed that the regional waste management groups will receive \$2.78 million to cover administrative funding and provide for education. There have been some concerns around country Victoria about some of the aspects of this bill, as we have been advised by some of the local councils and by people involved in waste management of those concerns.

I have also heard from somebody involved in the regional waste management groups about their concern that \$2.78 million will not be enough, but I am assured by people who have been involved in recent meetings that the regional committees have now agreed that it should be enough at this stage. We would certainly like the government to give us an undertaking that if these regulations could be reviewed in 12 months and it was found that the regional waste management groups are out of pocket, then funding arrangements could be changed to ensure that they can continue to educate the public through the schools, et cetera, and see if we can ensure that that money is going to the right place, is doing what it is expected to do and is enough to do what is required by the regional waste management groups.

Those groups are made up of people who are interested in waste management. Mostly they come from local councils. This bill also provides that not only councillors need be appointed to these groups. There should be at least one councillor from each council, but of course there are some groups that have only one council. The bill provides for people other than councillors to be appointed so they can bring in some expertise from outside if they find somebody who can help with those groups. That is a good move and I congratulate the government for ensuring that the opportunities can be widened for more people to be representative in those groups.

I looked through the information to see the sort of money that these regional waste management groups are receiving. In my electorate Goulburn Valley Regional Waste Management, incorporating the municipalities of Moira, Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mitchell and Murrindindi, receives somewhere around \$856 000 of landfill levy paid by licensed landfills within the region. There is funding to the region from Ecorecycle and other levies, with a net regional benefit of \$914 000. This is not small bickies; it is money that is giving an opportunity for work to be done to help with our waste.

Another issue we need to make sure we are careful about is the voluntary sustainability covenants for industry and companies. We understand that the industries the Environment Protection Authority has talked to have been quite happy with this. They wanted some statutory recognition for any results and efforts for emission reductions. It is not surprising that the companies are saying, 'If we do the job then we should be recognised for that'.

In my own area, one of my local milk factories was sending waste down the drain. We had massive holes in

the ground, because the waste underneath the ground had escaped from the pipes. It was found that the pH level of the waste product was such that it was eating out the concrete drains in the town.

Mr McArthur interjected.

Mr KILGOUR — No, it wasn't!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KILGOUR — I know what you were getting at!

It was later discovered that technology had become available that not only changed the waste but also enabled it to be recaptured and the product sold at a profit. So that was a tremendous move ahead for that company with its waste management. Not only that, but of course it was a great help to the community because the waste was no longer eating out the drains, which were replaced.

If the industry receives some recognition, it feels it has been worthwhile to be involved. It could give companies a marketing advantage to have a covenant. It could standardise licence conditions over several sites and could help the companies. There are a number of things that could be done to reduce ecological impacts and make companies better as far as looking after their output and waste.

The Victorian Farmers Federation suggested that this could be a heavy-handed approach. We need to be very careful about the way this is done and make sure we do not have the heavy hand of the EPA dealing too much with companies that do not deserve it.

As time is short, I will say one final thing about the bill and that is in regard to littering. The Litter Act is being absorbed into the Environment Protection Authority Act. It doubles some of the financial penalties for littering and also provides that posting bills will now be classified as littering. There is also some work on the 'No advertising material' or 'No junk mail' part of it.

I notice the object of this part of the bill is:

- (a) to prohibit and regulate the deposit of litter in the environment; and
- (b) to regulate the distribution of materials that may become litter; and
- (c) to enable the removal of detrimental or disorderly objects and other things.

When you look at the bill more closely, there are a number of issues there that the general public will need

to know about. The bill states that a person must not deposit any advertising material in a receptacle that states, 'No advertising material'. That will mean that someone who places advertising material in a letterbox that has 'No junk mail' or 'No advertising material' on it can be fined up to \$1000.

Another interesting provision that I noticed and that the public will need to be educated about is:

A person must not deposit any document in or on any vehicle ...

They must not deposit any document in or on a vehicle without the express consent of the owner. So no longer can you go along and put advertising material under the windscreen wipers of vehicles, and there is a penalty for doing so of up to \$1000.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr KILGOUR — Parking tickets are not involved in this bill, sadly. If you want to move an amendment I am sure the government will accept it!

The other issue that we are going to have to ensure that we have a very wide advertising campaign about — and I hope the minister will include the junk mail issue — concerns the posting of bills. Everybody has talked about bill posters over the years — and Bill Posters has been a much maligned gentleman — but the proposed legislation states:

A person must not affix any document on to any fixed structure without the express consent of the owner, occupier or manager of the structure.

There is a penalty of up to \$1000, and that means that companies will not be able to come into a town, rent a shop for a couple of weeks and sell carpets or mats, or whatever they do, and go around putting posters on structures such as light poles. We need to ensure that the opportunity is widely given to people to understand that that is a new law.

There will be a penalty of up to \$1000 for a person setting fire to a rubbish receptacle, and a penalty of up to \$1000 for offences concerned with the loading of vehicles. It will be an offence for a person to require another person to move a vehicle carrying a load unless he or she supplies the other person with sufficient means to secure the load. So a boss will not be able to say to somebody, 'Throw those things on the truck and take it down the road' unless they make provision for it to be covered. The person in control of the vehicle will also be able to be charged.

But there is one thing that I would like clarified by the minister — that is, litter thrown from a vehicle. Proposed section 45G inserted by clause 39 headed 'Owners, drivers etc. of vehicles from which litter deposited liable for littering' states:

If litter is deposited from a vehicle contrary to section 45E, the following are deemed to be guilty of an offence against section 45E —

- (a) the driver of the vehicle; and
- (b) the registered owner of the vehicle; and
- (c) any person authorised by the registered owner to use the vehicle at the time the offence was committed.

I am concerned that, if somebody owns a truck and a business and sends a driver off to take a truckload and somewhere along the line that driver decides to throw out some rubbish, say, a bag from the lunch he had finished eating, and somebody sees that, whether the person who owns the truck would actually be responsible for paying the fine when the truck owner had nothing to do with the littering. I would hope that commonsense prevails and that we do not see somebody being charged for something that they had absolutely nothing to do with.

Time is short so we do not have time to look further into a lot of those issues which I am sure there are many questions to be asked about, particularly around country Victoria, but I would say that the National Party does not oppose the legislation. I am very hopeful that when all these amendments get through the committee stage tomorrow we will have a bill through which we can say to the people that we can certainly see an improvement in our waste management process.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — Hopefully I will get through the Environment Protection (Resource Efficiency) Bill by midnight! It is a pleasure to speak on this bill and to follow the great presentations made by lead speakers from the opposition and the National Party.

There are a couple of functions of the bill: it establishes voluntary sustainability covenants and a regulatory system behind that which encourages more efficient resource use and reduction of waste and the impact on the environment. In this day and age it is something that we are moving towards in a range of different industries, and we need to do so.

There has been some controversy associated with this development. We have done a fair bit of consultation on this bill with our local councils because a large part of the impact of this legislation will be on local

government, which in most regional areas bears the brunt of the landfill and waste management issues. There has been some concern about the increase in costs; however they are still substantially lower than those found in New South Wales. They are still of concern, particularly in large areas with low population bases. The current increase in the cost of providing waste services and landfill sites — more recently most of that is provided in basically drop-off points and taken back to a central municipal tip — rests with the councils. The East Gippsland Shire Council and the Wellington Shire Council, which cover wide areas, are having a lot of trouble complying with many regulations.

As members of Parliament we get lobbied by local government as well as landowners whose properties adjoin tip sites. We need to do things properly because the leach from some old waste landfill sites is quite damaging and impacts on neighbouring properties.

I would like to focus on a couple of issues addressed in the bill. I understand that the local government associations, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association, have been consulted and are resigned to the fact that the levies need to go up because of current costs. Some councils have expressed concern, and I am sure the minister has received correspondence, as I have, on some of those concerns. I am pleased to say that consultation has been undertaken with our councils.

The bill provides that the funds from levies will go to fostering recycling programs and the more efficient use of resources, which is obviously good — particularly if it is done in the right spots to achieve better resource use.

One part of the bill deals with letterboxing — —

Mr Steggall — That is a big deal, is it?

Mr INGRAM — I think there is a principle here. In my view there was a problem with that part of the proposed legislation. The government made a commitment to honour the ‘No junk mail’ and ‘No advertising’ stickers on letterboxes. It appears it went through the process and then came out with a list of exemptions to the requirement not to put information into letterboxes. The problem as I see it is that if some people are allowed to put information in mailboxes why can everyone else not do so?

The groups that are conspicuously left unspecified in the bill, and therefore not exempted, are community groups. That omission needs to be addressed. Groups

like Neighbourhood Watch and other community groups — —

Mr Perton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member Doncaster!

Mr Perton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster!

Mr INGRAM — The government has gone down the path of saying, ‘Okay, no junk mail is to go into these letterboxes, but we will make a whole series of exemptions, including anything delivered by Australia Post, obviously, in a stamped addressed envelope, because that is a legal requirement under commonwealth legislation; any material that has a political purpose; magazines and newspapers; any public notices issued by a legal authority’ — and you could argue that essential services documents should be included there — ‘and any document issued either for the purposes of any commonwealth act or any document issued by or on behalf of any government or government agency’.

Now, you would have to say that that is a fairly open list, but it still does not include local charities. That needs to be addressed, and I reckon there is a simple solution to this. Here I am arguing for equity. Currently most people have ‘No junk mail’ stickers, and there are other stickers available from Australia Post saying ‘No advertising material’, as well as another one that goes under it, I am reliably informed, that says ‘except community notices’.

Now, a real bestseller — and do not doubt it! — would be an exemption for political material, too. I am sure that if we had stickers to go on the bottom of the ‘No junk mail’ and ‘No advertising material’ stickers that said ‘and no political advertising’, nearly every mailbox would have one on it.

It is a question of democracy. Most people who put ‘No junk mail’ and ‘No advertising material’ stickers on their letterboxes do not want to be bombarded by a large range of materials. It is my view that this part of the bill can be got around. Advertising can be put inside a newspaper, for example.

Mr Perton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! I remind the honourable member for Doncaster that it is disorderly to interject.

Mr Perton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster!

Mr INGRAM — The system of equity that I am arguing for here, Madam Acting Speaker, is on account of all those exemptions and the fact that none of them exempts community groups, making the provisions irrelevant.

The bill addresses sustainability covenants, which I can see some really good purposes for. I know the honourable member for Gippsland South is not here, but he would support me fully on this. Gippsland Water has a facility at Dutson Downs, in his electorate. Dutson Downs currently takes a whole range of waste from the Latrobe Valley and central Gippsland and runs it through an open channel, a bit like an irrigation channel of the kind used in northern Victoria, to a processing plant. Then the waste is stuck out into Bass Strait. That waste has a substantial impact on the environment of the ocean, and there is ample evidence that it has caused fishing collapses on the reefs offshore from the ocean outfall at Dutson Downs.

Sustainability covenants should be placed on such authorities to make them control the impact on the environment of outfalls such as the outfall from Dutson Downs. Gippsland Water should, as a government agency, take the lead role. Government agencies should do that so their facilities do not have a broad impact on the environment or on society. As it stands, anyone who lives near Dutson Downs or drives along the Loch Sport road past the facility when the wind is blowing the wrong way will suffer the consequences.

I understand the reasons for the legislation and for the proposed amendments regarding the Victorian Farmers Federation; but I also point out that most of our natural resource industries and most of our industries that have a natural resource component are required to be world leaders in their resource efficiency.

They are going to be required in the future to be much more sustainable and to have minimal impact on the environment, not only directly but also in their processing, because in industries like the fishing industry currently — although we have Victorian-managed fisheries — they are required to meet commonwealth schedule 4 requirements for export licences, and there is a whole range of requirements placed on all industries. If any industry — like our agricultural industries — is not performing to the highest level of environmental sustainability, its export market opportunities will be diminished in the

future. We have some very good agricultural production, but it is important that industries are required to comply with all the environmental protection legislation. So I commend the bill to the house. I will be moving an amendment, and it will be interesting to see what the reaction of the house is to that amendment.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

APPROPRIATION (2002/2003) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 30 May; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — It is with pleasure that I stand at 12 midnight — family-friendly hours! — to speak on the Appropriation (2002/2003) Bill. As I said last week, this budget is a non-event for ordinary Victorians. Indeed the *Age* said:

Guess who loses? Ordinary Victorians.

I tend to agree, because there was no tax relief for families, who will on average be paying \$1500 more this year than in 1999. In fact, the budget papers show that land tax is up 66 per cent — from \$411 million in 1999 to \$611 million in 2002.

Police fines are up 240 per cent — police are just tax collectors. Gambling taxes are up 31 per cent. Taxes on insurance are up 49 per cent. So ordinary Victorians are getting no tax breaks.

You would think that since the government is receiving this extra money, things would be much better. In reality, things are getting worse. Hospital waiting lists are up. If you compare figures from 1999 to 2002 — not 2001 to 2002, but apples with apples — and look at the Austin and Box Hill hospitals, which are the two hospitals used by residents in my electorate, you see that at the Austin there were 684 people on the waiting lists for elective surgery in March 1999, whereas in March 2002 there were 1457 — an increase of 113 per cent. In Box Hill, there were 312 in March 1999 and 512 in March 2002 — an increase of 64 per cent.

How many patients stay in each hospital's emergency department for longer than 12 hours? In the Austin, in March 1999 there were 63; and by March 2002, 297 — an increase of 371 per cent. In Box Hill there were 72 in March 1999 and 348 in March 2002 — an

increase of 383 per cent. And how often are hospital emergency departments going on bypass? In Box Hill in March 1999 there was one; in March 2002 there were 10 — an increase of 900 per cent.

Crime is going up. In Templestowe it has gone up 16.1 per cent; in Bulleen it has gone up 25.3 per cent; and in Lower Templestowe it has gone up 33.6 per cent. So there has been an increase in crime in my electorate despite the government trying to put a spin on police numbers. It is not working because the police are just there to collect taxes.

People in my electorate are suffering. As was the case last year, this year my electorate received very little. Apart from Templestowe Park Primary School which received \$780 000 for a general classroom, all the other schools — Manningham Park, Templestowe Heights, Templestowe Valley, Bulleen Heights, Birralee Primary School and Templestowe College — missed out. The only reason they missed out is that this government believes it is a non-winnable seat. It treats those students as second-class citizens simply because it thinks it cannot win the seat, even though everyone has to understand that all seats are marginal. These schools do need extra money, but this government is refusing to give it to them.

I have raised the matter of Templestowe Road and Thompsons Road in Bulleen with the Minister for Transport on many occasions. As the honourable member for Doncaster would appreciate, they are appalling roads. Yet, even though I have raised this issue with the minister on numerous occasions for two and a half years, the minister has done absolutely nothing.

I wish to read a letter from an 11-year-old boy who wrote regarding Thompsons Road. He said:

I am 11 years old, live in ... Thompsons Road, Lower Templestowe. I am grade 6 student ... I am complaining about the footpath in our street mainly our side. The council fixed the opposite side last month and so far it looks good. I have a problem whenever I ride my bike and I keep getting a flat tyre. When I walk the small stones get into my shoes and hurt my feet. I cannot push the stroller or the pram when I have to take my baby brother for a walk to the reserve next to our place. Most of the times I have to carry him but he is too heavy and moving a lot. Also I hate sweeping the driveway, the wheels of the car keep getting stuck and throw these small stones everywhere. Since we have a steep driveway, sweeping it is killing me. Do you know that I always feel very sorry for our 78-year-old neighbour when he sweeps his driveway or whenever he complains about not being able to walk because there is no proper footpath. So can you please come and fix the footpath as soon as possible. Trust me, it needs your immediate attention.

I have raised this matter with the Minister for Transport and he tells me he is far too busy to come to my electorate. The same week his office advised the residents that he will be coming to Bulleen on 12 June at 12 noon to look at Thompsons Road. I hope it is not a ploy. I hope the minister does turn up and has a look for himself at the poor conditions of Thompsons Road.

I have also raised with the Minister for Environment and Conservation Birralee Park Lake. I requested some funding to install a pump to pump some water into the lake which has since dried out, but the minister has shown no interest. She did respond saying that there is no interest in the park. There are indeed tens of thousands of people who use the park.

I turn quickly, because of the time, to multicultural affairs. This has been an absolute disaster due to the fact that this government and this Premier have no idea on multicultural affairs. If it were not for the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, this Premier would have absolutely no concept, no policies, no vision, and no aim in this area. And the proof? In this year's budget there is an increase of about \$275 million and only \$750 000 went to multicultural affairs — that is, 0.27 per cent of the increase. When you consider that almost a quarter of the people of Victoria come from non-English-speaking backgrounds, that is appalling. If you look at the total expenditure, this government is spending on multicultural affairs only \$5.3 million of the \$24.7 billion in the budget — that is, 0.002 per cent of the total budget.

Again, it is a government with no vision, no plans and no ideas. It is just relying on the good work of the previous government and it is trying to put a spin on the budget. In the ethnic newspapers I read that the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs said that in the 2002–03 state budget an extra \$4.5 million has been earmarked for programs targeting Victoria's multicultural communities. I would love to know where he got the figure of \$4.5 million. He is reported as going on to say:

You might note that some opposition members of Parliament have sent press releases to criticise the Department of the Premier and Cabinet over the extra staff. Some of those extra staff are in the multicultural commission and in the office of multicultural affairs. How are we going to have a whole-of-government multicultural agenda, delivering, supporting and serving communities, unless they actually have the staff?

Let's have a look at the staff. In September 1999, under the previous government, there were seven staff in the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs. In September 2000, with the new government, that increased to

10 staff — an increase of 43 per cent. In July 2001 that increased to 13 — another increase of 30 per cent. In September 2001 it went up to 14.8 — another increase of 14 per cent. In May 2002 it went up to 17, plus two graduate recruits. That is an increase of 170 per cent in two and a half years. Now you would think, okay, all right, if there is an increase of staff, you would expect them to achieve something.

Let's have a look to see what they have achieved. Instead of using the staff that they have employed, they are using consultants to do the work the staff are meant to do. Sweeney Research was paid \$35 200, the Strategy Shop was paid \$42 128, Fantastic Communications was paid \$3553, Cultural Perspectives was paid \$700 000, and Allen Consulting Group was paid \$89 000. Over \$870 000 was spent on work that was meant to be done by public servants.

There is more to say, but I need to finish there. All I have to say is that it is an appalling budget for my electorate, for ordinary Victorians and for multicultural Victoria. I remember when the Treasurer as opposition leader made billions of dollars of promises. What happened? After a few years, he said, 'Forget about those promises. I will start again from today', not realising that they were more than what the budget was.

Mr Lenders — That was Stockdale!

Mr KOTSIRAS — No, that was Brumby, when he was Leader of the Opposition.

I have to say that again this year it is an appalling budget. The government had a chance: it had the money, thanks to the Kennett government; it also received extra taxes. It has the money, but regrettably all Victorians have lost under this Labor government.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — How pleased I am to speak on the marvellous 2002–03 budget, which was handed down last month by the Treasurer. In my opening remarks on the state budget I pass on my congratulations to the Minister for Finance, who is at the table, for his participation in the preparation of the budget. It builds on the previous two state budgets handed down by the government — two budgets that have been marvellous for country Victoria. The government really is turning around the seven-year decline that we saw under the former Liberal–National Party coalition government. This budget reinvests in and rebuilds country Victoria, which is just marvellous for country Victorians, but I am here to talk more specifically about the benefits in the budget to my electorate of Bendigo East.

I start in the vital area of transport. The budget saw the state government commit \$70 million for the duplication of the Kyneton to Faraday section of the Calder Highway. This allocation is on top of money provided in previous budgets for the Karlsruhe section, which is currently being upgraded. Sadly though, the works will come to a grinding halt unless the federal government matches the funding under the roads of national importance agreement. I have spoken on this a number of times. The federal budget, which was handed down just one week after the state budget, gives us a glimpse of what Victoria would be like if a Liberal–National Party coalition were returned and what it would mean for country Victoria.

The budget has provided a massive boost for bus services in my electorate of Bendigo East. I could list the increased services across the suburbs of Bendigo but I would like to focus on one which is the best example — the outer area of Huntly. The budget has provided a 50 per cent increase in services to the community, including additional services during peak times and on Saturdays. This will provide greater access to people in the Huntly community, who are a little way out of Bendigo and who have lobbied for it for some time. I am very pleased to see the budget deliver that increase in services.

The environment also received a great boost in the budget, with the box-ironbark adjustment package of \$20.8 million to assist communities and industries through this phase. That is a fantastic commitment to this important environmental reform which we will move to later this year and which is welcomed by many in my local community. The \$77 million for the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, while not directly impacting on Bendigo is certainly welcomed by many in country Victoria. Again the federal government is to be condemned for the way it has refused to fund this vital infrastructure project for country Victoria.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment at Epsom in my electorate will be funded for major building works to the value of \$6.3 million, of which \$3.8 million was allocated in this year's budget.

Education was boosted in country Victoria, with \$31 million for country school bus services.

We heard the honourable member for Bulleen talk about health. I can say that the government has truly delivered in a number of health areas, and the Bendigo Health Care Group has seen many benefits. The budget has provided \$150 000 for replacement beds on top of the \$16 million radiotherapy unit that has already been delivered.

We will see a new police station at Inglewood — it is a little bit out of my electorate but it is important — and \$1.4 million for an upgrade of the Bendigo courthouse.

I finish by referring to the \$90 000 that the Bendigo Bank Academy of Sport will receive. It is not a great amount of money but it is something that a huge number of people in the community, including me, have lobbied hard for. It is particularly important to provide opportunities for country kids to participate at the elite level in their chosen sports in their local communities. I thank the Treasurer and the Minister for Sport and Recreation for the allocation.

The budget continues the great work being done by the Bracks government in country Victoria. We are certainly turning things around. We still have a way to go but we are up to the task. I look forward to further budgets from the Bracks government continuing to deliver for country Victoria.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I rise to make a brief contribution on the appropriation bill. It is very interesting to follow the contribution of the honourable member for Bendigo East, as I have done on a couple of occasions now. She usually starts off her repertoire in relation to rural and regional Victoria talking about the scorched earth policy, the closing of schools, the sacking of policemen, the sacking of teachers, the closure of hospitals and the loss of nurses.

It is great to be young, but it is also accepted that there has to be a fair bit of naivety with it as well. If the honourable member would step a little bit further back from that she would understand the commercial reality — that is, what actually happens when you have a budget situation of, say, around \$20 billion a year but you actually owe \$35 billion and you are paying somewhere in the order of 15 per cent interest on the money you owe: you actually end up with about \$15 billion less to spend. That was the legacy of the Cain and Kirner years. That was the issue the Kennett government inherited. It was not elected to government; it was appointed official receiver of a bankrupt state.

When you start off in that position you do not have the opportunity that this government has had to walk into a fantastic fiscal situation. This government has been handed a beautiful and magnificent surplus as a result of the hard work and gut-wrenching decisions that had to be taken by the previous government.

It would have been nice in the context of this budget to have seen some top-up funding for the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. I know that when in opposition the current Treasurer went out and sold very

hard what he was and was not going to do in relation to regional infrastructure and funding for country Victoria. In fact, he spent an awful lot of time around country municipalities saying, 'This particular fund will be the be-all and end-all for country Victoria. This has been set up wholly and solely for country Victorians'.

However, when challenged on the issue as to why 50 per cent of that funding had found its way into the major regional centres he said, 'It is not for rural Victoria; it is a regional infrastructure fund, and it is not for rural Victoria. In actual fact what I intend to do is top that fund up by \$10 million and I'll put aside another smaller fund within the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, and that fund will be for rural Victorians'. Of course that is a miserly \$10 million. When we started to have a look at the content of that fund and where the money had gone, we found money being raided out of the small towns fund and going back into the regional centres.

You have to admit it was a great ploy and a great job done on country Victoria. But when you look at the money that was put into country Victoria, particularly in and around my electorate, and you have a look at what is happening now under what I would call a scorched earth policy by the government of the day —

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr MULDER — I hear the honourable member for Bendigo East talking about hospitals and schools. I would like to remind her that if she happened to travel down to the Polwarth electorate and looked at the initiatives that were undertaken by the Kennett government, she would see the brand-new hospital that was built at Apollo Bay, the new hospital at Lorne funded by the Kennett government, and the rebuilt hospital at Winchelsea —

Ms Allan interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Bendigo East has had her say.

Mr MULDER — The honourable member could go and look at the new community health centre facilities at Birregurra and the lovely new hospital that has just been built at Timboon. She could possibly then visit the schools in the electorate and find that of the 35 schools in the electorate 34 had received funding, and several were totally rebuilt. What do we have in this budget? Only one school in the Polwarth electorate will receive any funding whatsoever.

It would have been great also to have some funds put into stage 2 of the redevelopment of the Colac

community health services. The Kennett government in its own right put significant funding into that facility. Funding for stage 2 was expected; there are over 75 nursing home beds at that facility. What did we get? We got nothing.

What about all the police stations that were funded under the Kennett government — the police stations at towns such as Birregurra, Cressy and Beeac, and all the great initiatives of the Kennett government? I could not speak more highly of the effort put in by the previous government on infrastructure throughout Victoria and the Polwarth electorate.

But when I examined the budget I thought for one fleeting moment that a page was missing, because certainly the Polwarth electorate and western Victoria were overlooked to a major extent. I understand that other honourable members wish to contribute to the debate on this appropriation bill, so I shall conclude my contribution at this point.

Mr VINEY (Frankston East) — It is certainly a great pleasure to speak in support of this third Bracks government budget. It is a budget that has delivered a massive infrastructure boost to the region of Frankston, Frankston East and further down the peninsula. It is a budget that includes the commitment to the Scoresby freeway, which has been promised for many years, but of course it is the Bracks Labor government that is delivering on that commitment.

It is a budget that has included \$13 million in capital works programs for local schools, including \$4.7 million for the development of the new Carrum Downs secondary school. Some of the other schools on the peninsula and in Frankston that have had substantial boosts out of this budget include Derinya Primary School with \$2.7 million, Mount Eliza Primary School with \$2.2 million; Konyung Primary School with \$700 000; and Frankston High School with \$2.34 million. This budget has been great news for schools in Frankston and further down the peninsula.

It is a budget that has delivered a substantial boost to transport and road infrastructure in Frankston and on the peninsula. Again, this government has delivered on the works for the Cranbourne–Frankston Road with \$11.7 million worth of funding which will see the much-needed duplication of that road.

The budget has delivered \$445 million to the Scoresby freeway development. It has delivered \$2 million for new bus services between Frankston and Cranbourne, providing additional services through Karingal and Langwarrin, including more frequent services and, for

the first time, services on a Sunday. The budget has also provided \$2 million for new bus services from Frankston to Portsea — increased public transport services that are vitally needed in this region.

This is the third Bracks government budget that has delivered extensive additional funding to a number of preschools and for much-needed capital works in the region.

The budget builds on the magnificent commitment of the Bracks Labor government to substantially redevelop the Frankston Hospital — a \$21 million redevelopment achieved over the first two budgets to bring in two new wards and improved midwifery and paediatrics units. This budget allocates an additional \$967 000 to the Frankston Hospital for a range of medical equipment and ergonomic beds.

The budget also includes a \$2 million allocation to the government's transit cities program to improve existing and provide new opportunities for redeveloped urban living closer to transport nodes.

It is of course also pleasing to see the work to be done at the former Monterey Secondary College site in Frankston North, closed by the former government and now being turned into a park. The planning is now nearing completion and work will be undertaken over the next few months. This is a budget that I have great pleasure in supporting and in endorsing. I commend it to the house.

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — What a disappointing budget it is for Geelong and the Surf Coast! It is high taxing — a hallmark of Labor governments over past years. Once again this government is going down the track visited by the Cain and Kirner governments.

The government missed the opportunity to put a stop to the stamp duty rip-off of home buyers. There is no funding for the Grovedale railway station or for the Torquay police station, which urgently needs replacing; there is next to no extra capital works funding for the Grace McKellar Centre, as the government has set aside only around \$20 million when about \$80 million is needed; the duplication of the Princes Highway between Geelong and Colac has been abandoned by Labor; and the Geelong ring-road does not even rate a mention.

Barwon Heads has also been forgotten, with no funds for the football and netball club upgrade or the connection of natural gas. Extra train services between Geelong and Melbourne appear to have been overlooked in the budget. On the other side of the

ledger it is pleasing that the government has bowed to Liberal Party pressure and set aside funding for the upgrade of the Warrnambool rail line, but it had to be dragged kicking and screaming to do it.

The government claims to have made headway in health, but the truth is quite the reverse, despite the money it claims to be spending in this area. The latest *Hospital Services Report*, which was released on Sunday, paints a very bleak picture for the Geelong hospital under this Bracks Labor government. It is now quite clear that the Geelong hospital delivers better services under a Liberal government.

Since Labor took over the hospital has gone backwards. The March 2002 quarter figures show that the number of patients waiting on trolleys in the emergency department for more than 12 hours has skyrocketed by 475 per cent to 149, compared with 26 patients at the same time last year. Compared with the hospital's performance under the Liberals, this figure has swollen by a scandalous 2500 per cent! Waiting lists for semi-urgent patients are up by 28 per cent to 656 patients, compared with the previous March quarter figure of 510 patients. That figure has soared by 85 per cent since the Liberal Party left office. Total waiting list numbers are up by 5 per cent to 2510 patients.

The number of semi-urgent elective patients waiting longer than 90 days for their operation has soared by 70 per cent to 322. This is a 115 per cent leap on the previous Liberal government's performance. The hospital's Labor Party chairwoman and ALP candidate, Lisa Neville, says it is not the government's fault. In typical form, lazy Labor members want to blame anyone but themselves, and it is quite plain that the return of a Liberal government is critical to the Geelong hospital getting back on track — and the sooner the better.

In summary, we have a high-taxing Labor government, but despite the high taxes, services — particularly in the Geelong and the Surf Coast areas — are suffering.

Ms LINDELL (Carrum) — It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Appropriation (2002/2003) Bill. This budget has certainly been welcomed by my community in Carrum. It is a budget that they accept has continued to turn things around by cleaning up the mess left behind by the Kennett government, delivering on our promises and governing for all Victorians.

For my own electorate the budget has produced considerable benefits. The Chelsea Heights Primary School, which was forgotten by the former Kennett

government, has received a \$2 million upgrade for new classrooms; art, craft and music teaching areas; new toilets and a canteen; staff administration upgrades; and library facilities. Those benefits are certainly most welcome in that community, which was, as I said, forgotten totally by the Kennett government.

There is also an extended bus service for Chelsea Heights. For the first time Chelsea Heights residents will be able to access public transport over the weekend. There are new Sunday and public holiday buses running down Edithvale Road through Edithvale, Chelsea and Chelsea Heights as an extension of the Smart Bus service from Ringwood to Chelsea. Sunday services, the first ever for Chelsea Heights, will run every 40 minutes from 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. There will be Saturday morning, afternoon and evening services as well from 6.40 a.m. to 9.00 p.m., and the weekday services have been extended until 11.30 p.m. Apart from one bus service this area is totally unserved by public transport of any description, and these extended services are most welcome.

Welcomed also by the communities of Seaford, Patterson Lakes, Carrum, Chelsea, Chelsea Heights and Edithvale is the \$445 million committed to the Scoresby freeway. The freeway will make a huge difference to those communities, with an expected fall in traffic along Wells and Boundary roads of 30 per cent. The freeway will take traffic off Wells Road and will change the traffic flows considerably for the entire electorate.

Mr Steggall interjected.

Ms LINDELL — You did not shut them all, no.

Ms Asher — Your lot shut one in five.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the National Party shall cease interjecting.

Ms LINDELL — Health has been very well resourced, with Frankston Hospital receiving more critical care equipment, ergonomic beds and pulse oxymeters for the new critical care wards that have recently opened. There is a \$10 million redevelopment for the next stage of the Dandenong Hospital, and Southern Health, which includes both Monash and Dandenong hospitals, has received \$2 million for extra equipment, including mobile X-ray machines, digital thoroscopy and theatre equipment for orthopaedic and plastic surgery.

All schools in my electorate will also receive extra numeracy teachers under the new funding in the budget

for such teachers. In the budget more than \$550 million extra is allocated for the next four years to build a world-class education system for the state, which can be contrasted starkly with the federal budget, which came out the week following the state budget and which did not address education in any sense.

I commend this budget to the house. It looks forward to our future. It is about more jobs, about stronger and more caring communities and about delivering record investment in education and innovation.

Mrs ELLIOTT (Mooroolbark) — The Bracks budget for 2002–03 has some commendable aspects, but there are also some glaring omissions. In the community care area I applaud the \$23 million that will go into preschools. It is long overdue and much wanted. The \$23 million is there, although there are some questions still about the group employer model. Kindergartens do not want their autonomy and the ability to employ teachers taken away from them.

However, the most glaring omission in the community care area is that there is not one single dollar for foster care in Victoria. Currently 3800 children need foster care in this state. In Australia in 1999 there were 13 000 foster carers and in 2001 that number had dropped to 9000. There are about 2500 to 3000 in Victoria, although nobody is sure how many because there is no central register, and the number gets lower week by week.

What are the reasons? They are grossly underpaid. Foster carers in Victoria receive \$5919 a year from the government; carers in New South Wales get \$9513. The last significant increase for foster carers was in 1996 under the Kennett government. There has been no increase in foster care payments since then.

The children who need foster care are some of the most disadvantaged in the state. They can no longer live with their birth families because they have been abused physically, mentally or psychologically. The people who volunteer to be foster carers are some of the contemporary secular heroes of our society. They take on children who are extremely damaged. Sometimes their care is for a short period, sometimes for weeks or months and sometimes for years. Yet they are not appreciated by the government.

Last year the Productivity Commission released figures that showed that Victorian children had more placements than children in any other state — in other words, they were rotated through a series of placements. In April this year 348 children had no case workers allocated despite investigations finding

substantiated abuse. The number of foster carers is decreasing.

The payments are not enough to meet the real cost of looking after children in care, and those real costs are stark. The real cost of looking after a baby is about \$8000 a year, and the cost for looking after a teenager increases to \$12 900. However, if those children were institutionalised the cost for each would increase to \$70 000 a year. Obviously, children in foster care are much better off, but foster carers are not paid enough. There are no back-up resources to support them in the difficult job they do.

Only yesterday I was speaking to the president of the Foster Care Association of Victoria, Janice Hughes. She said she is actively advising her friends and people who inquire not to volunteer as foster carers. She said people, and particularly the government, do not realise the extent of the extra costs for these children. They need nappies far beyond what children in normal circumstance would need because they bed-wet and soil themselves. The older children often destroy their own furniture and belongings. They need money for counsellors and psychologists and often extra money for special food. Most foster carers are not rich people. There comes a point where no matter how altruistic they are and no matter how much they want to love and care for other people's children it becomes all too difficult.

A major report is being released on Friday in New South Wales called 'The cost of caring: a study of appropriate foster care payments for stable and adequate out-of-home care in Australia'. It makes these facts stark. I call on the Bracks government and the Minister for Community Services to do something about this appalling situation.

To conclude on the issue of foster care, Victoria has 12 times the number of Aboriginal children on care and protection orders of any other state. In other words, Victoria has the highest number under those orders. It is appalling that Victoria, one of the smallest states, has the largest number of indigenous children under care and protection orders. The rate here is higher than in any other state, including the Northern Territory.

I move on to the disability sector of the community services portfolio. So far, despite the Bracks government having been in office for nearly two and a half years, there is no state plan for disability services despite it having been legislated for. The government is in breach of the law in that respect.

In the budget the most glaring lack in this area is that no money has been made available for early intervention. There may be money for integration aids for children going to preschool but nothing for children before they reach that stage. Every moment counts from the birth of those children who suffer from conditions such as autism, spina bifida and Down syndrome.

The people at the autism association are particularly incensed that \$1 million was allocated for early intervention in the budget last year and up to two weeks ago that money had not been allocated in the eastern region and there is not one cent in this budget for early intervention. So children with autism who often are not diagnosed until they are two or three years old are waiting and waiting on ever-growing lists to get the specialist early intervention help that they need. Those agencies that care for those children and the children's parents feel let down and betrayed by this government. They feel they cannot trust this government to help them when they need help.

In August 2000 the previous Minister for Community Services produced a statement in this house on juvenile justice in which she promised that in the criminal jurisdiction area of the Children's Court the age of young offenders dealt with would be raised from 17 to 18. That has not happened. She said that this government's policies would limit the numbers in custody to allow the closure of Turana. We were calling for Turana to be rebuilt. The opposition has been calling for that for years. In fact it was part of our last policy. This budget admitted that we were right and the government was wrong, and has allocated \$14.8 million to replace Turana. We commend that; it was part of our policy, but the previous minister said it would not be necessary.

Not only is the government adding new beds at Turana but it is putting 16 extra beds at Malmsbury juvenile centre in Castlemaine in a demountable building. Everybody in this house is aware of the problems at Malmsbury — the abscondings, the drug culture up there and the fact that people associated with staff were growing marijuana on site. Although the 16 beds at Malmsbury are meant to be temporary, I am quite sure in several years from now we will find that they are still there. The minister promised that she would report back to Parliament on the outcome of that juvenile justice statement. That was in August 2000; we are now in June 2002 and the minister has yet to report back to Parliament. The whole juvenile justice strategy of this government is a sham and a failure.

In the arts part of the budget there is another glaring omission.

An Honourable Member — Only one?

Mrs ELLIOTT — There are several, but there is one major one, and that is that the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) got not one cent in extra recurrent funding. The national gallery is one of the finest galleries in the world and it — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! honourable members are making it difficult for the honourable member on her feet to speak. If members on the front bench wish to have a conversation, they should leave the chamber.

Mrs ELLIOTT — Thank you for your assistance, Mr Acting Speaker. The Minister for Finance is doing a little delving into history. The national gallery is certainly one of the finest galleries in the Southern Hemisphere. The gallery in St Kilda Road closed for renovations two years ago. The Museum of Australian Art in Federation Square was meant to be open last year. The temporary gallery at the NGV in Russell Street closes at the end of this month. There is absolutely no sign of a handover of the Museum of Australian Art at Federation Square, and the gallery in St Kilda Road is not due to reopen until August next year. When it does reopen it is going to be faced with some terrible choices because there is not one cent in this budget for the gallery. It may have to introduce fees, which the trustees have said they will not do.

It may have to cut its programs or its hours of opening, even though it had said that with the opening of the gallery at Federation Square it would open for extended hours to allow more of the public to see that collection. The gallery trustees are devastated that there is nothing in this budget for them. I received a letter from the gallery the other day. Addressed to its friends and supporters, it said the gallery needed to start yet another appeal to raise money for the building. Although the government has a statutory responsibility, it does not care about the arts.

Meanwhile, the Melbourne Museum is obviously in dire trouble. There is \$17 million for the museum in the budget. The government has predicated that funding on the fact that visitor numbers to the museum will fall, so there is \$17 million to bail it out.

I turn to the State Library of Victoria. The retiring state librarian, Fran Awcock, said that although the library was grateful for the pittance it got in the budget — that is, \$4.1 million over four years — it was not nearly enough to preserve the outstanding and unique collection of the library.

There is absolutely no evidence in this budget that this government cares about the arts. If Federation Square is not opened by October, the Melbourne Festival, a proud festival that during the Kennett years was a huge success every year, is going to be thrown into utter chaos because the whole festival is predicated on the facility being open.

Finally, crime is up quite drastically in my electorate, particularly robberies and car thefts. Last year's budget promised \$10 million to build a new 24-hour police station at Croydon. There is now a sign amongst the weeds at the site on Mount Dandenong Road which says the police station is estimated to be completed by September next year. I have consistently called for that police station to be built, and I am waiting to see whether we will get it. It was one of the commitments made to the people of Croydon by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

In terms of education, it will come as no surprise to everybody in this house that in the outer east the equivalent national tertiary entrance rank (ENTER) scores of students are below the national average. I invited senior school students from secondary schools in my electorate to Parliament House for dinner last week, and I would pit those students against any others. Something is wrong if they cannot achieve the ENTER scores of students who go to non-government schools and students in other areas of Melbourne. The fabric of some of my schools needs attention, particularly Pembroke Secondary College.

In the outer east we are looking forward longingly to the completion of the Eastern freeway. Business in that area is bowing under the weight of government taxes and charges. I could go on and on, but in the interests of time I will not. This budget delivers very little for the arts, for community services and for the people of the electorate of Mooroolbark.

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I am very pleased to be here to support the third budget of the Bracks government. What a genuine difference a Labor government makes! This is truly a Labor budget; a budget which delivers to education, health and public safety. This government is rebuilding the physical and social infrastructure that was so badly damaged under the previous government. The budget provides for a more sustainable transport system and looks at the efficiency of our urban form. It really is a Labor budget that looks at long-term investment in Victoria's people and its infrastructure.

This is a government that is riding high, and this budget has been well received. All I can do is support it. The

budget delivers on what is a very important issue for me: the Coburg police station, to which the budget allocates \$9 million. I have raised this issue numerous times in this house. I first raised it on 6 December 1994, just after I had been elected to this house. In 1994 I said that the police station needed to be redeveloped because it was not fit for the police. Under the previous government we lost — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order!
The honourable member for Coburg, without assistance from the opposition benches!

Mr CARLI — Ten police were lost from that station, which was unfit for the police force because it was falling apart. I raised that fact and said it should be redeveloped. I also said that 10 officers had been transferred from the area because of the unfit nature of that police station.

I raised the issue with previous ministers, but it took the Labor Minister for Police and Emergency Services to deliver that police station to the people of Coburg so they can have a fit and proper police station for their police to ensure public safety on their streets. It took time, but it has been extraordinarily well received in the community.

This strong Labor budget is about supporting Melbourne's suburbs. It is also about supporting Melbourne's transport system, with commitments to the Scoresby freeway and the Scoresby transport corridor. The government does not see transport simply in terms of roads. It sees the importance of the integration between roads and other modes of transport, and it is certainly contributing in that area. The government has made the biggest commitment to buses and bus services in urban Melbourne in 30 years, and there is a commitment to extend tram services to Vermont South.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CARLI — There will be key construction works on arterial roads and the electrification of the rail line from Broadmeadows to Craigieburn, which is important to the people of the northern suburbs.

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr CARLI — The honourable member for Doncaster does not have a railway and does not care about it!

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr CARLI — The honourable member for Doncaster can go on about the fact that he has not got a railway and wishes to have one! The northern suburbs have a railway, and they now have a further commitment to extend it, which has been extremely well received.

This is a budget that delivers to the people of Victoria and to the people of Coburg. This government will continue to build on this budget, as will future governments, because the Labor Party makes a difference to this state. It is rebuilding after the damage caused by the previous government and will continue to do so. I am pleased to rise in support of the third Bracks government budget.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! Before I call the next speaker, I want to caution honourable members that this is the Victorian Parliament and there are certain standards to be kept. I did not want to interrupt the honourable member for Coburg in his address, but clapping is disorderly, rude interjections are disorderly and honourable members who are out of their place are doubly disorderly. I caution honourable members to see out the debate this evening with the decorum befitting the house.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — At 1 o'clock in the morning the previous opposition in its seven years on this side would have said, 'They are sneaking through the budget in the wee small hours'. This government would not bring the appropriation bill on in the daytime but has brought it on in the middle of the night instead! I want to make a few comments different from those made in the last hour.

I acknowledge that this is a government that has money.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr STEGGALL — I know, because we helped get it for you. I do understand that the Minister for Finance, his Treasury, and other ministers are having trouble spending it.

The government has raised expectations throughout Victoria, and it is failing to meet those expectations. Indeed its delivery is very low in many areas in which it made promises. It will take a while yet before the people really catch on to the lack of direction and the inability of this government to manage the state and deliver on those things it promised. We have heard a lot of announcements — we have announcements three and four times for the same thing — and they are very clever but we are not getting many results. As the honourable member for Coburg said, 'This is a budget

for the suburbs of Melbourne'. I do acknowledge that it is a budget for the suburbs.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr STEGGALL — The Minister for Finance wishes me to talk about the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. That is the big plus in the budget for my electorate — it is the only plus in the budget for the Swan Hill electorate! It is very important, because it matches up with the commonwealth's commitment to make sure that we do the planning. Let's not get carried away with all the rubbish that is being spoken by the Premier and the Treasurer, who have both been less than honest. The Wimmera–Mallee pipeline budget, which we acknowledge and are very pleased about, contains \$3.5 million for the detailed planning and feasibility of the project. If that adds up there is a forward commitment for funding over a 10-year period.

We are looking forward to the management of that commitment to see it proved up. A lot of things have not been touched on yet with regard to the public policy which is required on that operation. We in country Victoria are only too pleased to help the government with those areas, but the government is going to have to start adopting public policy as to how it will deliver in that area and the principles it is going to operate with. That is very important.

For the last 11 years we have been building the northern Mallee pipeline, which is in its final stage now, and with the matching funding I believe is in this budget for the Patchewollock and Cannie Ridge area, which is the finalisation of the old one, the government is matching the commonwealth money that was put up during the last election. We will have that finished and the feasibility and the detailed planning done, but the government should not think that is a done deal yet. We have a lot of hurdles to get over, and we have to get proper answers. I plead with the government to take it very seriously and not treat the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline as it has so many of its other major projects, where the talk is cheap and the delivery is poor.

This is an important project for western and north-western Victoria. In many parts of my electorate, such as Birchip, Charlton, St Arnaud, and into the new electorate of Donald right through to Sea Lake and Wedderburn, and the smaller communities throughout the Wimmera–Mallee, the pipeline is vital. It will open up a whole range of new opportunities for those communities and will turn around their social standing in the future. It is vital, and more will be said about it as the debate goes on.

The Swan Hill electorate has not done all that well out of this budget. I have to say that for the last five or six budgets it has done extremely well, and we expected a bit of a downturn in this one. We certainly got it! I have got two new police stations at Pyramid Hill and Inglewood in my electorate. We are most grateful for those because they have been in the pipeline for about five or six years.

Four schools are referred to in the Loddon–Campaspe region, which is a huge region. But the budget being such a secretive document, we have no idea where those schools are, and they are probably not in the Swan Hill electorate. However, communities throughout the Swan Hill area are going from strength to strength in spite of the government.

I would like to run through a few of these areas, starting with Robinvale, which unfortunately will no longer be in the Swan Hill electorate when the next election comes around. It is probably the fastest growing country town in Victoria, and it is growing at an enormous rate because of the investment in and development of its wine and table grapes, almonds, carrots, olives, vegetables, and mineral sands at Wemen. In the next 20 years the mineral sands industry will be one of the biggest industries, if not the biggest, in north-western Victoria and one which we must watch to make sure the government plays the role it should. Honourable members will hear us from time to time talk about the standardisation of rail and access to Portland from that north-west corridor, and it is the mineral sands which will drive that.

Robinvale is one of the most multicultural areas in this state. With this government we are not able to address the needs of fast-growing communities where we have enormous cultural issues. There are big populations of Samoans, Tongans, Vietnamese, Malays, Thais and Aborigines. We cannot get enough assistance for the schools. We are having trouble with immigration. It is interesting to see the growth in these areas, which are all communities with export industries that are going straight overseas. This growth and development is being fuelled by immigration, not by Melbourne people — Anglo-Saxons if you like — moving into that area. We are actually developing our growth through immigration.

Industry in the Swan Hill electorate is also growing at a very rapid rate, and the pressures resulting from growth, immigration and other changes are just starting to surface. If you consider Swan Hill's industries, particularly wine and table grapes, nectarines, apricots, peaches, vegetables, plums, carrots, onion seed,

legumes and grains, you realise that these communities are operating basically in our country's export area.

The situation is similar in Birchip, where grains and cropping have bought a new standard and quality to research. One thing about the Swan Hill electorate is that it has a cooperative research. It is not coming out of a straight research centre like the Victorian Institute for Dryland Agriculture in Horsham; it is being carried out on the farms. As a result it needs and is getting support from both the state and federal governments and also from the commercial world throughout Australia. It is a very exciting operation.

In country electorates we try to involve the industries and the communities. Because we do not have government institutions on hand to do it we have to do it in a different way. It is the same for health services and hospitals. The health services throughout this vast region are very different from those in the metropolitan area or the major centres. Our health service delivery is extremely good, although there is no doubt that we are short of aged care for our small towns.

We are getting there now, mainly because of the efforts made in our own communities by our own people to get a better health service. It is different to the health services of metropolitan areas and major centres, but we are getting services through.

The Swan Hill electorate defined by its current boundaries is the size of Israel, but it has about 40 000 people in it as against Israel's 6 million. It has more water, more arable land, more mining and more minerals than Israel, and yet it has only 40 000 people. The new electorate, which will run from Boundary Bend down to Warracknabeal, Minyip and Murtoa, and over to St Arnaud and through all those areas that way, will be the size of Belgium, would you believe! Belgium has a population of about 10 million and Swan Hill will have a population of about 45 000. Our issues are very different from those of a lot of countries, and the ways we handle and resolve them are different from the ways others do things.

The Swan Hill electorate has not done very well out of this budget, but we are, as we have done in past years and continue to do now, working out and resolving a modern way of delivering services in a lot of areas, particularly in health and community services and also in education. There are 300 students in the vocational education and training (VET) programs we run in the Swan Hill area alone. VET is something we introduced a few years ago to try and give our own people the opportunity to understand what opportunities exist in our area, what type of science they can take up if they

want to go to university and what type of jobs are available. We are short in just about every area of employment in the Swan Hill area, as we are in Robinvale and now, I am pleased to say, in Kerang, which has been the sleeper of our electorate but is now starting to really kick and move. Investment and development in Kerang is going to be good.

Electorates like mine are able to grow and develop without a government nursemaidling them, but they do need some help and assistance from time to time. We hope that governments will better acknowledge the differences in the needs of different country electorates. All our country electorates are different: Gippsland is different to the north-western, the western and the north-eastern electorates, and all those are different from each other. We tend, however, in this place and in the bureaucracy through the laws and regulations we set, to try and get a single standard to apply across the state. That does not work.

I am very pleased and proud of the progress my electorate has made over the last few years — the excitement that is there and the growth and development that are coming. I trust that in the future we will see more government interest in and acknowledgment of our differences and more government willingness to put systems in place that are not necessarily suitable for the whole state but which will match in with our needs.

The biggest thing in this budget, as I have mentioned before, is the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. Just remember: we have a long way to go with that, so let's not get carried away and make the absolutely terrible mistakes the Premier has made this year.

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr STEGGALL — The honourable member for Glen Waverley lives in a suburb that is just about the same as any other suburb you would care to run to, but the Swan Hill electorate is a little different. We do not get very many opportunities to have a bit of a roam through the issues that are important to each of us.

In closing I say this to the government: please be careful how you travel with the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. If we are going to see continual political carryings-on such as we have seen during the introduction of this project into the Parliament, we have a danger of splitting and dividing those people who are going to be most helpful in the growth and development of that project. It is not an easy project; it has a lot of environmental and recreational snags in it. We have a challenge ahead to make sure we can deliver

the real benefits that can come from that pipeline being developed on a shared federal and state basis.

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — I am certainly very pleased to speak on this, the third Bracks government budget, which has delivered so much in so many ways to people across the state overall in the areas of health, education, community safety, transport and the environment.

It has had a very broad impact right across this state and certainly in my electorate: the people of Ballarat East can be very pleased with this budget, and many people are already expressing to me their delight at so many aspects of this budget as it affects them. Although in the time available to me I will not be able to comment on all of the aspects of the budget which provide great benefits to the community of Ballarat East, I will cover some of them.

Let me start with education, where this government has really turned things around. We have put back into education much of what was taken out year by year under the Kennett government. In this budget preschools in particular have gained significant additional funding — \$28 million overall — allowing for significant and well-deserved pay increases for teachers in the preschool area. The budget has also provided for significant capital works for numerous preschools in my electorate, including Mount Helen Preschool Centre, Buninyong and District Kindergarten, Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten, Mount Clear Community Kindergarten, York Street Kindergarten and Meredith Preschool — all of which are receiving in this budget capital works which will significantly improve the facilities they offer.

Moving on into higher levels of education, there is \$32 million for early numeracy programs, which effectively will put another teacher in each of the schools in my electorate. There is \$82 million for a very sound initiative called the Access to Excellence program, which I look forward to seeing implemented in my electorate, where schools that have special needs get special support — something that the Kennett government never understood. It took all of that special money from schools that needed special support. This program provides \$82 million extra to secondary schools where there are families with special needs. This will mean, to many of the schools in my electorate — —

Mr Steggall interjected.

Mr HOWARD — You don't know — it hasn't been determined how much! You will get them if your

schools are in need, but it has not been determined yet which schools get them. They have to put forward their applications and show their programs, but I am very confident that the majority of secondary schools in my electorate will be able to put forward very worthy programs. They have special needs, and I look forward to the schools in my electorate gaining that support. We know that the middle years programs also have significant additional funding for clusters of schools — these are the primary moving on to secondary clusters

As well, money has been allocated to support the new Victorian certificate of applied learning program, which has been in its trial year under this government but will be significantly expanded so that at Victorian certificate of education level there will be further opportunities to provide a more flexible curriculum and syllabus that will meet the needs of senior students in secondary years.

I am pleased also to see the \$8 million going into Freeza funding to provide youth activities for the communities within Ballarat and Daylesford in particular, which will provide the great benefit of getting students into great activities. Also the students and communities of Napoleons Primary School and Buninyong Primary School are very excited. At the Napoleons school they know that the new year will see a new school which they have long been awaiting built on a site near their present school, and that will happen through the funding in this budget. Buninyong Primary School is also excited at getting four new classrooms and a new library out of this budget.

On law and order there is funding to support the increased number of police promised by the Bracks government. There is also funding for the Gordon police station, about which the community of Gordon is excited.

There is much funding in the health area for additional support for ambulances and mental health; and the long-awaited radiotherapy unit has now begun operation in Ballarat after so many years of waiting. We thought we might have had it under the former Labor government, and nothing progressed under the Kennett government, but now it is in place in Ballarat. The great Supporting Vulnerable Families program, which will be run by the Ballarat City Council, will benefit communities in Ballarat.

There are many activities in the transport area. First, work will start under this budget on the fast rail project. There is money to assist with Ballarat Transit, and \$190 000 will see more transport provided in the Buninyong–Ballarat link and other areas. Some

\$31 million will go into school bus reform, which will be of great benefit to my electorate. Much is happening in the environmental area. We have heard about the Healthy Rivers program, Landcare and \$15 million has been provided for the greenhouse initiatives, about which we will hear more tomorrow with the release of the greenhouse strategy.

The fox program will be greatly appreciated in my electorate, as will the \$80 million for the Our Forests, Our Future program. There are significant challenges ahead in the Wombat State Forest in my electorate, and we will be working through that with a well-funded program on its transition into a sustainable forest environment. That is something which has been long required in the state and which the former government overlooked completely.

The government has provided so much for the Ballarat East community, as it has for the whole state. I commend the budget as a great Labor government budget.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I appreciate the opportunity to make some short remarks on this year's budget. I will endeavour to keep it short, although I have to make comments on my electorate plus three portfolio areas.

In relation to the people of Caulfield, one of the most disappointed groups regarding the budget was the Glen Eira University of the Third Age. The U3A has been pleading with the government to confirm whether its campus will have to be sold because the land on which it is situated belongs to Victrack. The U3A has not been given any surety for the future of the wonderful site in which it has invested over \$40 000. There is no money in the budget for the Glen Eira U3A; instead the Minister for Senior Victorians, who claims that she is so caring about older people and supports positive ageing, wrote to the U3A saying that its land was to be sold and that it would lose the site on which the premises are situated. At the same time she wrote to me as the member for Caulfield informing me that this was a decision of the Minister for Transport and that he would be writing a letter to outline what would happen. The Minister for Transport has not written to anybody, and to this day we still do not have a response. That is one group in my electorate that is disappointed in the budget.

The other area of great concern in my electorate is that crime rates have increased dramatically. The municipality which covers the electorate of Caulfield has one of the highest robbery rates in Melbourne. The number of street and shop thefts has jumped by some

46 per cent under this government. Reports from police and traders show that thieves are breaking into up to six shops every night by smashing shopfront windows and stealing goods. The latest figures show that thefts from cars have increased by some 37 per cent and drug possession and use has increased by 36 per cent. While there has been some decrease in residential burglaries, the municipality of Glen Eira covering the seat of Caulfield, is still in the top 10 worst residential burglary areas in the state.

I know our police are very dedicated, hard working and competent, but they are not getting the operational support they require to tackle these growing problems. This is something that this government needs to own up to instead of trying to make excuses as we hear day after day in this house at question time.

The third area of concern to my electorate is in relation to land tax. I have a large number of self-funded retirees who are depending on small portfolios of land ownership to support themselves. I have one gentleman who has five small properties for his retirement. In 1998 he was paying \$1000 in land tax. This year he is paying some \$16 000, and he is saying to me that he is going to have to sell his properties in order to reassign his investments somewhere to be able to make a living.

The next area of concern in my electorate is in relation to stamp duty, which has grown astronomically. Quite frankly, if this government wishes to help provide affordable housing for the community, as it and particularly the Minister for Housing claim, then one would imagine it would bring some relief to people in relation to stamp duty. Certainly the federal government is offering assistance to home buyers by way of the \$7000 first home owner grant and the \$14 000 first home builder grant. But in the area of Caulfield, for instance, we have seen that with the 55 per cent increase in the median price from 1999 to 2001 there has been a 69 per cent increase in stamp duty. In the Elsternwick area there has been a 62 per cent increase in prices, and with that a mammoth 79 per cent increase in stamp duty — nothing for this government to be proud of, and plenty for people to be very concerned about.

On Sunday morning I attended the launch of the master plan for the Caulfield hospital. It was also the launch of a new 90-bed aged care nursing home facility, to cost some \$10 million, which is not unappreciated. It is absolutely necessary given the change in policy by this government and the fact that the current nursing home was not going to pass certification this year. The money that was allocated to that was somewhat equivalent to the money that was going to be allocated by the

previous government in any event. What absolutely threw me was that at the launch of this master plan the Minister for Health skited that his government was going to spend some \$112 million on the Caulfield site — but it is not going to be completed until 2007. In other words, we could go through two entire elections before one single brick has to be laid for this hospital. I do not believe that sort of arrangement is worth the paper it is written on because we have not seen \$1 allocated to this project. The people of Caulfield will be looking for something more from this government if they are going to be assured that the Caulfield General Medical Centre is to go ahead.

I would like to talk briefly now about multicultural affairs. Certainly it is one which has bipartisan support: we all support multicultural communities here in Victoria. However, from my point of view I was very disappointed in this budget. It shows no innovation, no new ideas, no vision for multicultural Victoria, and particularly no vision in relation to the contribution that second-generation migrants should be looking to make in the future. There is nothing about the future of multiculturalism.

In terms of the budget, however, we did find some rather interesting things. First of all, last year the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee criticised the government in a major way for the lack of performance indicators and the reduction in the number of output cost groups — and we find there is an even greater reduction this year. So there is complete lack of accountability, certainly in the budget papers.

The other thing that is quite extraordinary is that this year the government announced an increase of \$1.4 million to multicultural affairs, but in its explanation of the expenditure of this money the government can only account for some \$750 000 of this \$1.4 million. The Premier was asked to explain how the \$1.4 million will be spent. He accounted for the \$750 000, which is to go in additional small grants to multicultural communities of some \$250 000, with \$500 000 for language services. However, the remaining \$650 000 is something of a mystery.

This week I had a briefing from the head of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, and she could not explain where this money is being spent either. It is my view that the government intends to increase the size of the staffing of VOMA yet again. Under the previous government seven staff were employed in what was the equivalent of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs. There are now 17 staff, and I imagine with the additional money the government has

up its sleeve it intends to employ more people to provide speeches for lazy members of Parliament.

Next I would like to turn to the area of public housing and make a few brief comments on the Office of Housing. The allocation of the money in public housing is a case of two little, too late. Budget figures reveal that public housing assistance has only increased by \$5.5 million in real terms in this budget. The Victorian public housing area is a disaster under the Bracks government. Waiting lists are skyrocketing and have continued to skyrocket — —

Mr Wynne — What did you do?

Mrs SHARDEY — I will tell you: waiting lists under the previous government were reduced by 20 per cent. Under this government they have gone up by 11.5 per cent and are climbing! We have found a blow-out — —

Mr Wynne — That's not true, you know that.

Mrs SHARDEY — I am telling you the truth. We have found a blow-out in rent arrears — a more than 50 per cent increase under this government — and it has wiped off over \$11 million in bad debts.

The \$2.2 million a year to support homeless people is inadequate. It means that Victoria's 17 800 homeless people will receive approximately \$123 a week, which would not even get them into a caravan park. Certainly homelessness has been identified by all peak bodies as one of the most severe problems we face, yet this government has cut the budget for housing assistance to the homeless by \$12.2 million. I believe the government has a lot to answer for. It has cut crisis accommodation targets by 95 properties and cut the number of families receiving housing establishment funding by some 3000. This is absolutely appalling.

I need to make a couple of comments about aged care. The government has restructured the Department of Human Services three times since coming to government, which means that it is impossible to judge the government's performance based on reporting through the budget papers. We have seen the complete devolution of aged care programs from what was a Minister for Aged Care into the health portfolio. We now have a Minister for Senior Victorians who has responsibility for just 3 out of 61 aged care programs. When the minister was asked by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee how much time she was spending on senior Victorians she refused to answer the question, claiming it was the sort of question the *Herald Sun* would ask. I think she should answer that question

because, after all, it is taxpayers who are paying her salary.

I wish to make a couple of further comments. First of all, the government claims a huge increase in home and community care funding. It is some \$29 million, but I point out that that is to be spread over four years and it is nothing more than the growth funding that this government is required to provide under the agreement with the commonwealth. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction in this state about the implementation of this program, the delivery of the services and the way this government allocates funding across Victoria.

The other area I wish to touch on briefly is the allocation of \$40 million to upgrade the state's nursing homes and hostels. Yet again this amount is to be spread over four years. In fact, as I saw in the forward estimates, the only funding this year under the budget is some \$8 million. We know hundreds of millions of dollars are needed for state-run nursing homes and hostels to reach accreditation standards in 2003 and 2008. I believe this government hopes it will slip through two elections before the 2008 deadline and thus avoid having to face the task of really putting the sort of money into this area that is required. I believe this minister has not been honest with the Victorian community about the requirements in aged care and has not made the commitment.

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — This is a great budget for Preston. In our key policy areas of health, education and community safety we are delivering new services and additional funding. Last December the Leader of the Opposition had the cheek to do a two-day pass through the northern and western suburbs and make the sweeping statement that Labor did not look after its heartland. He did so without for one moment stopping to look at the damage his government had done to the northern and western suburbs, and without looking at what this government was doing to address those wrongs. Indeed, some of the biggest ones occurred under the former government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was a member.

I mention the Preston police station as an example. When Labor was last in government just before the 1992 election it signed a contract for a new Preston police station. The incoming Kennett government tore up the contract for that police station and during the life of the Kennett government the Preston police station sat at the top of the Victoria Police priority list. However, nothing occurred. The Labor Party made an election commitment that an incoming Bracks government would commence a new police station at a cost of \$3.5 million. However, upon assuming government we

recommitted and in the budget increased that to \$7 million. I am pleased to say that work has now started on the new Preston police station. The opposition is trying to talk up law and order as an issue, but it left an antiquated police station and police cells to languish during its seven years in office.

In the health area the previous Kennett government closed our public hospital, the Preston and Northcote Community Hospital, or PANCH, and reneged on a promise to build a replacement integrated health care service. We gave a commitment that an incoming Labor government would fund an integrated health care service at a cost now of \$6 million. I am pleased to say that construction is well under way. The facility opposite the old PANCH will be built by the end of this year and commissioned in January next year. That will bring much-needed health services back into Preston.

In the area of education not much at all happened to our schools during the Kennett government other than closures and attempted closures. I am sure honourable members will remember the Northland Secondary College. Money is now flowing back into our schools for much-needed major maintenance.

Preston North East Primary School will receive \$548 000 for the refurbishment of the arts and craft teaching area to facilitate improved literacy and numeracy programs. Preston Primary School will receive \$484 649 for the construction of the new multipurpose and music rooms and canteen on the senior school site. Kingsbury Primary School will receive \$761 000 to upgrade junior classrooms to accommodate six classrooms, staff work space and an arts and craft room. There is also money for local kindergartens: \$9000 for the Blake Street kindergarten and \$14 000 for the Regent Baptist kindergarten.

In another area of community safety money is flowing throughout my electorate under the black spot program. I will mention three that have been of particular concern to me. The first is \$76 000 allocated to install pedestrian signals at the corner of Spring and Viola streets, Reservoir. Significantly that is outside a primary school where a death occurred. The second is \$59 000 to modify signals at the intersection of Plenty Road and Murray Road, one we have been pushing for for a long time. The third is \$318 000 to install traffic signals at the intersection of Plenty Road and Gremel Road, which is accessed by many elderly people from a retirement village, so that will contribute to community safety.

In the area of environment a running sore for us has been the state of Edwardes Lake, because it receives a

lot of run-off from a very large surrounding area. Nothing happened under the previous government, yet work on stage 1 has now started on the Victorian government stormwater program, with \$430 000 released by this government to clean up the lake.

I do not have the time to talk about other areas I would like to talk about, such as funding for the community-building project, but as you look across each portfolio you can see that this state government has strongly supported my electorate of Preston.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — My electorate received nothing from this budget, yet my constituents are interested in opportunities for the future and opportunities in the new globalised economy for their children.

Former federal Australian Labor Party staffer, now director of the National University of Ireland Centre for Infrastructure and Structural Change, Roy Green, said it all when he described the Bracks government's innovation and technology programs and policies as timid, half-hearted, tinkering at the edges and doomed.

Innovation is the quality of being able to convert knowledge and ideas to improve products, processes or services. As one of my constituents has observed, innovation is quite nebulous. It is hard to determine how you can quantify or encourage lateral thinking — particularly when the Premier does not or cannot demonstrate it himself!

After all this time in office the Bracks government has finally got around to identifying innovation and information and communications technology (ICT) as key economic drivers, despite not having had a minister responsible for either of these enablers for its entire term. Given the Bracks track record, now is not the time to be resting on non-existent laurels. The test of the adequacy and sincerity of the Bracks government's leadership in technology issues is the decision to scale back meetings of the Knowledge, Innovation, Science and Engineering Council — which is only the Premier's leading advisory group on science, technology and innovation! The council will go from holding 16 meetings last year to holding just 4 meetings on the budget estimates. Clearly the cost of tea and biscuits must have gone up, otherwise what possible explanation could there be for this backward step?

The Bracks government was elected on what it perceives as an antichange, antitechnology platform. As anyone in the ICT, research, technology, commercialisation, entrepreneurship, design and manufacturing communities can tell you, for most of

these, comparatively small amounts of cash have come two years too late.

During the Kennett government's time in office more than \$300 million was spent putting the Bio 21 strategy in place and building the state's biotechnology strengths. Under Bracks and Brumby the amount has dwindled in this budget to a minuscule \$20 million spread out over the next four years, the balance of the eggs being put into the synchrotron basket, into which five times that amount is being siphoned. It is testament to the foresight of the Kennett government's Bio21 program that the federal government has stepped in with almost \$130 million to establish a centre of biotech excellence — an amount that dwarfs the state's contribution and puts the state government's spin firmly into perspective.

The budget declines to nominate any of the deadlines by which its biotech strategy will be delivered. It posts deadlines as 'not available' across a wide range of indicators, leaving the way open for the Bracks government to do even less. It hides budget cutbacks behind the ruse of department restructures. It removes pesky indicators such as the computers-to-technicians ratio in schools which last year was pegged at 900 to 1. Throughout Labor's term in office its own innovation and technology projects have routinely run 12 to 18 months behind schedule.

In light of the recent loss of the information and communications technology centre of excellence to Sydney and Canberra, the Liberal opposition feels compelled to ask: is this a government that goes far enough and is this a government that is responsible enough? Clearly the answer is no. In respect of the ICT centre of excellence the government stepped in too late and offered a mere \$400 000 in the first year of operation, compared with the tens of millions of dollars offered by the New South Wales government.

This budget shows that Labor has learnt nothing from its years in political opposition. Another constituent of mine who wrote to me recently said that the perception of this government is that it is a do-nothing government with no innovation and no forward thinking, and that the Premier is deliberately making politics boring because that is the only way he knows how to do it. Other constituents of mine talk about the fact that this Victorian government wants to be a settler in the innovation stakes rather than a pioneer.

This government has betrayed the people of Victoria. They know, particularly those in my constituency, that they live in a globalised world and operate in a globalised economy. Last week I was at the East

Doncaster Secondary College, which has students from all around the world. Some can hardly speak English, yet within 18 months of arriving many are among the top students in the Victorian certificate of education in physics, mathematics and chemistry. These are people who expect the government to do something about driving the economy forward and returning Victoria to its central place as a driver in the world economy.

I hope that when the Liberal government is re-elected at the end of this year or the beginning of next year it is able to restore Victoria to its rightful place as the centre of Australia's innovation engine and the driver of the Australian economy.

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I rise to support this budget and the Treasurer because it is a budget for all Victorians. It is a budget that encompasses the needs and aspirations of the people of Victoria. Under the previous administration we had budgets that basically forgot about country Victoria altogether and did not care about it — and the western suburbs did not even exist! That previous administration was led by the Liberal Party.

I have been sitting here listening to members of the Liberal Party talking about this budget and wondering whether we are reading the same documents. I will hold up the books the Treasurer presented for honourable members so they can see the budget we are talking about. It is for all the people of Victoria and not just for one area which gets the lot while others miss out completely, particularly the country, where in the past everything was closed.

This budget further delivers Labor's election promises by extending the number of teachers, the number of nurses and the number of police officers, who are all an important part of the wellbeing of a society that takes care of its members. Extra police resources help provide the safety net that makes people feel safer. Increased nursing numbers are bringing hospital waiting lists down, and that is another positive step. The development of our education program, with smaller class sizes, is also very important.

I heard the honourable member for Caulfield speaking about multiculturalism and second-generation Australians. Will my grandson still be referred to as a third-generation immigrant rather than as an Australian? We need to start looking at how we use the terms 'first-generation', 'second-generation' and 'third-generation' with respect to immigration. When does one become an Australian? It is an interesting question. We need the extra help because of the mixture of migrants, as the Deputy Leader of the National Party

spoke about in his electorate. We need extra assistance particularly in some education fields.

I cannot claim that my electorate of Keilor is as big as Belgium or Israel. These days it is a small, condensed electorate. Once it encompassed three-quarters of the western suburbs. It has now developed into a large and densely populated community. It is a big growth area in which this government has kept up with services. We have finished Sunshine Avenue; we are currently constructing the Keilor–Melton highway; we have built the Copperfield Secondary College Sydenham campus and are extending that campus; and we are building a new primary school at Gourleys Road which will service the communities of Taylors Hill and Hillside. Those items are very important. Smaller schools need to be maintained, repaired and kept up to modern-day teaching standards for the staff.

It is also important that pensioners and elderly people are looked after. Postwar immigration has left the electorate of Keilor with many people who have needs such as dental care, health care, home help and handyman services to enable them to maintain their own homes so they can live on their own properties and not have to shift out of their familiar environments and neighbourhoods.

Extra resources have been allocated to the western health network, particularly the Sunshine campus in Furlong Road, which is an important and integral part of aged care in that region because it is accessible for people in my electorate. They are able to travel there by bus and train. It is a reasonable distance if they need to travel by taxi. It is important that aged people are able to communicate in their own language, to see their friends and familiar faces, rather than what it used to be like out at Greenvale or Royal Park when people had to take a train into North Melbourne, a train out to Broadmeadows and then a bus or taxi out to Greenvale. Those are commendable services provided by this government.

I put on record that my colleagues want me to finish at this point because they all want a say on this budget. I hope opposition members are looking at the right budget and not at the Kennett government's last budget!

Mr WILSON (Bennettswood) — I am pleased to make a brief contribution to the budget debate. I wish to give three local examples of where the budget has failed my constituents. Firstly, I raise the issue of the 1500 Mount Waverley residents who live near the Monash Freeway and who will be very disappointed that the government has failed to approve any funding

for the construction of enhanced noise barriers to alleviate serious noise pollution along that freeway. That is a reasonable budgetary expectation from my constituents and they feel betrayed by the Bracks government.

Secondly, the Bracks government's Department of Infrastructure tells us that 17 per cent of Mount Waverley residents are aged between 60 and 74 years. Those older residents are severely disadvantaged when they try to move house if their lifestyle requires change. They may need to sell their house and buy a new unit or apartment in Mount Waverley. When they spend \$315 000 on that unit they pay \$14 560 in stamp duty, which is \$4895 more than they would pay in New South Wales. This budget provided no relief from the high stamp duty taxes which people have come to expect from the Bracks government.

The third local example is the Monash Medical Centre. Constituents in Bennettswood use the Monash Medical Centre for the bulk of their medical procedures. On all major indicators the Bracks government is performing badly in its administration of the Monash Medical Centre — firstly, on waiting lists for elective surgery; secondly, the number of patients spending inappropriate periods on trolleys for more than 12 hours in the emergency department; and thirdly, in episodes of ambulance bypass. On all three indicators the Monash Medical Centre is performing worse in the March quarter of 2002 than in the March quarter of 1999.

On Sunday the Minister for Health released the latest *Hospital Services Report* and concocted figures to suggest that the hospital system in Victoria was improving. Any understanding of the Victorian health system and any comparison between March 1999 and March 2002 would show that the Victorian health system, and in particular the Monash Medical Centre, has deteriorated over that period.

In the short time left for my contribution I raise an issue about a black hole in the budget. There is a black hole because over the last three years of the Bracks government the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (MAS) Royal Commission was conducted. That commission has cost the Victorian taxpayer up to \$100 million, money which could have well and truly been spent on providing better education and health services in Victoria.

I have a number of questions for the government. What was the total cost of remuneration and expenses paid or payable to the royal commissioner Mr Lex Lasry? With the exception of the royal commissioner what was the total cost of remuneration and expenses for all legal

counsel and any other lawyers who assisted the MAS royal commission? What is the latest advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet estimating the total cost associated with the MAS royal commission? Prior to the establishment of the MAS royal commission did the Premier and/or the government receive any advice from Mr Stuart Morris, QC, regarding the suitability and availability of Mr Lex Lasry to serve as royal commissioner? What was the nature of that advice?

During the term of the MAS royal commission did the Premier have any discussions on the progress of that royal commission with Mr Morris? If so, when did those discussions take place and what was the nature of those discussions? What was the total cost of legal indemnity granted to current and former public servants, former ministerial advisers, current and former ministers, and any other witnesses who were subpoenaed and/or appeared before the royal commission? Did the Department of Premier and Cabinet or the royal commission authorise or approve the engagement of public relations or media consultants to advise and assist the royal commission? What were the names of those companies? What were the associated costs?

The royal commission cost the Victorian taxpayers up to \$100 million. Everybody knows it was an obsession of the Minister for Health who forced it on Victorian taxpayers. There are no benefits from the royal commission. Victorian taxpayers who are trying to access better health and education services in my electorate and throughout the state are poorer for that effort. The Minister for Health stands condemned for his actions.

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact it is now 1.55 a.m. and that the current government indicated it would introduce family-friendly hours. It places pressure on the library staff, the catering staff, the attendants, the clerks and Hansard staff to be sitting here at this time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The Chair has no control over the government business program.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — The budget delivers for today and invests for tomorrow. It continues to repair the loss and damage of the Kennett years. Its macro efficiency is nothing short of excellent and I have argued strongly for a strong fiscal policy for the government. Strong budget surpluses of at least \$500 million are predicted for the next five years up to 2005–06.

I applaud the funding in the budget for my constituents, particularly in education. On Friday the new facilities at Solway Primary School will be opened and will make a tremendous difference to that school. Also, \$2 million is being provided from the budget to Camberwell South Primary School. I have been closely involved with the school council in working to get that upgrade.

Many of the children from Camberwell High School come from my electorate and they welcome the more than \$2 million from this budget for upgrades at that school. I was delighted to visit the school a few weeks ago and join in the celebrations at that announcement. There is still a lot of hard work ahead to complete the building but the school has an excellent program.

I also commend the excellent and prompt work that was done to effect the urgent repairs at Ashwood Secondary College following a fire there earlier this year.

Schools in and near my electorate are also highly appreciative of the new funding for libraries and sports equipment which they recently received. I had the privilege of announcing these grants at Surrey Hills Primary School at the opening earlier this year of its new library, which cost well over \$100 000.

Also in my area there are two TAFE institutes, Holmesglen and Box Hill. Both are excellent institutions which have benefited greatly from the emphasis Labor has put on this sector. In this regard I quote a couple of figures: at Box Hill TAFE, in terms of 15 and 19-year-olds, between 1994 and 1997 just over 100 extra places were added. However, in the last two years around 1600 students have been added. What a difference! What a contrast! The Bracks Labor government is really investing in education, our children and our future.

I also mention that my constituents welcome the massive investment in health. When I was elected in Burwood what did we have? Kennett left a bombsite on Warrigal Road where the Burwood Community Hospital was. There was a threat of downgrading Box Hill Hospital. Today Box Hill Hospital is a leader in patient management and the numbers of emergency patients handled have gone up by close to 10 per cent in each of the last two years. The budget has delivered \$1.8 million in medical and monitoring equipment, especially in intensive care, at that hospital.

The budget has also delivered for preschools in my electorate and the funding for them has helped them to manage the kindergartens and preschool teachers' salaries. In particular, funding is going to individual preschools to help them to improve their facilities with

building and ground safety works. They include Estrella Preschool, which will receive \$28 000; Rowen Street Kindergarten, which will receive \$16 500; Summerhill Park Kindergarten and St Scholastica's Kindergarten, which will each receive \$10 000; Surrey Hills Preschool, which will receive \$13 500; Burwood Preschool, \$21 400; Fordham Avenue Kindergarten, \$6000; Wattle Hill Kindergarten, \$5000; St Paul's Kindergarten, which will get \$10 300; and Box Hill South Preschool, which will receive \$8000. This is extraordinary support being provided for the preschools, restoring the balance and making good the destruction that was done to kindergartens during the Kennett era.

I could also go on about public housing — \$8.5 million to restore public housing in Victory Boulevard, Ashburton, and in Ashwood and Chadstone — and in terms of public transport. These are magnificent achievements in this budget and I commend it to the house.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — This budget is a testimony to this government's remarkable consistency. It is consistent with other Labor governments in being a high-taxing, high-spending Labor government. It has consistently failed to deliver on major projects in this state, and those projects it inherited from the previous government have been consistently delayed or consistently had cost overruns.

The tax burden is also consistent with its ethos. That tax burden has increased by approximately \$1500 for every Victorian family. It is also consistent in its hypocrisy and increasingly frightening dependence on revenue from gambling. On top of that, despite supposed increases in education, health and police, we seem to have a consistent lack of any benefit, and worse, the actual service delivery is even worse now.

There is a consistent policy paralysis. Just have a look at the bats in the Royal Botanic Gardens. I walked through the other day and saw that the bats are still in the gardens. They are still there despite the gardeners going through this interminable exercise. One bloke was letting off penny bungers to try to frighten them off, but the bats were still there. On top of that, we have a government now that is consistently relying on rhetoric as a substitute for genuine decision making.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WYNNE (Richmond).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Senior Victorians).

ADJOURNMENT

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Senior Victorians) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Taxis: multipurpose

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — I bring a matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport. It relates to the taxi service used by a constituent of mine, Mrs Lucy Stone, who lives at Villa Maria in my electorate. She is a wonderful 84-year-old woman who has a particular interest in playing bridge. At her age, it gives her quite an activity. Her problem is that every time she goes out, which is every Wednesday and Friday, she has to wait a considerable time for a taxi from the taxi service for the disabled. Normally every morning she waits about 20 minutes to half an hour, but in the afternoon Mrs Stone has to wait at least two and half hours for a taxi to collect her.

She orders the taxi every day, and the service knows the time she has to be collected. Nevertheless, this poor woman, who has only one leg and is in a wheelchair, has to sit outside the area where she plays bridge for 2½ hours waiting for a taxi. She cannot use the toilet facilities or anything else; she has to sit out there and wait, and it most distressing. She normally gets home too late for meals at the home, and by that time she is so tired and exhausted it is almost too much for her to sit in a wheelchair.

She has asked me to request the Minister for Senior Victorians to try and help with these circumstances. It has been a difficulty for quite some time, and we all recognise this, but somehow we have to work through this issue to try to assist these people who already have enormous disabilities and would like some help at least to have a normal taxi service.

Disability services: western suburbs

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Services. I seek her assistance in funding and continuing to consider submissions for advocacy for people with disabilities in the west of Melbourne, and particularly in my electorate. Advocacy for people who need some assistance in having their needs considered and their rights respected are part of the ethos of this government, but they are not concepts the opposition would either understand or respond to. That was exemplified and manifested by the very cruel and heartless defunding of the Western Region Committee of Disabled Persons (Westcod), a body that existed

from 1975 until 1995 when the razor held by the black hand of the Kennett government cut it down and left some of the more defenceless and underrepresented and inarticulate people in our community without a voice.

I understand that funds are available under the innovation in advocacy initiative within the minister's portfolio. I seek to secure a share of that for my electorate. I know that some of the need for this comes out of a quite profound report that was launched and presented in my electorate last year on the difficulties that individuals from families of Vietnamese background have. It was launched by the then Minister for Community Services, now the Minister for Senior Victorians. It can be very difficult for people from that cultural background to take a normal role in the functioning of that community and certainly in the mainstream community. That can be difficult on a family and an individual level. Out of that sort of research comes the need for this sort of funding. I ask the minister to favourably consider this application and enhance the rights of these families to be heard.

Bail justices: Wimmera

Mr DELAHUNTY (Wimmera) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General relating to bail justices and justices of the peace in western Victoria, particularly Horsham. The Wimmera community is a very law-abiding community, but presently only two bail justices are appointed in the Horsham area. One has very limited access because of his work commitments and does few out-of-hours calls. Because of changes to court registrars' duties they are not permitted to perform bail justice activities, so the one and only bail justice is required to be available and on call to the police 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I ask the minister to review the operations of the office of justices of the peace and explain to the people of western Victoria why no action has been taken on the training of bail justices and the appointment of bail justices and justices of the peace, and why his staff do not answer phone calls and emails. Bail justices are appointed by the Attorney-General from members of the community to carry out duties under the Bail Act, the Children and Young Persons Act and other acts affecting the custody and attendance of people before the courts. Most of the duties are conducted outside normal business hours, the position is honorary and no allowances are paid. Applications for positions have to be supported by three character references.

I wrote to the minister in September 2001 about Mr Craig Wright, who was unable to get some action. The minister's response states:

... prospective justices of the peace in this state are required to demonstrate good character, an ongoing history of voluntary involvement in the general community, as well as demonstrating a need for additional appointments in their locality ...

I have seen Mr Wright's application, which was sent in on 12 October 2001 and which was supported by the president and the chief executive officer of the board of management of the Wimmera Health Care Group and a past mayor and justice of the peace from the Horsham Rural City Council. At this stage there has been no response. Mr Wright has tried to ring the office of Mr John Kakos on numerous occasions and has consistently met with his voicemail. He has even tried to email Mr Kakos, and there has still been no response. He tried to go through Mr Kakos's administrative assistant, but it diverted to John Kakos's email and there was no response.

This is an unacceptable position. The Department of Justice has supplied information that courses will be run in the Wimmera, but at this stage nothing has happened. There are no details of either when or where this will happen. The situation has been going on for 12 months. We need more bail justices and a process for people to become justices of the peace and for their applications to be processed by the minister's office. I ask for action to take place as soon as possible.

Mickleham–Barrymore roads, Greenvale: traffic control

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — I raise a matter of concern with the Minister for Transport. I ask him to urgently investigate traffic problems in the Mickleham Road area of Greenvale. For honourable members who do not know that area, it is a main feeder road in the northern suburbs. A housing estate has been developed in an ad hoc fashion and the local roads feeding onto Mickleham Road do not operate very well.

The Bracks government completed a section of the road from down near the Westmeadows Football Club right up to the Alan Gray estate and widened the road, but it needs to go further. There is pressure at the next intersection with Barrymore Road, which can be a nightmare at peak times. To compound the issue, recently the council has sold land to the Country Fire Authority for a fire station and there will be a need for emergency vehicles to exit Barrymore Road quickly. At the moment they would not be able to do that. There is also a heavily used recreation reserve in Barrymore Road, and many young people go there to play basketball and indoor soccer.

Barrymore Road is the main exit from the estate. To compound that there is also the same problem at Elphinstone Boulevard and Greenvale Drive in the area, but Barrymore Road — the one main feeder road — is the real problem. As I said, the estate has been planned in an ad hoc fashion. Just across the road, another estate, Cambridge Gardens, is being developed with some 312 housing blocks. There is development going all around that area, with the new development of Roxburgh Park also feeding down into the area.

There is quite a problem, especially in peak times. I ask the minister to urgently investigate this intersection with Vicroads and see what can perhaps be done. Vicroads engineers need to look at the area, because if you talk to the residents there are as many solutions as there are problems. Many residents want three or four sets of traffic lights along there. I think one set would suffice, but that is a matter for the engineers to take advice on. I urge the Minister for Transport to investigate this problem and alleviate traffic difficulties around that area.

Monash Medical Centre

Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier in relation to the seriously declining standard of access to health services in the Bentleigh electorate. I have raised this matter on numerous occasions and have called on the Minister for Health to address the concerns and worrying trends which have been shown up by the government's own *Hospital Services Report* time and again.

Its most recent report released last Sunday shows the continuing serious nature of these concerns. I therefore call on the Premier to take personal responsibility for addressing obvious hot spots in the administration of the portfolio which the current Minister for Health is clearly not able to address and resolve.

Figures from the government's own *Hospital Services Report* show huge rises in patients staying at the Monash Medical Centre longer than 12 hours, the number increasing by 62 per cent from March 1999 to March 2002. The centre's waiting list for elective surgery of semi-urgent cases increased by a staggering 322 per cent from March 1999 to March 2002. The number of people on the centre's waiting list for longer than the ideal period in the semi-urgent cases increased by a staggering 283 per cent from March 1999 to March 2002. The bypass figures for the centre, again comparing those two quarters, show a staggering 456 per cent increase!

The minister may boast about some improvements on the appalling government performance indicators of the previous year, but in comparison to the standard of performance of the hospital under the Kennett government there was a dramatic difference. Clearly this minister is unable to address a very serious issue, and I call on the Premier to take personal responsibility to resolve this matter.

Ansett Australia: assistance package

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. It concerns the collapse of Ansett Australia and Traveland, which has had a dramatic impact not only on the employees of those respective organisations — I know my colleague the honourable member for Tullamarine has had to deal with many quite difficult issues in her office surrounding past employees who lived in her electorate — but specifically on the question of compensation for people who held tickets seeking to travel with Ansett and/or Traveland and had booked prior to the collapse of both of those organisations.

As I understand it, a Travel Compensation Fund was established around all the states to deal with the question of licensed travel agents. There was a reserve of, I think, approximately \$10 million, which in normal circumstances would have been able to handle the range of claims that one could reasonably expect. However, since the collapse of Ansett and Traveland I understand that claims in excess of \$15 million have been lodged with that fund, and it is currently paying only 40 cents in the dollar in compensation to people who inadvertently, through no fault of their own, have been caught out by the collapse of Ansett and Traveland.

I seek advice from the minister on what action she can take to further assist those people who been caught out by this collapse. Clearly the fund as it currently stands is unable to pay full compensation to those affected.

Kangaroos: control

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — The matter I wish to raise with the Minister for Environment and Conservation relates to the continuing culling of kangaroos at the Puckapunyal army base. We are all deeply concerned that the Department of Defence has allowed the numbers of kangaroos on commonwealth land to grow to the existing level.

The complaint I bring to Parliament is from local farmers who, because of the increased numbers of

kangaroos on their land and the action of protesters in releasing literally thousands of kangaroos onto this private land, are now faced with the problem of kangaroos competing with their livestock for food. This is a difficult situation, given the dry conditions that exist in that area, although it is nowhere near as bad as other areas of the state.

One of the farmers who approached me indicated that he was the last of the local farmers to seek a permit for the culling of kangaroos on his private land. When he approached the Department of Natural Resources and Environment office for a permit, demonstrating to the staff there that he had some thousand kangaroos on his land, he was given a permit to cull 30 kangaroos. He complained to me that there seemed to be no rhyme nor reason for the allocation of a permit to cull only 30.

The farmers in that area are calling for a clear statement of policy by the minister on the way in which culling licences are granted to farmers in the difficult position of having on their land excessive numbers of kangaroos that may be in a bad physical condition, and where, as in the case of Puckapunyal, the culling may be endorsed by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Petrol: terminal gate pricing

Mr HELPER (Ripon) — I ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs to assure the community that the government is monitoring the effectiveness of terminal gate pricing under its petroleum products initiative. Honourable members will remember that there has already been considerable debate about the introduction of terminal gate pricing.

By way of explanation, this initiative introduced transparency into the pricing of petroleum products, meaning that anybody in the community would be able to obtain petroleum products at the terminal gate at a price that was publicly stated and publicised. The threshold issue relating to the price of petroleum products — that is, petrol — to the public is fundamental to the issue and the policy of the introduction of terminal gate pricing.

If I may I will dwell for just a moment on my own experience as the proprietor of a service station prior to coming to this chamber — and some members may remember my exposé in a previous debate on the registration of my business name, Newstead Motors. The issues of the pricing of petroleum products and the fluctuations in that pricing, firstly, were a frustration to me as the proprietor, and secondly, meant that I understood and certainly appreciated the considerable

frustration to the general public — namely, my customers.

The issue of petrol pricing is very topical in the Ballarat and central Victorian areas as a result of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission investigation into petroleum products distributors in that district. I will not discuss that any further, because there is an action currently before the courts.

To reiterate, the action I seek from the minister is to assure the community of Victoria that there is an ongoing monitoring process into the effectiveness of terminal gate pricing, because it is an issue that dwells very much on the minds of the Victorian public.

Planning: Mornington Peninsula

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I draw to the attention of the Minister for Planning a promise that was made by the Labor Party prior to the 1999 election. On 30 August 1999 the Kennett government promised to legislate to protect the Mornington Peninsula as it had done in 1996 to protect the Yarra Valley. Now more than three years have gone by since the Labor Party in 1999 happily and quickly jumped in and matched that promise made by the former Kennett government, yet people on the Mornington Peninsula are still waiting for the Bracks government to keep its promise.

I realise the minister is new in her portfolio and perhaps has not caught up with a lot of things, but this is the time to catch up with this particular issue. A firm promise was made — and a firm commitment. The action taken by the former Kennett government to legislate to protect the Yarra Valley from overdevelopment has been highly successful. It is an action that was sought by the people of the Mornington Peninsula of the government of the day, and the Kennett government responded. Subsequently the Labor Party matched that promise.

The people of the Mornington Peninsula are now, three years later, simply asking for the Bracks government to keep that promise. I call on the Minister for Planning to take immediate action on the matter and to inform me and the people of the Mornington Peninsula when she intends to bring in legislation to keep that firm commitment made by the Labor Party, or alternatively to advise me and the people of the peninsula why she is not prepared to keep that promise.

Greater Dandenong: councillor

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Local Government the actions of a

Dandenong Labor councillor, who I believe is in an inappropriate role as a councillor in defence of his city. He earns \$42 000 from the state of Victoria and \$18 000 plus expenses from the council. This professional candidate for the Labor Party is earning \$60 000. He could be best described as the spy of the Minister for Gaming on the council. Indeed the acrimony between some other councillors and this adviser has got so bad that I am seeking advice from the minister as to what action he will take to investigate that councillor's activities and whether he is doing his job on behalf of the ratepayers of that city.

Mr Helper — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I clearly heard the honourable member for Mordialloc asking a question and seeking an action of the minister to explain to the house — —

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

Mr LEIGH — The fact is the councillor is misusing his position. Cr Dale Wilson told Labor councillors the other day that 'Panda and Lenders are upset with you. You have never had it so good'.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Refer to ministers by their appropriate titles.

Mr LEIGH — No, I am quoting what an individual said.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Either way.

Mr LEIGH — I understand that, but I am quoting what an individual said; it is not what I am saying.

These ministers had claimed that the Labor council had sold them out over the Dingley bypass and a number of issues. They were personally outraged, and want the council to back down. It seems to me that this councillor knew all along what was going to happen to this — he kept it secret, and as a result of that I think he has grossly misused his position as a councillor in the City of Dandenong. Even worse, as a paid councillor for the state of Victoria and Narre Warren North — —

Mr Mildenhall — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on the question of relevance and the trivialising of this debate, every councillor usually has another job. There is no issue being raised here — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Mordialloc has asked the Minister for Local Government to investigate a council or a councillor, which is quite appropriate.

Geelong hospital

Mr PATERSON (South Barwon) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, and ask him to take urgent action to fix the growing crisis at Geelong Hospital. The latest *Hospital Services Report* painted a very bleak picture of the Geelong Hospital under the Bracks Labor government — it is now quite clear that the Geelong Hospital delivers better services under a Liberal government. Since Labor took over the hospital has gone backwards.

The March quarter figures for 2002 show that the number of patients waiting on trolleys in emergency for more than 12 hours has skyrocketed 475 per cent to 149 patients from 26 at the same time last year. Compared to the hospital's performance under the Liberals, the figure has swollen by a scandalous 2500 per cent. Waiting lists for semi-urgent patients are up 28 per cent compared with the previous March quarter, and have soared 85 per cent since the Liberal Party left office.

The Labor government has run out of answers and run out of excuses. These are very disturbing figures. Labor was elected in part on the promise of delivering results in the health system, which has simply gone backwards. The often-used excuse by the government — that the Geelong Hospital is treating more patients — is wearing thin too. Quarter after quarter the hospitals are treating more patients.

Wy Yung: Berry Street Victoria house

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Community Services and seek action from the minister on a Berry Street Victoria house in my community in Wy Yung. This house has been a controversial issue, because there have been a number of young people in that facility, and representatives of both the Berry Street Victoria administration and the Victorian homelessness strategy admit that this is an inappropriate site for that house. It needs to provide an alternative site for that house, which is in Bullumwaal Road, so that the young teenagers who have been disturbing the peace of their neighbours can be moved and the local residents will be able to have more peace in their community.

I would like the minister to have a look at the issue and try to resolve it for the community of Wy Yung.

Beach Road, Beaumaris: traffic control

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport. Following the cancellation of the Dingley bypass there

is a view among many of the local people that there will be a continuing increase in traffic along Beach Road and the Nepean Highway. I have two constituents in Beaumaris who have sought the installation of traffic lights at or near the Ricketts Point Tea House. Mrs Val Bletcher, of Florida Avenue, Beaumaris has noted that she recently went on an outing and tried to cross the road to visit the beach with her parents and grandchildren, and it was so dangerous that the outing was cancelled.

Mrs Lesley Anderson of Reserve Road, Beaumaris has consistently raised this matter with the council but to date nothing has been done. Following the cancellation of the building of the Dingley bypass this issue is even more important for the residents of Beaumaris.

Responses

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Senior Victorians) — The first issue that was raised for my attention in my portfolio as Minister for Consumer Affairs was by the honourable member for Richmond concerning the Travel Compensation Fund and ensuring that people who had booked transport and holidays through Ansett were adequately recompensed. The Travel Compensation Fund was established by all states and territories, except the Northern Territory, in 1986. It is responsible for compensation to consumers who have paid for travel by a licensed travel agent when that travel agent has ceased trading or has suffered a financial collapse and failed to pass on an order to the travel principal — for example, a hotel.

I am sure the honourable member for Richmond was outside ringing his constituents saying that he is about to hear what will happen with their travel refunds. As a result of the \$1.25 million the government has invested to top up the Travel Compensation Fund, I am pleased to inform the honourable member that his constituents will no longer be receiving 40 cents in the dollar but full compensation for their tickets and their holiday packages, so long as they booked through a licensed travel agent.

The second issue raised for my attention as Minister for Consumer Affairs was by the honourable member for Ripon, who has had a strong interest in the impact of the Petroleum Products (Terminal Gate Pricing) Act, as has the honourable member for Mildura.

Mr Smith — Honourable Deputy Speaker, I call your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms CAMPBELL — The honourable member for Ripon was concerned to ensure the terminal gate pricing was evaluated. I am pleased to inform him that the government is mailing out questionnaires through the office of consumer affairs to fuel distributors and retailers to evaluate the operation of that act.

A series of quantitative and qualitative indicators are being used to monitor the impact of the act. Amongst other arrangements, a two-stage survey is being undertaken.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is too much audible conversation. I have all night, so I have plenty of time! I would like all honourable members to be quiet and then we can hear the minister.

Ms CAMPBELL — There were two matters raised for the Minister for Transport, the first by the honourable member for Prahran regarding a taxi service for disabled people. I will pass that on.

The honourable member for Tullamarine raised a matter seeking action to assist in alleviating traffic problems in Mickleham Road, Greenvale. I will convey that to the minister.

The honourable member for Footscray raised a matter for the Minister for Community Services about funding for advocacy for people with a disability within his electorate, particularly to ensure their rights are enhanced. I am sure the minister will attend to that matter.

The honourable member for Wimmera raised a matter for the Attorney-General, asking him to assist with the provision of bail justices, particularly in Horsham. I will refer that to the Attorney-General.

The honourable member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the Premier about improved health services. I will refer that to the Premier.

The honourable member for Doncaster raised a matter for the Minister for Environment and Conservation about a clear statement of policy on kangaroo culling at Puckapunyal. I will refer that to the minister.

The honourable member for Mornington raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, asking her to provide information on planning on the Mornington Peninsula. I will refer that to the Minister for Local Government.

The honourable member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Community Services about

an appropriate location for a residential care facility. I will refer that to the minister.

The honourable member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Minister for Health concerning the Geelong hospital, and I will refer that.

The honourable member for Sandringham raised another matter for the Minister for Transport about traffic lights near Ricketts Point Tea House, and I will refer that.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 2.40 a.m. (Wednesday).

**NUMBER OF SPEAKERS AND HOURS OF DEBATE ON APPROPRIATION BILLS,
SUPPLY BILLS AND ACCOMPANYING WORKS AND SERVICES BILLS
FROM FINANCIAL YEAR 1992–93**

Prepared by: Procedure Office
6 July 2001

Source: Original minute book/electronic copy
Original committee book
Debate record book

	Supply/Appropriation Bills			
	2nd reading stage		Committee stage	
	No. of speakers	Hours	No. of speakers	Hours
1992–93				
Supply Bill	39	18.24	a	–
Appropriation (Jul–Oct) Bill	19 ^d	9.25	a	–
Appropriation Bill (1) ^f	1	0.41	–	–
Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (1) ^f	1	0.01	–	–
Appropriation (Interim 1992–93)	10 ^d	4.59	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament) (Interim 1992–93)	2 ^d	1.06	a	–
Appropriation (1992–93) ^e	24 ^d	12.58	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament) (1992–93) ^e	1 ^d	1.10	–	–
1993–94				
Supply (1993–94) ^e	24 ^d	12.58	a	–
Supply (Parliament) (1993–94, No. 1) ^e	2 ^d	0.14	–	–
Appropriation (1993–94, No. 1)	42 ^g	20.56	15	4.23
Appropriation (Parliament) (1993–94, No. 1)	8 ^g	2.32	–	–

	Supply/Appropriation Bills			
	2nd reading stage		Committee stage	
	No. of speakers	Hours	No. of speakers	Hours

1994-95				
Appropriation (Interim 1994-95)	39	18.19	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (Interim 1994-95)	7	2.47	a	—
Appropriation (1994-95, No. 1)	32	17.38	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (1994-95, No. 1)	8 ^g	3.00	a	—
1995-96				
Appropriation (Interim 1995-96)	33	15.47	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (Interim 1995-96)	12	3.30	a	—
Appropriation (1995-96, No. 1)	41	20.02	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (1995-96, No. 1)	4 ^g	1.03	a	—
1996-97				
Appropriation (Interim 1996-97)	23	12.40	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (Interim 1996-97)	3	0.31	a	—
Appropriation (1996-97, No. 1)	27 ^g	9.59	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (1996-97, No. 1)	1 ^g	0	a	—
1997-98				
Appropriation (1997-98)	40 ^g	19.34	a	—
Appropriation (Parliament) (1997-98)	8 ^g	1.40	a	—

	Supply/Appropriation Bills			
	2nd reading stage		Committee stage	
	No. of speakers	Hours	No. of speakers	Hours

1998–99				
Appropriation (1998–99)	41 ^g	20.16	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament (1998–99))	6 ^g	1.07	a	–
1999–2000				
Appropriation (1999/2000)	48 ^g	22.53	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament 1999/2000)	9 ^g	1	a	–
2000–2001				
Appropriation (2000/2001)	52	16.08.00	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament 2000/2001)	6	00.21.00	a	–
2001–2002				
Appropriation (2001/2002)	69	17.32.00	a	–
Appropriation (Parliament 2001/2002)	14	1.12.00	a	–

a Committee stage dispensed with.

d Guillotine applied.

e Second reading and subsequent stages of Supply/Appropriation Bill and Works and Services Bill debated concurrently.

f Bill lapsed at resumption on second reading

g Sessional order 6 guillotine applied

