

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

22 February 2005

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Tuesday, 22 February 2005

The SPEAKER (Hon. Judy Maddigan) took the chair at 2.02 p.m. and read the prayer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The SPEAKER — Order! At the beginning of the autumn sitting the Parliament today acknowledges the land of the tribes and nations of the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before we get under way I welcome to the gallery this afternoon the Honourable Michael Polley, the Speaker of the Tasmanian Parliament, Mr Brett Whiteley, MP, the opposition Treasury spokesperson, and Mr Tim Morris, MP, the Greens opposition whip.

MINISTRY

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I wish to inform the house of the responsibilities that will be undertaken by ministers in this Parliament. The honourable member for Northcote becomes the Minister for the Arts and Minister for Women's Affairs. The honourable member for Bundoora adds the portfolio of Minister for Children to her community services portfolio. The honourable member for Kororoit now becomes the Minister for Manufacturing and Export as well as the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Financial Services. The honourable member for Lyndhurst now becomes the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections. The honourable member for Niddrie adds planning to his portfolio responsibilities of Attorney-General and industrial relations.

In the other place the member for Waverley Province Mr John Lenders now becomes the Minister for Finance, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for WorkCover and the TAC.

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass will cease interjecting in that manner and allow the house to hear the ministerial changes.

Mr BRACKS — The member for Melbourne North Province the Honourable M. R. Thomson becomes

Minister for Consumer Affairs, in addition to her role as Minister for Information and Communication Technology.

In respect of the representation arrangements for this house — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The members for Doncaster and Brighton!

Mr BRACKS — The member for Bendigo West will represent the minister responsible for WorkCover, and the member for Broadmeadows will represent the Minister for Major Projects.

In the Legislative Council the member for Melbourne Province Mr Gavin Jennings will represent the Minister for Children, and the member for Melbourne North Province the Honourable M. R. Thomson will represent the Minister for Small Business.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Sexual offenders: legislation

Mr DOYLE (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer the minister to the proposed legislation to monitor serious sexual offenders, which is not yet before the house, and I ask: can the minister confirm that rape has not been included as a serious sexual offence in this legislation, and can he explain why the government does not consider rape a serious sexual offence?

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The legislation, which will shortly be introduced into this Parliament, is significant and serious indeed. What it seeks to do is provide a regime by which serious child-sex offenders can be monitored, tracked and if necessary have restrictions placed on their movements and conduct following their release from prison.

These are very serious matters. We need to make sure that we have in place a regime which protects the most vulnerable.

Mr Doyle interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HOLDING — We need to ensure that Victoria has in place the most appropriate regime for protecting the most vulnerable members of our community from ongoing harm. We believe the legislation that will be introduced into this Parliament reflects both the recidivism rates of serious child-sex offenders while at the same time taking into account the catastrophic impact that these crimes have on their victims.

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass!

Mr HOLDING — The legislation will complement the Sex Offenders Registration Act, which was introduced and passed by this Parliament last year. Modelled on the regime that exists in New Zealand, which also applies to child-sex offenders, we believe this legislation strikes the right balance between accepting that when a prisoner has completed their sentence they should be released from prison and at the same time protecting the most vulnerable members of the community from ongoing trauma and harm.

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Speaker. My point of order relates to the answer by the minister. Why is bestiality included in the bill but —

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. I ask members not to abuse the forms of the house in that manner.

Mr Perton interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Doncaster to be quiet. I know we are all excited about being back here, but I ask members to try to control themselves in the house.

Mitcham–Frankston project: funding

Ms ECKSTEIN (Ferntree Gully) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline to the house how the government's approach to funding the Mitcham–Frankston project will benefit country Victorians, and has the government considered the implications of alternative policy proposals on them?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Ferntree Gully for her question. Our record in country and regional Victoria is second to none. Let me give you a couple of examples —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will put that down!

Mr BRACKS — Let me give you just a couple of examples that have occurred over the last five years. We have had something like 1432 new teacher and support staff in country Victoria. When it comes to nurses we have had something like 1593 new nurses in country and regional Victoria.

We have reopened country rail lines, including Ararat and Bairnsdale, and we are going to reopen Mildura and Leongatha as well. Since 1999, with government assistance and support, we have generated some 9000 new jobs in country and regional Victoria. That is an investment of about \$4.3 billion into the Victorian regional economy. Just on the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund alone, we have seen something like 97 capital works projects to a value of something like \$212 million. I reiterate, our record in country and regional Victoria is second to none.

The key question that arises is how is this possible? It is possible from this point of view. Effectively the government has delivered to regional and country Victoria because it has had sound financial management. That is the reason: sound financial management and a surplus on the operating account, low debt and maximum expenditure in services for education, health and public safety, and infrastructure as well. That sound financial management includes our decision to introduce tolls on the Mitcham–Frankston project. We should remember that that decision was made in order to fill a \$1 billion black hole left to us by the previous government.

Mr Mulder interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order, particularly the member for Polwarth. I ask him to cease the continual interjection.

Mr BRACKS — Just as we had to fix the problems in public transport arising from the previous Kennett government, we have the alternative policy in this state from the Liberal opposition, which says it will run up some \$7 billion of debt in the Victorian economy. That is what it is saying. It will rip up contracts, compensate the operator and pay out some \$7 billion. We learnt today that the opposition's policy has not only a big hole but a gaping hole, because The Nationals have effectively dumped the Liberals in Victoria.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. He is restricted in his answer to discussing matters of government administration, and policies of the Liberal Party or The Nationals are not matters of government administration until after the 2006 election.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier's comments do seem rather broad. I ask him to refrain and bring his comments towards government business.

Mr BRACKS — Thank you, Speaker. In relation to government business, the question, as the house is aware, is: has the government considered any implications of alternative proposals? Yes, the government has. The government has rejected the proposition to rip up a contract and pay out \$7 billion. We have rejected a proposition that would mean the Kennett cuts to health, education and public safety would be resumed. That is the policy of the opposition — the alternative policy. Not only have we rejected the alternative policy but we are joined in that rejection, because of the pressure on country Victorians, by The Nationals who also say they cannot take it any more. They do not want to return to the Kennett days either. They remember what happened when they stood by and country rail lines were closed, when hospitals were closed and schools were closed. The country member for Benambra is saying he can take it!

Mr Plowman — On a point of order, Speaker, The Premier is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to the question. Also, former Speaker Coghill said that attacks against the opposition are unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the first part of the point of order from the member for Benambra and ask the Premier to return to government business.

Mr BRACKS — I will, and in summary could I say this. The government has an excellent record over the last five years in growing jobs and returning services to country Victoria. It is second to none. We have done that through strong and robust financial management by investing the proceeds back into services and back into infrastructure for country and regional Victorians. Alternative policies would put that in jeopardy, would run up debt and would return to the cuts we saw before this government came to office. That is rejected by our government, and thankfully, because of the pressure from country Victorians, it is rejected by The Nationals as well.

Planning: rural and regional Victoria

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — We are different, Premier, we keep our word.

My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the minister's comments on the ABC's *Stateline* last Friday when he said:

... any minister that doesn't take into account communities' views in relation to any area of policy is really in la-la land.

Does this mean the Bracks government will finally listen to the views of country Victorians and abandon the site of the Nowingi toxic waste dump near Mildura and reject the location of the proposed Dollar wind farm in South Gippsland, or are we already in la-la land?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS (Minister for Planning) — Let me put it this way: one of us is — and it ain't me.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — What a great portfolio planning is! It is a great portfolio, and I am absolutely thrilled to be given the privilege of being the Minister for Planning in the Bracks government. I think the honourable member knows quite well that appropriate processes need to be gone through for the issues he has raised, and those processes will be undertaken, including appropriate environment effects statements. Indeed I stand by what I said on *Stateline*.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr HULLS — I am glad you watched it, because I think you would agree it was a pretty good interview.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr HULLS — Appropriate processes will be followed, and I am very keen to get out there and consult as much as possible with all relevant stakeholders. I will be doing that on a regular basis.

Roads: funding

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — My question is for the Minister for Transport. Given the efforts the Victorian government is making to secure necessary AusLink funding for major Victorian projects, can the minister outline to the house what the barriers are that are preventing Victoria from getting its fair share of these funds?

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — Members would be aware that the Victorian government is campaigning for Victoria to receive its fair share of federal roads funds. We can get those under the AusLink program. The government is strongly committed to this campaign, and interestingly

support for the campaign is growing. We have had support from key industry and motorist groups, such as the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, the Victorian Transport Association and the Victorian Freight and Logistics Council.

All these groups are urging the Howard government to reallocate the \$520 million that has been set aside for the Scoresby freeway and to use that money for other urgently needed infrastructure projects somewhere in Victoria. Unless this money is reallocated Victoria will only receive 16 per cent of federal road funds, and that has to be compared — —

Mr Doyle interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BATCHELOR — That compares with the 25 per cent of fuel taxes that Victorian motorists pay. I was asked what were the barriers to our receiving this money, and the biggest one is the opposition here. It is the attitude of the opposition. It is because the opposition has told the federal government not to give that money to Victoria. It has boasted about it. It has said, ‘Keep the money there in Canberra; do not give it to Victoria’, and then its members sit here in Parliament and laugh about it. The Leader of the Opposition in Victoria would rather play politics than defend the interests of Victorian motorists. He is a Liberal first, a Victorian last!

We will continue to strongly argue that Victoria and its motorists should receive their fair share. If that money is reallocated it can be directed to other really important projects. Interestingly, many of those are in regional Victoria. They are projects such as the Deer Park bypass, bringing forward the upgrading of the Calder Highway, upgrading the Goulburn Valley Highway, and upgrading the Western Highway between Ararat and Ballarat.

Mr Mulder — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly reading from a document. I ask him to table that document.

The SPEAKER — Order! Was the minister reading from a document or using notes?

Mr Mulder — No, reading from a document.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister was using notes.

Mr BATCHELOR — I thought the member for Polwarth was going to suggest another project. The

opposition has no policies; it is a policy-free zone. The only policy it has is to prevent money coming into Victoria. Today I am calling on the Leader of The Nationals to support the effort of the Victorian government and to make immediate representations to his Nationals colleague in Canberra, the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. I ask you to have him return to answering it. While I am here though, yes, I am prepared to do that if the government keeps its word on Scoresby.

Mr BATCHELOR — On the point of order, Speaker, I was asked what were the significant barriers to Victoria receiving other funds. We have a campaign under way and all I am doing is asking the Leader of The Nationals to join that campaign.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order at this stage. I ask the minister to continue.

Mr BATCHELOR — If the government in Victoria received the support and encouragement from the other side of the chamber — such as The Nationals have begun to demonstrate — for the reallocation of those millions of dollars to projects right across regional Victoria, it would be a great boost to the motorists of Victoria and to the Victorian economy. It is extremely disappointing that we have failed to get support from the opposition. We call on it to join The Nationals and encourage the federal government to make those funds available. We call on the opposition to stop preventing those funds from coming to Victoria.

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass will cease interjecting in that manner. I ask him to be quiet.

Hume: planning decisions

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer the minister to the \$5000 donation to the former mayor of the City of Hume, Cr Mohamad Abbouche, also employed as electorate officer to Labor powerbroker Senator Stephen Conroy by developer Peet & Company, and I ask: can the minister confirm that Cr Abbouche and other Labor councillors, including Cr Burhan Yigit, employed as the electorate officer to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and Cr Gary Jungwirth, adviser to the Minister for Energy Industries and Resources, took no part in planning decisions favouring Peet & Company?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! A great deal of that did not relate to government business, but I think the last bit did. I could not quite hear the last part of that question, and I do not think the Minister for Planning could, either.

Mr Perton — Read the whole thing again then.

The SPEAKER — Order! No, I do not require the member to read it — and thanks for the assistance of the member for Doncaster! I just could not hear the last few words.

Mr BAILLIEU — Speaker, I ask: can — —

The SPEAKER — Order! Just the last couple of words; I do not require the whole question again.

Mr BAILLIEU — I asked, Speaker, whether the minister could confirm whether those councillors whose names and associations I mentioned took no part in planning decisions favouring Peet & Company?

The SPEAKER — Order! Can the member explain to me how that relates to Victorian government business? Are these planning decisions made by the council or by the state government?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am having some trouble relating it to government business. The member will have to explain to me how it relates to Victorian government business.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BAILLIEU — The Victorian public expects that there is a Minister for Planning in this state; they have not had one for some time. There are planning decisions and responsibilities associated with this issue which go directly to the Minister for Planning.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is difficult for the Speaker to judge whether it relates to Victorian government business or not. I therefore ask the Minister for Planning whether he wishes to respond to that if he believes there is anything relating to Victorian government business; but the member for Hawthorn has not made it clear to me how it relates to Victorian government business.

Mr BAILLIEU — On a point of order, Speaker, the Planning and Environment Act sets this out quite

clearly. This is a responsibility of the planning minister, and it should be a question that is answered.

The SPEAKER — Order! I cannot determine from the member's question that it relates to Victorian government business.

Honourable members interjecting

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order!

Agriculture: production

Mr HELPER (Ripon) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Can the minister update the house about any recent information concerning the state of agricultural production in Victoria and any future risks to this production?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the honourable member for Ripon for his question and for the great interest that he shows in agriculture. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has recently released figures on the value of agricultural production for the 2003–04 year which shows that for the first time Victoria, of all the Australian states, is leading the way and is the leading state when it comes to agricultural production.

The farm-gate value in the 2003–04 year was \$8.7 billion, and that compares to the New South Wales figure of \$8.4 billion. Over the years of the Bracks government we have been closing the gap on New South Wales, and we have now pulled ahead. As we come out of the drought there will be to-ing and fro-ing in the years ahead, but what we have is a trend where in time we will be consistently ahead.

If we go back to the 1998–99 year, we see that agricultural farm-gate production in Victoria was \$6.3 billion — a 38 per cent increase that we have seen during the Bracks government years. Compare that to — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAMERON — Here we go! Compare that to 1995–99, the golden years of The Nationals. You know what happened to agricultural production in this state? It went down!

There has been an increase in livestock slaughtering during the Bracks years — and that is a bit how members of the Liberal Party feel today after The Nationals took to them over their Mitcham promise. We have seen increases in cereal — —

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the issue. Rather than these infantile comments about a serious issue, could he please return to the question which has been asked of him.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the minister to return to answering the question.

Mr CAMERON — When we look at crops cut from hay, since 1998–99 we have seen an increase from \$53 million to \$153 million. Members of The Nationals would take particular interest in crops cut from hay because cut grass is one of their specialities — ‘moan, moan, moan’!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to treat question time seriously.

Mr CAMERON — Good science, good innovation, good adoption, good industry, good business climate and a good government — they are the ingredients we have seen in recent years. We have seen a government that has been prepared to free up the markets. The government has done work in relation to freeing up the chicken industry and the dairy industry and, of course, deregulating barley. As a matter of interest, during those years we have seen barley go from \$126 million to \$401 million.

The greatest threat to agricultural production, the greatest risk if we return to the Kennett years, is the promise of the Liberal Party to rip \$7 billion away from country Victoria. Victoria can be proud that it is now the leading Australian state. This is something which has occurred only during the time of Labor — the party of country Victoria.

Hume: planning decisions

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — My question is to the Minister for State and Regional Development. I refer the minister to the \$5000 donation to the former mayor of the City of Hume, Cr Mohamad Abbouche, by developer Peet & Company and I ask: will the minister advise the house what discussions on rezoning issues in the City of Hume he has had with Cr Abbouche, who also works for him?

The SPEAKER — Order! I will allow the minister to answer this question but only insofar as it relates to Victorian government business.

Mr BRUMBY (Minister for State and Regional Development) — I thank the honourable member for his question. I have not had any discussions at any stage with this particular councillor or others about rezoning matters in the City of Hume.

Tourism: performance

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — My question is to the Minister for Tourism. Can the minister outline to the house the latest information about the contribution of tourism to the Victorian economy, and whether the government has considered any threats that exist to this success story?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Tourism) — I thank the member for South Barwon for his question and his ongoing solid support for regional tourism. I can report to the house that Access Economics recently released a report commissioned by Tourism Victoria that confirms that tourism is one of the top 10 industries in Victoria. The report tells us that it is bigger than mining, electricity, gas and water — to name a few. Even more impressively, what that report has told us is that the record investment the Bracks government has made in tourism and major events over the past five years has seen tourism’s value to the Victorian economy grow some 45 per cent over a five-year period, meaning that it is now for the first time a record industry worth \$10.6 billion to the Victorian economy and employing 156 000 Victorians.

This data also tells us that jobs growth in regional Victoria has been faster than jobs growth in tourism in Melbourne. This government’s including regional Victoria as a key part of tourism has meant growth in tourism jobs for all of Victoria — in every tourism region in the state. The report also tells us that of the \$10.6 billion that came into the Victorian economy, \$7 billion was export income from interstate and overseas travellers. So \$7 billion has come into the Victorian economy — some 70 per cent of the industry is an export industry for us.

We have also announced a big investment in the new convention centre, but we have a very big risk. We have to continually monitor threats, and clearly the industry asks us about the potential risks for the future and what might undermine the record growth, record investment and record confidence in tourism. It is interesting, because we have a lot of contracts with major events rights holders, airlines and international travel companies, and they take very seriously any threats about governments ripping up contracts. There is one big threat hanging over the lot of us, and it rests with the opposition talking about ripping up the toll

contracts for the Mitcham–Frankston freeway. That is unfunded, would cost \$7 billion and is undermining potential growth in this economy. Delivering the best tourism results requires a partnership between government and the private sector. Questions are being asked regularly by businesses wanting to invest in this state, and they wonder what would have to give way — not only the ripping up of contracts — to find this \$7 billion. We know it would be back to the dark old days of cuts in health, education and police, but would there also be cuts by abandoning the convention centre project? Would there also be cuts by the ripping up of major events contracts? These are the things that potentially undermine Victoria.

Mr Plowman — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to it. He cannot attack the opposition and stay within the context of the debate.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — On the point of order, Speaker, I put it to you and the house that alternatives about who may be in government in the future and their policies are very relevant to the government of the day. The number of times ministers are asked by potential or current investors in Victoria about what the future climate may be can undermine confidence. The thing they are pleased about is that we are on their side about growing — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I think the minister is now debating the issue in the point of order. In relation to the point of order, I think it is fairly borderline. I ask the minister to continue, but I remind him to relate his comments to Victorian government business.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — I will wind up, Speaker. It is very relevant. We do have record investment in tourism, and we are very proud of that. There is record growth in tourism right across the board in regional Victoria, and we do not want that to be undermined. I find it embarrassing when companies ask me what future governments might do. Of course we do not know, but it is very relevant when you are trying to attract investment. The sooner the opposition abandons this unfunded promise, the better it will be for Victoria.

Yarra River: pollution

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Environment. I refer to the high E. coli and other pollution concerns recently exposed in the Yarra River, and I ask: will the minister give a firm undertaking that he will release all water quality test results prior to the Moomba festival?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment) — I thank the member for his question. I point out firstly that one thing is clear — that is, that there would be no improvement in and no more money for the Yarra if a Liberal government were ever in power and able to take \$7 billion — —

Mr Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass will cease interjecting!

Mr THWAITES — This government has invested significant funds in improving the Yarra River, and they are funds that would not be there if a government had to pay \$7 billion to fund a reckless promise. The government, as well as improving the health of the Yarra, is ensuring there is proper monitoring of the Yarra, and we will continue that. That is overseen by the Environment Protection Authority and Melbourne Water. It is very important that we continue to have that independent testing, and we will continue to do that.

Mitcham–Frankston project: funding

Mr LOCKWOOD (Bayswater) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline to the house the strength of Victoria's financial position and what the implications of alternative policies are, including funding of the Mitcham–Frankston project, for the administration of government business in this area?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I thank the honourable member for his question without notice. I say at the outset that the Bracks government understands the importance of our budget position being strong, and I can say confidently that it is very strong indeed. We are AAA credit rated, our budget is secure, our economy is performing more strongly than economies in other Australian states and territories. We have halved net debt and at the same time provided significant increases in expenditure in health and education in country Victoria.

I am also proud to say that, after 40 years of debate, we have started the Mitcham–Frankston project. It is a project which has been talked about by successive governments over decades in this state. We have got it up and running, we have signed the arrangements and work is under way on the biggest road construction project in Australia. Importantly, we are funding this in a financially responsible way. Last December I warned that the plan by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Box Hill was unworkable, it was irresponsible, it was unaffordable and it would cost Victorians dearly in country areas. Wasting \$7 billion

of taxpayers money to buy out a contract would have disastrous implications for people in country Victoria.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. As you know, he is restricted to answering questions on government administration. At the moment he is attacking the member for Box Hill and his model in respect of the renegotiation of the contract on the Scoresby tollway, and that is not appropriate during question time. If the minister wants to have a ministerial statement and debate, that is appropriate, but it is not appropriate during question time.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer is to return to answering the question and relating it to government business.

Mr BRUMBY — As I said, I issued a press statement on 28 December in which I challenged Liberal Party MPs to back the Leader of the Opposition's crazy road plan — I challenged them all!

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer must relate his comments to Victorian government business.

Mr BRUMBY — On the point of order, Speaker, I am referring — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I have just ruled on that point of order, but the minister can raise another point of order if he wishes.

Mr BRUMBY — Speaker, I am referring to a press release which I issued as the Treasurer and the Minister for State and Regional Development in December. Obviously that is government business. In the press release which I issued I challenged members of Parliament to back this plan. Speaker, you know that the only opposition member of Parliament who has come out and backed the government's plan on the Mitcham–Frankston project is the Leader of The Nationals.

The SPEAKER — Order! I understood the Treasurer not to have raised a point of order, but to have continued debating. The Treasurer, to continue.

Mr BRUMBY — We have been a government which has invested heavily in country Victoria. We have reversed the old toenails image and policies of the former Kennett government; we have invested in schools, invested in hospitals, invested in roads, invested in water infrastructure and invested in aged care facilities. The only person on the opposition side who has finally come out and seen the light in relation to funding of the Mitcham–Frankston project is, as I

have said, the Leader of The Nationals, and the only person who has shown leadership on the opposition benches on this issue is the Leader of The Nationals. There is light at the end of the tunnel here; the light is coming from the Leader of The Nationals, who has seen the light.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, whilst I am being damned by faint praise here, the minister is clearly debating the issue, and I would ask you to have him return to the question he was asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order at this stage. I think the Treasurer was expressing his enthusiasm for people supporting his policy line.

Mr BRUMBY — Today's papers probably went further than that. I think they referred to the Leader of The Nationals stomping on the Leader of the Opposition's policy proposals. As I said, there is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a dimwitted proposal from the Leader of the Opposition — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I think the Treasurer has gone a little far now. I ask him to relate his comments to Victorian government business.

Mr BRUMBY — We have got on with the job. We took the hard decision. We took the right decision to build the Mitcham–Frankston. Work is under way after 40 years, and that work is generating something like 12 000 direct and indirect jobs for the people of Victoria, with all the huge multiplier benefits throughout the region.

Mr Plowman — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer has been speaking for 6 minutes now. Despite the fact that he called a point of order on himself, he has been speaking for 6 minutes.

The SPEAKER — Order! There have been a number of points of order.

Mr Doyle interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Treasurer to continue his answer.

Mr BRUMBY — We have the project under way. To buy out this contract would cost \$7 billion. That would inevitably mean less funds, not just for schools and hospitals generally but particularly for country Victoria — for country hospitals, country schools, country roads and country infrastructure.

We have provided leadership on this issue. I am delighted that the Leader of The Nationals has now agreed with the government's view that its policy settings are right. The challenge is now with the Leader of the Opposition. My own view is that this is the end of the road for the Leader of the Opposition. He has run out of supporters for his policy. We are taking bets on this side. We think you will backflip on this by Easter!

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for questions has now expired. Ten questions have been asked.

DISSENT FROM SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr DOYLE (Leader of the Opposition) — I desire to move, by leave, a motion of dissent from the intervention and ruling of the Speaker today in inviting the Minister for Planning to decide whether or not to answer a question without notice on the minister's interpretation of whether the question concerned government business when that question clearly went to the heart of the integrity and propriety of the planning processes of Victoria. It was clearly government business, and therefore it was not open to the minister to decide whether it was or was not government business.

Leave refused.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Standing orders

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — By leave, I move:

That so much of standing orders be suspended today as may be necessary to permit:

- (1) the immediate introduction and second reading of the Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill; and
- (2) discussion on a motion of condolence concerning the Boxing Day tsunami victims, and:
 - (a) the Premier, in moving the motion, to speak for no more than 10 minutes, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals to speak for no more than 10 minutes each in response, and any other members to speak for no more than 5 minutes each in response;
 - (b) at the conclusion of all speeches permitted by paragraph (a), the Chair will immediately put the question or questions required to dispose of the motion; and

- (c) formal business to be deferred and to take place immediately after the responses, followed by other business set out in standing orders.

Motion agreed to.

SERIOUS SEX OFFENDERS MONITORING BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Corrections) introduced a bill to enhance the protection of the community by requiring offenders who have served custodial sentences for certain sexual offences and who are a serious danger to the community to be subject to ongoing supervision while in the community, to amend the Corrections Act 1986 and the Sentencing Act 1991 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

Second reading

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is concerned about risks to children and to the community more generally when convicted child-sex offenders are discharged back into the community at the conclusion of a sentence of imprisonment. The community is rightly concerned about the evidence that some paedophiles are likely to offend again and again throughout their lifetime and that they are likely to have many victims. Today, there is also a much greater understanding of the fact that victims of child-sex offenders and their families can continue to experience the damaging and painful consequences of these terrible crimes for many, many years.

The government views the risk of reoffending by child-sex offenders as so great as to be unacceptable. Too many children are at risk of serious and long-lasting harm. Until now there has been no system of active monitoring of high risk child-sex offenders after the completion of their time in prison. This inability to monitor has harmed our community. In light of what we now know about child-sex offenders it is appropriate and necessary to provide for the supervision of these individuals.

This bill establishes a new regime that provides for the extended supervision of high risk child-sex offenders beyond the term of their sentence. This monitoring will

only be available where authorised by a court that has considered all the relevant circumstances of the offender, including expert evidence about his or her pattern of sexual offending. The child-sex offender will then be made the subject of an extended supervision order that contains a range of conditions for the purpose of ensuring adequate protection of the community, for promoting the offender's rehabilitation, care and treatment and for monitoring the offender. The orders will be supervised by the Adult Parole Board which will be empowered to give the child-sex offender directions and instructions individually tailored to his or her current circumstances. The deterrent effect of ongoing supervision, reduction of the offenders' exposure to environmental risk factors and ongoing access to treatment and support will deter the commission of further offences.

These requirements will be balanced against the need to protect the individual rights of offenders who are subject to this scheme. The bill contains a number of safeguards including a right of offenders to be legally represented at hearings, a right to obtain an independent clinical assessment of the risk of reoffending, periodic review by the court of all extended supervision orders and the right to appeal against the making of an order.

The scheme achieves the appropriate balance between affording sufficient rights to individual offenders and the need to protect the community from offenders who are assessed as being at high risk of reoffending.

Our community will be protected by this monitoring scheme that will reduce the likelihood that these convicted serious child-sex offenders will reoffend.

The scheme of the bill

The new monitoring scheme contained in the bill will apply to a category of persons known as 'eligible offenders'. These are persons sentenced in relation to a wide range of sexual offences against children who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

The Secretary to the Department of Justice will be able to apply to the court for an extended supervision order in relation to an eligible offender. It is anticipated that such applications would be made only where a child-sex offender is assessed as being a high risk of sexually reoffending.

The application will be made to the County Court if the eligible offender was sentenced by that court or the Magistrates Court or to the Supreme Court if the offender was sentenced by the Supreme Court.

An application for an extended supervision order must be accompanied by a report from a psychologist, psychiatrist or other prescribed health service provider who has conducted an assessment of the likelihood that the offender will reoffend.

The court will be empowered to make an extended supervision order if it is satisfied that the offender is likely to commit another relevant offence after his or her sentence is completed if an order is not made. The court must be satisfied of this to a high degree of probability.

The offender will have the right to be legally represented at the hearing, be permitted to produce their own independent psychological and psychiatric reports and to give evidence to the court.

If the court makes an extended supervision order, it will apply to the offender for an initial period of up to 15 years. The court would be able to renew this order for additional periods of up to 15 years if, on application by the secretary, it forms the view that the offender is likely to commit another relevant offence after the expiry of the initial order.

An extended supervision order would be suspended during any period when the offender subject to the order is in custody.

Each order will contain a number of core conditions. These are:

- a requirement that the offender must not commit, whether in or outside Victoria, another relevant offence;

- a requirement that the offender attends at any place as directed by the secretary or the Adult Parole Board for the purpose of supervision, assessment or monitoring;

- a requirement that the offender reports to and/or receives visits from the secretary and any person nominated by him or her for the purpose of monitoring the order;

- a requirement that the offender notifies the secretary of any proposed change of his or her name or employment at least two clear working days before the change occurs;

- a requirement that the offender must not move to a new address without the prior written consent of the secretary;

a requirement that the offender does not leave Victoria without the permission of the secretary granted either generally or in relation to the particular case;

a requirement that the offender comply with any lawful instructions and directions given to him or her by the secretary; and

a requirement that the offender comply with any lawful instructions or directions given by the Adult Parole Board. These instructions and directions may be made about any matters that the Adult Parole Board thinks are necessary to ensure adequate protection of the community or for the offender's treatment, care and rehabilitation or the monitoring of the offender.

The Adult Parole Board will be able to give the offender directions and instructions that may include but are not limited to matters such as:

where the offender is to reside;

setting curfews;

specifying that the offender must not visit specified places or may only visit at specified times;

requiring the offender to attend and participate in treatment or rehabilitation programs or activities;

prohibiting the offender from engaging in certain types of employment;

prohibiting the offender from engaging in certain community activities such as volunteer activities where children may be present;

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Speaker, I am loath to rise in the middle of the minister's second-reading speech, but having said that I query whether the minister is reading the correct speech. A cursory look at the bill indicates that it is intended to protect the community, whereas it appears from the second-reading speech that there is a reference to protecting people who are victims of sexual offences against children. On top of that, one of the scheduled offences is bestiality, and I do not see how that relates to the second-reading speech.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The minister is fully entitled to read the second-reading speech in any way he wishes, as the member for Kew well knows. The minister, to continue.

Mr HOLDING — To continue:

prohibiting the offender from having contact with certain persons or classes of persons; this could include, for example, children of neighbours or children under the age of 10; and

requiring the offender to adhere to electronic or other forms of monitoring of his or her compliance with the order relating to his or her whereabouts.

The role of the Adult Parole Board will be to supervise the orders. It will be assisted in doing this by its power to give the child-sex offender directions and instructions individually tailored to his or her current circumstances. The Adult Parole Board is able to vary the lawful instructions and directions as required throughout the period of the order.

The Adult Parole Board has extensive experience in supervising offenders who have been released into the community gained from its existing role in supervising offenders subject to parole orders. In fact, it is likely that the subject of an extended supervision order will have been supervised by the Adult Parole Board prior to the expiry of his or her sentence.

It will be an offence for an offender to fail to comply with a condition of an order. This includes a failure to comply with any directions or instructions given to the offender by the Adult Parole Board.

The bill provides for breach proceedings to be initiated by the Secretary, who may receive information from sources such as the Adult Parole Board and may also require the eligible offender to be assessed as to his or her current circumstances. Alleged breaches of an extended supervision order will be considered by the court that made the order. The court may find that a breach has been committed if, after considering the evidence, it is satisfied that the subject of the order failed to comply with the order without reasonable excuse.

The proposed maximum penalty for the offence is five years imprisonment.

Extended supervision orders will only be in force when the subject is resident in the community. An extended supervision order is suspended automatically if the subject of the order is detained in custody and will recommence upon discharge from custody.

As I have mentioned, the bill contains a number of safeguards to protect the rights of offenders and ensure that an extended supervision order does not remain in place if the need for the order no longer exists.

An extended supervision order will be subject to periodic review by the court that made the order. The subject of an extended supervision order can also apply for a review of the order at any time, with the leave of the court. If, on review, the court is not satisfied that the offender remains likely to reoffend it will be required to revoke the extended supervision order.

Both the secretary and the subject of an order can appeal a decision of the court in relation to the making, review or renewal of an order.

The bill provides that a person subject to an order should be present at any hearing conducted under the scheme. The court may issue a summons requiring the subject to attend a hearing and is also empowered to issue a warrant for the arrest of the person to ensure his or her attendance at the hearing. However, the court is empowered to proceed with a hearing in the absence of an offender if it is satisfied that it is necessary to proceed with the hearing in the interests of justice.

The bill makes a number of consequential amendments to the Corrections Act 1986. These include an amendment to make it clear that the Adult Parole Board has the new functions conferred upon it by the bill. The amendments will also require the secretary to provide employees of the Department of Justice and other assistance to the Adult Parole Board to assist it in supervising persons subject to an extended supervision order. Employees of the Department of Justice responsible for extended supervision orders will be subject to the directions of the Adult Parole Board.

The bill will also amend the Sentencing Act 1991 to make it clear that when a court is sentencing a child-sex offender, the court cannot take into account the fact that an extended supervision order may be made under the scheme at the end of the sentence.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WELLS (Scoresby).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

BOXING DAY TSUNAMI

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I move:

That this house —

expresses its deepest condolences at the tragic loss of life and devastation suffered by countries around the Indian Ocean due to the Boxing Day tsunami disaster;

extends to all people from the affected countries and the many tourists and their families who lost loved ones its deepest sympathy and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured;

mourns those Victorians who lost their lives following the tsunami and shares in the grief of the families of these Victorian victims;

expresses its gratitude to all Victorians for the unprecedented outpouring of support by volunteering to provide care for the survivors and the generous contributions of millions of dollars towards the rebuilding effort; and

commits itself to work closely with the countries affected by the disaster to assist with their long-term reconstruction.

I offer my condolences, along with many members of this house, to the thousands of people both here and overseas who lost loved ones in the tsunami of Boxing Day 2004. Much has been said already about the tsunami, particularly during the national day of mourning on 16 January this year. Much has been done already to alleviate the suffering of the survivors. But more needs to be said and much more needs to be done. The United Nations estimates it will cost up to US\$12 billion to rebuild the areas affected by the tsunami. So far US\$5.5 billion has been pledged by the international community. What that astronomical figure underlines is the size and scope of the tsunami. We are being confronted by death, destruction and suffering of a magnitude we have never seen before in our lifetimes.

Hopefully we will never see it again. How we respond to this suffering over the long haul — not just when the terrible images are fresh in our minds — defines us as individuals, as a community and as a nation. It will take years for the affected communities of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, the Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya to recover.

The worst hit areas such as Banda Aceh may never be the same again. At last count 289 000 people lost their lives on 26 December 2004, including 236 012 in Indonesia, 30 957 in Sri Lanka, 6389 in India, 5393 in Thailand, 82 in the Maldives, 68 in Malaysia, 61 in Myanmar, 29 in Somalia, 10 in Tanzania, and 1 in Kenya. On behalf of the government and the people of Victoria I extend my condolences to the Victorian ethnic communities that have been hit by this tragedy, and to the Victorian families who have also been affected.

Unfortunately, with thousands of people still missing, we will probably never know the full death toll of the tsunami. So far, regrettably, 19 Australians are

confirmed to have lost their lives on 26 December last year, including two Victorians — Paul Giardina and Troy Broadbridge. They were 16 and 24 years old respectively, two young men at the start of their lives. Rather than recount how Paul and Troy died, I will take this opportunity to put on the parliamentary record how they lived. Paul's family — his father, Joe, mother, Ivana and sister, Carla — are present with us today. I welcome the family here today and I am sure all members of the house would as well. This is what they had to say about their son and brother, who had Down Syndrome, in an article published in the latest edition of *Down's Voice*:

Paul faced many challenges, not the least those that come inherently with his disability. He took these in his stride and without lament. We marvelled at his determination, inner strength and ability to overcome these, and we grew stronger with him.

Paul leaves us with a unique legacy. His successes are wide and varied, but his greatest success was to influence those around him and to teach us how to love unconditionally.

I know that all members of this house would agree with those moving sentiments.

This is what Jim Stynes, a former great of the Melbourne Football Club, had to say about Troy, a key member of the Melbourne Football Club:

Troy was a genuine guy with an extremely gentle, caring nature, always happy, with such a calm presence, a talented footballer brought down in the prime of his career, an amazing son to loving parents, Wayne and Pam, an inspirational brother to Sarah, Sam and Jane, a great friend to many, in love with such a beautiful woman — his wife of just eight days, Trish.

These are two young lives out of more than 289 000 people who lost their lives in the tsunami. I again send my condolences to the families of Paul and Troy for their losses, and I know that is heartfelt by all members of this house. These two young men gave so much to their families and communities, just as so many Australians have given in time and money to the tsunami relief effort since 26 December. So far Australians have pledged in excess of \$220 million to various appeals. Others have volunteered their time and professional services to assist with relief and reconstruction efforts, such as the Victorian school principal who is part of a contingent of Australian volunteers teaching in the Maldives.

I congratulate the federal government for its response, providing \$1 billion towards the recovery efforts. Our government has also made a swift and sustained contribution to the international relief and recovery operations. Within days of the tsunami we offered emergency management and other capabilities as part

of the national contribution to the international relief effort.

Consequently Victoria Police, forensic and health experts have been deployed to the Indian Ocean countries as part of national teams. Our government also immediately donated \$1.5 million to aid Australia's four main aid agencies — the Australian Red Cross, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Care Australia and World Vision Australia — to support the tsunami victims.

Other Victorian experts have been deployed to affected areas, including a Victorian health and medical support team that travelled to Banda Aceh and returned home on 13 February. I would like to extend our particular gratitude to these officers, many of whom interrupted plans to be with their families, for their generosity, commitment and professionalism and for working in what must have been difficult and confronting circumstances. I met many of these hardworking emergency services personnel on their return, and what they described were appalling conditions on dirt floors with very, very little opportunity to perform any operations. When they left operations were being undertaken in the major hospital in Banda Aceh, and that was a great achievement as part of the wider effort across the whole community.

Our government is also keen to ensure that the ongoing reconstruction needs of the affected communities are not overlooked. To this end we have also established a \$10 million tsunami disaster reconstruction fund to support medium to long-term reconstruction projects over the next three to five years. The fund will support projects that include: a contribution to the rebuilding of the basic government service delivery systems such as education, health and water supplies; rebuilding critical infrastructure and capacity; and providing the materials or equipment to allow communities to resume key industries, like fishing, farming and tourism. A considerable amount of work is being undertaken to plan and coordinate the rebuilding process. The Treasurer visited Sri Lanka with the fund director early this month to gauge the extent of damage first hand; to consult with government agencies, non-government organisations, donors and the local communities; and to assess projects that the fund may be able to finance in the future.

The government has also ensured that support is available to Victorians who have suffered loss and trauma, helping with the return of victims, providing information services, holding community meetings and providing additional training for medical personnel. These services continue to be available for those in

need. We have also held several meetings with diplomatic representatives and community groups from affected communities to help to keep them informed and provide advice on fundraising and other related activities. The government will continue to work with these representatives, in close consultation with the Commonwealth government, as needs arise.

In conclusion, on behalf of all Victorians, I extend our condolences to the many who have lost friends and family members. I would like to thank all Victorians for responding to the tsunami with such goodwill, generosity and philanthropy. They have shown what can be done when we unite and work together. That is why our government will continue to work for the long haul to help our neighbours recover from this monumental human tragedy.

Honourable members — Hear, hear!

Mr DOYLE (Leader of the Opposition) — I join the Premier in expressing my deepest condolences and those of the Liberal Party on the tragic loss of life, the injuries, the pain, the suffering and the devastation resulting from the Boxing Day tsunami disaster. Isn't it a paradox in our community that the worst brings out the best in us; that the greatest natural disaster witnessed in our lives brought forth an outpouring of compassion and support unprecedented in our history.

It is now our history that on 26 December 2004 an earthquake in the Indian Ocean measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, the most severe in 40 years, caused devastating tsunamis throughout the Asian region and as far away as Port Elizabeth in South Africa. As the Premier said, the death toll now approaches 290 000 human souls, but of course an exact number will never be known. As he said, Indonesia lost over 200 000 citizens; Sri Lanka over 31, 000; India over 15 000; and Thailand over 5000. Many other countries, as the Premier detailed, also lost people — the Maldives, Burma, Bangladesh, Malaysia and others.

The number of Australians confirmed dead is 19, with another eight still unaccounted for. We think not just of those lost people but also of their families, their friends and their communities here in Victoria, and those with us today, particularly the family of Paul Giardina. Our sympathies, our feelings, our thoughts and our prayers are with you all.

The United Nations estimated that the cost of the devastation was almost unable to be quantified. They think these tsunamis have displaced 1 million people and deprived a further 5 million people of basic services. These numbers are so overwhelming as to be

beyond our grasp, almost beyond our comprehension. The one thing that I think we should remember is that, although the numbers are large, each one, every one, was a human life — part of a family, part of a community — and every single one was a tragedy.

As the Premier pointed out, Australia's response was swift. The Australian government provided \$1 billion in national aid and concessions to the region on top of an initial \$60 million of assistance. The amount donated by Australians was truly remarkable and reached nearly \$235 million — this from a nation of 20 million people. Everybody donated: families; ordinary working people; pensioners, children; sporting groups — we all remember the Asia vs. Rest of the World one-day match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground; big, medium and small companies; churches and community groups. I remember going down to the Anglesea Surf Lifesaving Club at Anglesea where a group of the Nippers, the lifesavers in training, called the Dolphins put together a fundraising effort. These were kids between the ages of 10 and 13 and they were going to do a 24-hour paddlethon on the Anglesea River. They organised it themselves; they raised over \$15 000. There were thousands of such gestures throughout Australia.

The AusAID disaster response plan was activated on 27 December. We sprang into action very quickly. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) tsunami disaster summit in Jakarta on 5 and 6 January. Out of that the governments of Indonesia and Australia agreed to form the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development. Our response included the provision of a 90-bed Australian Defence Force field hospital in Banda Aceh, vaccines to prevent disease and significant medical supplies and staff. We provided water purification plants to Banda Aceh. We provided to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund the School-in-a-Box program for both state and Islamic primary schools. Our delivery of telecommunications in those very confused days was outstanding.

Victoria made an outstanding contribution of its own. The Premier first announced a \$1.5 million contribution to the non-government organisations working on the ground. There were four members of Victoria Police who went to assist with the very difficult business of victim identification. As the Premier outlined, in January the government announced a further \$10 million tsunami disaster reconstruction fund over the next three to five years. There were 19 health

professionals who went to Banda Aceh to spend two weeks working in the local hospital.

I congratulate the Premier, his ministers and the public servants — often the unsung heroes — for these gigantic organisational undertakings. I put on the record that I think the government's response was generous, swift and appropriate. I say to the Premier that it was admirable that his government made those efforts on behalf of all Victorians. The relief effort was Australia wide. It was not as if we were by ourselves. It was as if the whole nation was united in one effort. Queensland was one of the first to respond. It gave \$10 million in aid, particularly medical staff and provisions. Tasmania gave \$1 million in shipments of donated goods to Banda Aceh. The South Australian government made donations through relief organisations like the Red Cross and World Vision. In Western Australia \$2 million in local counselling and medical services was dispatched. New South Wales gave \$2 million, many medical teams, identification experts, health equipment and supplies. The Northern Territory provided nearly \$450 000 to aid organisations and organised shipments to affected areas of supplies that were so desperately needed. It was a magnificent national response. As Victorians we can be very proud of the response that we made. It was certainly above and beyond the call of duty. It was extremely well received.

As the tragedy unfolded, I wrote to the Australian-based representatives of the nations affected by the tsunami and was pleased to speak to many of them. In those early days I learnt from them exactly what was going on and what we might do to further help. I pledged the assistance of the Victorian Liberal parliamentary team and party. I commended the commonwealth government on its rapid response effort. At that time I was also pleased to commend the Victorian government on its financial assistance. But as the Premier said, there is so much more to be done. Some of the most telling moments for me were when I met a couple of the consuls general to talk to them about how things were on the ground. The most telling conversation I had was with the Sri Lankan consul general. I asked him where Sri Lanka would start and what it would do first. I heard the chilling rejoinder that the first thing that needed to be done was to build an orphanage. That struck me most deeply.

We all took part in the national day of mourning. Many of us were at the Sri Lankan multifaith service at the Victoria Police Academy. The services were sombre and uplifting. They joined us together in a way that was quite remarkable. Personally, I support the proposal for Melbourne to adopt the Sri Lankan city of Galle as a

sister city and to help the rebuilding of Galle. We have so many connections with that city. It would be worth while building a relationship that goes much further than just the immediate response that we have already made. I spoke to Tim Costello at great length about what it is we can do to help. Apart from the obvious personal donations I am sure we have all made, one thing I have committed to do is to sponsor one of those children in Sri Lanka who has been orphaned by the tsunami.

I would like to provide an education, shelter, clothing and all the assistance needed over a long period in a single child's life. I would encourage many of my fellow members to do the same thing, and I know that some already do so. That might be an ongoing gesture we can make, because one of the other points made to me was that this is not the end; this is the beginning. This will affect people for generations, but I think our generosity and compassion is up to that challenge.

One of the questions we have asked ourselves in the face of these overwhelming numbers and images that have flooded us since Boxing Day is: 'What can we do in the face of the incomprehensible, particularly when the incomprehensible is on this scale?'. I think we do the only thing we can: we do the small things that we can, each and every one of us. If that is sponsoring a child, well and good. If it is a different response, let each of us individually make those responses.

I also point out that inevitably out of disasters come stories of heroism, of sacrifice, compassion and endurance. Hold on to those. They are what sustained us after September 11 and after Bali. They are what often sustain us after these natural and other disasters for which we have no logical explanation. I would argue that we look for those stories of heroism as something to bring out of this tragedy. We celebrate the individual stories and celebrate them, as the Premier said, just as we celebrate Paul's life and his contribution to our community.

Finally, of course, we wish this had never occurred. We wish we did not have to move such a motion and that we did not have to go through such efforts, but we do. If there is one thing that I will take out of this personally it is the fact that I have never been more proud to be an Australian when I look at the compassion and support that came from all of us.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — I rise to support the motion before the house and in so doing reflect upon the fact that as of today there are confirmed dead 287 993 people. Of course the reality of that figure will grow with the passing of the years. Nineteen of

those people are confirmed as having been Australian and there are eight who remain to this day unaccounted for.

In trying to speak to this, to comment on it and understand it, it is so difficult to get to grips with the actual scale of it. I remember being at the Australia Day celebrations at Leongatha where the tsunami was being talked about and speaking to the crowd there about the fact that in the area east of Pakenham and Berwick, and in that immediate vicinity, about 240 000 people live — that is, in the whole of the east of the state of Victoria. We know now that in the space of 1 hour at least that number and 50 000 or 60 000 more were lost across the span of the countries involved. It is an absolutely staggering loss of life from the many countries that were subjected to the enormity of the horror that unfolded on that day.

As has been referred to, individual countries and more particularly individual families have suffered terrible losses. In Indonesia Aceh was one of the worst areas hit. Located at the western tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, it bore the full brunt of the waves that led to literally tens of thousands of people being killed. Apart from those who tragically lost their lives there are of course some other terrible statistics. Many of the children who were not killed were orphaned. It has been estimated that 37 per cent of the casualties in Aceh were under 18 years of age. Up to 12 160 of those who died, about 13 per cent, were infants. As many as 7722 children lost both parents and about 32 735 children lost a single parent. These are tragic figures of absolute enormity. In many areas the massive demographic change that has been left in the wake of the waves is something from which Aceh may never fully recover. About 700 000 people are homeless. Farmers, fisherfolk and others with small businesses have lost their livelihoods. All that will be very difficult to rebuild.

In some areas the tsunami reached more than 5 kilometres inland, destroying crops and killing livestock as well as sweeping through houses and poisoning thousands of wells. There were terrible stories of some of these waves coming through estuaries, wreaking havoc on the way in, then banking up against the hinterland, a kilometre or more inland, growing to a size of 30, 40, 50 and 60 metres or more before rushing back out to sea again and completing the disastrous effect started by the waves coming in in the first place.

This situation was repeated in many other countries. In Sri Lanka about 31 000 people are known to have died and thousands more are missing. The number of

homeless has been put at somewhere between 800 000 and 1 million people. In India more than 8800 people have been confirmed dead on the mainland. Of course there are many, many tens of thousands missing. In Thailand more than 5300 people are confirmed dead. In the Maldives, which are very low-lying islands, 82 people have died. Of the 199 inhabited islands, around 20 are described as totally destroyed by the tsunami. It is a similar picture, albeit to a lesser degree, in Malaysia, Burma, Somalia and other countries such as Tanzania, the Seychelles, Bangladesh and even Kenya. Accordingly it must be said that the scale and scope of this disaster has never before been recorded in the history of mankind. I know that everybody in this place is deeply touched by the terrible tragedy that occurred.

We have with us today the Giardina family — Paul's parents and siblings. The deep sympathy and condolences of the whole of the house are conveyed to them. The Premier has already referred to some of the commentary that very appropriately appeared in the newspapers at the time of Paul's funeral.

There are similar stories, but in their own way, about Troy Broadbridge. For the whole of my life I have barracked for the mighty Demons, the Melbourne Football Club. Troy Broadbridge was a wonderful player. He had played about 40 games for Melbourne. Along with many others, he would have played many more. He was 24 years of age when his life was cut short by the events of Boxing Day last year. He was on his honeymoon in Phuket with his wife, Trisha, when the tsunami struck. They had been married for eight days — since 16 December. Trisha Broadbridge has been recorded as saying:

We watched the tide come in rapidly for a couple of seconds, and when we realised it wasn't going to stop at the shore, Troy suggested we jump on the balcony of a bungalow on the beach. The wave got bigger and bigger.

Troy told me to keep my head above water, because at this stage we didn't realise the force and power it had.

The force of the wave uprooted the bungalow in front, which in turn hit me, and I was swept away by the wave. This was the last time I saw Troy.

I love Troy Broadbridge. He is my life.

This is commentary by someone I do not know — I have never had the honour, the privilege or the pleasure of meeting Trisha Broadbridge. Just as happened with the Giardina family and so many others who have been tragically thrust into the spotlight, I think those words are a mechanism whereby we can, to some degree at least, connect with the people who have suffered tragic losses as a result of this awful event.

But life does go on for all of us. Hard as it is for the families of those who have been lost, there is a tomorrow. Collectively we now must look at this event on the basis of what we can take out of it and what was impressed upon our collective mind as tomorrow comes. The first thing is the indomitable nature of the human spirit. How the people who have survived have been able to pick themselves up and go on is remarkable in itself. I cannot help but constantly reflect upon it as these sorts of pictures are beamed into our lounge rooms night after night — even now, weeks on. We see the way in which these people have recovered from the appalling tragedy that was visited upon them. We also see that indomitable spirit in the families that have lost their loved ones — again, one cannot help but have regard to those who are with us today. There is no doubt that to some degree or other this nightmare will live long in their lives, but they will forever have the treasured memory of those they have lost.

Another thing to reflect on is the amazing power of nature. Over the last few years we have had occasion here to pass condolence motions to do with September 11 and then Bali and other such tragedies. I am sure all members remember the appalling loss of life in the earthquake in Iran. Yet now we have something which puts all of that in the shade in the sense of the raw numbers of loss of life and the dreadful injuries that have been sustained. It is astounding to reflect upon the fact that nature was the root cause of this in a world where unfortunately we tend to focus commentary on events which are visited upon us by each other.

Another matter for reflection is the generosity of Australians — through the federal government, which reacted so very well to all of this and did what was able to be done, and through the state government. I endorse the words of the Leader of the Opposition in that regard — for the immediate and positive response made by the Premier, the cabinet and the government at large, and by Australians in the general community sense, including the extraordinary degree of donations and the inventive means which were settled upon to enable additional money to be raised. I reflect also on the efforts of our Australian armed services and all of those involved in our non-government agencies who have already done and continue to do amazing work.

I suppose I most of all reflect on the fact that we are fortunate in this place that, all things being equal, there is a tomorrow. The greatest problem for those poor people was that they went down to the beach or were located near it at the wrong time on 26 December 2004. May they always be remembered in our hearts.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment) — In the new year we were all united in sorrow for those affected by the Asian tsunami which, as we all know, was the biggest natural disaster in our lifetime. As other speakers have said, the scale of loss is completely unimaginable, not only in terms of the numbers of people who died but also the economic loss. I think of the reports we saw of fishermen in some of the countries who basically threw up their hands and asked, ‘What is there for me to do?’. Their future ability to earn income had been destroyed, they had lost their families, and in some cases it seemed at the time that they had lost their will to live.

For so many people there is also the long-term loss of opportunity. Many of the children who were orphaned will not have the support of a family. As they grow up in countries that are undeveloped and relatively poor in many cases, how will those children be able to get a start in life and have a full life? There is also the potential for mental stress and mental illness as a result of the terrible things that people have seen. To see your parents ripped away in an event like that would be not only traumatic in the short term but could potentially lead to long-term mental illness. That is why it is absolutely vital that the whole world has seen this as a world task to take on. As a number of speakers have said, it really has brought out the best in human nature. We have seen the best and worst of human nature in many of the terrible events of recent years. In this case, where there has been an act of God, or an act of chance, we are seeing only positive responses from all around the world.

I would like to acknowledge a number of groups and pay my respects and offer my condolences to them — first, the people in the countries affected and their governments. In Australia we are seeing this second hand, but for the people in those countries who are directly affected themselves or are part of that country, the event is so much more dramatic and more concrete and will have so many more lasting effects.

Many of these countries are ones that over the years would have been regarded as undeveloped or less advantaged, yet their governments’ responses have on the whole been very well regarded. You only have to look at what has happened, for example, in Sri Lanka — and maybe the Treasurer will indicate that — India and Indonesia, where there has been a very rapid response from governments, which on the whole are delivering the sort of initial support and long-term reconstruction that is required. Our first thoughts are for people and families in the affected countries and for their governments.

The second, of course, is for the families of Australians who have been killed, particularly Victorians. We have been speaking today about Paul Giardina and Troy Broadbridge. In a sense that is what really brings home to us in some way the extent of the terrible tragedy that has been felt by these countries. We can relate to the families of Victorians in a much closer way. As the Leader of The Nationals has indicated, not only would many of us have seen Troy Broadbridge play football at both Melbourne and Sandringham, but it is difficult to imagine how bad the terrible story of his dying such a short period after his marriage could be. We have also read about Paul Giardina and the sort of life he had and the happiness he was able to provide to so many people. That joy to be snuffed out in that terrible way is a tragedy.

I would also like to acknowledge the role that charities and non-government agencies have played. This tsunami, of course, happened just after Christmas at a time when probably many people were looking forward to having a holiday, and that includes employees of the various agencies. They abandoned those plans immediately, and many of them travelled overseas.

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — To the families of Paul and Troy, my personal condolences. To the representatives of some of the communities here today, I would like to say to the Sri Lankans, ‘Ayubowan’; to the Indian community representatives, ‘Namaste’; to the Thai representatives, ‘Sawadee Krup’; and to the Indonesian representatives, ‘Selamat Detang’.

Two weeks ago my wife and I visited Chennai, which was called Madras, in the company of the honorary consul general to Melbourne, Dr Janardhana Rao, who is known to many members in this house. We personally visited the tent cities that have gone up throughout the Indian coastline south-east of Chennai and also an orphanage, which was an incredible experience for us both.

It is amazing to think that a country such as India has been able, entirely through its own resources, to say, ‘Look, we do not want foreign aid because we think others are more deserving of help; we will do it on our own’. India has been able to look after its own in the way that my wife and I were able to inspect the sites and to talk to various community leaders. In the company of the honorary consul general we met with the Minister for Education in Tamil Nadu state, which was the worst affected of the mainland states in India. His electorate was the worst affected. Six hundred of his constituent families were killed or missing through the tsunami. He was proud of the fact that he was able

to base himself in a tent city in his electorate and to coordinate aid through his state government and from the national government to ensure that every family was personally looked after. He as Minister for Education was proud of the fact that within weeks of the tsunami every child in a tsunami-affected village was provided with new books and paper so that schools could operate literally within weeks of this disaster.

It was the most incredible experience to go into an orphanage and see the look on the faces of young children from the ages of 2 years up to 12 years. There we were — adults entering their world, that world having been deprived of adult family members. They have lost mentors and people who could care for them after a tragedy such as this.

Within weeks of the tsunami and during the incredible disaster relief, separately from my meeting with the Minister for Education in Tamil Nadu state I also had the honour of meeting with the Minister for External Affairs in the government of India, Minister Shri Jaswant Singh. I commended his government for the fact that it was looking after its own and saying, ‘We do not want foreign aid, and we will do it on our own’, and I commended him on the fact that India has also provided humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia and Thailand through emergency rations, medical supplies, hospital ships, search and rescue operations, and the provision of other emergency equipment urgently required in those affected countries.

Such was the effect in India of the tsunami that the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were all affected significantly as well. Indira Point, which is a significant coral atoll and India’s southernmost point, was wiped out completely. In the Andaman Islands, a major tourist destination that brings enormous tourist revenue to India and the people of the islands, whole islands have been shifted. They have to rewrite the maps, such was the effect of that incredible force of nature.

The most poignant story that I heard was surely the story of the kiddies running down to the beach when the first wave withdrew. They were excited because they saw the fish flapping around on the beach. To think that this was nature at its most seductive and its worst at the same time — here they were seeing fish flap around; they had come from families in need of food and were gathering up those shiny fish on the shore when the real force hit. It was the children who were the worst affected in many instances, and our hearts go out to them. To all those governments in our neighbourhood, we offer our condolences.

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I rise to join this debate today and endorse the condolence motion moved by the Premier and endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of The Nationals and other speakers. I extend my condolences to the families, relatives and friends of those who lost lives. I want to mention in particular Sri Lanka, which I visited for the first time last week specifically to inspect and assess the damage, the destruction and devastation that had been caused as a result of the tsunami.

Before I left for overseas I participated in a charity game of cricket which had been organised in my electorate between the Coolaroo and Jacana cricket clubs.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — I made a few runs! I mention this because a number of Sri Lankan players — including, in the afternoon, Murali — dropped in briefly to add their support. Those people are ordinary people from ordinary cricket clubs in my electorate who felt so strongly about the loss of life that they organised a charity cricket game. They raised \$18 000 in an afternoon, and all of that money is being donated to rebuilding the Lahiru children's orphanage in Sri Lanka. It is yet another example — we know about many more from other electorates around Victoria, across Australia and across the world — of the generosity of the folk contributing funds because of the tragic loss of life in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

In my visit to Sri Lanka I spent the first day travelling to Galle and back from Colombo. I did that with the support of the Australian High Commissioner. I think I was the first Australian minister to visit there since the tsunami. The overwhelming impression 15 kilometres out of Colombo, where you come across the damage that the wave caused, is just devastation and destruction. When you see the tsunami on television you think of particular towns or places, but it is kilometre after kilometre of destruction, rubble, debris, bricks, rock, sand, palm trees, tin and timber. Some houses are still standing, some are half standing and others have been obliterated.

I visited the Galle Cricket Ground. Coincidentally while I was there the Sri Lankan team was there with its captain, Marvin Atapattu. CricketAid was there and for the first time since the tsunami they had 600 kids out on the ground as part of a youth program to get them back to playing cricket. That was also inspirational. Shane Warne had been there the week before. I have to say that he has done an extraordinary job as an ambassador for Australia and for Victoria. There have been a few

tensions in the past between him and Murali, but they are all overcome and the Sri Lankans' regard for Australians, for Victorians and for Shane — for all of us — is extraordinarily high as a result of his visit.

On the way back from Galle I visited a number of communities, including one at Hikkaduwa. I met with three different community groups there, literally in the sand and rubble. We stood or sat in the dirt, or in some cases in chairs, listening to stories and talking about the devastation. I said to the Prime Minister when I met him the next day that Sri Lanka was a beautiful country with beautiful people. You have to meet these people to understand their resilience and strength. People have lost children, mothers, fathers and other relatives, including uncles, but there is enormous resilience and strength in the face of that adversity.

Many of the wells are still polluted. On the day I was there 50 Australian water purifiers were arriving. Before I met one of three groups only a handful of people were there, but 20 minutes later more people turned up. They were very apologetic. They had run off before the visit because someone had yelled out again, 'Tsunami coming! Tsunami coming!'. This is a commonplace occurrence. The threat is still there. People think another wave will come, so there is this enormous pressure.

I met with many ministers, including, as I said, the Prime Minister, and the aid agencies. I also, of course, signed the memorandum of understanding between the Victorian and Sri Lankan governments.

I urge Australians to continue to give. I also urge Australians to agree that the money they have already given be provided directly for tsunami relief but also indirectly for other rebuilding that needs to occur in places like Sri Lanka. Finally I urge people to visit Sri Lanka as tourists for a holiday. The jobs and benefits that come from that will stimulate the local economy.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I would like to focus my remarks under the headings of two themes: courage and context. I remember seeing a picture of a mother rushing into the face of danger and probable death to rescue her children. Fortunately she survived to be able to tell her story but in the many lives that were lost there are many untold stories of people who sacrificed their own lives in the face of the tremendous onslaught of the tsunami wave, which in Aceh province reached a height of some 30 metres, the height of the Melbourne Cricket Ground southern stand, and wrought enormous devastation.

Then there was the courage of the people searching for other family members who subsequently lost their lives, and the harrowing and horrific process of their going through makeshift morgues trying to find and identify family members. In the case of the Broadbridge family, Mr Broadbridge's wife survived but he lost his life. It was a tragic outcome for a person in the prime of life, in peak fitness in the struggle against nature.

Then there is courage by way of the response by such people as Dr David Young, a Melbourne-based orthopaedic surgeon, who went to Sri Lanka for a total of two weeks, travelling a distance of 1500 kilometres to assess needs and possibilities. Subsequently half a million dollars was relayed to the area in the form of medical supplies. Dr Young was directly involved in the performance of some 12 operations. The response of the Western world was magnificent, as was that of South-East Asia, in seeking to address the crisis.

There was also the response of young Australians — people like Nelu Jayawardena, a young Australian student who organised a concert at the Melbourne town hall to raise funding for the construction of an orphanage. She noted that before a 'tsunami was merely a geography topic', but now people remember it as:

... the powerful force that had the ability to take hundreds of thousands of lives, to destroy homes and families, and to leave countries in a state of shock.

She also noted that many young people in her homeland, Sri Lanka, no longer live with the blessings which we enjoy in Australia.

She continues:

... as proud Australians and loyal Sri Lankans, over 250 people stand united before you today, each with a different background, each with a different story, but each with one common goal; to recapture some of those young futures before they too are taken out to sea.

She went on to comment further:

... we embark upon this journey of hope. A journey where we, the youth —

of Sri Lanka and Australia —

prove that we are strong, we have courage, and that no wave in the world can drown our hope.

That experience was replicated around the nation and around the world.

In my lifetime there have been a number of natural disasters and some man-made wars that have led to an immense loss of life, such as the events in Liberia,

Rwanda, the Sudan, Chernobyl, Cambodia, Iraq, Kosovo, and this year when we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

There are also circumstances which I would like to put into a wider context by quoting from one of the finest speeches I have ever heard in this parliamentary chamber. It was made by the then member for Warrnambool, John McGrath, during a speech in the Legislative Assembly on 26 November 1993:

I shall begin by reading a statement by Dr Silvano Arieti of the New York Medical College who was speaking on schizophrenia as part of the widening mental health picture. All ... members should think seriously about his comments, and I hope they will take their thoughts to the wider community so that we can address the massive problem of community attitude to mental health. Dr Arieti said:

No war in history has produced so many victims, wounded so many people.

No earthquake has exacted so high a toll.

No other condition, that we know, has deprived so many people of the promise of life ...

The tsunami was a major event that impacted upon the lives of many people. So, too, do the consequences of war and ill health. It is important that as we continue to respond to the events that Australians have so magnificently responded to since Boxing Day 2004, we are mindful that there is an ongoing task and an ongoing struggle across many frontiers of human endeavour. It is important to note the great contributions of all Australians, including those from Sri Lankan, Indonesian, Malaysian, Indian and Thai backgrounds.

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for the Arts) — I join with my colleagues on both sides of the house in expressing my condolences to those families and communities devastated by this unprecedented tsunami disaster. I particularly acknowledge Paul's and Troy's families, who are here today.

Around the world many of us watched the horrific images on television. We watched on screens that were really too small to cope with the scale of this unfolding disaster. We read the graphic newspaper reports but only those who were there, who saw or who were caught up in this awful event can truly appreciate the scale, the horror, and the long-term consequences of this disaster.

Victorians and Australians, people of the Lucky Country, have truly been generous. I would like to place on the record my admiration for Victorians — for example, those young kids who gave up their Christmas

money to put it towards the relief effort. I admire those wonderful volunteers who gave up their holidays and worked in the disaster areas. I have in mind one man who went over to offer his assistance and ended up working in a makeshift morgue.

As Minister for the Arts I would really like to acknowledge the very generous response, in particular, by the Victorian arts community — both audiences and artists. In late January this government, as part of its tsunami response, announced that there would be a special tsunami benefit concert to be held as part of the two-day Melbourne International Music Festival. It will occur this Sunday, 27 February, and all donations received at that event will be directed to charities and non-government organisations working to rebuild the tsunami-devastated regions.

This concert builds on the very successful Melbourne Symphony Orchestra concert series held over January and February where again the arts community worked very closely with Plan Australia to provide ongoing funds for the orphans of the tsunami. As has been mentioned today, hundreds of thousands of children have been left homeless, destitute and without parents. The funds from these concerts will be directed very specifically towards assisting these orphans of the tsunami. I spoke at the last concert on Saturday, 12 February — a week ago — of the partnership that has been created between the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Plan, the agency working with the children in Sri Lanka, Thailand and other places. This partnership has been expanded to include the Melbourne Football Club which of course was touched by the loss of player Troy Broadbridge.

The funds are going to an early childhood care centre in Sri Lanka, and will also provide micronutrients for women and children devastated by the tsunami. It is an ongoing partnership which does not stop now. Through the arts community we will continue to raise funds directed to Plan to build villages, to build schools and to build early learning centres. Even when these schools are built the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra will provide musical instruments for the schools in Sri Lanka.

Also I would like to acknowledge those in my electorate who have been so touched by these events and salute the Darebin City Council for holding a multifaith gathering on 20 January — an important focus for the grief and support. I would like to mention one member of the Sri Lankan community in my electorate who I know personally and about whom I have spoken in this place. Channa Dassanayaka lost a family member in the tsunami and I particularly want to

acknowledge the grief of Channa and many other families in these circumstances.

Sadly and unfortunately the suffering caused by the tsunami will go on for months and years. When the images fade from our screens and our newspapers, it is important that we do not forget that this area, so close to Australia and Victoria, both geographically and in many other ways, will need our continuing and ongoing help. We certainly will do that through the arts community of Victoria and I would like to commend those volunteers who have already made that commitment to continue working both in the tsunami-affected areas and here at home so that the rebuilding can go on.

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — I rise to support the motion and to acknowledge the words of many other honourable members who have spoken before me on this terrible tragedy. I wish to pass on my condolences and that of South-West Coast to the victims of the tsunami, their families, their communities, their countries and, of course, to offer our support for their recovery from this terrible tragedy. With respect to the Australians, unfortunately 19 have been confirmed dead, and I understand 8 are still missing. Victoria lost two very valuable citizens. Troy Broadbridge was emerging in his career as a footballer in the Australian Football League — the elite level of sport in Australia. He made an enormous contribution and was very much in the early stages of his career and his marriage — a tragic loss. We pass on our sympathy to his family.

The other Victorian was Paul Giardina. Paul had Down syndrome and was an absolute inspiration to people with Down syndrome and people who have disabilities. Because of his enthusiasm for life, his love for life and the way that he was able to participate fully in every aspect of life and show that people with disabilities have an enormous capacity for love and for contribution, he will forever be an inspiration not only to many individuals with disabilities, but also the families of people with disabilities. I pass on my sympathy to his family who are with us today.

I also wish to recognise the enormous devastation which was caused by the tsunami and which will take a long and large commitment to rebuild — to rebuild those communities, to rebuild those lives and to rebuild those countries in terms of housing, roads, schools, hospitals and the entire infrastructure such as water and sewerage systems, economic infrastructure and indeed human infrastructure.

I think while we as Australians have been extraordinarily generous to date, we will need to show ongoing generosity and support. I urge Australians to recognise that this will be a long haul. This is in our backyard in South-East Asia; it is part of our community and we have a positive role to play.

I would like to acknowledge the significant response already provided by the Australian government, with more than \$1 billion worth of direct aid and other contributions. The leadership provided by Prime Minister John Howard in this crisis has been exemplary. Similarly the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, has provided a leadership role. I would like to acknowledge our armed services, particularly the role of our medical teams and the teams which perform that absolutely crucial but very difficult task of victim identification. I know a number of those people are from Victoria. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many agencies which have been at the forefront of providing services, and the communities and individuals within Australia who have done such a fantastic job.

Within South-West Coast and western Victoria I would like to acknowledge a couple of individuals and a couple of contributions. Bob Handby, the environmental health officer from Moyne shire, spent two weeks in Banda Aceh and has just returned. His contribution to this and previous disasters has been outstanding. I would like to acknowledge Alan Davis, whom I know personally. He was a teacher at Winchelsea primary school and taught my siblings and is now a teacher in Geelong. He has been to the Maldives as a teacher and an educationalist and he has returned there to make a contribution.

Larry Lawson and Narelle Allen organised a tsunami concert in Warrnambool and raised over \$70 000, which is an enormous effort in the Warrnambool community with just a couple of people, particularly Larry Lawson, in leadership there. In Portland Joel Roberts, Kerry Jennings, John Ferguson, Holly March, Tony Pearce and Joy Ralph organised a tsunami concert which also raised thousands of dollars. There are many service clubs, individuals and groups across western Victoria which have made a great contribution. Ian Ballis from the Mill Markets in Geelong had an auction which raised more than \$60 000. It was organised at short notice but had great support. The local fishing industries in Portland, Port Fairy and Warrnambool have contributed by donating fishing equipment to many areas in Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives where fishing equipment is very much needed.

Australians have done a great job, but there is much more to be done. I urge all Australians to stay in for the long haul.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I rise to join this condolence motion and sincerely pass on my sympathies to the Broadbridge and Giardina families; the Giardina family is with us today.

My experience of the tsunami was relatively personal. On Boxing Day morning I received a phone call from a member of my staff who was caught in Phuket, where he had been holidaying, and experienced the full impact of the tsunami. In a rather crackling conversation over a very difficult phone line he indicated that this disaster had just occurred and that there had been massive loss of life. His message to me was that at least he was safe. It was hard to comprehend the enormity of this disaster so early on in the day.

As the day progressed and we saw the news bulletins I think we all looked on in horror at the extraordinary loss of life over such a large area of the Asia-Pacific region. It was almost incomprehensible. My staff member indicated to me that if he had stayed in the hotel where he normally stayed — he has been a regular visitor to Phuket over a number of years — he almost certainly would have died. It was pure luck that the accommodation he was staying in this time was a little bit further back from the beach. While he certainly experienced the devastation, thankfully he survived this terrible tragedy.

He told me stories of incredible generosity by the Thai people who, in spite of this devastation, tried to respond as best they could, not only to their own people but also to the many visitors from all over the world who had flocked to Phuket over the Christmas period to enjoy the best of what that culture has to offer. He spoke to me of having to go and look into the open morgues for friends whom he thought may have been lost and of the incredible confronting aspects of having to deal with this human tragedy. It was extremely devastating to see photographs of cars and buildings that have just been thrown around like meccano toys.

I want to acknowledge my staff member because not only did he seek to render assistance to his friends but he also stayed on for a period of about 12 days to seek assistance and work with Australian government representatives who had set up in Phuket, as well as United States government representatives. In a small way he tried to make his contribution to support tourists and other people who were trying to at least start the aid effort in Phuket. That has come at a personal cost to my colleague. He has suffered from that trauma, and he

continues to suffer from experiencing that trauma as, I am sure, are the many other people who were there and who survived it, and those families who are experiencing the unimaginable pain of having lost their loved ones in this unspeakable tragedy. I want to applaud my colleague and acknowledge him for the work he did there. We wish him a very speedy recovery.

We must also, of course, acknowledge the extraordinary efforts that have been undertaken by the Victorian community and the rest of the Australian community in their fundraising activities, and the work of the government and non-government sector here in Australia, of which we ought to be proud. It has been a fantastic effort. I know my colleague is going to speak particularly about the appalling tragedies in Sri Lanka in a contribution in a few moments. I commend the work that has been undertaken.

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

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — On Boxing Day last year a natural disaster struck which was a tragedy of enormous proportions that changed the lives of people across the world, particularly in the Asian region. Whilst the lives of people living in the 11 countries hit by the tsunami were changed forever, the rest of the world was also affected. Many people and organisations across the world have held services and raised funds to assist the people in those countries.

In my own electorate of Shepparton the people have been very quick to respond. Shepparton is a multicultural, multifaith community, and many people have friends or family who were living in or visiting those countries when the disaster struck. On 7 January about 400 people from the Shepparton district community came together in an interfaith gathering in response to the tsunami disaster, which was organised by Monsignor Peter Jeffrey, Muhammad Bob Graham, Islamic communities, the Shepparton Interchurch Council, the Ministers Association and Joan McRae Benson.

This service united people of all faiths, including the Christian, Islamic, Sikh, Buddhist, Thai, Sri Lankan and our Aboriginal communities, to pray for those who were still missing with the hope that they would be found soon, to grieve for those who lost their lives, to offer support to their families and friends and to recognise the great work of the rescuers and carers — the doctors, nurses, volunteers, emergency services, police, soldiers, aid workers, pilots and the many other people — and their assistance in doing whatever they

can just to help and provide essentials, such as food, water and shelter. The funds that were raised at that interfaith service went to the Red Cross, which is doing a magnificent job in that area.

Shepparton became the basis of a major fundraising effort for the people in southern India. The president of Assisi Aid Projects, Mr Tom Dumaresq, is working with Sr Stella Edattu. While the convent where she works was not damaged by the tsunami, the waves hit 14 of the fishing villages and destroyed at least 3300 houses. Sr Stella is doing a fantastic job at the moment feeding 1500 people in her backyard at the convent and is being supported very generously by donations which have been organised by Mr Dumaresq.

A number of people from my electorate have travelled to the disaster region to give support and help in whatever way they can, including two nurses who felt compelled to provide their skills and went there to make sure they could help those people who needed care.

The Goulburn Valley fruit growers and the Rotary Club of Mooroopna were also quick to act, wanting to donate a large amount of fresh fruit to the people affected by the tsunami. Mr Santo Varapodio phoned me on 30 December and asked me to speak to the federal Minister for Trade and the federal Minister for Foreign Affairs. I was able to get in contact with their offices on 30 December. While the generosity of the donation of fresh fruit was acknowledged, I was informed that unfortunately the infrastructure in those countries is just not in place and that it would take far too long to get the fresh fruit over there and that obviously it would spoil. Not to be disheartened, the Rotary Club of Mooroopna decided to donate water purifiers and had huge fundraising efforts at its New Year's Eve mardi gras.

Many people have been affected by the horrific images and stories that have been portrayed in the media: the pictures and stories of young people who were killed or injured or orphaned, of old people who were unable to save themselves, and of newly married couples who had just started their lives together and had them shattered by losing their partner. I congratulate the federal government for committing \$1 billion in aid and the state government for its assistance.

There is a need now to rebuild infrastructure — the roads, the bridges, the airstrips, the homes and any other accommodation. There is a need to get confidence back to the countries to allow them to rebuild their economy through tourism and through fishing. There is also a very strong need to establish the healing process

and that will start with the rebuilding of the churches, schools and hospitals.

While I grieve for those who have lost families and loved ones in horrific circumstances, I am also very proud to be an Australian citizen and part of such a generous world community. I am also very proud to be representing an electorate that acted quickly to raise funds and give assistance to communities in need while going through very hard times itself. I hope that the goodwill existing between our countries will continue for a long while to come and that those who have lost loved ones can find some sort of comfort in knowing that many people share their grief and pray for them.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Tourism) — I too join with other members in paying our respects to all the tsunami-affected countries and all those who were visiting those countries from other parts of the world.

This is certainly a tragedy that no-one has experienced in their living memory. Being in our region — and there have been debates about how close we are to and what our relationship should be with Asia — this tragedy has definitely brought us closer together. I hope that we do not have debates about our interests not being closely aligned with those of Asia — they definitely are.

From the number of Australian tourists and Australian residents there, a lot of us have learned about Australian travel and that in those regions there are many Australian business owners with tourism businesses et cetera. We have also learned what a great number of visitors from other countries there are to this region. We have all been shocked by the number of Swedes and Germans who have died — much larger than the number of Australians. So we have learned a lot about our own region, which we may have thought was just a whole lot of developing or Third World countries. I agree that the tragedy has brought us closer together.

I, like other members of the house, want to commend and say how proud I am of Victorians and Australians and the way they have responded without effort — instantaneously and spontaneously — to do the right thing. Maybe it is because it was in the holiday season on Boxing Day and we were all seeing the mass communication on television. We saw what the real world was like and we noticed a lot more of it. Certainly communities have responded immeasurably well. The work continues and I am very proud of the aid organisations and the people who have got behind them. I am very proud of our different ethnic communities and the way they continue to fundraise —

not only the affected communities like the Sri Lankans, the Indians, the Indonesians, the Malaysians and those from the Maldives and from Somalia, but other ethnic communities that have been fundraising and continue to fundraise and are looking at supporting and sponsoring projects.

I have also been very proud of the way the government has handled this situation because normally as a state government we do not get involved in aid projects. The government is normally at a wind-down phase at that time of the year. Being able to talk with the Treasurer and Minister Thwaites about the sorts of things we should be doing and also the phone calls I was getting, not only from parliamentarians but from ethnic communities in my capacity as Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, I am very proud of the way the government responded — \$1.5 million to the four big aid organisations, the symbolism that the Victorian government is there and others should also be encouraged to be there, and the extra \$10 million we have put in as part of the rebuilding effort.

Whilst the initial response was absolutely fantastic and phenomenal, the reality is that these countries will take many years to rebuild. Having been in my early days in Parliament a member of the board of UNICEF Victoria, I am very much aware how hard it is to continually raise funds for aid projects in areas where there is need. The work never ends, and as a country I hope we continue to do more. Our aid support is very low compared with our gross domestic product, but I think the community has a great opportunity to adopt and support projects in the same way the Victorian government has. We are working with different governments on the sorts of projects we can support over the next three or four years. We have already announced \$1 million for a hospital in Hambantota in the southern province of Sri Lanka, a hospital in Ampara district in the eastern province and two schools in those regions totalling about \$1 million.

I want to thank the member for Cranbourne for his leadership and stewardship. He has not only helped mobilise the Sri Lankan community, but has been a good source of advice to many organisations. I know the organisers of the tsunami concert which is being held this Sunday as part of the Melbourne International Music Festival have been talking to the member for Cranbourne about where the money should go. He has also shown great leadership in the programs that the Parliament has adopted as well.

He has also been supported by a lot of people from many different communities. I was pleased to meet, along with the Deputy Premier, a number of the

communities. We have offered ongoing support for those communities — multilingual information about crisis counselling — and also planning together how we can assist in those projects. Some of those projects, as I said, are in Sri Lanka. I also want to commend Janaka Perera, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, and the Consul General in Victoria, for their great work.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — We have all been deeply saddened by the tsunami that swept South-East Asia and beyond on 26 December last year with so much tragic loss of life, homelessness, disease and destruction. We all, I am sure, recall vividly the images that came to us over the following days. Different images would have struck home to each of us in different ways. Those of us who have visited various affected parts of South-East Asia in the past no doubt have been struck by the images of places we have personally seen — in my own case the beach and township at Phuket. But other images also strike our memories.

I recall with particular vividness a television broadcast from what had been a family home in Indonesia, which remarkably had remained intact. It appeared the flood of water had swept through and swept out and receded again, leaving the home with children's homework and books scattered around — the home basically intact, but the family nowhere to be seen. Such images are a stark reminder to all of us of the brevity, frailty and unforeseeability of human life: people who were happily and hopefully going about their business on 26 December, planning and looking forward to the rest of their lives, had this massive wave of water sweep past and destroy everything they had looked forward to.

We rightly mourn and pay tribute in particular to those closest to us — the Victorians and Australians who lost their lives — but as the Leader of the Opposition most forcefully and truly said, there are many thousands of individual stories and tragedies of lives and hopes abruptly ended, and it is important that we remember that every one of those more than 280 000 people who died was a person with their hopes and dreams.

This tragedy is also a stark reminder of the power of nature to overwhelm mere human and mortal structures, plans, arrangements and ambitions. We in this modern age like to think that we have control of our own destiny and have control of the forces of nature, but events such as those of 26 December remind us forcefully that that is not altogether the case. For all these reasons we need in our own lives to resolve to rejoice in and make the most of the opportunities of life that we have. For each of us, we never know when those opportunities are going to end.

In Australia and around the world, as has been said, people have shown enormous generosity and compassion in donating money and goods and other assistance. Reference has been made to the sums pledged by Australians. We have responded as neighbours — our neighbour is in trouble, and we have responded. I think it is as simple as that, and as an aside we can reflect on how it shows that we as Australians have expanded our horizons and now embrace virtually the whole of South-East Asia as our neighbour — and when a neighbour is in trouble we come to help. We helped not only in cash and finance, invaluable as they are; so many of our compatriots have spent their time, their effort and their blood and sweat in the direct hands-on saving of thousands of lives — both our army personnel and our volunteers.

Now the hard and ongoing task of rebuilding gets under way. As other speakers have pointed out, we need to sustain our help beyond just the initial response and make sure we rebuild to help people make something better out of this terrible tragedy. We hope it will lead to putting aside differences in views to build a better future in the common interest.

We also ask how all this happened without notice and without time for reaction. What could have been done to abate the loss of life that was suffered? We must thus also put our efforts into identifying and establishing effective detection and warning systems that will guard as far as is possible against future, similar natural disasters both in South-East Asia and around the world. I extend my condolences to all those who have lost family and friends in this terrible tragedy.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — It is an honour to speak on the condolence motion for the victims of the Boxing Day tsunami. It would appear now that the death toll is much higher than was originally thought and much higher than is shown in the official figures available to us. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to all those who have been affected by the tsunami across all the countries — Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives and Africa.

However, being the only member of Parliament of Sri Lankan origin in this house I would like to comment on how the disaster affected Sri Lanka. Geographically the island of Sri Lanka is slightly bigger than Tasmania and smaller than Victoria, with a population just like Australia's — around 19 million. Sad to say, nearly 35 000 Sri Lankans have perished and over 5000 people are still listed as missing. The bodies are still being found daily.

Sri Lanka is very well known for its fishing trade. Unfortunately we have seen fishing villages disappear and fishing boats wrecked by the tsunami. Members of the fishing community always had a hand-to-mouth lifestyle, living well below the poverty line without any savings or bank accounts. In some cases whole families have been killed by the tsunami and in other cases all but one or two have died. A 30-year-old woman can be an orphan when the rest of her family have perished and her belongings have been washed away.

The sandy beaches of the south coast and the east coast have always been congested with European tourists. In Sri Lanka 45 per cent of tourism and recreation services are handled by small-time, family entrepreneurs. Today the tourist industry is completely dead in those areas and livelihoods have been destroyed. Arugambay on the east coast was known as the fifth best surf beach in the world. This is the place I visited during my visit to Sri Lanka last July.

I met a man from Torquay, an Australian citizen and a keen surfer, who fell in love with the place and has lived there for the past five years. This small town has been completely destroyed. I hope he is safe. The southern and eastern coastlines experienced massive destruction. The tsunami has directly impacted and displaced over 500 000 Sri Lankans.

The International Labour Organisation has estimated that 400 000 people have lost their jobs. The government of Sri Lanka has launched a US\$3.5 billion reconstruction program. This island nation was embattled in a 20-year-long civil war, with soaring foreign debt and an increasing budget deficit, which is now over 7 per cent of its gross domestic product. In the lead-up to the tsunami the trade deficit was over US\$1.1 billion. The disaster was beyond comprehension, and under these circumstances Sri Lanka cannot stand on its own.

The commonwealth government's contribution of about 3 per cent of the total tsunami aid package to Sri Lanka will certainly be helpful. The government and people of Sri Lanka are very grateful to the Victorian government for committing the first 10 per cent of the announced \$10 million in rehabilitation aid to the tsunami-affected countries. Two schools and two hospitals will be built in Ampari and Hambantota districts by the Victorian government. This work will be a monument of friendship between Victoria and Sri Lanka that will go a long way.

I would like to acknowledge a number of organisations, city councils and individuals who have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, donated in kind, and those who

went over there as volunteers to help the tsunami victims of Sri Lanka. I record my special appreciation to the staff of Parliament House, the Speaker, the President and the Sri Lankan parliamentary friendship group who have come together to contribute all their fundraising dollars to a worthy Sri Lankan project.

I am deeply touched to notice that Australians of all origins, from all walks of life, all political persuasions and all religious faiths have come together as a single family entity to render their wholehearted support for the tsunami victims. Shane Warne, Australia's finest leg spinner, who has taken over 500 first-class wickets, took his 500th wicket at Galle Cricket Stadium in Sri Lanka. The stadium has played an integral part in Shane's first-class cricket career. I take my hat off to Shane who has shown his true courage, support and respect to the Sri Lankan community by teaming up with Sri Lanka's top off-spin bowler, Muttiah Muralitharan, in showing his commitment to assist with the rebuilding of Galle stadium and the lives of the affected community. Friends in need are friends indeed. Having been born and lived there I know Sri Lankans well enough to say that they have long memories and will always remember the generosity of all Australians.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to make a couple of comments in relation to the condolence motion before the house on the Boxing Day tsunami. This was a human tragedy of unknown dimensions, and other speakers have referred to the fact that the death toll is already 289 000 with vast numbers of people missing. Obviously my condolences go to the people of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, India, the Maldives, other African nations and, of course, most of all, given the proximity to home, the families of the two Victorians who perished.

I wish to make a couple of observations in relation to this motion. The first is to reiterate an observation made by almost every other speaker on this motion — the outstanding nature of the human response to the tsunami. There was an overwhelming desire to want to help, to want to contribute, but most people did not know quite what to do. In a highly affluent Western nation the immediate response is to help economically. A range of people have helped in a voluntary capacity — people with specialised skills and the like.

The Australian government response was outstanding — \$1 billion committed very speedily. I note also the gracious support of the opposition for that particular package. These things are not always so in Australian politics, and again I commend the Victorian government for a rapid and appropriate response in this area. The specific help has been outlined by other

speakers, so I will not occupy the time of the house going over it.

However, the long-term challenge for us is to maintain this momentum. We have a huge reconstruction task both in personal and economic terms. The Premier referred earlier to the amount of money needed and raised and there is still a long, long way to go. Presumably in the main the international community will provide that gap. It is a huge task both personally and economically which requires the commitment of worldwide communities.

I want to very briefly acknowledge the local response in my electorate of Brighton. A number of local volunteers — people with specialist skills, some in the medical area — contributed to the relief in a low-key way. I also have the very high-profile constituent Shane Warne, who is contributing in a terrific way to reconstruction. I want to acknowledge the work of the Church Street traders and in particular Colin Beruldsen from Bizworks Print and Copy Centre, who organised a Church Street raffle and community event which raised a significant amount of money very quickly at a local level. It is a relatively small contribution, given the overall amounts of money raised, from the traders and residents of Brighton, but is reflective of the desire of a relatively affluent community to do something to assist in this disaster of a dimension that none of us could really quite take in as we watched our televisions on Boxing Day and read our newspapers and the like. I offer my condolences to all those affected.

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Community Services) — I want to support this condolence motion concerning the devastating tragedy, the like of which no-one has seen before. The loss and damage have been absolutely unbelievable. We have all seen it on our television screens and been involved in some way. There have been almost 300 000 people lost, and that number, which is still rising, is hard to comprehend. The scale in terms of the numbers of nations that have been involved is also quite devastating. I want to extend my sympathy to all of those who have suffered loss: the neighbouring nations that were very hard hit; the nationals of many countries who were there as tourists; Australians who lost their lives; and especially the families of the two Victorians who lost their lives, who have joined us here today. My deepest sympathy goes to those families.

The response from Victorians and Australians has been heartening. Indeed there has been a most generous and positive response from people around the world. It has in a way drawn the world's population together. In many ways, as has been said before, it takes the worst

of events to draw out the best in us. We have seen people offering to help in numerous ways, in whatever way they think best. The generosity of people has been absolutely remarkable. Another thing that has been very positive and heartening is that the links between us as nations have become much more obvious and have helped to break down some of the barriers that have been between us. This has been a very positive development that will continue for many years and serve us all very well.

The Department of Human Services has been involved in part of the Australian response. I would like to place on record my thanks for its efforts. The people of the Bundoora electorate have also been very generous and active in their response. I am very pleased to see that and pass on my thanks to them. Reconstruction will take many years, if not decades. We should see this as both an opportunity and a challenge to continue to provide help, to strengthen friendships across borders and to break down the barriers between people and nations.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I rise to support this condolence motion and to express my sympathy and condolences on behalf of all the people of the Rodney electorate. We all remember 26 December 2004. At the time we did not have any concept of the scale of the disaster that was unfolding. In the following days and weeks the scale of that disaster became all too evident. As other speakers have said, some 300 000 people have lost their lives and we will never know exactly what that number is. It includes 18 Australians who lost their lives. There were horrific stories of loss, of miraculous escapes, and there was an immediate outpouring of aid and generosity from this country, which we are all very proud to call our own.

The federal government gave immediate assistance and then pledged a further \$1 billion. Private and corporate donations were very generous, totalling some \$220 million. The Victorian government also gave very generously, as did thousands of individual Victorians giving of their time and their expertise, including the armed forces, the police, the medical teams, the aid agencies and individuals. Our hearts go out to all those directly affected by this disaster.

Australians have been extremely generous, and individuals and organisations in the Rodney electorate have given in a wide variety of ways. I just want to touch on a number of those. Echuca Regional Health is assembling right now a container load of unused medical equipment and beds which will be shipped to Sumatra, where they will be used in a hospital south of Aceh. Echuca Regional Health has donated more than

30 beds as well as medical equipment such as wheelchairs and walking frames, and in a community effort that is typical of country Victoria, Rich River dealers have supplied the container and Neil's Transport has arranged for the shipping and transport of the container.

Echuca residents have been donating toys and equipment to Fr Chris Riley's Youth Off the Streets program. Fr Chris Riley grew up in Echuca, his parents still live there, and he has done some marvellous work in the area. In his speech the Leader of the Opposition talked about the need for orphanages. Fr Chris Riley is establishing an orphanage in Aceh.

Wearing casual clothes and the like, staff at the Shire of Campaspe raised just under \$5000 for the Red Cross to assist communities affected by the disaster. The service clubs in Echuca-Moama donated \$20 000. Murray River Paddlesteamers and Sharp's Magic Movie House held a paddle-steamer cruise on 19 January, with all of those proceeds going to Care Australia.

The Echuca-Moama Rotary Club raised more than \$5000 for the appeal. The Echuca Lions donated \$1000 for the appeal and plans to add to that with some of the proceeds of its work at the Southern 80 in Echuca-Moama. This support extends right across the electorate. The Rochester Rotary Club raised more than \$5000 to contribute to victims of the tsunami through a fundraising auction and donations. Kyabram residents donated clothing, sheets, towels, toys, schoolbooks and money to the appeal, and in this case the goods have been shipped to Sri Lanka.

The board of directors of the Kyabram Club, in a very generous donation, approved a funding proposal, representing a contribution of \$1.80 for every member of the club, and this goes directly to assist the villagers of Betapur to purchase a fishing vessel and nets. A 12-year-old in Kyabram, Dru Shaw, teamed up with the town's local newspaper, the *Kyabram Free Press*, to have his cartoons converted into a calendar to raise money for the relief effort. That initiative raised \$2000. Ten-year-old Amelia McCaskie of Kyabram raised more than \$300 for the tsunami relief by doorknocking houses in Kyabram.

The Cohuna Lions Club knocked on doors and received donations, and it has given very generously to the appeal. Likewise in Nathalia, the Court House Hotel raised more than \$2000 for the appeal. Tongala held a great country music festival which raised a considerable amount of money; and in Gunbower two 10-year-old girls, Caitlin Kaldow and her friend Ebony Munzel doorknocked the town and raised a magnificent \$3300.

Our hearts go out to all of those directly affected by this disaster.

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — I rise to support the condolence motion. I remember clearly when I first heard that a tidal wave had hit a number of Asian communities. It was not until many hours later that I came to understand the extent and the scale of the disaster, which continued to grow by the hour. For many of us it has been very hard to comprehend. We have seen the pictures of loss and devastation and of grief and fear, but for me what really brought it home was what happened on a flight back from Sydney on New Year's Eve. I met two of a number of Victorians who had flown into Sydney on the Qantas flight from Colombo and had the opportunity of being one of the first people in Australia to hear their story of the holiday in Sri Lanka that had not gone as predicted.

Their experience is typical of those of so many other Australians who were overseas on holidays in a number of the affected countries. They were lucky to escape with their lives. They lost everything — clothes, money and passports; however, they were helped and supported by the Sri Lankan people, who, despite their own losses, provided them with food, shelter and transport. As a result they have been left with an overwhelming sense of wanting to repay that generosity and help the communities that have been affected. I suppose one of the questions you ask at times like these is: what hope can you find in a tragedy like this? For me that has been the hope found in the human kindness and generosity expressed so overwhelmingly throughout the world, in Australia, in Victoria and in the communities of Bellarine and Geelong.

In Geelong the first coming together after this tragedy was in an ecumenical service held at St Mary's Catholic church, which I was very pleased to be able to attend, where people from across the region came to grieve and offer their support to all those who had been affected by the tsunami. People donated money and time, and there continues to be a sense of wanting to do more.

Today I want to acknowledge the local individuals and organisations who have put their energy into trying to make some sort of difference. Many groups have worked in the Geelong region to raise money. The cricketers from Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula raised nearly \$6500 in a weekend fundraiser for CARE Australia and the Lions Club International tsunami fund. A Twenty 20 tsunami benefit between the Bellarine X1 and Geelong Invitational X1 was played under the lights at Memorial Park, Leopold, before over 700 supporters. The Leopold Cricket Club and the local community came together and raised that money by

holding auctions and offering prize money et cetera. Bellarine won by nine runs! The Geelong tsunami appeal concert was also held at the weekend, and I want to congratulate the artists who donated their time, as well as the organisers through Deakin University, who contributed many resources to make it possible.

Residents at retirement villages also raised money: The Geelong Grove Retirement Village raised over \$4000. Congratulations! We have had contributions from the Greater Geelong City Council and from the Borough of Queenscliffe, which also donated in a very quick response. We have had businesses like Bunnings, the Cheesecake Shop, the Bush Inn Hotel and Mill Markets. Rotary clubs across Geelong and Bellarine have held sausage sizzles and street parties and are collecting bandages to send overseas. We have also had some outstanding individuals. In particular Alan Davies, the principal of Newcomb Secondary College, led a team of volunteers in a mission to help build schools in the Maldives. I thank Alan for his contribution, We miss him at Newcomb, but I know his skills will go a long way towards helping to rebuild the Maldives education system.

I also acknowledge Dr Richard Page and Dr Eugene Athan, who are employees of Barwon Health and who have helped by using their medical skills in Indonesia. I want to finish off by saying that in an interview Eugene Athan said that despite the ruin and despite the sadness there are glimmers of hope and that the people have great strength, and that is where we can continue to move forward on this.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — There is almost nothing you can say in this debate which could engender sufficient description of the events which have taken place in the Indian Ocean. It is simply for us to be in awe of the power of the ocean and to be demonstrating — as best we can — whatever empathy and support are possible for those affected. It is also a cruel reminder of the fragility of life and the fragility of the necklace of islands and nations which circle the Indian Ocean. It has perhaps touched Australians particularly because of our affection for the coast and our affection for the ocean. Other members have spoken at length about the contributions of the federal and state governments. I absolutely support those commentaries.

I want to make mention of a few people who have made great contributions, both at a national level and a local level. I want to single out Bruce Billson, the member for Dunkley. Bruce is a parliamentary secretary, and he found himself in a situation where he was frequently required to respond on behalf of the

government over the holiday period. Bruce did a magnificent job. He was always available. He provided information in detail. He also provided compassion and understanding, which I think Australian people were looking for. I pay tribute to Bruce in that exercise. I also single out all the Australian agencies, particularly Red Cross, World Vision and CARE Australia, as well as Tim Costello, who likewise provided great leadership through this period and no doubt will into the future.

On a local level I want to make mention of many people who have contributed to fundraising in a way which perhaps for Victorians is reminiscent of our Good Friday Royal Children's Hospital appeal, where the appeal has basically consumed our society and we have all been working as one. That is one of the positives that have come out of this tragedy, and many members have spoken of it. I want to mention in particular the City of Boroondara, the Rotary Club of Hawthorn and especially Jason Thomas, who organised a campaign to support particular villages in Sri Lanka. Jason is a Hawthorn resident who has given up his time to collect, sort and assess a huge variety of non-prescription medical goods which have been provided by the Boroondara community. In particular I also mention Sigma, which contributed significantly to that effort. I have seen that collection of material. It is an extraordinary contribution. The Rotary Club of Hawthorn and Jason are there ensuring that it is delivered on the ground at this moment.

I want to mention also the Mill Markets in Geelong and Ian Ballis and the extraordinary auction they ran, which raised some \$60 000. Virtually every restaurant, bakery and shop has run a tin-on-the-counter campaign, and I am sure we have all contributed to those. I mention the children who were on the beach collecting money in buckets. They too were part of this enormous effort. I also mention Sing Australia, the Hawthorn and Camberwell choirs who have graced the halls in here in the last couple of years. Aneke Smit, Brendan, Brian and their teams ran a fabulous concert which I attended. It was again a wonderful contribution and an enormous sum of money was raised.

I would also like to mention Jon Faine, whom I came across at a beach event. This was within a few days and Jon had brought together a number of people and under the auspices of Red Cross was collecting. That was a magnificent effort at very short notice. These are people who recognised very quickly the import of what was going on in the Indian Ocean. On behalf of the people of Hawthorn I thank them all for their contributions, and I trust that none of us will let this go and that the contributions will continue into the future. My thoughts are with everybody affected.

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — Just as the tsunami hit with an impact, a devastation and a loss of life unprecedented and unknown in our part of the world in modern times, so too has the community reaction been extraordinary. It has been of a breadth and depth that I have not seen in my lifetime, and I doubt whether anybody else has.

One particular group in my electorate that responded to an extraordinary degree comprised those Australians in the community with a Vietnamese background. At last reckoning the efforts of the Vietnamese-speaking community not only in my electorate but across Australia had raised some \$700 000. The community quickly sprang into action via an SBS radiothon appeal in Melbourne and Sydney.

I had the pleasure to attend a function at Happy Receptions in Union Road, Ascot Vale, which raised some \$25 000, quickly followed in the third week of January by a similar function which raised nearly \$30 000. The owner of the reception centre donated its use for these occasions and also donated the food to enable every cent raised to be used for the tsunami appeal.

I pay tribute to the extraordinary leadership of the abbot of the Quang Minh temple in Braybrook, the Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan, and his rallying of formidable resources, particularly the human resources of the Vietnamese-speaking community, to the effort. He had many others of the Buddhist faith participating with him, including Tibetan monks, who were present at the function. I also pay tribute to the leadership of Hung Chau, the president of the Victorian chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, to Peter Nguyen, the deputy president of the Footscray Asian Business Association, and to the indefatigable Cuc Lam, a former councillor of the City of Maribyrnong, who literally works her fingers to the bone to ensure these efforts are successful.

The question is sometimes asked how in these circumstances people who have been through so much as refugees — for example, as boat people attacked by pirates and with all the family devastation they have gone through — could be so generous and rally round these causes. The countries of Thailand and Indonesia were important landing places for the boat people; they were places of refuge that enabled them to break their long journey to freedom. Many of these people with Vietnamese backgrounds remember fondly the assistance they received in Indonesia and Thailand. It really struck a chord, with extraordinary numbers of participants rallying round and raising money to assist this Australia-wide and worldwide effort of restoration.

I pay tribute to that community and to the many other Australians who have rallied so compassionately to this great cause.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — Every person has a set of core values, and it is these common values that bind us as human beings. Values of sympathy, mercy, fairness, compassion, peace, love and friendship are universal values. Recently the world has had the opportunity to witness these common values in action.

On 26 December 2004 the biggest earthquake for 40 years occurred in the Indian Ocean. Registering 9 on the Richter scale, it occurred approximately 30 kilometres beneath the earth's surface. In deep water the tsunami moved at up to 800 kilometres an hour, and when it reached the coasts it increased in height. The coastal areas had no warning of the approaching tsunami. The only signs came just before it struck, when the waterline suddenly retreated, exposing hundreds of metres of seabed. It hit Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand very hard. It caused close to 289 000 deaths, but the real number will never be known.

This natural disaster has brought unbelievable and unbearable grief to so many people. Children too weak to hold on perished, while other children were swept from their mothers' arms. Others were left alone, hungry and destitute. Many faced agonising searches for their loved ones. Millions have been left homeless. However, out of misery we have seen compassion, out of grief we have seen sympathy and out of sadness we have seen friendship — the world united to assist and care for those who were affected.

A student in one of my local primary schools lost 40 members of their family in Sri Lanka. While some schools have decided not to discuss this with their students, others have taken a different stance. For example, Templestowe Heights Primary School is organising an appeal concert for this Friday night. It has been registered with the Save the Children fund, and visitors and parents will be entertained by students who have given up their valuable time to help other children in need. I wish to pay tribute to the principal, Meredith, and to the staff and students for giving up their valuable time.

Another school, Manningham Park Primary School, recorded what students felt about the tsunami disaster. I wish to read some of what they said. Harry, who is five years old, said, 'When I saw the tsunami on TV I was shocked'. Brian, who is six years old, said, 'I want to donate money so they can build their houses again. It makes me feel happy that they can get their houses

back'. Daniel, who is seven years old, said, 'I feel bad about what happened in Asia. It has killed so many people! I am devastated. How can people live their lives? All Australians should donate to the tsunami appeal. They need more food and water! Every cent ... will make a difference'.

Disha, who is nine years old, said, 'I thank the people who donated clothes, shelter and food for the people who got hit by this terrible disaster. I think it is very sad and disturbing. Some people were lucky they escaped the disaster, and remember it could be us'. Finally Emily, who is 10 years old, said: 'My thoughts about the tsunami is, well, I am scared. I feel sorry for the people who had to go through all that. I think it is good that people are donating money. I would really want to give as much food as I could to those people. I think it would be scary if it happened to us'.

I also wish to pay tribute to the Manningham City Council, which organised a multifaith service that brought many community leaders together. It was very uplifting, and it was great to see what other people felt. Finally, on behalf of the people of Bulleen, I pass on my condolences to those who lost loved ones. I pray that it never happens again.

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — I think it is fair to say that the events of Boxing Day 2004 will be forever etched in our minds. As with other dreadful tragedies we will be able to recall where we were and what we were doing at the time the Asian tsunami brought so much suffering to the region. Each day, it seemed, new footage appeared, and the enormity of it all became increasingly clear. The mounting toll of lives lost, the pain, the grief and the suffering were beyond what most of us can imagine.

As the toll climbed I realised that the loss of life in Sri Lanka alone was almost equivalent to the population of the electorate I represent, Yuroke. Many of my constituents are of Sri Lankan origin, and as the co-patron of the Sri Lankan Disaster Relief Fund and the convenor of Friends of Sri Lanka in this Parliament, I feel it is appropriate that my contribution focus on that country. Sri Lanka is a proud country with a rich history. It has survived and thrived through even the most difficult times. Its people are some of the warmest and most generous I have come across. The local Sri Lankan community and the wider community of Yuroke have demonstrated this most profoundly over recent weeks. They have shown great loyalty and commitment and have achieved amazing results. I would like to acknowledge some of the people whose generosity and selflessness has been so greatly appreciated.

I give my heartfelt thanks to a number of people and community groups in Yuroke who have participated in the relief effort. I asked residents, through the local media, for donations of school supplies, Dettol, bandages and bandaids, which could be delivered to my office and from there be sent on to Sri Lanka via the honorary consul for Sri Lanka, Dr Rodney Arambwela. The response has been outstanding, with individuals as well as local businesses and schools collecting and dropping in supplies. Elaine Williams and other Qantas staff, staff and students of the St Carlo Borromeo School and the Upper Plenty Primary School community all arranged to collect donated items and have them delivered to my office.

Mr Chandra Bamanusighe, a Greenvale resident, took annual leave from his job and flew to the devastated coast of Sri Lanka and was actively involved in the delivery of urgently needed supplies, the relaying of information back to anxious family members and providing first-hand accounts and assessment of the ongoing needs of the area.

The Craigieburn-based Fijian Social and Cultural Organisation of Victoria — a small community group that is just starting out — had a barbecue and raised \$1370 which it donated to the Sri Lankan disaster relief fund. Mrs Joan Dudman and members of Selwyn House in Craigieburn are continuing to collect items which will be shipped to Sri Lanka. The Brotherhood of St Lawrence and the Craigieburn and Sri Lankan communities have coordinated efforts to send surplus medical equipment such as wheelchairs, frames and cots via a shipping container provided by Ford Australia. Hume City Council and Dianella Community Health are sending staff members to devastated areas for three months to assist with the rebuilding efforts.

Much has been said about the generosity of Australians in recent months and it has been an honour to witness that wonderful spirit of giving first-hand at the very grassroots level within my community. The rebuilding of damaged infrastructure and lives is a long-term project that will require sustained and unwavering commitment. It will be a privilege to play a role in that rebuilding process over the coming months and years. Through the Parliamentary Friends of Sri Lanka group I look forward to making further contributions and continuing the great efforts that I have been honoured to be part of at a local level with the residents of Yuroke.

To all those who have contributed I say a heartfelt, 'Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have been extraordinarily generous and I know that generosity will continue'.

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — It is hard to believe that on Christmas Day we were all reunited with our families having Christmas lunch and playing cricket, with the great focus being on the family, and that we then woke up the next day — Boxing Day — realising that something was not quite right. It was quite amazing to see the story unfold. We were told that there were some deaths, then it became many deaths and then it became a disaster. The footage we saw on the television night after night and the articles and photographs that we saw in the newspapers were just horrific.

For a long time I kept thinking how it must have been for parents in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia looking for children who were lost. I cannot imagine anything more devastating to a parent than not being able to find your child. The flipside of that is for all those young children who could not find a parent or family member. Over and over again you hear so many stories of children losing 17 or 18 family members — brothers, sisters, uncles and aunties. It must be absolutely devastating. The Leader of the Liberal Party said today that one of the first priorities in Sri Lanka was to get money to build an orphanage. It is not just for a roof and food for those little kids; it is a matter of trying to get them educated and get their lives back together again because these kids will be scarred for life.

Nineteen Australians have been confirmed dead and eight are missing. Of course, all our thoughts and prayers go to all those families — especially to the families of the eight who are still missing, because they do not have closure. It must be devastating that with every single day that goes past they have still not been able to get that closure.

The way the Australian government acted made me proud to be an Australian. All credit goes to the Prime Minister for acting so quickly. It demanded immediate action and Australians reacted. Within 36 hours of the disaster essential supplies from AusAID were on their way, four RAAF Hercules aircraft had departed, and there were more flights of funded medical teams and an immediate deployment of four participants in the United Nations disaster assessment team to get people on the ground to see what was going on. That is of great credit to them.

Then there is \$1 billion over five years — \$500 million in grants, and \$500 million in concessional loans over 40 years. That very point is important, in that it is not just a matter of giving aid for the first 12 months. The Australian government has seen fit to make sure there will be loans over a 40-year period. This is a commitment to the long-term building of Indonesia.

The response to this particular disaster has been very good, and the media need praise and congratulations for this. There has been a real emphasis on where our money is being spent, and the media has done a very good job on that. It is okay for the aid agencies to be asking for more money, and Australians are very generous putting their hands in their pockets, but the media has gone to great lengths, as have the aid agencies, to show where that money is being spent — on reconstructing shelters, water purification, food and the rebuilding of other vital infrastructure, in which Australians have expertise.

I also pay great tribute to the Australian Federal Police state police disaster victim identification team which was in Phuket. That must have been an awful job. Families would have been putting pressure on them to hurry up and find and identify people who were presumed missing and feared dead. They had to act in accordance with protocol and make doubly sure that everything was right when identifying people, because there would be nothing worse than wrongly identifying a person because of pressure from families.

They acted accordingly, and in very difficult circumstances they did an outstanding job and certainly did Australia proud. On that sad note I offer my condolences to all those families in those Asian countries.

Ms GILLET (Tarneit) — I too would like to offer my condolences, my sympathy and my affection to those who lost loved ones in the Boxing Day tsunami. Losing a loved one in any circumstance is always tragic and always difficult to cope with, but loss on the scale that the tsunami produced I find incomprehensible to this day.

I am proud to be able to make this small contribution today to say thank you and to sing the praises of my community for their contribution to assisting the survivors of the tsunami. When natural disasters like the tsunami occur, people often struggle to understand why. I am not going to offer any solution other than to observe that when there is so much strife going on in the world, so much that is not right, so much conflict and so much pain and hurt, one begins to wonder just what has happened to the human spirit.

The one thing the tsunami has proved is that the human spirit, when push comes to shove, is prepared to be generous, thoughtful and active in helping brother and sister human beings. That is the one thing we can be proud of, and it is the one thing that is helping to restore my faith.

I would like to record my congratulation of those people and organisations in my community that have made a contribution to helping the victims of the tsunami. I too have to say at the outset that while providing money and goods is terribly important, the most significant contribution that has been made by members of our local communities, the Australian community broadly and the international community is that the people who have been so disastrously affected by the tsunami know that somebody cares. Indeed, they know the whole world cares!

In my community the members of the Werribee RSL have been wonderful. They have conducted all sorts of fundraising activities, from coffee drives to rattling tin cans. There are donation tins available not just at the RSL, but all around the community. The Rotary Club of Hoppers Crossing has decided that it wants to be there for the long term. It wants to provide long-term assistance through various projects it has started that involve reconstruction of villages and the necessary infrastructure to support those villages.

The Rotary Club of Wyndham made an immediate and significant donation to World Vision. Also, it is linking with a number of our local schools so that the effort and energy of our young people can be steered in the direction of looking after and perhaps adopting young people in those countries most affected. Derrimut Heath Primary School is one of the schools. It is having an out-of-uniform day shortly. Everything it raises from that will go to the appeal. It is also looking at sponsoring three or four students, which is a wonderful, practical thing to do.

I am quite proud of my council, Wyndham City Council, ably led by Ian Robins, a wonderful chief executive officer. The council invited numerous local groups such as service clubs, schools, different ethnic groups, churches, the chamber of commerce and everybody to a meeting last week to discuss the further direction for fundraising and support. Many Wyndham residents have already supported fundraising by donating to the Salvation Army, Red Cross and to CARE Australia. But this meeting was to look at future and long-term commitment. Gordon Holland of CARE Australia was the guest speaker; he indicated that money had been raised for short-term objectives.

We are forming a task force. It will meet next Monday and looking at a couple of special things. We are looking at adopting a village or an area to help rebuild and provide materials and people to help rebuild. We are also looking at providing practical things such as fishing boats and sewing machines because we understand that many of the people most immediately

affected were self-employed. I congratulate my community and applaud the wonderful stories that members have mentioned about their communities as well. It is a long-term effort.

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — All Australians have surely been affected by the tsunami disaster. It was with a sense of horror, followed by a sense of profound sympathy, that we viewed what happened to so many countries around the world. It was one of the world's worst tragedies. It was an unbelievable sensation to hear and read about and see the devastation that occurred.

One of the saddest things is that it occurred to so many people least able to afford it and in many ways least able to recover from it. The tragic loss of life is to my mind incomprehensible. A disaster of that magnitude is something that hopefully we will never see again. It is certainly one that does rock you to your bootstraps. The other thing that is so sad is the impact on the remaining members of the communities. There is a real resilience in those communities. They have to be congratulated on their ability to withstand what one could not in any way reconcile to unless one were actually in it.

This tragedy has really brought out the best in all Australians. We heard the last member speak about her community, and each one of us would be aware of similar stories in their communities. It is a time to be proud of being an Australian because of the response that so many individuals and communities have made in so many different ways. I too am very proud of communities in my electorate that have responded in similar ways. We had a remarkable event at Beechworth, which attracted a lot of people. It was done purely by two families getting together and trying to do something, and I think this was reflected right across Australia.

The initial response by the state and federal governments is to be applauded. As an individual I commend those in the state government for their quick action, and I think the federal government's response was recognised worldwide.

I want to finish by expressing my sympathy for all the families in Victoria and throughout Australia who have been affected either directly or indirectly by this tragedy. I share my sympathy with others who have spoken on this event and with people throughout the world, particularly those in the countries most directly affected.

Mr LIM (Clayton) — So much has been said already about the scale of the destruction and what it

means to those who are affected. There has also been much spoken about the generosity of the response to the disaster and the amount of money raised to help those unfortunate people.

My contribution to the motion will take a slightly different angle — that is, to bring to the attention of the house and alert members to another aspect of this whole thing that we probably need to be careful about and to watch. We could very easily let our emotions carry us away because of the enthusiasm for good deeds that this disaster has generated.

The stories that keep coming back to me are the ones about the victims who have not received any help. In particular I refer to Burmese victims near the border of Thailand and Burma. All members in the chamber would be aware that because of its political situation Burma is probably the least economically developed of the tsunami-affected countries. A lot of Burmese residents have migrated legally or illegally — mostly illegally — as refugees into Thailand to find work. I understand that at least 8000 of them have been affected by the tsunami in Thailand. We have no real figures or statistics for what is happening in Burma itself because the regime is controlling information and will not let the world know how the tsunami has affected its country.

My heart goes out to those Burmese illegal workers who have been affected. I understand that they are not allowed any help at all. In fact a reliable source reported from the affected area that Médecins sans Frontières had been trying to help, but its workers were apprehended and locked up by the local Thai authorities for trying to help the Burmese community. The situation is such that these Burmese people cannot identify themselves as refugees because if they are identified as being Burmese they will be sent back to Burma. They have nothing. They are in bad shape because of the trauma and tragedy they have suffered. I hope that somehow their plight is recognised and that some of the millions and millions that have been raised here will reach them as well.

My other concern is that it is so easy to take for granted the ongoing problem in the northern part of Sri Lanka. Because of the continuing conflict I am concerned about the amount of aid that is getting through to that area. We need to be alert to that situation and make sure that the real victims are being helped in the true sense of the word.

In Indonesia the response in the Aceh area is incredibly overwhelming. The federal government is going to spend something like \$1 billion over the next five years.

I am also concerned about some other reports I have heard. In some countries in South-East Asia there is a long tradition of hatred of their Chinese minorities. Sometimes when there is a calamity of this nature these people are deprived of help. I would be very disturbed if that were the case, and I hope the situation will be addressed by the Indonesian authorities in a meaningful way as they respond to the goodwill of the whole world.

In the short time available I want to pay tribute to all the people in the Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Singhalese, Tamil, Indonesian and Vietnamese communities in my electorate and all over Melbourne. During the past month they have done tremendous work in raising funds for the Salvation Army, World Vision, Red Cross and a whole range of other aid organisations. They are the unsung heroes; they have done so much, and we should be very proud of their activities in helping the unfortunate people affected by the tsunami.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — The tsunami that occurred on Boxing Day 2004 is certainly not the first tsunami that has affected the world dramatically, and it will not be the last, but by any judgment it was certainly the worst. There have been at least 290 000 victims so far, and probably a lot more are still to be found in the ruins, particularly in the Aceh province of Indonesia.

It is a tragedy that has affected so many countries in the Pacific and in the Indian Ocean area, including Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives and Burma, as well as several others on the coast of Africa. It is a world catastrophe of enormous proportions. We know that at some time in the future there will be other tsunamis. There will be tsunamis in the Pacific area, and there will probably be one, if not more, in the Atlantic Ocean area as well. The world has had a taste of what these massive events can do, and it has been shocked by that.

In this country we often witness the generosity and compassion of Australians; we take it all a bit for granted. Whenever there are major bushfires, floods or other natural disasters in this country Australians always come to the fore, and they come to the fore rapidly. Many people in this country who have been dramatically affected by tragedy have been assisted in great ways by other Australians. In this particular instance the world has had a chance to see how Australians react. We did react. We reacted quickly, and we can say with some degree of pride and without too much backslapping that we led the world in our response to this enormous disaster.

Along with other members I congratulate the Australian government, led by the Prime Minister, John Howard, on the terrific response it immediately provided to affected countries, and that was followed very quickly by a response from all state governments including the government of Victoria. I thank this government for its generosity, and the speed with which it responded also deserves congratulations.

In my community the high level of support is pretty much the same as has been recounted by other members when speaking about their local communities. The day after the tsunami I rang the Red Cross call centre not only to donate money but also to volunteer my services, and I was pleasantly surprised when the person who answered the phone was one of my constituents. She said they had been literally buried under the number of phone calls and donations they were receiving. That was evident, of course, when the Red Cross cut off its appeal after donations reached \$80 million because it had received more than it needed. That was a fantastic result, and other agencies raising money had similar responses. There was a plethora of community organisations, individuals and businesses in my electorate that simply could not do enough. They did as much as they possibly could and are still doing a lot to assist the victims of this terrible tragedy.

This event has touched the lives of every Australian. As a Melbourne Football Club member and supporter, I was touched by the terrible tragedy that hit Troy Broadbridge and his new wife in Thailand, and I know that every football supporter in this state, and probably throughout this country, felt their hearts tugged by what happened to Troy Broadbridge.

But of course there were so many other victims and as a member said when speaking just before me, there are families now in Australia who still do not know what has happened to members of their families. They have people missing, and there has been no closure. What a terrible thing for them to have to endure.

Here in this country we grieve for those who died. We pray for those who survived, and we will, I know, continue to do everything we can to assist to foster the recovery of the nations that have been so badly affected.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I join with other members of the house in expressing on behalf of the people of Burwood their condolences on the massive loss of life and suffering following the tsunami on Boxing Day that devastated parts of South-East Asia, South Asia, the Indian Ocean and Africa. Thousands of

people, including two young Victorians, lost their lives. Our hearts go out to the families and friends at such a loss.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Thailand, Myanmar and other countries were rendered homeless. Indeed whole towns and whole villages were swept away. Australia, and Victoria, responded spontaneously and magnificently to this disaster. Thousands of community groups and millions of Australians, indeed practically all Australians, immediately acted to help. I commend in particular the responses of people in my electorate and surrounding areas to assist not only with immediate, urgent needs but also for long-term reconstruction. It was a matter of trying to meet the immediate needs of people but also looking at the long-term rebuilding of the lives of people.

Truckloads of most-needed medical supplies, clothing and food were donated by the people in one of the municipalities in my area, Boroondara, for Sri Lanka with the aim of helping the tsunami relief effort. Overwhelming response was received from the local appeal which was coordinated by the Hawthorn resident, Jason Thomas. I commend him in particular. Support came from various people and organisations including local pharmacies, transport companies, Rotary and council. It was a combined effort and the materials were stored at the local council. With the assistance of AusAID, the supplies left for Sri Lanka on Monday, 7 February, to provide relief and comfort to hundreds of people affected by the tragedy in Sri Lanka.

I also mention many other local groups such as the Lions Club of Boroondara-Gardiner's Creek which sent donations to its counterparts in other countries. Another example was a concert held at St Dominic's Church in Camberwell, from which funds raised were sent to relief appeals. I also want in particular to mention two local children who said to their parents, 'We want to help'. Daniel and Amelia Bertolini decided to do something to help the children overseas by busking in local shops. They got their violins out and they busked for several days. Another child from down the street joined them and they raised \$671 that people threw into their violin cases while they were playing — a spontaneous effort so representative of many parts of our community.

I also mention two local cricket clubs. The Burwood Uniting Canterbury Cricket Club — the Burwood Bulls — and the Eastern Willows Cricket Club last week held a one-off Twenty20 cricket match to raise funds. About five players from the Burwood Bulls

came from Sri Lanka; their friends and families had been affected by the tsunami. The two neighbouring clubs got together, played a cricket match and had a big barbecue. The local businesses all pitched in and provided sponsorship. That effort raised over \$3000.

While that happened only last week they are now looking to the future, and the funding will go to building houses in Sri Lanka. A new house can be built there for around \$2000. They have made arrangements with a Sri Lankan company, Ceylinco, to use these funds to build houses there. Earlier they collected 80 large boxes of clothing for Sri Lanka, and I pay tribute to Ami Amarakoon of the Burwood club who organised the match with the help of club presidents Peter Nicholls and Rodney Piltz. Thanks also go to the many sponsors and supporters.

As an Australian and a former assistant director-general of AusAID, I am particularly proud of the response Australia has made, particularly through its disaster emergency response team, coordinated by AusAID in Canberra as well as overseas. I am particularly proud of the work of non-government organisations such as Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Care Australia, the Red Cross, World Vision, Caritas Australia and AngliCORD, the headquarters of which in Camberwell I recently visited. These organisations have done a marvellous job of contributing to the disaster response and to the long-term reconstruction of the lives of the people in these countries.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I join my colleagues in supporting the motion before the house in relation to the devastation caused by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. I am sure many of us who have had the good fortune to visit that area of the world understand that the people affected are great and gentle people. I have had the fortune to visit Thailand and the island of Koh Samui in the past and to spend quite some time there. The people of those countries are also gentle. They live in very humble dwellings, but they seem content with their lot in life.

On the day the tsunami hit I was sitting in my lounge at home in Colac with my daughter, who had just finished an intensive course in Melbourne. She was thumbing through her travel itinerary; she was due to be in Banda Aceh and Phi Phi Island in a week's time. We were sitting there discussing her trip when the first newsreels started to flow through about problems being experienced in that area. We were discussing the fact that she had been suggesting to her supervisors in Melbourne that she would like to have left a couple of weeks earlier, which would have put her in one of the worst affected areas on Boxing Day.

As the events unfolded and the true devastation was realised, I was struck by a number of emotions. The first was one of great relief, then one of guilt. You were relieved that a member of your family was fortunate enough not to have been caught up in that devastation, but when you realised the extent of the loss of life, the injury and the devastation to other communities there was a feeling of absolute grief for the people involved and their families. As I was sitting here in the Parliament today I looked up into the public gallery and could not help but think of the family of Paul Giardina. His parents lost their son and the family was devastated; yet here I am and through a set of different circumstances I still have my daughter with me. I have had flashbacks many times since that day and have thought what could have been and how fortunate I am. Perhaps someone was looking down on me and my family at that time. We were not affected by that disastrous day, which devastated so many families and so many communities.

Always out of such events comes some good in the world. The response by the Australian and Victorian public to this disaster can only be described as totally overwhelming. When you look at the Australian people you see that we are a young country. You only have to go back a couple of generations to spot our newest arrivals — and many have arrived on our shores only recently. I think those people have always brought with them not only a great sense of boldness and entrepreneurialism but also a tremendous sense of generosity. When you think about the reasons why these people have packed up and left other countries, it usually has been to find a future for members of their families. A great spirit of generosity has been created within Australia. I think we have a gene pool which demonstrates that we are a very generous people.

That was, as I said, demonstrated from that day right through the process of assisting people in all those countries affected by the tsunami so they were able to at least get their lives back into some form of order after the disaster. As we know, these are early days, and the last thing you would want to happen to some of those countries is their being affected by ongoing poverty because of the disaster. There is a great challenge in front of Victoria and the rest of Australia to ensure that we continue to give to those countries the support that has been given up to date. I extend my condolences to the families affected.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — I would also like to contribute to the tsunami condolence motion. I extend my sincere sympathy and condolences to all those families and friends who unfortunately lost loved ones on 26 December, Boxing Day. Unfortunately many

people lost not just one loved one but entire families, and that is a tragedy. As a family man I cannot fathom how one could cope with such a disaster.

Today I would like to pay tribute to the life of Paul Giardina, a local resident of Rosanna, which is within my electorate. As we all know, Paul was taken by the tsunami on the morning of 26 December while having breakfast with his mother and father. I learnt of this while I was also on holidays and reading the paper with my family around me, not far from a beach. It struck me while watching my family what a tragedy it would be to have a wave such as that come through and pinch one of your children. It is a tragedy I cannot quite get over even today. We all love our children very much, and to have one taken from us, like Paul, is beyond belief. I would like to pay tribute to Paul, and probably the best way of doing that in the brief time I have is to quote some of the things said about him by many of his relatives. I will not name them all because the number is countless. Some family members described him as a 'sweet, sweet boy'. One newspaper notice reads:

God, please fold your arms around Paul and hold him close to you. Always a part of us, never forgotten ...

Another family member said that she would miss Paul's 'enormous hugs and cheeky smile'. Paul's smile was referred to in most of the comments in the newspaper. He had a great smile. One notice says that he was a:

happy-go-lucky young man with a smile from ear to ear and a big heart full of so much love.

They are the tributes from his family members. I know Paul's loss devastated his family, and I extend my condolences particularly to his mother and father, Evanna and Joseph, and to his sister, Carla, who fortunately was not with them on their holiday because she was starting a new job.

That tragedy hit us all. I would like to pay tribute to the federal government and all state governments for getting behind the mammoth task of sending money, all sorts of equipment and people, and for doing as much as we can to assist all the nations suffering from the tsunami. It is an enormous effort which will not be resolved in weeks or months but will take years. I know governments of all political persuasions have dedicated that support. My local community has also got behind managing the disaster. The City of Banyule has been particularly generous and is holding a number of events and contributing funds as well. I am aware that local residents are also trying to organise a local committee to work with the council to raise awareness of the issue. The process will be ongoing. The City of Banyule is

trying to find a village in a country somewhere to adopt. We have to work out the best way to contribute. It is a painstaking effort, but it will be done in the next couple of months. As I said, the support will be ongoing, not just for this year but for future years.

I pay tribute to everyone across the nation. We have had an outpouring of not only grief but also support, which is testimony to what this great country is all about. We want to support people who need our help. I again extend my condolences to the Giardina family and to all those families that have suffered, and I will give my ongoing support as a member of Parliament and as a family man. I will certainly help wherever I can.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — It is not a very happy duty to join in this motion. I want to say a few words about the tourism industry and the area affected by the tsunami. The tourism industry within parts of Thailand especially has been devastated by the tsunami. In Thailand the industry was very established, but Sri Lanka was just starting to establish itself as a wonderful destination. Unfortunately the tsunami has set the tourism industry in Sri Lanka back years, and it will take a long while to recover, as will the tourist areas in the Maldives that were also devastated.

The initial horrible period of the recovery of the bodies, the burials, and initial mourning has now passed, and we are now starting to see some early repair and replacement of basic infrastructure in those tourism areas. I would like to encourage Victorians not to keep away from those places; I think they should look at where they want to go and find out whether those areas are capable of taking tourists at this stage. If they are, it would be a wonderful thing for Victorians to again go and visit those places, because tourism is probably the basic mainstay of the communities in all those areas.

The flow-on effects of tourism businesses to local villages and provinces are massive; they employ many people and bring the only outside income to the many people who are now basically existing at a subsistence level. If tourism is re-established it will give them some semblance of normality but also bring in some sort of income so they can get on with and improve their lives.

With those few words of encouragement to Victorians to get out there and visit those wonderful and beautiful parts of the world, I offer my condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed or injured, especially of those who are missing because at this stage it must be very hard for them.

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I rise today to speak on the tsunami condolence motion. Like previous speakers, I really cannot conceive of the scale of the tragedy of this overwhelming natural disaster that has occurred to our neighbours or the suffering of so many innocent people, many of them children, as we have seen on extensive television coverage. The devastation of whole communities, whole families and whole stretches of coastline is truly beyond words and beyond comprehension. On behalf of myself, my family and my constituents I would like to extend our heartfelt sympathy to all those who lost their lives, their loved ones or their homes and communities.

My local community has been anxious to do all it can to lend assistance and support to tsunami victims and affected areas. As an example of the many benefits that have been held in my community, I would like to mention just one. Two young people in my electorate, Reid and Clare Monks, approached our local church vicar, the Reverend Eden-Elizabeth Nicholls from St Augustine's in Mentone, and asked if they could organise a tsunami appeal concert through the church. \

I was privileged to attend this wonderful concert last Sunday, and I thank all those involved for their efforts and for giving freely of their time and their talents. The concert raised \$1578; altogether St Augustine's has raised over \$5000 to aid the tsunami appeal. As well as cash it has provided 51 boxes of summer clothing and 12 tea-chests of clothing for Sri Lanka, 10 tea-chests of medicines for Aceh, 1 plumbing snake for Aceh, and 10 tea-chests of medicines for Sri Lanka. That is representative of the kind of effort that has been going on throughout my community. This money will be distributed through local relief agencies for priorities marked by local people on the ground who know the areas of most significance that this money and aid can be directed to.

There has been overwhelming support not only from my local electorate but from my local Kingston council, which has also run many functions to help the tsunami devastation appeal. Support has also come from the Victorian and federal governments.

Other countries worldwide have also contributed greatly to this appeal, as have ordinary people everywhere, many of whom are children who can only give a dollar or two, but it has all really added up. I know also that many people in the devastated countries have given of their time, effort, help and money to try to help rebuild their local communities. This work will be ongoing. I hope the commitment from all the above will also be ongoing because a lot of work will continue to need to be done.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I rise to join the condolence motion for those who suffered as a result of the tsunami and offer my condolences to those countries who were so devastated by this tragedy, to the families of those who died in the tragedy and also to the friends of those who died. I also offer my support to those people who were injured in this terrible tragedy. It is probably the most severe and tragic natural disaster that has occurred in living memory and I doubt we will see anything like it in our lifetime again.

I was extremely proud of the response of Australians in the contributions they made. I was also proud of the Australian federal government, which has given an enormous amount, particularly to the reconstruction of Aceh in Indonesia, and the Victorian government did us proud as well in the contribution it has made. Probably, though, the greatest contribution was the overwhelming emotional support of a large number of Australians and Victorians. I would like to tell the story of two families in my electorate. Two reports that were printed in newspapers tell these stories.

A Melbourne man feared dead has become an angel of mercy, helping to treat tsunami victims in Phuket. Bill Stahmer is alive and pitching in to save the lives of the region's victims after cheating death himself. Mr Stahmer arrived at Patong Beach in Phuket only hours before the massive waves hit. He was asleep in a first floor beachside room at the Imtiana Hotel when water came bursting in. He swam out of the room and then threw himself into helping the injured. His son Matt was only hours away from flying to Phuket to search for him when he phoned home more than 24 hours after the disaster hit. 'One, you run and save yourself, or two, you jump in and start helping', Matt said. In reference to his father, he said, 'He wouldn't think. He would just act on gut'.

The chief executive officer of Harness Racing Victoria, John Anderson, a friend of Mr Stahmer, said he was not surprised at his mate's actions. 'I knew if he wasn't killed he would be pitching in. He cares more about the welfare of others than himself'. I think that is a testament to the sorts of things Australians did during this disaster.

The report of a second story stated:

A grateful father and son are behind an auction called 'From the Heart' to raise money for Boxing Day tsunami victims in Asia. Elsterwick deli owner Dan O'Connor said he had to wait four days to hear from his son Christian who was on the island of Phi Phi when the killer waves hit. Christian had stayed behind to help and had been deeply touched by both the generosity and suffering of the local Thai people, he said. When he rang he said, 'I'm here; I'm safe'. Mr O'Connor said his next words were, 'If you can get anything going to

help the Thai people, then do something'. A jar on the counter of the deli quickly overflowed with donations, so Mr O'Connor contacted the Caulfield RSL Lions Club and the idea of a charity auction was quickly approved. The Caulfield RSL and Elsternwick Mainstreet Committee joined the cause and an auction was held on 29 January with all the proceeds going to the Lions Club for the tsunami.

These are two examples of families who, while their loved ones survived, were determined to help others, and I certainly applaud their efforts.

I also offer my particular condolences to Paul Giardina's family. I was very taken when his mother said after the service at St Paul's Cathedral, 'I don't think anything will ever help a broken heart, but it was very comforting'. I think we all support that.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Education Services) — I also rise to join this condolence motion in what is indeed the saddest of circumstances and to offer my condolences on behalf of both my local community in the Bendigo area and the education community. This week through a number of efforts we have launched tsunami education action week, which has been supported by the Department of Education and Training and also the Australian Education Union. This is a week in which we are asking schools, teachers and staff to coordinate a range of activities to draw attention to the relief effort that is going on in hundreds of communities across the state and is raising enormous funds.

The Victorian education community, as we know, was directly affected by the loss of Paul Giardina, a student at Merriang Special Development School. We pass on to Paul's family — his mother, father and sister — our sympathy for the loss of their much-loved son in such difficult circumstances.

The department has coordinated a range of events, and my office has been overwhelmed with the responses we have had from staff, teachers and schools who have written, phoned and emailed, putting in their suggestions and offers of help. One of our immediate actions has been to set up automatic payroll deduction systems for those departmental staff who wish to have money deducted from their salaries on a weekly basis. We have also set up a central collection of goods that will be shipped directly to Sri Lanka, and the generosity of staff who have donated clothes, sleeping bags and toys has been enormous. Principal Alan David from Newcomb Secondary College is leading a team to go and work in the Maldives. We have arranged for staff members who wish to volunteer their services through Australian Volunteers Abroad to get a combination of

recreation leave, long service leave or leave without pay for the duration of their assignment.

We are coordinating enormous efforts, and I would like to thank everyone across the education system — whether it is teachers and principals, departmental staff, parents, families — all those who have, through their schools, coordinated enormous efforts at either school level or more broadly at the department level. I would like to thank them for the way they have really come together and been very generous in offering their support through either money, donation of goods or of time.

I also wanted to recognise and acknowledge the enormous efforts of those in the Bendigo community who, like those in all communities, have been affected by what has happened. In Bendigo we have a very strong Sri Lankan community which has been personally touched. I have spoken to two members of the community, Tilaca De-Zilva and Conchana, a student who has been studying at the Bendigo university. They have both been deeply affected by the tsunami in their home of Sri Lanka.

I also acknowledge the countless acts of individual generosity of people who have won prizes and immediately donated them back to tsunami relief efforts and the contribution of the Bendigo Bank, which has coordinated an outstanding effort — \$1.3 million in funds — through a combination of staff donations, bank donations and donations from people who have come into the various branches.

The City of Greater Bendigo is also to be congratulated for its coordination of efforts across the City of Greater Bendigo to ensure that the events that are being organised in neighbourhoods, across sporting clubs and other community organisations, are well coordinated to maximise the benefits from those who have put in the effort. The Bendigo community has also been called to get behind the tsunami soft toy appeal.

On the national day of mourning, 16 January, the Bendigo community came together at the Sacred Heart Cathedral. I joined the member for Bendigo West, who is the Minister for Agriculture, and over 6700 members from the Bendigo community who heard from individual members of the nations affected. That was a very moving and touching ceremony and brought home that there is no corner of this globe that has not been touched by the devastating impact of this natural disaster, which we pray we will never have to witness again.

It is with those words that I thank the Bendigo community for their response and similarly the response of all Victorians. I include and recognise the efforts of the education community, and I offer my deepest condolences to all nations and people who continue to be affected by this enormous tragedy.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — I am glad to be following the Minister for Education Services, because like her I pay tribute to the education community and to the young people of Victoria for their response to this tragedy.

On behalf of the people of Doncaster and the City of Manningham, we express our condolences and enormous sympathy to all those who were affected. As you know, Acting Speaker, my electorate and yours comprise essentially multicultural communities with many migrants having come from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and the other countries that were affected.

The tsunami has raised a tremendous response in our community. While there are dozens of organisations that have worked hard and contributed, in the few minutes that are available to me I will mention just a few. Firstly, as the Minister for Education Services said, the children in the schools and the school communities have thrown themselves into it. Heatherwood School organised a fundraising dance and sausage sizzle, and St Gregory the Great Primary School offered prayers and fundraising. Doncaster Primary School, Doncaster Gardens Primary School, Donburn Primary School, Donvale Primary School, Beverly Hills Primary School, East Doncaster Secondary College, Doncaster Secondary College, St Peter and Paul's Primary School, Our Lady of the Pines Primary School, Carey Baptist College and Donvale Christian College all got together, firstly, so the children could pass on their best wishes to the children of the countries affected and could gather books and materials to send to their contemporaries in those countries and also to raise money so that things could be purchased for the children in those countries.

If there is one good thing that may come out of this enormous disaster it is that the contribution of Victoria, the rest of Australia and other countries to the education systems of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India will improve the infrastructure and the materials that will be available to those children. So our children, whether they be from Doncaster, Bulleen, Bendigo or elsewhere, when they visit those countries in the future will be able to take some pride in the new infrastructure and the materials that have been built up.

The non-government sector has been very active. Manningham Rotary Club has donated in excess of \$10 000; Manningham YMCA has donated \$5000; and Lions International has an ongoing program. All the Rotary clubs, Lions clubs, Kiwanis and the like have thrown themselves into this effort with great goodwill. Bharat Agrawat, a student from Templestowe, raised \$9000 at a youth event in Box Hill, and Vox Congo, a group of Congolese refugees, has also raised money for this cause by playing at the Pilgrim Uniting Church in Doncaster.

On behalf of my community I can say that we really believe there are forces beyond human control that have created this, but it has given many of us a great opportunity to contribute to help people who are in desperate need. We thank the Australian soldiers, nurses, relief workers, police and the like who have travelled to those countries to make a personal and physical contribution. I believe on behalf of my community I can say that we stand ready to give ongoing assistance as those countries rebuild and create a better life for those who survived, and if necessary, to provide comfort for the people who are in distress at the loss of their loved ones.

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — On behalf of the people in the electorate of Gembrook I express my deepest sympathy to all those affected by the tsunami, one of the world's largest tragedies. I am therefore expressing my sympathy to the world's population as nobody has been untouched by the devastation that killed over 280 000 people and left more than 1 million homeless and struggling for access to food and water.

In responding to the disaster the Victorian community has made amazing contributions to the relief effort. The commitment and generosity shown by local community groups are outstanding. It is indeed heart warming when political, personal and religious differences are abandoned to assist our international neighbours.

I watched as the toll rose each day after Boxing Day. My son has a friend who, along with his family, returned home to Sri Lanka over the Christmas period. We were so relieved when he arrived at school safe and well. His mother painted a picture for me that was much more vivid than that painted by the media. Her picture described the panic, the fear, a million what-ifs and finally the relief for her and her extended family to know that at the very least her family was alive.

The Victorian government initially contributed \$1.5 million, which was shortly followed by the establishment of a \$10 million tsunami disaster reconstruction fund to enable assistance to be provided

in the critical stage of rebuilding. The disaster fund over the next three to five years will directly contribute to the medium and long-term reconstruction efforts.

Various local communities have joined together to fundraise for the rebuilding. The construction of Pakenham's House of Hope is a wonderful example of the level of generosity being demonstrated locally. I acknowledge and thank local organisations such as the various branches of the Country Women's Association, the Red Cross, Rotary and many others. I also congratulate the medical staff who have gone to various areas throughout South-East Asia to assist. In particular, Dr George Summers, along with the nurses from the Emerald medical clinic, have volunteered in Aceh, as has Ann McDonald from St John of God Health Care in Berwick.

This tragedy has affected all residents in the electorate of Gembrook, and they have given in so many ways. It is my belief that for the areas affected by the tsunami there has never been a better time than now nor a better reason for world leaders of developed nations to show a true commitment to rebuilding long-term prosperity by relieving these nations of the debt that strangles any attempt to alleviate poverty.

Mr SMITH (Bass) — It is a sad day for all of us to have to get up and express our condolences on behalf of our electorates. I do that on behalf of the people of the electorate of Bass. This natural disaster in South-East Asia struck very close to our country. We live in such a technological age that we were able to sit in our homes and watch this disaster unfold in front of us. You could see people who were dying and people who were being swept away in the floodwaters. Two guys who were standing on a bus in Sri Lanka just disappeared when the bus rolled over into the waters and probably are now dead.

The television coverage was also a rallying point for Australians and people around the world who saw this disaster in the same way that we did and said they wanted to do something to help. I must say I was overwhelmed by the support people in Wonthaggi and Phillip Island gave. I was able to see at first hand how they assisted. I was contacted by Anne Oswin, who is the editor of the *Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser*, who along with Maria Reed from the International Children's Care Organisation was organising to collect clothes and toys for orphanages, particularly those in the Sri Lanka area, where a lot of the devastation occurred. What happened was just dreadful. We said we would be happy to open our office and become a collection point for the Wonthaggi area. I was absolutely amazed by people who were

coming into the office. As soon as the notices appeared in the local papers in the *Advertiser*, the *South Gippsland Sentinel-Times* and the *Great Southern Star* they flocked into the office.

When we arrived to open up the office on the first morning after the advertisements had gone in, a stack of bags, full of clothes, had been left outside, along with toys that had been left for the kids. In the end three large truckloads of goods were removed from our office, and it was wonderful to witness the generosity of the people and the genuine feeling they had in being given an opportunity to help. All that was in addition to the way in which many gave generously through monetary donations. We had kids bringing in their toys — even their teddy bears — to be sent off to the orphanages, along with little notes wishing the kids over there all the best and hoping that things would improve for them.

People would come in and say, 'What sort of stuff are you after?'. When we said, 'Linen and that sort of thing', they would say, 'I don't have any linen but I will go and buy some'. They would come back with their arms full of sheets, pillowslips and all sorts of things like that, and would say, 'Here, take these'.

There were also people whom you knew had gone through their linen presses because you could smell the mothballs in the sheets. Obviously some people had put their sheets away, as we all do, and the linen presses get full of sheets that we probably should have got rid of when the kids moved out; but we hang on to them because there is nothing wrong with them. Many single sheet sets were brought in like that.

These added to the huge collection of stuff that was picked up. The company Phillip Island Transport came in and collected all of the gear and was prepared to move it for us, and a Mr and Mrs Bailey from Leongatha, who were involved with the International Children's Care Organisation and the orphanages over in Sri Lanka, were packing them up.

They had collected so much gear from the Gippsland area, and I am pleased to think that the people in my electorate came from miles around to contribute, to help people suffering from the tsunami devastation that inflicted itself upon the people of South-East Asia. I can only say to the people of Wonthaggi, 'Thank you, thank you!'.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — I support the condolence motion, and specifically I want to talk about a local organisation called the Victorian Tamil Cultural Association and its general secretary,

Mr Nagamuthu Ramalingam Wickiramasingham, known as Wicki Ramasinga. The organisation represents some of the 20 000 Tamils currently in Victoria, many of them in the south-east of Melbourne.

In January this year I attended a condolence ceremony at Dandenong High School. It was attended by other members of Parliament, and it was a very dignified ceremony. I want to talk about some of the tangible things the organisation is currently undertaking. It has set up a benefit fund to take care of orphan children. It is currently putting money directly into schools to rebuild them, it is currently providing books and equipment for these schools. It has also assisted in setting up orphan centres, and is currently working with the Tamil rehabilitation organisation in the north and the east of Sri Lanka.

Last Wednesday, when Mr Wicki Ramasinga arrived back from Sri Lanka, he described the situation of so many 5 to 12-year-olds having lost both parents. Wicki said he had seen a lot of suffering in his time due to the civil war, but the loss of the parents of small children was just so difficult for him to comprehend that in the end he just broke down and cried while he was there.

He estimated that it costs between \$20 and \$25 a month at the moment for the organisation to take care of the orphan children — to put them through school and assist them with health services. I guess the important thing in this instance is that in many ways the civil war of Sri Lanka is put aside in these times. There should be equal distribution relative to the suffering of all parts of Sri Lanka. Commonsense must prevail, and people like Kofi Annan and so forth should be allowed to go up into the north and the east to actually assess the suffering so that all organisations can work together, including the non-government organisations, to bring Sri Lanka back to some sort of normality.

Above all else my condolences go out to all persons from the various countries who have suffered this terrible tragedy, but I certainly congratulate the Victorian Tamil Cultural Association which has been very quick to put money into the country and to assist with rebuilding that part of Sri Lanka.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — On behalf of my Yan Yean constituents I am terribly saddened to join the condolence motion to respect the victims of the Asian tsunami. Little did any of us know that as we enjoyed our Christmas Day and Boxing Day festive season with our families — many of us at coastal resorts — that we would be looking at hundreds of thousands of people who were doing the same thing throughout Asia but who consequently were to lose their lives. How could

any of us surfing our own mild waves not have those victims at the front of our mind — both the living and the dead?

Just as communities in my electorate opened their hearts following the Bali bombings, the Diamond Valley and Plenty Valley communities have made a sterling effort in rallying to the cause, like many other communities across Australia, crossing political, ethnic and religious lines, and I will now name just some of these. Karyn Kamminga has marshalled Eltham Rotary and the Bend of Islands Conservation Association to send a number of Aquaboxes to purify water, the City of Whittlesea is sponsoring a Roy Orbison tribute show next week to raise funds for the affected Sri Lankan communities, the Diamond Valley Christian Outreach Centre has held a dinner dance, and the St Andrews market stallholders have had a collection

The Diamond Valley Arts Society has raised over \$2000, and A. D. Ryans Bar and Restaurant, which is always a great fundraiser and supporter of anyone in need in the community, held an all-day Australia Day lunch that raised over \$500, which was then supplemented by its own contribution of \$2000. The Greensborough traders market has had money tins at events since the tragedy, and many schools have rallied to the cause as well. The Shire of Nillumbik, together with other members of the community led by Karyn Geraadts, held a benefit concert at Panton Hill. Many churches and schools have also paid tribute to this terrible event. I commend the members of my community for showing their respect, and I know that they will continue to work in the relief efforts.

Ms BEARD (Kilsyth) — I too wish to support the tsunami condolence motion, one we would all prefer not to make. I offer my sympathy to the Giardina and the Broadbridge families, and in fact to all the members of our community who have suffered loss of family and friends.

The scenes we have so often viewed on our television screens serve to remind us of the uncertainty and fragility of our hold on life and of the power of nature. The tragedy throughout South-East Asia, particularly in the Aceh province of Indonesia, has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions homeless. I would like to focus specifically, as have others, on the effect of the tsunami in Sri Lanka. I am a foundation member of the parliamentary friends of Sri Lanka and the mother-in-law of a delightful Sri Lankan. He and his family obviously lament the fact that on the next visit to their homeland, many of the familiar places will no longer exist. I am sure that will be traumatic for them as

it will be for so many others who will also make that trip home.

The Maroondah City Council in my electorate has Sri Lanka as its adopted nation for the Commonwealth Games, so it is close to the people in the outer east. Victoria has a special bond with Sri Lanka as approximately half the Sri Lankan migrants have settled in Victoria, predominantly in Melbourne.

On 4 February the Speaker, the members for Cranbourne and Yuroke and I joined the Melbourne Sri Lankan community for what was to be the celebration of 57 years of independence of their homeland. Little were the organisers to know that it would be a memorial to those who lost their lives and an appeal for help and any kind of assistance for the survivors of the tsunami.

Music tributes and personal anecdotes left us with a lasting memory of the tsunami's impact. We cannot comprehend a natural disaster of this magnitude. We cannot start to imagine what has happened to the people who are living there, but the generosity that we saw and continue to see from the Australian people and the Victorian and federal governments is evidence of their goodwill to assist others in times of trouble. As I said, both the state and the federal governments joined the response. I am pleased that the state government and this Parliament are going to make an ongoing commitment to Sri Lanka. There is an intention to set up a ward in a hospital in Sri Lanka which will be named after the Victorian Parliament.

I presume that while the survivors of the tsunami cannot ever recover from this loss of family, friends and homes, we, who are so fortunate in this land, have an ongoing commitment to assist those survivors in any way possible.

Mr HARKNESS (Frankston) — The walls of water that crashed upon the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, the Maldives, Myanmar and India on Boxing Day 2004 were shocking enough when television footage was first viewed, but the shock quickly transformed into horror when news reached us of the death toll which was mounting by the moment. The loss of lives is devastating enough, with over 280 000 people dead as a result of the disaster in the Indian Ocean. If you add to this the loss of homes, the displacement of people, the destruction of workplaces, industry and employment, and the orphaning of large numbers of children, it is clear that we are witnessing a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions. The two countries hardest hit were Sri Lanka and Indonesia. According to UNICEF, in Indonesia over

113 000 people have died, 127 000 people are missing and 426 000 people have been displaced. In Sri Lanka 30 000 people have died, 5600 are missing and 553 000 people have been displaced.

The outpouring of human emotion and support for those in need is awe inspiring, and it remains so. In Frankston about 500 people gathered at the Frankston pier forecourt on Sunday, 16 January, for the Frankston Reaches Out to Asia waterfront memorial service. The speech made on that occasion by the member for Cranbourne was both heartfelt and moving. I also applaud the Frankston City Council for its donation of \$20 000 to World Vision in support of the relief efforts. Frankston people are helping out in a variety of ways. Members of the Lions clubs of Frankston and Frankston-Bayside put on a barbecue at the Frankston pier forecourt and shook collection tins at the memorial service, raising a further \$2000 for the relief effort. The Rotary Club of Long Island Frankston is providing special shelter boxes designed for people who have lost their homes. Each box costs about \$1100 and provides shelter and warmth for up to 10 people. It contains a 10-person tent, 10 sleeping bags and other equipment such as a water purifier, torch, ropes and tools. Rotary has already sent 2000 of these boxes to the affected region and is continuing to raise funds to buy more.

The Frankston Youth Resource Centre held a tsunami appeal concert at the 21st Century Nightclub, which was attended by 220 young people and raised a further \$2400. As in other parts of Australia, schools, churches, other local organisations and families are holding concerts, organising barbecues or simply holding garage sales in order that much needed funds can be directed to the affected countries. Dr John Copland, a doctor from Frankston who has returned from Aceh, is one of many Victorians who volunteered to rebuild medical services. The Frankston Library Service donated hundreds of books to the giant book sale of the State Library of Victoria. The staff there donated their time to help. Rehab 1 at the Frankston rehabilitation clinic on Golf Links Road has raised \$3500 through raffles. The efforts keep continuing.

Kingsley Park Primary School is holding a huge garage sale. A group of comedians and musicians will perform at the Tsunami Supa Gig next Saturday at the Moorooduc Cool Stores. The Frankston District Basketball Association is holding a charity match on Sunday, with proceeds directed to World Vision. The Frankston Church of Christ will soon be holding a variety concert to raise additional much-needed funds; and one of my staff, Joanne Winterbottom, has been instrumental in another local effort in Mornington, collecting supplies to send to those in need.

The task ahead — rebuilding hospitals, schools, sewerage, electricity and water services — is certainly enormous. Whilst this crisis is on their doorsteps, Australia and other countries in the industrialised world cannot rest easy. There are many other crises occurring around the world at the moment. For instance, more than 350 000 have been affected by rain and floods in Guyana, Venezuela and Colombia; the number of civilians affected by fighting in Eastern Congo is dramatically increasing; millions of antipersonnel landmines and other explosive remnants of war continue to pose a problem around the globe, killing, injuring and orphaning people long after the wars are over; and AIDS in Africa remains a major crisis. Third World debt certainly must be relieved, and I applaud the singer Bono and the British Prime Minister and his Chancellor of the Exchequer for their realisation of this.

My heart goes out to the families of those who have lost loved ones in this tragedy, and in particular the children left behind. Australia has a lot of work ahead of it to assist in rebuilding the countries affected by this crisis and to aid the other countries around the world which are also suffering from tragedies both natural and man made.

On behalf of the residents of my electorate of Frankston I pass on my condolences to the tsunami victims, their families and the countries affected by that horror. My sympathies, as do those of my constituents, go to all victims of suffering around the world today.

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — I wish to place on the record the condolences extended by the people of Pascoe Vale to all those who have been affected by this tsunami, and I congratulate all the people in my electorate who have been involved in assisting them. I pay particular tribute to the Rotary clubs of Pascoe Vale and Coburg; Moreland City Council; YMCA Pool Management; the Moreland Interfaith Gathering; the Lions Club 'Recycle for Sight' project; the Sri Lankan Welfare Association; the Cornish Arms Hotel; the Retreat Hotel; and Pina Cala and Rebecca Cucinotta, who performed and produced a CD. Rod Quantock, Fr Bob McGuire and Meredith Wright have also been active in my electorate.

Today I want this Parliament and the Victorian community to understand how widespread has been the support that has come from people who in many cases are themselves battling to survive. I want to congratulate and pay tribute to the people of the fledgling nation of East Timor, who have also contributed to the international aid effort. They gave US\$50 000 from their own very tight budget. In the words of their Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri:

As neighbours and friends we cannot stand by and do nothing ... Our nation is poor but our spirit is strong, and our people support the government of Timor Leste in doing this, even though they have so little.

Within East Timor there have been major problems since the tsunami-like militia devastated their entire country, yet they have bothered to help. It is interesting for a nation as rich as our own to reflect on how others so poor have helped.

I also pay tribute to people beyond my electorate — that is, those members of the Victorian community who have been involved with a great woman called Sr Stella in Kanyakumari in India. She has provided a home for 635 tsunami survivors from 194 families, and in addition she is responsible for feeding 500 children under 10 years of age in local camps. The children have grown up on a diet of fish. They are not coping well with a rice-based diet, so Sr Stella is providing each child with one egg and a glass of milk a day. When we reflect on the meals we are able to enjoy it is indeed sobering, so I congratulate the people of Pascoe Vale who have worked so hard to support the tsunami victims. Congratulations go especially to the fledgling nation of East Timor and the unsung heroes who are going quietly about the reconstruction of individuals and nations.

Ms McTAGGART (Evelyn) — I rise today to express my condolences on behalf of the people of Evelyn. On Boxing Day 2004 almost 300 000 lost their lives without any warning in a natural disaster over which nobody had any control.

The absolute power of nature overawed all of us. We all became aware of this tragedy via the media and could not believe or begin to imagine the magnitude of the tsunami as the events were unfolding before our eyes. Our hearts were heavy for the victims as we tried to come to terms with the unbelievable event that hit Indonesia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the coast of Africa, and especially Banda Aceh. These horrific images will remain with us the rest of our lives. We must never forget those who have lost their loved ones or those who struggle to gain control of their lives after this disaster. We must never forget the children — those who were lost and those who are left homeless and orphaned. We must never forget that the livelihoods of many of these communities trying to survive after such family tragedies are gone.

As we all mourn for the loss, we must also reflect. Reflection allows us to look deeply into grief and to draw new life from it. It allows us to move forward, to be wiser and more responsible. For the victims of the tsunami, I hope reflection gives them the strength to

start again with new hope. As we are all aware, the generosity of the Australian people has been unprecedented. We can all be proud to be Australians.

To the thousands of families who were enjoying the natural beauty and culture of the Asian and African coasts whilst on holidays, to those who have lost loved ones and to those struggling to carry on, we give our love and sympathy. I commend the work of those who have organised huge fundraising events such as cricket matches and concerts, and also the many Australians who have contributed quietly and anonymously.

I would like to acknowledge some of the fundraising efforts in my local electorate. The Shire of Yarra Ranges raised \$26 000 for the Red Cross, and the Heritage golf club raised \$37 000. Amy Deverell, a nurse, volunteered her services in Banda Aceh. I acknowledge clubs such as the Lilydale Lions Club for calling for old spectacles and the Mount Evelyn Christian Reformed Church for collecting goods. Bendigo Bank raised \$14 000 in Mount Evelyn and \$1.4 million nationally. Single mother of five children, Mandy Dudnick, collected flowers, plants and bulbs from local nurseries and raised \$4400 while sitting on the side of the Warburton Highway. Wandin Rotary Club is still raising funds to rebuild a school in Sri Lanka. I also acknowledge the efforts of many other organisations.

To Trisha and the Broadbridge family, my deepest sympathies and condolences on the loss of your beloved Troy. May his memory and his love give you comfort. To the Giardina family, my work with special needs children gives me an insight into the deepest love and affection you will surely be missing from your gorgeous boy. Sympathy must also go to the ethnic communities throughout Victoria that have lost loved ones. They are committed to rebuilding their lives and the future of their communities. I pray that the passing of time does not diminish our bond with those who suffer.

Sitting suspended 6.27 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — As other members have today, I pay my utmost respects to the victims of the Boxing Day tsunami. It is part of the way that human beings think that you always seem to remember what you were doing or where you were when you first heard significant news. I was a child but will always the day that the West Gate Bridge collapsed, I will always remember how the night unfolded on September 11, and of course, I will always remember the tragedy of the Bali bombings.

I will always remember Boxing Day 2004 and the news of the tsunami striking the 11 countries that has already been noted in today's debate — it is vividly etched in my mind — and hearing the death toll announcements as they came across 774 ABC Melbourne radio on Boxing Day. The first toll I heard was 10 000. That was hard to fathom — I remember trying to explain to my youngest daughter how many 10 000 people were — let alone imagining or fathoming the devastation that was to occur or the number that that was to increase to over the coming days. I vividly remember quickly going through in my mind the list of any friends or family who may have been in the area at the time, given that we were at the height of the Christmas holidays. The images that were relayed via our television sets that night and in the following weeks are forever etched in my mind. No doubt those scenes in no way portrayed the devastation inflicted on the victims of the disaster. I do not think that anyone can truly understand the trauma people go through in such an event unless they are directly affected by it or have lost loved family members or friends.

As we have heard today from a number of speakers, there is little doubt that at the end of the count, whenever that may be, more than 300 000 people will have lost their lives. Some 5 million people will have been displaced, and 2 million people will be dependent on emergency food assistance. Those figures are so enormous that it is hard to understand where you would start to build new beginnings — but of course new beginnings thankfully have begun.

As the member for Bellarine rightly pointed out earlier today, Geelong is no exception to various communities around Australia in contributing to the rebuilding of the areas that have been so devastated. As the member from Bellarine also pointed out, people such as the principal from Newcomb Secondary College, Alan Davis, are amongst a number of schoolteachers from Victoria who have headed across to the Maldives to ensure that the 2005 school year is up and running there. I have come to know Alan Davis over my years as a member of Parliament, and it is no surprise to me that Alan has volunteered his services. No doubt he will greatly assist the people of that area.

We have also seen people from the Geelong area such as Dr Eugene Nathan and Dr Richard Page from Barwon Health volunteer their medical expertise and valuable time to ensure that the communities in those devastated areas are helped from a medical point of view. Not only individuals such as Alan Davis and those two doctors but also the community of Geelong have contributed enormously to the disaster relief. Major fundraisers conducted through the Geelong Red

Cross, Rotary and the *Geelong Advertiser* tsunami appeal have raised something like \$500 000, nearly \$2 for every man, woman and child. The numerous art exhibitions, musical concerts and sporting events that have taken place have ensured that Geelong has contributed. I take this brief opportunity to congratulate all those people who have contributed for the magnificent work they have done in assisting the people who have been affected by this disaster.

Ms ECKSTEIN (Ferntree Gully) — I also rise to extend my condolences to all those who lost family and friends in the Boxing Day tsunami, which affected so many countries in our region. I too saw the television coverage, watching in horror and disbelief at the mounting death toll as it grew to incomprehensible numbers, more than we can really even fathom.

This is a natural disaster of unprecedented proportions. It is a tragedy for so many communities in so many countries, particularly in the worst affected areas of Aceh province in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and India, as well as other areas around the region.

This tragedy has also affected many families all over the world who had loved ones holidaying or working in the affected areas. Many of them lost their lives and others may never be found. Others spent days or weeks looking for missing loved ones — some are still looking — fearing the worst until finally making contact with them.

My own friends Vaughan and Marienne Duggan, whom I have known since 1975 when I first joined the Labor Party, feared for their only son, who on Boxing Day was on a boat somewhere off the coast of Myanmar on a diving holiday. It took a number of days, if not nearly a week, to find out what happened, as various embassies, governments and tour companies were contacted about the fate of the vessel and those on board. Fortunately the boat was well out to sea when the tsunami struck, and those on board were oblivious to the tragedy unfolding on the coasts of the various countries around them. Luckily this story had a happy ending, much to the relief of family and friends, but so many others did not.

Most of us cannot conceive what it would be like to lose your entire family, your home and your whole community in a matter of moments, but this is exactly what happened to thousands and thousands of people in Thailand, Aceh, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives and other affected countries in the region. It will take a very long time, many years perhaps, to rebuild the infrastructure across so large an area as well as to begin

to heal the shattered and broken lives of the people themselves. Those who survived will never be the same again and probably will never fully recover.

However, the compassion shown by so many ordinary Australians in this immense tragedy has been magnificent. The generosity of Australians who dug deep and donated to the many appeals not once but often several times is truly inspiring. Over \$200 million was donated by Australians, apart from the donations by the various states and, of course, the commonwealth government. Donations have come from large corporations as well as individual Australians, including many from children donating their pocket money.

The hot bread shop next to my office in my electorate has a Red Cross tin for the tsunami appeal, as do many businesses in my electorate and across this state and across Australia. Many local community groups also have made a significant contribution. The Knox Italian Community Club in my electorate recently held a fundraising dinner and raised a total of \$14 011 for the Red Cross tsunami appeal. This is a significant achievement for a relatively small local community group, which I am sure will assist the victims of the tsunami rebuild their shattered communities.

Many Australians have played a major role in the aftermath of the tragedy and in the longer term reconstruction phase. Many tourists stayed on to assist with identification or volunteered their skills at hospitals and hastily set-up morgues. Expatriate Australians acted as interpreters and assisted families and friends of the missing to negotiate the local administrative procedures. Health workers and others have gone to the affected areas as volunteers to assist the injured and help with reconstruction. Our armed forces are also playing a significant role. Australian forensic specialists are performing an essential role in identifying those who have lost their lives in this tragedy and bringing certainty and closure to family and friends.

The response of ordinary Australian people and both the Australian and Victorian governments has been truly magnificent. Australia has contributed more than other countries with far greater populations and revenue capacity. It has brought us together as a community that cares about our neighbours and has shown our capacity for compassion to the world. I think it makes us all truly proud to be Australians.

Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings) — I also rise to contribute to the condolence debate on behalf of the Hastings electorate. Many people who have spoken before me today have talked about the tragedy that

occurred on Boxing Day. It has often been stated that television has desensitised people to issues of conflict and tragedy around the world. But in the case of the Boxing Day tragedy it has been the reverse, particularly from the point of view of the compassion and generosity shown by the Australian people.

I would like to talk a little about that generosity as it relates to people and organisations within the Hastings electorate, specifically the Hastings RSL, which, after gaining knowledge of this tragedy, spontaneously coordinated the collection of equipment, including medical supplies, clothing and so on to such a degree that it filled up over 160 large crates. These were then conveyed back to the areas of greatest need.

I want to highlight a local Hastings resident by the name of Tim Mirabella, who is the current chair of the Seafood Industry Victoria and who recently went over to Sri Lanka to assess the needs of the fishing fleet there. Many would know — and it has been mentioned earlier today — that in the area of Wellaboda, Sri Lanka, there were 60 fishing boats before Boxing Day, but only about two or three survived the tsunami devastation. Tim, though his network of fishermen around Western Port and Port Phillip Bay, has already looked at providing five new or reclaimed fishing boats to the region. Five is fine; 60 are what is needed. They are also looking for things like outboard motors, second-hand nets and navigation equipment. My challenge here today is to ask any other of our fishermen, either professional or recreational, to support that cause and progress it further.

There are two other things I would like to mention very briefly. Firstly we cannot be complacent and consider that the fact of supporting once during January or February is enough. This is an ongoing issue which will require many years of support and rehabilitation to get the people in the regions around the Indian Ocean back on their feet. Montalto vineyard recently hosted a fundraising cocktail party. There will be two benefit concerts in the region very soon, one in Frankston on 26 February, where local musicians such as Geoff Achinson and Phil Manning will perform, and the second on 27 February at the Coolies Bar of the Peninsula Lounge in Moorooduc, where 36 bands will play all day, giving their time and effort free of charge to see what they can do to raise money for the tsunami-affected regions.

Local schools have adopted devastated townships and, as has been mentioned often today, medical staff have given their time and services to the tsunami-affected regions. Local eye centres are collecting second-hand glasses to assist people in the devastated regions.

In conclusion, the devastation has been horrendous. However, the supportive action of so many Victorians, which is reflective of our true Aussie spirit, has been uplifting. Many local organisations have set up relief programs to which local residents have responded with overwhelming generosity, donating time, money and requested goods.

To the many locals who have made a contribution may I offer my heartfelt appreciation for their contribution to and support for those who have lost and are suffering so much. It will take much time, energy, resources and positive spirit to heal the devastation caused. Victorians — indeed, all Australians — have shown again why they are the most generous of all peoples across the world. I would like to acknowledge all of these people for their inspirational selflessness. In many respects we are indeed the lucky country.

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I am very pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the condolence motion. Despite the best efforts of all speakers in the chamber I am sure that I speak for everyone else in saying that it is difficult to find the words to adequately convey the sympathy that we feel for so many people who have suffered unimaginable tragedy through the recent tsunami. Rather than try to find my own words I will borrow the words of a resident of the Mitcham electorate. A letter from Su Amaranayaka, a resident of Nunawading, was published in the *Age* of 7 January. She wrote:

On 16 December I left Melbourne to change my life but came home with my soul changed. I went to Sri Lanka for a well-deserved holiday and also to marry the man of my dreams, my Canadian fiancé.

We married in Colombo in December 24. Too late to book our honeymoon in one of the resorts in the south the island, we headed to the hills. We were saved when thousands have perished.

My husband and I came back to Colombo as soon as we could to help with the relief process.

What we saw on the way destroyed us. Kilometres of coastlines that had housed the poorest of the poor — simple fishermen and labourers destroyed.

The final death toll will never be accurate as it can never take into account the thousands of beggars and destitute who flocked to the beaches to survive on the fish and rice given to them by poor but generous fishermen's families.

We saw mountains of rubble from what had once been homes. Burst sewer pipes and communal toilets add to the stench of rotting human and animal corpses. The damp sea smell clings to everything, your clothes, your hair — it suffocates you.

We went to a refugee camp in the coastal town of Panadura with milk for the children a week after the tragedy.

My husband was concerned that I would slide into depression after what I had seen and wanted me to leave the refugee camp. After cuddling a baby for a few minutes and distributing the milk, we left in the pouring rain.

As we were walking out, I saw three girls standing in a shack in the refugee camp. Desperation was written all over their mother's face as she looked aimlessly into the distance. But her three girls had something about them.

After playing in the sand for a few minutes, the eldest stood up and listened to the beat of the rain thumping on the corrugated iron roof.

And she started dancing to the 'macarena'. Soon her sisters joined her, dancing with the joy that can only be childlike.

They will survive.

They are very eloquent words. Much as I believe that it is entirely appropriate that we stop today and reflect upon the enormous suffering which has been inflicted upon so many, it also behoves this place to commit to considering again the position of people who have been so badly affected in the days, weeks, months and years ahead as so many seek to rebuild their shattered lives.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — I rise to express my condolences to all the people, both here and overseas, who have been tragically affected by the Boxing Day tsunami. I also pay tribute to the Victorian and Australian governments for their prompt and immensely generous aid contributions. I am very proud to represent a community that has been so generous in its response to victims of the tsunami.

The people of Geelong and the Surf Coast feel a special affinity with the people of the countries that have been affected, particularly countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, which have been traditional holiday destinations for local residents. Many of us have friends or family members or know of community members or neighbours who have come from these countries and who have been severely affected. Quite rightly, there has been an outpouring of support from the people of this region for those affected by the tsunami.

I was privileged to join 400 to 500 surfers and clubbies — men, women and children — from the Surf Coast, who paddled their boards out to form a ring at Cosy Corner in Torquay to pay their respects and organise an event where people could donate money and remember the victims of the tsunami. The Surfriider Foundation, the group called Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment (SANE), the major surf companies and their foreign aid arms were all involved in this event. Many surfers, with their love of the sea — many of them regularly visit Indonesia and surfing areas around Aceh — knew people who died or who

were affected by the tsunami. They have a special affinity with them.

In yesterday's *Geelong Advertiser* there was an article on Sri Lankan-born pastor Richard Brohier, G-Force's Brandon Howard, teacher Michael Nair and pastor Rick Wright, who have formed a body called Rebuilding Communities after Tsunami, a cooperative venture between Geelong businesses and churches. Many individuals have given up a lot of their own time to help tsunami victims: people like John Wycherley from Torquay, who was ringing around on his mobile trying to set up a benefit concert whilst lying in his hospital bed the day after he had major surgery.

On Australia Day I opened a tsunami fundraiser at the Village Life complex in Grovedale. The residents, manager and owner had organised a raffle and auction for the day. Congratulations to these people and the many others across my electorate and indeed across Australia for their spontaneous efforts to do something to support these countries. The City of Greater Geelong has also given generously, along with many local businesses, churches, service groups, unions and individuals, and I am sure all members in this place have seen the same thing happen in their communities.

This is one of the worst natural disasters of our time. It is also one of the great tests of our time. It is a test of our generosity as neighbours and friends of Indonesia and the other countries affected. My hope is that from this disaster we can forge closer links with these countries, and that this great disaster will not be forgotten about in a month's time. The scars and the hardships will certainly live on amongst those affected for years to come. We need to be there for them not just today but in the future, helping them rebuild their communities.

I say a big thankyou to the people of Geelong and the Surf Coast region, but I also say that we must not forget; we must continue to assist our neighbours and build bonds that will last a lifetime.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave) — I rise to add my voice and the collective voice of my local community to this condolence motion. This motion expresses our deep sorrow and sadness at what I am sure is the greatest loss of civilian life for many years — certainly in my lifetime. This tragedy is the most terrible loss of life witnessed by people of my generation, and it is important to note that while we can all grieve and express our sorrow, the exact nature of this horror can never be truly understood by us as mere bystanders and onlookers.

The facts clearly demonstrate the magnitude of the amazing course of events during the 8 hours in which so many people lost their lives. Some 11 countries were affected, with some 296 000 people confirmed dead. Many speakers have noted this fact throughout the debate this afternoon and into the evening, but to watch that figure grow daily from a small but important number initially to such an enormous death toll was part of the overall experience that has been responsible for the outpouring of both financial support and deep sorrow.

Nineteen Australians lost their lives. Two of them were Victorians, Troy Broadbridge and Paul Giardina. It is a great tragedy for them and their families, but it is part of the broader picture: 296 000 people confirmed dead. Some 5 million people are homeless, and the United Nations estimates that some US\$10 billion to US\$12 billion will be required to rebuild each of these devastated communities.

To lose everything is absolutely unimaginable. This is the reality for 5 million of our neighbours and I think it is important to note that they are our neighbours. This is our definite neighbourhood. In recent times there has been some debate about where our allegiances should lie, where we should view ourselves, where we should see our place in the world. The absolute generosity of and the goodwill that has been expressed by the Australian community, particularly the Victorian community, toward those affected answers that question once and for all. This is our neighbourhood, this was our job, this was our work that needed to be done to support those who live so close to us.

I am proud that we as a government and a community more broadly have been so generous and so absolutely outstanding in the support we have offered. We must never forget this tragedy. We should never forget the absolute destruction that has beset so many that live in our local neighbourhood, and the generosity and the absolute commitment and goodwill that has been expressed means that we will never forget this terrible tragedy. I express my sincere sympathy to all those affected, especially the families of Paul Giardina and Troy Broadbridge, and say a sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the aid effort. It makes me proud to be a Victorian and it makes us all proud of the great role that Australia and our community has played.

Mr LOCKWOOD (Bayswater) — I would like to add my condolences on behalf of the people of Bayswater electorate to this debate. The people of Bayswater have contributed as hard and as much as anybody else. I was approached by one constituent whose family was missing for a time in Thailand, but

fortunately they were found in Bangkok after a couple of days.

My contribution will be a little bit different to that of other members who have spoken of the scale of the disaster, and who recounted lots of the things that happened. On a more personal level my wife, as some may know, was born in a place called the Seychelles, which is a group of 99 islands in the Indian Ocean. As we were watching the dramas unfold on the cable television that day it slowly dawned on us that the tsunami had headed across the Indian Ocean to her place of birth. Having seen on the television the damage it wrought to the places that we had actually holidayed in, like Patong in Thailand, we were a bit concerned about the Seychelles, so we spent a bit of time on the Internet and the telephone trying to track people down and gain some information.

Given that it is a fairly small place of only 70 000, information was pretty scant on the news services and the Internet and it took us a little while by phone to track people down and find that all the family was okay. In the end Seychelles suffered little because they had a greater warning, unlike most other countries. They suffered one loss — one death — but they did suffer some damage to low-level housing. A housing estate on low-level reclaimed land on the coast was totally flooded. The capital of the Seychelles, Victoria, also suffered damage — there was water in among the buildings, and the airport was cut off because it is also on reclaimed land right on the coast.

The Seychelles is a small place. There are somewhere around 10 000 Seychellois in Australia, so they are fairly strongly represented in percentage terms. They were of course very concerned and worked hard for their community back home, albeit the disaster there was not anywhere near as bad as in other places. It nevertheless was affected. It did not get mentioned much in dispatches and it took a bit of time to gain information. On that note I again add my sympathy and condolences to all those who suffered losses, and I hope we all work hard for the reconstruction over the years to come.

Mr HUDSON (Bentleigh) — On behalf of the people of Bentleigh I would like to join with other members in offering my condolences to the victims of the tsunami. This was one of those events where the enormity of the disaster unfolded day by day and it became really clear that the disaster was going to have reverberations beyond the immediate waves in the days and weeks that followed.

The devastation that was caused by the tsunami and its aftermath are almost beyond belief. In a way I think we could only really grasp the full extent of the devastation through the stories of those who told us that they had lost everything including their loved ones. Australians responded with overwhelming generosity to the tsunami disaster and donations flooded in to our major aid agencies. I think it is worth noting that, as of 5 February, the Australian public had donated more than \$240 million, compared with \$386 million in total donations to overseas aid agencies to tackle poverty throughout the world in 2003.

The public response to the tsunami disaster was unprecedented. Everywhere you went in Bentleigh, in pubs, shops, community organisations and churches, people were raising money for the tsunami victims. Their response was spontaneous and from the heart. Overwhelmingly the public wanted to help. Victorians turned out in force for the tsunami charity cricket match between a world XI and an Asian XI where more than \$15 million was raised. I think it was one of those rare sporting occasions when the result did not matter as much as the fact that people came together to express their common humanity with others.

The extraordinary level of generosity shown by the Australian public was reflected in the responses of the Australian and Victorian governments. I would like to pay tribute to both governments for their generosity in the wake of the tsunami disaster. This generosity has restored our faith in our capacity to respond to the needs of others. While we live in a global world, I think it is true to say that in many ways we have become inured to the impacts of the poverty, disease and starvation that affect so many people in the poorest countries on earth. I for one have become somewhat despondent at the proportion of our gross domestic product (GDP) provided in overseas aid, which has steadily declined over the past 20 years from 0.7 per cent of GDP to less than half of that figure.

We need to remind ourselves that twice as many people die from the effects of poverty in a month as were killed by the tsunami. According to the United Nations Development Program at least 2 million people will die from AIDS this year alone. In many parts of Africa the tragedy of famine is an ongoing reality. I do not think we can afford to forget these global realities, and I believe we must redouble our efforts. In a globalised world where international trade is so often seen as the key to economic growth I do not think we should forget that well-directed aid can also build economic capacity.

It is a tragedy that it took this catastrophic tsunami to put many of the poorest countries in the world on the

map, yet it has shown that Australians are good-hearted people. It is my hope that out of this we will redouble our efforts to tackle some of these problems in the world — malnutrition, poverty and disease — as part of our common destiny and our common humanity.

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — It is without any pleasure at all that I speak on this condolence motion this evening. An unimaginable death toll has resulted from the tsunami tragedy, and many people in Australia have either been to these places or have family and friends who are there or are connected in some way. On behalf of the people of the electorate of Macedon I convey my deepest sympathy to all those people who have been so affected by this disaster. Our deepest condolences go to all those who have lost family and friends and to those who have lost their homes and their communities.

The response of the people of Macedon reflects the generosity of spirit shown by Victorians and Australians generally. From fundraisers providing financial support to church services providing spiritual support, from individual contributions to organised events, people have joined together in response to this tragedy. Some of the specific events likely to support the tsunami victims have been concerts and open gardens, information evenings, donations of goods and charity auctions. I thank all those individuals and groups who have given time, money and emotional support to those who have suffered so much and continue to do so. It makes us proud to be Australians and to be members of our wonderful local communities. I also congratulate the state, federal and local governments on their financial contributions. I am proud to be part of this very wonderful and very lucky country.

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I rise to offer my condolences to all the victims and the people from the affected countries and to the families and friends of the victims of the tsunami which impacted so devastatingly across Asia. For so many people to be affected by a tragedy such as this tsunami is beyond my comprehension. The resilience and bravery those left behind have shown, despite their anguish, in rebuilding their lives in the most disastrous of circumstances speaks volumes for human nature.

The generosity shown by so many who have been touched by this tragedy is testimony to the spirit of people around the world, and nowhere has that been more so than among those in our own local communities. Whether they be governments, organisations, people who have offered their skills and have offered to go over to the affected areas, or those

who have offered funds or have run fundraisers around Victoria, they are testimony to a great spirit.

The Seymour electorate has had many fundraisers, whether in Seymour, where we had an auction and activities to raise funds; in Kilmore, where the Pyalong–Kilmore music and arts society ran a concert in conjunction with the local Pyalong district Red Cross; in Kinglake, where there was a jazz festival; or at the bowls clubs or the Hidden Valley Golf Club. All around the area people were trying to do their little bit to raise funds, and they really put themselves out. I congratulate all those people who have put a lot of effort into making a bit of a difference and hopefully helping those people to rebuild their lives and move on. It is a wonderful testimony to the human race.

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — I want to briefly add my condolences to everyone touched by the tsunami tragedy. The tragedy was and is on a scale that is very hard to comprehend. Many Victorians and other Australians lost loved ones, and hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in just a few short hours as a result of devastating natural forces.

I attended a multifaith memorial service at the police academy in Glen Waverley on 22 January. The event was organised by the Sri Lankan community and the Committee for Sri Lanka in association with the Sri Lankan consulate. It was a very moving service attended by members of all the communities that were affected by the tsunami. Poems, hymns, beautiful singing and a welcome by the honorary consul for Sri Lanka, Dr Rodney Arambewela, were followed by Buddhist chanting, Islamic prayer, Hindu prayer and an Old Testament reading. The event was attended by many local community members along with federal and state members of Parliament and consulate representatives from nations including the United States of America, Portugal and Japan. I also take this opportunity to praise the work undertaken by Glen Waverley resident Dr Morley Pereira and the committee that organised the service which honoured those who died and those who were affected by this tragedy.

I also want to briefly note the selfless work of volunteers who found themselves caught up in the wake of the tsunami. The work of the volunteers was highlighted by Australian woman Jess Maulder, whose work as a volunteer in the makeshift morgue at a temple in Krabi, 250 kilometres south of Phuket, was reported in the media, and many members will have seen it. Jess Maulder is a 20-year-old, second-year Monash University medical student. Jess helped identify bodies from amongst the thousands of corpses

so that families could be reunited with their loved ones. One can only imagine how difficult and heart rending this work must have been. Jess was on holiday in Thailand with her childhood friend from Tasmania, Ineka Dane. I greatly admire Jess and Ineka and all the other volunteers who helped in the immediate aftermath in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and all the other affected communities.

Let us hope the rebuilding and reconstruction continues to be well supported by the world community and that the lives of those in affected communities improve as quickly as possible.

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — I am pleased to be able to speak on this condolence motion. We all learnt soon after Boxing Day last year of the enormity of this tragedy. I know that within my electorate there were many people who were then very concerned about the wellbeing of family members and friends whom they knew to be either living or travelling in the affected regions. I lived in India for several months about 10 years ago, and I was very concerned about some of the friends I had made during that time. I was pleased to be able to make contact via email and hear that they were all still alive. Many had lost houses; however, I was pleased to learn more about the event and how the community in that area was supporting other families who had lost their houses too.

I am also very impressed by the way we have responded across Australia. I am impressed by the effort of the federal government and the Bracks government in offering leadership in supporting aid to help rebuild the affected areas.

I am very impressed by the efforts that have been made in my electorate to hold a range of fundraising activities, some of which I have been pleased to attend, such as a dinner dance run by the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, a celebrity concert organised by Ballarat City Council and directed by Irene Donald, and the One Small World extravaganza held at the Hepburn Springs Palais. I congratulate Sallie Harvey and the many community members who organised that event.

Many other events have been held, such as the FReeZA concert organised by the City of Ballarat Youth Services. Several events have been organised by the Anglican church, including a concert, a quiz night, a coffee afternoon and a summer luncheon at Sulky. At Kyneton \$30 000 was raised via a variety concert and a charity auction organised by the Macedon Ranges council and the community in that area. I congratulate all those who have come together to support and be

involved in these fundraisers. We know that there is lots more to be done.

One of the silver linings that I believe has come out of this event is that so many people from across this country have involved themselves in supporting people in the affected region around the Indian Ocean. They are learning more about those communities and will be following through on how they are rebuilding. After the last few years, when Australia and some of its citizens have perhaps in some ways been seen to be showing anti-Asian sentiment, I think this event has shown that we can move forward and can show that we are very interested in our Asian region, that we are prepared to come out and support it. I trust that the bonds that are being developed will only strengthen in the years ahead as the world helps to support the rebuilding of these countries around the Indian Ocean that were so badly affected by the tsunami.

Ms LINDELL (Carrum) — I would like to contribute to the condolence motion on behalf of my electorate of Carrum and the residents that I have the honour to represent in this place.

As many of the area's residents live along the beach, they would have found it quite terrifying to watch the tsunami on their TV screens. We just sit there and look across the bay in all its moods — on its very still days and on windy days when the waves lash our beach houses and the sand — but never do we really perceive the amazing threat nature can force upon us in such a devastating way.

It is beyond all of us to even try to imagine the effects of the tsunami upon the people living near the Indian Ocean who witnessed this dreadful natural disaster and to fully comprehend the loss of life of 296 000 people there. In his remarks today the Premier mentioned the lives of two Victorians who were lost and the very special place they had in their families' hearts. To think of the 296 000 people — complete families, in some cases — who were swept away is just too much for all of us.

I would certainly like to commend the residents of my electorate. There have been numerous fundraising activities, and I know of a few of them. I would like to commend both the Frankston and Kingston councils, which have both stepped forward with very generous donations to the tsunami appeals, for their efforts and ongoing commitments. The Frankston council had a memorial service on the national day of remembrance for victims of the tsunami.

I will point out a couple of particular efforts made. The Rotary Club of Chelsea, which runs farmers markets opposite Southland shopping centre, has donated the takings of \$5000 from those first three farmers markets this year to the tsunami appeal. The Chelsea Lions Club has also stepped into the breach with a donation of some thousands of dollars.

We have a benefit gig organised in the next couple of weeks by a local business, Mercury Signs, at the Chelsea RSL. The RSL is donating the hall and all proceeds are going to Care Australia. The Chelsea Baptist Church has been very busy collecting clothing, non-perishable foods and medical supplies, which have all been sent. At their swimming sports on Friday the Mordialloc College student representative council ran a sausage sizzle and raised \$500 for the tsunami victims. There have been individual efforts. A Sri Lankan person, Bandu Muthuthanthirige, who is now living in my home town of Aspendale, collected 150 boxes of clothing, cutlery and toys in four days and sent them across to Sri Lanka. The list goes on. Proceeds from the Kingston council's globe-to-globe activities over Australia Day were also sent to the tsunami appeal. I would certainly like to commend all these efforts.

The City of Kingston recently acknowledged one of its officers, Karen Coffield, a maternal and child health nurse, who took annual leave and went to Sri Lanka, understanding that her special skills could be used in the immediate aftermath of this dreadful travesty.

I congratulate my local community on their efforts, and on their behalf I offer their condolences to the people of all affected countries.

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Oakleigh electorate to speak on this condolence motion for the victims of the tsunami. Many speakers today and tonight have expressed very fluently the figures, the terrible tragedy that took place and the terrible effect that it has had on all of us.

As other members have said about their electorates, I had a great deal of support in the Oakleigh electorate from all members of the community. There were Red Cross tins in all shops and people were working very hard to raise money for the victims. In our local area one Saturday morning we got together, particularly the Greek community. Cafe Frappe opened up and gave contributions from their coffee — which is very good coffee, I might add. The local butchers donated sausages which were sold for the victims of the tsunami. We had a very full morning on that Saturday, but we raised a lot of money.

tsunami. We had a very full morning on that Saturday, but we raised a lot of money.

I would like to remind people that Red Cross has a significant month in March. Many members have spoken of the need to sustain the efforts that we have to make to ensure we continue to assist the victims of the tsunami. In March of every year, the Red Cross Calling appeal is held. Every year that I have been able to, I have doorknocked a couple of areas in my electorate and collected for Red Cross. It takes only a few weekends and a couple of hours of your time on those weekends.

Every area has a Red Cross coordinator, and I urge all members of Parliament not only to get out and collect for the Red Cross but also to urge their constituents to join in the efforts that Red Cross members put into March to make sure they raise money. Yes, they did raise a significant amount of money during the time when we had lots of fundraisers, but we all recognise the need to sustain that effort. We can all do that by giving up a couple of hours on a couple of weekends in March and going out and doorknocking in our area and continuing to raise that money.

As I said, there were many efforts in our area. I congratulate, for example, Monash council. Instead of conducting a whole range of Australia Day activities, it donated that money to the victims of the tsunami. In my area the local Uniting Church has a very significant Sri Lankan congregation. They have a Sri Lankan minister and meet there every Saturday. We were all very pleased to offer assistance. I am also pleased to have had this opportunity. It was a very tragic event, and we will remember it forever.

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

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Laptop computers

The SPEAKER — Order! Towards the end of the last sitting period the Minister for Agriculture and the member for Mornington raised a point of order relating to the use of laptop computers. They queried what must be disclosed in response to a request to make available a document which a member had quoted directly from his or her laptop.

In such a situation a member is required to make available a copy of the entire document from which he or she was quoting — for example, the relevant Word

or Excel file — but does not need to produce any other file on the hard disk drive from the laptop. In practice the member should print off a document as soon as practicable after the conclusion of his or her speech and give the copy to the Clerk.

VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to advise that on 24 January 2005 I administered to Steven Hunter Tully, the Victorian Electoral Commissioner, the oath required by section 16(4) of the Electoral Act 2002.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 177 to 185 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires a notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing before 10 o'clock tonight.

MITCHAM-FRANKSTON PROJECT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) introduced a bill to amend the **Mitcham-Frankston Project Act 2004, the Road Management Act 2004 and the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority Act 2003 and for other purposes.**

Read first time.

HEALTH (COMPULSORY TESTING) BILL

Introduction and first reading

For Ms PIKE (Minister for Health), Mr Batchelor introduced a bill to amend the **Health Act 1958 to make further provision for the compulsory testing of patients for specified infectious diseases.**

Read first time.

CHARITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) introduced a bill to make miscellaneous amendments to the Charities Act 1978 and for other purposes

Read first time.

CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES) (ENFORCEMENT) (AMENDMENT) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) introduced a bill to amend the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995, the Crimes Act 1958 and the Confiscation Act 1997 and for other purposes

Read first time.

COURTS LEGISLATION (JUDICIAL CONDUCT) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to amend the Constitution Act 1975 to make fresh provision with respect to the grounds for the removal from office of judicial office holders, provide for the appointment of an investigating committee and give an entitlement to reappointment to a judicial office to the holder of an abolished judicial office, to amend the Supreme Court Act 1986, the County Court Act 1958, the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 and for the purposes.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — Could the Attorney-General please provide a brief explanation of the legislation?

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — This is another groundbreaking piece of legislation that will implement the recommendations of the report on judicial conduct and complaints system in Victoria that was undertaken by Professor Peter Sallmann in December 2003. It will establish in this state a modern system for dealing with serious complaints involving judges, masters, magistrates and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal members consistent with the constitutional principles of judicial independence.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LEGAL PROFESSION (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to amend the Legal Profession Act 2004 and to amend other acts as a consequence of the passage of the Legal Profession Act 2004 and for other purposes.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — Could the Attorney-General please provide the house with a brief explanation in relation to that legislation?

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — In general terms this bill makes a number of consequential amendments which are necessary due to the passage of the Legal Profession Act. It actually amends a large number of acts to incorporate changes in terminology arising out of the principal act. It also includes a number of minor amendments which are necessary to correct typographical errors and incorrect cross-referencing. When the legislation was originally read a second time I indicated that there would be a range of consequential amendments that would have to follow due to the fact that certain offices were being abolished — the Office of the Legal Ombudsman, for instance — and were being replaced by a legal services commissioner. Acts have to be amended as a consequence.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

OUTWORKERS (IMPROVED PROTECTION) (AMENDMENT) BILL*Introduction and first reading*

Mr HULLS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to amend the Outworkers (Improved Protection) Act 2003 to ensure that outworkers receive the minimum entitlements contained in any relevant federal awards and for other purposes.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — Could we please have a brief explanation from the minister as to the content of the legislation?

Mr HULLS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — This bill is intended to address some deficiencies in the way the federal award applies to some contract outworkers, to ensure that all outworkers, whether they are set up as employees or as contractors, are provided with appropriate federal award terms and conditions.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (VICTORIA) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to make provision for the operation of the national electricity market, to repeal the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 1997, to amend the Electricity Industry Act 2000, the Electricity Industry (Residual Provisions) Act 1993 and the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 and for other purposes.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — Could the Treasurer please provide a brief explanation in relation to the legislation?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I want to thank the Leader of The Nationals for that question. The new electricity law will reform the government's arrangements for the electricity market. It will confer functions and powers on two new industry bodies, it will provide for rules that govern the operation of the national electricity market, it will provide a clear objective for the electricity market and it will put in place a number of other functions to improve the situation.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Frankston: central activities district

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of traders in the Frankston central activity district draws to the attention of the house the chronic lack of car parking for customers in the Frankston CAD, the cost of car parking in the Frankston CAD (which contrasts with all other shopping precincts in Frankston and neighbouring municipalities), and poor street lighting in Frankston.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria works with Frankston traders and Frankston City Council to ensure time-limited free parking be implemented in Frankston and better street lighting installed to allow for an attractive and competitive shopping precinct.

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

By Mr HARKNESS (Frankston) (3440 signatures)

Frankston: aquatic centre

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

The humble petition of undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth that a regional aquatic centre be established in Frankston to serve the people of the southern region. Your petitioners therefore pray that the government of Victoria in consultation with Frankston City Council and local community groups facilitate the building of an aquatic centre in Frankston.

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

By Mr HARKNESS (Frankston) (19 signatures)

Planning: development

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

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the following matter:

We the undersigned oppose the proposed residential canal and lake developments at Venus Bay and Maher's Landing/Pound Creek, Inverloch. Both proposals are located on the protected sensitive estuarine wetland of Anderson Inlet, Gippsland, Victoria.

We oppose them on the following grounds:

impact on coastal systems and biodiversity;

potential of acid sulphate soils;

Anderson Inlet is an internationally recognised wader bird habitat;

increasing urbanisation will destroy the character and amenity of Anderson Inlet;

both proposals are in conflict with Victorian Coastal Strategy.

Prayer

Your petitioners therefore request the proposed developments at Venus Bay and Maher's Landing on Anderson Inlet be rejected and that all future large-scale residential developments of a similar nature be prohibited.

By Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) (3520 signatures)

Port Phillip Bay: channel deepening

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

The petition of the citizens of Victoria points out to the house that:

The economic rationale for deepening shipping channels is inadequately justified against the environmental costs. The vast majority of benefits will stay with overseas shipping lines and shippers, and a PoMC witness admits that financial benefits to individual consumers will be ‘immeasurably minor’.

Port Phillip Bay Heads area outranks the Great Barrier Reef for diversity of reef life, colour and interest. Dredging will cause turbidity and sedimentation, smothering of marine species, and re-release of toxicity from Yarra sediments — all of which will seriously threaten our recently created marine parks, RAMSAR wetlands, dolphins, seals, penguins, recreational and commercial fisheries, residents around the bay and tourism industries.

The petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure that the proposal to deepen shipping channels is rejected, and that alternative solutions making better use of a mix of interstate rail from existing deep-water ports and sea transport are engaged. We also request that the Minister for Planning makes public the findings of the EES independent panel, due for release in February 2005, as soon as the panel provides its report to government.

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

By Mr LUPTON (Pahran) (16 043 signatures)

Tabled.

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

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Pahran be considered next day on motion of Mr COOPER (Mornington).

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 1

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park) presented *Alert Digest No. 1* of 2005 on:

- Channel Deepening (Facilitation) Bill**
- Corrections (Transition Centres and Custodial Community Permits) Bill**
- Geothermal Energy Resources Bill**
- Housing (Housing Agencies) Bill**
- Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Bill**
- Occupational Health and Safety Bill**

- Public Administration Bill**
 - Retirement Villages (Amendment) Bill**
 - Safety on Public Land Bill**
 - Statute Law Revision Bill**
 - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Amendment) Bill**
- together with appendices.**

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

Statute Law Revision Bill

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park) presented report, together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003:

Economic and Development Committee — Interim Report, as amended on the Inquiry into Labour Hire Employment in Victoria together with appendices and minutes of evidence — Ordered to be tabled and the report and appendices printed

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — Report for the year 2003–04 — Ordered to be tabled and printed

Report on the Review of the Auditor-General’s performance audit report — Services for people with an intellectual disability — Ordered to be tabled and printed

Ombudsman Act 1973:

Report on the Essendon Rental Housing Co-operative — Ordered to be printed

Report on a Complaint about the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria — Ordered to be printed

Dandenong Development Board — Report for the year 2003–04

Environment Protection Act 1970 — Order declaring Waste Management Policy (Siting, Design and Management of Landfills) (Gazette S264, 14 December 2004)

Ethical Clothing Trades Council of Victoria — Report for the year 2004

Financial Management Act 1994:

Budget Update for the year 2004–05

Response by the Minister for Finance to the Auditor-General's Reports issued during 2003–04

Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation Limited — Report for the year 2003–04 (two documents)

Heywood Rural Health — Report for the year 2003–04, together with an explanation for the delay in tabling

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice under s. 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule No 175

Legal Practice Act 1996 — Practitioner Remuneration Order under s. 113

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

Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme — No C5
 Ararat Planning Scheme — No C10
 Ballarat Planning Scheme — Nos C71, C73 Part 1
 Baw Baw Planning Scheme — No C30
 Bayside Planning Scheme — No C40
 Boroondara Planning Scheme — Nos C45, C60
 Brimbank Planning Scheme — No C32
 Cardinia Planning Scheme — Nos C47, C61
 Casey Planning Scheme — Nos C62, C63
 East Gippsland Planning Scheme — No C32
 Frankston Planning Scheme — No C21
 Gannawarra Planning Scheme — Nos C7, C10
 Glenelg Planning Scheme — No C12
 Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme — No C37
 Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Nos C49, C52, C104
 Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Nos C46, C49, C52
 Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — No C31 Part 1
 Hume Planning Scheme — No C46
 Kingston Planning Scheme — No C10
 Knox Planning Scheme — No C31 Part 1
 Latrobe Planning Scheme — No C29
 Loddon Planning Scheme — No C9
 Manningham Planning Scheme — No C29
 Melbourne Planning Scheme — Nos C99, C100, C101
 Mildura Planning Scheme — Nos C26, C29 Part 1
 Monash Planning Scheme — No C44
 Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Nos C35, C53 Part 1, C54, C70
 Moorabool Planning Scheme — No C28
 Moreland Planning Scheme — Nos C28, C41, C51, C52
 Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — No C71

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme — No C27

Murrindindi Planning Scheme — No C10

Nillumbik Planning Scheme — Nos C20, C26

Northern Grampians Planning Scheme — No C4

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — No C51

South Gippsland Planning Scheme — Nos C17, C24, C25

Strathbogie Planning Scheme — Nos C17, C18, C40

Surf Coast Planning Scheme — No C21

Towong Planning Scheme — Nos C5 Part 2, C12

Victoria Planning Provisions — No VC32

Wangaratta Planning Scheme — No C25

Wellington Planning Scheme — No C20

West Wimmera Planning Scheme — No C6

Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Nos C40, C52 Part 1

Whittlesea Planning Scheme — No C62

Wodonga Planning Scheme — Nos C29, C36

Wyndham Planning Scheme — No C63

Yarra Planning Scheme — No C90

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — No C35 Part 2

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals on Private Game Reserves licensed to hunt game birds

Road Management Act 2004 — Code of Practice for:

Management of Road and Utility Infrastructure in Road Reserves

Operational Responsibility for Public Roads

Worksite Safety — Traffic Management

Road Safety Act 1986 — Order declaring certain electric scooters not to be motor vehicles

Robinvale District Health Services — Report for the year 2003–04, together with an explanation for the delay in tabling

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 — SR No 155

Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996 — SR No 179

Building Act 1993 — SR No 174

Confiscation Act 1997 — SR No 164

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — SR No 172

Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958 — SR No 3/2005

County Court Act 1958 — SR Nos 180, 181

Credit (Administration) Act 1984 — SR No 167

Credit Act 1984 — SR No 165
Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 — SR No 162
Electricity Safety Act 1998 — SR Nos 182, 183
Evidence Act 1958 — SR No 156
Fair Trading Act 1999 — SR No 168
Health Act 1958 — SR No 4/2005
Health Services Act 1988 — SR No 173
Land Tax Act 1958 — SR Nos 160, 161
Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — SR No 163
Mental Health Act 1986 — SR No 157
Motor Car Traders Act 1986 — SR No 169
Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1982 — SR No 175
Road Management Act 2004 — SR Nos 176, 177
Road Safety Act 1986 — SR Nos 158, 159, 178, 184
Second-Hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 1989 — SR No 170
Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SR Nos 1, 2/2005
Travel Agents Act 1986 — SR Nos 166, 171
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — SR No 154

Strategic Audit of Victorian Government Agencies'
 Environment Management Systems, January 2005

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 154, 163, 174, 180, 181, 1, 2/2005

Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 128, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177, 179, 4/2005

Wrongs Act 1958 — Notice of scale of fees and costs for referrals of medical questions to medical panels (*Gazette G2*, 13 January 2005).

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 26 February 2003:

Animals Legislation (Animal Welfare) Act 2003 — Section 20(1) on 16 December 2004 (*Gazette G51*, 16 December 2004)

Public Administration Act 2004 — Sections 1 and 2 and Part 9 on 21 December 2004 (*Gazette S275*, 21 December 2004)

Royal Agriculture Showgrounds Act 2003 — Whole Act other than Part 6 on 30 December 2004 (*Gazette G52*, 23 December 2004)

Transport Accident (Amendment) Act 2004 — Sections 11, 12 and 13 on 16 December 2004; sections 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15

and 17 on 1 January 2005; and sections 10, 23 and 24 on 1 March 2005 (*Gazette G51*, 16 December 2004)

Transport Legislation (Amendment) Act 2004 — Part 12 on 1 February 2005 (*Gazette G3*, 20 January 2005)

World Swimming Championships Act 2004 — Whole Act on 16 February 2005 (*Gazette G6*, 10 February 2005).

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent to:

14 December 2004

Building (Cooling Towers and Plumbing) (Amendment) Bill
Corrections and Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Acts (Amendment) Bill
Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority Bill
Legal Profession Bill
Multicultural Victoria Bill
Planning and Environment (Development Contributions) Bill

21 December 2004

Accident Compensation Legislation (Amendment) Bill
Fair Trading (Enhanced Compliance) Bill
Gambling Regulation (Further Amendment) Bill
Heritage (World Heritage) Bill
Housing (Housing Agencies) Bill
Occupational Health and Safety Bill
Public Administration Bill
Safety on Public Land Bill
Transport Legislation (Amendment) Bill.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Channel Deepening (Facilitation) Bill
Corrections (Transition Centres and Custodial Community Permits) Bill
Geothermal Energy Resources Bill
Retirement Villages (Amendment) Bill.

CORRECTION OF BILL TITLES

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — By leave, I move:

That where a bill has passed through both houses and the citation of the bill includes a reference to a calendar year earlier than that in which the passage of the bill was

completed, the Clerk of the Parliaments be empowered to alter the calendar year reference in the citation of the bill and any corresponding reference within the bill itself to the year in which the passage of the bill was so completed.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That, pursuant to standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 24 February 2005:

Corrections (Transition Centres and Custodial Community Permits) Bill.

Courts Legislation (Judicial Appointments and Other Amendments) Bill

Retirement Villages (Amendment) Bill

Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Bill

In moving this motion comprising four bills, we had earlier indicated that we might be seeking to have five bills formally on the government business program, but given the extended and understandable response to the tsunami motion, and the desire of the house to deal with the Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill, I believe it is appropriate that we reduce the earlier foreshadowed government business program by one — namely, the Geothermal Energy Resources Bill. I point out for the benefit of members that the attention and the focus of the chamber will be directed towards those four bills after we have dealt with the Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill tomorrow. If there were, however, by some strange chance sufficient time at the end of the parliamentary week to deal with the Geothermal Energy Resources Bill, we might consider taking it on board at that time. In light of today's debate on the tsunami and the expected debate on the Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill, I think it is appropriate to reduce the government business program by one bill.

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — The opposition accepts the reduction of the government business program by taking out the Geothermal Energy Resources Bill, on the basis, as the Leader of the House said, that if time permits we will get to it and maybe get through it. The whole issue comes back to the fact that we have an extraordinary business program throughout the year. We have got three sitting days in each of the months of March, April, June and July and nine sitting

days in the month of May. I have never seen a business program quite so inadequate.

Mr Hulls interjected.

Mr PLOWMAN — Let us get on with it says the Attorney-General, who is also the Minister for Planning. I suggest that if he introduces the bills that should be introduced into this place, he will be keen to see many more sitting days than just those three days each month for five of the six months in front of us. You would have to ask: why does the government wish to sit for three days in July? This is quite an exception to the normal practice, and given that there are only those three days in every other month — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! We are discussing the government business program for this week, not the length of sittings during the year. I ask the member for Benambra to return to the government business program.

Mr PLOWMAN — There is a direct relationship between what is in this week's program and how the business program for the entire session is going to be concluded; therefore, I suggest there is the option to debate that.

The SPEAKER — Order! That is not the advice of the Chair. We are debating the government business program for this week only. I ask the member for Benambra to return to that subject in his comments.

Mr PLOWMAN — What is happening is that there is a limitation on the amount of legislation that will come before the house. This week is an example of that — effectively only four bills will come before the house.

Mr Leighton interjected.

Mr PLOWMAN — I suggest this even though the member for Preston is interjecting on this issue. The member said, 'What is the difference between now and the past?'. In the first five years of the Kennett government — —

Mr Leighton interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Preston!

Mr PLOWMAN — We sat more weeks and more hours than in the period of the first five years of this government. I take up the interjection. I would not have made that interjection myself if I were the member for Preston, knowing exactly what this government has

achieved by way of reducing the time and hours of sittings.

Mr Leighton interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Preston will be quiet! The member for Benambra will address his comments to the government business program or I will sit him down.

Mr PLOWMAN — It is with those thoughts in mind that I look at this business program for this week. Effectively we have only four bills before the house, and from that we know we will have a very much reduced business program. I accept your ruling that we are discussing this week's program. If that is an example of what is to come, we have a very limited program in front of us.

The Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill is going to come before us. It has been poorly drafted inasmuch as it does not include the issue of rape. I am sure that was a mistake. If we had more sitting days we would not have to be pushing through an amendment to that bill to cover that inadequacy. I suggest there is a fault in the business program. We have so few sitting weeks that this week we will be forcing through a bill that should not be forced through with so little notice. It is a deficiency.

There are other issues that I would like to mention briefly. The government has advised me of the reduction in the number of bills before the house this week. I acknowledge that, and I accept the advice that was given to me.

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

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — The Nationals will not be opposing the government's business program, but I want to make a few comments. Originally we had six bills that were going to be debated this week, and then the government decided it wanted to have the condolence motion on the tsunami disaster. That was fine. The Nationals were perfectly willing to accommodate that, and the government quite reasonably suggested the dropping until another time of the channel-deepening legislation.

Mr Pertton — I don't think that is why they dropped it.

Mr MAUGHAN — Well, it may not have been. The member for Doncaster might have some other views as to why that might be the case. I do not necessarily disagree with that. Nonetheless, in terms of the government business program it meant that we then

came back to five bills plus the condolence motion. That was fair and reasonable. Then yesterday we were told that the government, for understandable reasons, wanted to debate the Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Bill this week. Again, as I understand it, both the Liberal Party and certainly The Nationals have accommodated that desire. We all want to get that legislation through. We then had six bills plus the condolence motion. It was suggested that only five be guillotined and one be carried over — and I thank the Leader of the House for agreeing to have the Geothermal Energy Resources Bill not included in the guillotine. I agree with him that we have a fair chance of debating that bill before we go home on Thursday. I also thank the minister for accommodating The Nationals with regard to the Courts Legislation (Judicial Appointments and Other Amendments) Bill.

It needs to be stated that in between this first week of these sittings and the next sitting week we have a period of four weeks. Members may ask themselves why we are rushing through and are not as well prepared as we should be when we have that four-week gap in between the first and second weeks of the sittings, and at the end of the sessional period again we have four weeks between the second-last week and the last week. The government has not adequately explained to the community why that should be the case. Why are we stretching out that — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The debate is on the government business program for this week. I ask the member to relate his comments to the government business program for this week.

Mr MAUGHAN — Speaker, this is on the government business program for this week. We are not going to oppose it, and we will get through this week in reasonable shape.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Liberal Party: Geelong shopfront

Mr LONEY (Lara) — I wish to draw the attention of the house to an amazing new shop that is to open in Geelong later this year. It is good to see the Minister for State and Regional Development in the house, because I will wager he has never seen a business like this one anywhere in Victoria. It will bring a unique new concept to shopping: while it will have a shopfront, it will be a shop without stock or anyone interested in serving.

This amazing new shop was announced by the Leader of the Opposition during a recent visit to Geelong. On 11 February he told Geelong that a Liberal shopfront would open there in July, more than two years after his previously promised date of June 2003. However, even after two years of delay, which a spokesperson said on his behalf was due to the Liberals' priority on party rebuilding, not public access. The Liberals still have no policies with which to stock their shop, nor any candidate prepared to work in it.

If last week's public meeting in Geelong is any measure of their success in party rebuilding, and you apply that to how the shop will go, you have to think that it is going to be in trouble. The *Geelong Advertiser* said that when the members of the shadow cabinet came down and all lined up, less than 20 people turned up to that public meeting, so it will not be long before the shop has to — —

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

Innovation, Industry and Regional Development: family calendar

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — With such a huge influx of new public servants in government departments costing the taxpayer an extra \$1.7 billion a year and providing no new services to Victorians, confusion has arisen as to what these people actually do. This confusion about the role of public servants has prompted one department to draw stick diagrams to illustrate the role of each public servant.

I am advised that the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development is using public funds to discover what its employees are up to. DIIRD is asking each public servant to ask their children to draw a picture of what their mum or dad is meant to be doing in the department. Once this is done, these drawings will form a calendar, to be given to each public servant and to all new employees so that everyone can find out what the people next to them are doing.

An email reads:

Our DIIRD Family Calender is a fun initiative that involves your children ... The challenge to our young artists is to draw what mum, dad ... do at work. This will give entrants and parents ... an opportunity to ... discuss the work they undertake daily ...

The calendar will form part of our induction kit for new starters and will allow us to share important dates around ... our core activities ...

So get those crayons sharpened ...

I ask the minister to investigate whether this is worth while in terms of public funding, and whether the public should fund advisers to the minister.

Australian Small Business Listing Exchange

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I rise to congratulate Bruce Nicholls who last night launched an important new business venture not just for the Seymour electorate but for small businesses across Australia. This far-reaching and innovative business will be run from his farm at Glenaroua near Seymour and Broadford.

This Australian Business Listing Exchange, or ABLX, provides at-the-fingertips access to a range of basic products and services used by tradespeople, professionals, retailers and other small businesses. In Bruce's words, the ABLX 'empowers small business by focusing their demands in one place'.

The ABLX aims to offer small businesses a one-stop shop for a range of services such as buying or selling a business or franchise; finding business partners; finding a shop, factory or office site; accounting and taxation services; insurance services; hiring staff and a host of other services. The aim of the ABLX is to ensure that the buying power of small businesses is pooled to ensure they have some of the advantages available to larger corporations.

It was a privilege to attend the launch last night with the new state Minister for Small Business, the new federal Minister for Small Business and Tourism, and many supporters of the ABLX. Bruce has been passionate about this venture for a very long time. I wish him all the best. It will be great for small businesses and for jobs in country Victoria too.

Minimbah Hostel and City Camp: future

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — This morning I visited Minimbah Hostel and City Camp in Armadale to view the facilities first hand. The visit reinforced my belief that it should stay open to provide accommodation to country students when they visit Melbourne. I believe government comments about the condition of this hostel are unfounded. It appears structurally sound. With new carpets and a coat of paint, Minimbah would provide services to schools in country Victoria for years to come.

I will be tabling petitions in this house from schools incensed at the decision to close Minimbah. Would government members be happy for their children to have their first experience of Melbourne at a backpackers hostel, as now suggested, or would they

prefer the peace of mind that Minimbah has provided to previous generations of parents?

This is another example of a government that appears to have lost its way in providing services to country Victoria. I believe that both education ministers should personally visit Minimbah and speak with the schools that have used this facility in the past. They would then reverse their ill-advised decision to close Minimbah.

Oakleigh Kindergarten

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — The Oakleigh community was very pleased to welcome the Minister for Children on Wednesday, 16 February, to officially open the new Oakleigh Kindergarten, which is situated on the Oakleigh Primary School grounds. This has been a wonderful community project.

With the closure of three kindergartens in that area over a period of years, with more families moving back into the area and with growing waiting lists for other kindergartens, the local community was very aware of the desperate need for another facility. We as a government made a commitment that the Oakleigh area would be a priority for a new kinder, and I am very proud to represent this community, which took up the challenge of making this much-needed facility a reality.

In particular I thank Philip Hughes, the principal of Oakleigh Primary School, who has shown great leadership, commitment and courage in taking up the challenge. Along with assistant principal Kerry Wood, the school council and the parents of Oakleigh Primary School, there has been a lot of very hard work put in to develop this unique proposal. It is a stand-alone, purpose-built kindergarten on the grounds of the primary school and also incorporates a much-needed community and parent resource room.

Cooperation has been sought and gained from different government departments including community services, education and training and Victorian communities, and I thank those departmental officers who worked this through with the school and the community to make it happen. Without any great effort in terms of publicising the new facility, and operating to a very tight time line, we already have 20 four-year-olds, 35 three-year-olds and a playgroup about to commence in the community resource room. This is a fantastic facility, a true model of community participation and community strengthening.

Frankston Hospital: critical care beds

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — A report to the government on the availability of critical care beds in our public hospitals has revealed a situation that can only be described as disgraceful. The Bracks government has cut the ratio of intensive care beds in Victoria to the second lowest in Australia, and this is certainly reflected in the situation at Frankston Hospital, which the government's own report revealed.

Between 17 August and 27 October 2004 Frankston Hospital was unable to accept critical care bed patients for 89.8 per cent of the time. For 53 days out of a total of 72 days the hospital was not able to deal with new critical care admissions. What this government has not owned up to is how many of those patients turned away from Frankston had to be flown interstate for an available bed.

Frankston Hospital has been deserted by this government and by local Labor Party members of Parliament. We never hear a word from the members for Frankston or Hastings about this crisis at their local public hospital. Prior to the last election the member for Frankston publicly promised his electorate that health services would be a top priority with him, but he has not uttered a single word in this Parliament about the appalling shortage of health services at Frankston Hospital. The inaction and silence on this major issue from the member for Frankston and the member for Hastings will certainly be remembered by voters in November 2006.

Billy Dorris, Jr

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I use this brief opportunity to mark the passing on 10 February of a soccer legend in Geelong and Victoria — Billy Dorris, Jr. As members of this house would attest, there are many people throughout Victoria who contribute enormously to their communities in one way or another. Most of those people are unsung heroes who receive no accolades or national honours, nor do they seek them, and nor do they seek any monetary rewards. In fact much of their contribution comes from their own hip pockets, and that was Billy Dorris, Jr, to a tee.

I came to know Billy as a workmate at the port of Geelong where he worked as an administration officer throughout the 1990s. But it was in the field of soccer that Billy contributed enormously, especially at the junior coaching level. Unfortunately, due to a severe illness that ultimately took his life, Billy was unable to play the game he loved at a senior level, and so he took to coaching, a role where he absolutely excelled. Over

the years he coached generations of young soccer players, many of whom went on to represent their state and nation at a senior level. Recognising Billy's talents he was quickly recruited into the state ranks. At the state level he coached and managed numerous junior sides, with his travels taking him interstate and overseas.

Billy Dorris was only 37 years of age when he passed away. Although tragically his life was cut short, in such a short time he contributed enormously to soccer and the community of Geelong. I was proud to call Billy a friend. Rest in peace, Billy, you were a credit to yourself and your family. This world will be poorer for your passing.

Ukraine: elections

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — The orange revolution in Ukraine and the election of Ukraine's new president, Viktor Yushenko, is a true testament to the power of people and their aspirations for a democratic society. Democracy must be valued, and when it is under threat it must be defended.

Australia's Ukrainian community did this very thing when it became an active participant in supporting the democratic processes in Ukraine. The community rallied under its peak body, the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO), and lobbied and called on the federal government not to stand idle in ensuring that the people's choice prevailed. The community engaged with Ukraine. In the first instance young Victorian, Peter Romaniw, travelled to Ukraine to be an election monitor in the first two rounds. He remained with the tent city through November and December.

The re-run of the second election saw a larger contingent led by AFUO chairman, Stefan Romaniw, OAM. The delegation consisted of Victorians Eugene Stefyn, Daniel Stefyn, Irene Stawicki, Anastasia Romaniw, Julian Moravski, Terry Swiatinsky, Adrian Jarocky, James Pawluk, Peter Marczenko; Christina Bailey from New South Wales and Mykola Mowczan from Western Australia.

The local community in Victoria rallied on the steps of Parliament House and in Federation Square. The efforts of the community should be commended. I congratulate President Yushenko on his democratic election and strongly acknowledge other efforts of the Australian and Victorian Ukrainian communities for engaging the broader community in this process of bringing democracy to Ukraine.

Rafic El Hariri

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — Last Friday I attended a commemoration at the Coburg town hall for the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafic El Hariri. I joined members of the Lebanese community, particularly religious and community leaders, at the ceremony, as well as parliamentary colleagues, including the members for Yuroke and Pascoe Vale, federal members and local government representatives.

It was a very tragic moment for the Lebanese community both locally as well as in Lebanon. His death was a monstrous act committed on the world. Rafic El Hariri was a billionaire who had made his fortune in Saudi Arabia and returned to Lebanon in 1990 after 15 years of civil war to help literally rebuild the country. As the person in a building company he sought to rebuild Beirut, which is now a glorious centre after its destruction in the civil war.

His death was a very tragic moment. I extend my condolences not only to the local Lebanese community but also to the people of Lebanon, who not only have to wear this very tragic event but also have to ensure that this does not lead to further bloodshed and the further destruction of what is a very beautiful country that has had a tormented and bitter past.

Echuca-Moama riverboat, jazz, food and wine festival

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — Last weekend I once again enjoyed Echuca-Moama's magnificent riverboat, jazz, food and wine festival. I offer my congratulations to Maureen Bennett and the team of more than 90 volunteers who assisted on that weekend. This is the 12th year that the major regional festival, organised by Echuca-Moama Tourism, has been held, and it simply gets bigger and better every year. The aim of the festival is to showcase the excellent food and wine available in an entertaining manner and to promote awareness of Echuca-Moama and its very extensive riverboat heritage.

On Friday evening more than 1000 children attended the very popular Teddy Bears Picnic. Those participating in the Riverboat Ramble learnt something of the history of the Murray River while enjoying live jazz, consuming fine food and wine, and cruising the magnificent river on one of the many paddle steamers for which Echuca has become famous.

On the Saturday the many restaurants, cafes and hotels create a Mardi Gras atmosphere, with sidewalk dining and jazz bands strategically placed along the street. It is

a great weekend. Saturday evening is the time to be there. Sunday is also fantastic in the amphitheatre, with 3500 people enjoying the ambience, the food, the wine and the jazz bands. All in all Echuca by the Murray is a great place to be.

Werribee Mercy Hospital: community fete

Ms GILLET (Tarnait) — It was my pleasure last Sunday to attend the fifth annual Werribee Mercy Hospital community fete. The fete has grown steadily in strength, in numbers and in community support over the last five years, but this year, it has to be said, was an absolute bumper year. There were thousands of people who supported what is a wonderful hospital and a sensational asset and resource for a fantastic community.

I have to pay tribute to Stephen Connellison, the chief executive officer of the hospital, and his wonderful crew of staff and volunteers, who go beyond the envelope at every opportunity. They work so hard in their paid employment, but then they work outside those hours to put together this sensational carnival every single year, which raises well-deserved funds for the hospital.

The Werribee Mercy Hospital does a wonderful job in the community, which this government has recognised. It has invested over \$10 million to upgrade the hospital's emergency department, which we hope will be opened very soon, much to the pleasure of Stephen and his staff and all those who work in and attend the hospital.

Flemington racecourse: flood protection wall

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — Last year the Minister for Planning called in and approved an application to build a 1500-metre wall at Flemington intended to protect the racecourse from flooding. The approval included a primary condition that the flood risk would not increase in any other area as a result of the wall or any associated works. Short of a flood, that condition can be tested only by modelling.

However, since the approval, credible doubts have been raised by two separate and specialist water engineering consultants about the hydraulic modelling used by Melbourne Water and its consultants and upon which the permit relies. Dr Andrew McGowan from Water Technologies Pty Ltd and Dr Mark Jempson from WBM Oceanics have independently concluded that the modelling was flawed and that flood risk is in fact significantly increased. Those concerns are shared by a

number of former Melbourne Water employees who previously had responsibility for flood control systems.

Now the US Army Corps of Engineers, the authors of the HEC-RAS (Hydrologic Engineering Centre — River Analysis System) program used by Melbourne Water for its modelling, have confirmed in writing that the so-called Manning 'n' values, a friction coefficient, adopted in the project modelling, 'are not realistic' but indeed half that recommended. They also support claims by flood plain experts that Melbourne Water has made fundamental errors in its modelling techniques by not matching flood levels to water surface profiles in the calibration process.

There is now considerable evidence that the wall will increase the risk of flooding in the Maribyrnong flood plain. Indeed it is suggested that flood levels could be underestimated by 200 to 300 millimetres in the Maribyrnong area and even more at Dynon Road. Local residents, including the Maribyrnong and Mooney Valley councils, are understandably concerned, but their fears continue to be stonewalled by Melbourne Water.

It is time for the minister to act. The Minister for Environment should commission an urgent public and independent review of the hydraulic modelling and require the Minister for Planning to suspend the permit until this vital issue is resolved.

Lynn Murrell

Mr HARKNESS (Frankston) — One of the pleasures of being a member of Parliament is getting to meet some very interesting people. I am pleased to inform the house about just such a person I was fortunate enough to meet in my line of work last week. Lynn Murrell is a remarkable and inspiring man. He has never shied away from serving the community and standing up for his convictions. He was a councillor in Portland for 20 years and has served on an astonishing array of community and government committees, organisations and statutory bodies. Currently Lynn is a member of that Victorian Coastal Council, chair of the Western Coastal Board and president of friends of Cape Nelson Landcare/Coastcare.

Mr Murrell's latest extraordinary effort is a solo, unassisted walk along the Victorian coast. He started on 4 January at Nelson on the South Australian border and will not hang up his boots until the end of April when he reaches Cape Howe in the state's far east. The aim of his journey is to highlight the wonderful but fragile asset that is Victoria's coastline. I was privileged to join Mr Murrell on the Frankston leg of his journey last

week. Walking along Frankston Beach with Mr Murrell, I was more aware of the magnificent asset that is our coastline than I had ever been. Developers and property speculators too have in recent years discovered our wonderful asset.

Our job as legislators is to ensure a balance between development and protecting our wonderful natural environment. I am proud that the Victorian government continues to ensure that the coast belongs to all Victorians. I am also proud that, through recently announced tax exemptions for caravan parks, all Victorian families can still afford to enjoy beach holidays at coastal caravan parks.

Lynn is backpacking and camping with no support crew. This is an endeavour which has not been undertaken previously. I applaud Mr Murrell and wish him well for the remainder of his journey. He has reminded me to remain firm in my resolve to protect the — —

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

Boating: ramps

Mr SMITH (Bass) — I have concern for the actions of the Bracks government in closing down local boat launching ramps. I have raised in this house the total neglect of the Lang Lang Jetty and its derelict state. It has now been closed. The closure of the Soldiers Road ramp and the ramp at Bear Gully only add to this dilemma.

Now I have to report an assault by this government through Parks Victoria to close down the Bass Landing, which is a small man-made launching ramp on the Bass River. It is on an unmade road that is never graded by the council or Parks Victoria. The area adjacent is only disused grassy farmland where locals park their cars or trailers and just go fishing from the banks of the river. This is not a flash ramp but it suits the locals. They can launch their boats with safety into a calm river. On the bank opposite the launching ramp is certainly a significant natural salt marsh where migratory birds have a habitat which has been there for as long as the existing ramp. It has been suggested that the locals can launch their boats from either Newhaven or Corinella and go across sometimes treacherous waters to their usual fishing spots on the other side of the bay.

I ask the minister to get his staff to back off a little bit, to give some of these people down in that area a fair go. All they want to do is go fishing, and we have Parks

Victoria absolutely riding roughshod over the wishes of the local community.

Floods: Diamond Creek

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — Today I want to commend communities in my electorate for the manner in which they have dealt with the freak storms, rain and flooding which occurred on 2 and 3 February. The once-in-156-year event saw the Diamond Creek rise from its normal gentle levels to bursting its banks and turning into a 100-metre-wide raging torrent cutting the town in two, carrying complete trees, bridges, fences and debris sweeping from Arthurs Creek through Hurstbridge, Wattle Glen, Diamond Creek and through Eltham to the Yarra.

It was a truly frightening night and day. I want to pay tribute to all the emergency services workers, both the paid employees of the police, Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, the City of Whittlesea, the Shire of Nillumbik and TXU who went the extra mile, and the tireless volunteers of both the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the State Emergency Service (SES). Our community is still counting the cost. The state government has made relief available to affected households and can provide emergency grants to councils in exceptional circumstances. I am pleased that affected sporting clubs, which have suffered losses of equipment and first aid, can apply for equipment replacement. I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation in another place for his action in this. I was pleased to see that the floods receded and the ground dried out enough so that the Whittlesea Country Music Festival could go on.

Much work still needs to be done to clean up the mess, and I know the community will come out in force on Clean Up Australia Day on 4 March to clear debris in and around creek beds. My heartfelt thanks go to the CFA volunteer brigades in regions 13 and 14 and the Eltham SES, the Kinglake — —

Bayswater Plaza: redevelopment

Mr LOCKWOOD (Bayswater) — Community renewal is an issue close to my heart. Within my electorate are some of the finest examples of small suburban shopping and business precincts. For example, many people have remarked to me that Studfield shopping centre is one of the best shopping strips east of the Yarra. However, one area has been undergoing revitalisation — that is, the township of Bayswater.

For many years I have taken a personal interest in the redevelopment of Bayswater, initially through my work as a councillor and over the past two years as a local member of Parliament. I have witnessed the hard work and dedication of many traders, citizens and shoppers, each dedicated to the task of revitalising the shopping and business precinct. However, the one thing that volunteers cannot provide is real capital investment. The ugly duckling of the area, the Bayswater Plaza, was recently purchased by an investor with the finest foresight. I would like to recognise the show of faith in Bayswater that Mr Leo Blake has displayed by purchasing the Bayswater Plaza complex. As the owner-operator of the well-known Maxi Foods and Leo's Fine Food and Wine stores, Mr Blake has established a reputation for his dedication and insight into the independent supermarket industry. His Maxi Foods stores come complete with the usual full range of groceries as well as fresh fish, fresh meat, a bakery, a deli, a florist, a coffee shop, a greengrocer and a liquor store.

The potential has always been there to turn the Bayswater Plaza building into a shopping complex that can take advantage of a large local community of shoppers. Once empty shopfronts adorned the tired centre, but now I look forward to increased consumer traffic and positive flow-on effects that the existence of another major retail trader in the precinct will generate.

Noel Beaton

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I rise to pay tribute to Noel Beaton, the former federal member for Bendigo, who passed away on 18 December 2004. Noel Beaton spent his early life in Mooroopna, had a lifelong love of country Victoria, served in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II, and in the army's postwar occupation force in Japan. Noel maintained a lifelong interest in football: he played for Mooroopna, Prahran and Golden Square; he coached Elmore; he was a football writer for the *Bendigo Advertiser*; and in his later years he was a fan and member at Geelong. Noel was elected to federal Parliament as the member for Bendigo in 1960. He put the people of Bendigo ahead of his own needs and worked tirelessly for his electorate during his four terms from 1960 to 1969. He was proudly known as the Member for T Boxes.

When he retired from federal Parliament, Noel went on to run the editorial side of the *Bendigo Advertiser* during the 1970s and took pride in helping to save the Bendigo town hall from demolition. In the mid-1970s he ran the public and government relations aspects of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. In retirement Noel lived in Dingley in my electorate,

where he remained a great community worker and wonderful source of advice and support for me. He leaves a deeply loved wife, children and grandchildren. He was a lifelong Labor man, a true believer. He was a kind and gentle man who saw the best in everyone. He had a deep commitment to social justice. He will be a great loss to many, and I am deeply saddened by his passing. He lived a rich and full life, a life of which to be proud. I offer my condolences to his family.

Golf: government assistance

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — It was with great pleasure that on Friday, 18 February, I represented the Minister for Sport and Recreation in another place at a breakfast at the Commonwealth Golf Club in Oakleigh to launch a report on the issues and challenges faced by golf clubs and the golf industry more generally. The Victorian Golf Association has received funding for this project through the state sports associations support grants program under the Strengthening Communities — Future Directions category for research and analysis on the changing competitive positioning for Victorian golf clubs. Australia continues to produce outstanding results and world-class performers in golf, and the high level of community participation contributes significantly to this. I know more than most the importance of success at an elite level and the impact it can have on a sport, but even more important than those results is the community connection.

That connection is vital. That is why the Victorian government is so keen to support golf in Victoria. Golf gets Victorians off the couch and involved in physical activity, and that produces benefits for the whole community. But there is a price for having such a high level of community involvement: it means that as the community changes, sporting clubs need to change as well. The Victorian community is changing: we are getting older, more people are moving into Melbourne, and land prices are increasing. All of these changes are putting more pressure on clubs, so the challenge is for them to look at those changes carefully, get good advice and plan their response.

I congratulate the Victorian Golf Association (VGA) for commissioning this report, and I commend the Bracks government for its support in providing funds to assist the peak sporting bodies of Victoria to offer affordable access to sport for all Victorians.

Summerhill Residential Park, Reservoir: handyman

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — Summerhill Residential Park in my electorate houses some 200 mostly elderly, low-income retirees who live there in relocatable homes they have purchased.

Gerry Pascoe is the official handyman at Summerhill. He does poor-quality work and rips people off. One lady was charged \$35 to change a smoke alarm battery. She was given no receipt and Mr Pascoe put the cash in his pocket. Another lady was asked for \$65 as the installation charge to replace a smoke alarm that Pascoe 'tested'. The woman's son, an electrician, found that the alarm was not faulty — the test performed by Mr Pascoe was not a valid one. Another resident was charged \$65 for the installation of a replacement smoke alarm. On another occasion an elderly lady was charged \$35 to change a light bulb and no receipt was supplied — again the money was put in Mr Pascoe's pocket.

My investigations indicate that Gerry Pascoe routinely takes cash-in-hand payments for small jobs and offers discounts for cash for larger jobs. Mr Pascoe is a vulture who preys upon elderly, vulnerable, low-income people struggling to make ends meet. With his practice of taking cash in hand and avoiding his full payment of taxes he is a leech on society.

I call on the Australian Taxation Office to investigate Mr Pascoe, and I will make sure that the ATO receives the *Hansard* transcript of this speech.

Rafic El Hariri

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — It is with great sadness that I pay tribute to Mr Rafic El Hariri, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, whose death last week rocked both the local and international Lebanese community. Mr Hariri provided a strong and steadying influence on Lebanon and put much effort into the rebuilding of Beirut. His philanthropic work leaves a legacy that will reap benefits for many years to come.

Mr Hariri founded the Islamic Institute of Higher Education in his native town of Sidon. He established the Hariri Foundation — the Islamic Foundation for Culture and Higher Education — which has paid the tuition fees for 25 000 Lebanese students at universities in Lebanon, Europe and the United States, many of whom have since returned to their homeland to assist in rebuilding Lebanon. His other projects include the building of a hospital, a high school, a university, and a large sports centre in Kfar Falous, Lebanon.

Rafic El Hariri did much for his native Lebanon, and his legacy will be of benefit to the many generations who will follow him.

WATER EFFICIENCY LABELLING AND STANDARDS BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 3 November 2004; motion of Mr THWAITES (Minister for Water).

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) pursuant to standing orders.

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

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — This legislation is a bit of a dry argument. Water efficiency labelling undoubtedly is a very wise initiative of the federal government, which has passed legislation and is now awaiting the complementary state and territory legislation, which in fact mirrors the federal legislation. So, the more I talk, the more dry it appears.

Water efficiency labelling is ideally there to extract more use out of water by using less water and certainly it is commendable, and the opposition supports this legislation. However, as the house will note through the circulation of amendments in my name, the opposition wishes to amend a certain part of the legislation, and I will come to that later.

In part 1 of the bill the purpose is to provide for water efficiency labelling and water efficiency standards. The object is to reduce water consumption and to inform purchasers of those water saving devices, appliances or fittings that are available and then to promote the use of those products.

In part 2 the definition of 'water-saving product' is rather strange. It is:

... a device, appliance or fitting ... which is not ... a water-use product —

but is designed to operate in place of a water-use product. I cannot quite understand the meaning of that definition but I guess what it means is that it is there to initiate savings in whatever way is possible in respect of those appliances, devices and fittings.

In part 3 it goes on to talk about the introduction of the act as a national water efficiency labelling scheme, and

it incorporates cooperative arrangements between the commonwealth and the states with the state laws acting concurrently with the federal law.

In part 4 the water efficiency labelling and standards (WELS) products are determined by the commonwealth minister, and once a product is registered as a WELS product it can then be labelled by the manufacturer.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Innovation, Industry and Regional Development: report 2003–04

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — The issue I have is for the Minister for State and Regional Development. The action I am asking him to take is to issue a correction to the 2003–04 Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development annual report. At page 11 of the annual report it states as one of the department's achievements:

Construction of the film and television studios was completed ahead of schedule in February 2004 and within budget.

The facts are that this claim in the department's annual report is not true.

The project was, in fact, eight months late. The Premier issued a press release on 27 September 2001 indicating that the film studio would be opened in mid-2003. In his evidence to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee the then Minister for Major Projects was more than happy to indicate the lie perpetrated by the Minister for State and Regional Development and provided the committee with evidence of time delay in this particular project. The then Minister for Major Projects said the time delay was:

... due to contract negotiations and due diligence procedures in the lead-up to developer appointment and achieving financial close.

We all know that the project opened without electricity on the site. The project was also over budget. The original allocation for this project was \$40 million. In his 2003 report on public sector agencies, the Auditor-General indicated that the project had blown out to \$46.8 million.

I expect spin from the Minister for State and Regional Development all the time; it is his forte. He had the gall to issue a press release as the Minister for Innovation on 28 February 2004, when he prematurely opened the film studios, which stated:

The Minister for Innovation, John Brumby, today announced that construction on the Docklands film and television studio was complete — ahead of schedule and without one day being lost to industrial action.

The fact of the matter is that the Premier knows this project was behind schedule, the former Minister for Major Projects knows this project was behind schedule and the Auditor-General knows this project was over budget.

A departmental annual report is meant to be a factual document. I understand ministers wanting to spin away and perpetrate falsities to the electorate, to the opposition or to anyone else, but a departmental report is meant to be a factual document. People may ask why the Minister for State and Regional Development made such a foray into major projects both in the film studio and in the synchrotron, another project which is late and over budget. As I said, I am accustomed to spin. The film studio project was both late and over budget, like all this government's projects. I call on the minister to correct the annual report.

Summerhill Residential Park, Reservoir: management

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — The matter I wish to raise through the Minister for Agriculture, who is at the table, is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs in another place. I call on the Minister for Consumer Affairs to investigate the Summerhill Residential Park in Reservoir, particularly under the caravan parks legislation. A company search shows that the sole owners of Summerhill are Mr Steve Wellard and his wife. Through their company Ellerton Lodge Pty Ltd those two people own 100 per cent of the shares.

A good start for any investigation would be to establish if Summerhill is actually a caravan park. I have seen a document in which the owners refer to it as a caravan park, but I have gone through the contracts and they expressly prohibit residents from bringing caravans into the caravan park. The residents instead own supposedly relocatable homes and rent their sites from the Summerhill owners. However, the residents cannot relocate easily — the streets make it difficult to get the houses out, and they have had to sign contracts which require them to give 60 days notice before moving their homes out.

Other issues which in my view require investigation include the fact that some residents have been required to sign undated contracts selling their homes back to Ellerton Lodge, and residents are forced to sell their homes back to the park owners. Summerhill is promoted as a retirement village; residents are forced to buy electricity and gas through the park owners and thus are unable to get the price benefits of competition policy; and the owners are illegally levying charges on the supply of utilities. There have been rent increases without proper notification; there has been forced use of a preferred handyman, including for unnecessary renovations; the management takes a Stalinist approach whereby it dictates who can and cannot attend socials; and there has been a failure to provide residents with certain services such as a boom gate, a bowling green and a swimming pool, all of which should result in a reduction in rent. These are serious issues which could involve breaches of the fair trading and residential tenancies acts.

Steve Wellard, the owner, is using elderly residents as a cash cow to be milked dry of their hard-earned savings. I wonder how such an individual can sleep at night, as he appears to be a bloated leech sucking dry the residents of Summerhill.

If there is any justice in this world, he should be treated by the law as kindly as he treats his own residents. I wonder whether Mr Wellard learnt his grasping business practice at the office of Scrooge and Marley. I look forward to the Minister for Consumer Affairs ensuring her department investigates Ellerton Lodge and Mr Steve Wellard.

Border Anomalies Committee: future

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I bring a matter to the attention of the Premier, and in his absence the Minister for Agriculture, and express my concern about the outrage of constituents and residents living along the border between Victoria and New South Wales at the decision of the Premier to abolish the Border Anomalies Committee.

For the benefit of the house, the BAC was set up in 1979 to deal with and implement corrective action to eliminate border anomalies. There is no doubt that the committee has been very effective in removing a large number of anomalies, but you must remember that the states were established in the 19th century, and a huge number of border anomalies have developed over that time. I have made extensive representations over a number of years to the Premier and former premiers, but there are still massive numbers of border anomalies before us that need addressing.

In the late 1990s there was less emphasis on the Border Anomalies Committee, and despite strenuous representations, we have seen a reduction in funding being provided to this committee and a reduced number of reports being prepared by it. To say the least, I was shocked to receive a letter from the Premier dated 6 December 2004, and I want to quote this letter. It states:

As you may recall, the functions of the BAC have been under review. The formal review of the BAC is now complete. The review has recommended that the BAC be abolished and replaced with a number of other mechanisms at line agency level focused on resolving cross-border issues.

The issue I raise in relation to that is whether an investigation into the Border Anomalies Committee was undertaken outside the Premier's department. Certainly I had no indication that the BAC was under review.

This is an absolutely disastrous situation. You have only to live along the border between the two states to understand the difficulties with border anomalies. This committee must be fully funded, and it must be equipped so that it can deal with anomalies and ensure that corrective action is implemented through the various departments.

To his credit, I have had personal discussions with the Premier already, and he has agreed to meet with me and discuss the issues relating to the Border Anomalies Committee. But I indicate clearly to the house that, whilst I acknowledge the information provided by the Premier, we need action by him to ensure that the Border Anomalies Committee is reinstated. As far as I am concerned, as a member living on the border between the two states, it is absolutely imperative that we have a Border Anomalies Committee to deal with these anomalies and that the two premiers ensure that corrective action is being implemented by their departments so that anomalies can be corrected in the future as they have been in the past.

Geelong Art Gallery: travelling exhibition

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — Tonight I raise an important issue with the Minister for the Arts relating to a possible funding contribution from the state government for a proposed travelling exhibition of the works of five artists which will commence at the Geelong Art Gallery in October. The works are centred around Lake Gnotuk, which is located near Camperdown in western Victoria.

As this house would be well aware, there are significant costs related to travelling art exhibitions, especially

those travelling through our regional and country areas. The tour I speak of tonight will start in Geelong and continue through other regional areas of Victoria such as Ballarat, Warrnambool, Ararat and Horsham. The action I seek is for the minister to provide adequate funding for this important art exhibition to ensure that the people of western Victoria have the opportunity to view and appreciate the work of five established artists.

Lake Gnotuk, which is located near Camperdown, as I said, is a site of international geographical significance that is not appreciated nor understood by the wider community. The Geelong Art Gallery is planning a tour of the exhibition of the works of five artists — Brigid Cole Adams, Christine James, Ewa Narciewicz, Cameron Robbins and Richard Thomas — which highlight the beauty and surrounds of Lake Gnotuk.

The exhibition, importantly, is a collaboration between the artists, scientists and the local community. As I said, it will highlight the beauty of the lake but also bring it to people's attention as a point of interest geologically and scientifically. Locals hope that from the exhibition tourists will plan to visit the area. The proposed touring exhibition highlights Lake Gnotuk and is a terrific concept, and I therefore strongly recommend it to the Minister for the Arts.

Police: Manningham

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The action I seek from him is to increase the resources available to the Doncaster police and police patrols generally in the city of Manningham area. The issue that is deeply concerning many Manningham residents is an increase in vandalism and loutish behaviour. My office and the local newspaper have been contacted by an increasing number of residents, some very elderly and some with young families, who have been deeply distressed by behaviour which they regard as intimidating and which in many cases is disrupting their sleep.

These actions have ranged from loutish behaviour at the park-and-ride facility at the corner of Doncaster Road and the Eastern Freeway, local streets being used as burnout zones, neighbours living near parks having bottles thrown at them by people lurking in the grounds, and reports of drug taking and vandalism at a scout hall serving physically disabled children.

Much of the public focus has centred on the park-and-ride near the entrance of the freeway. Neighbours have complained to me that the facility is being used after hours as a meeting place, with

sometimes more than 100 cars gathering near residential homes. I quote one resident:

... the noise level is thunderous from the music from the cars, motor revving and people talking, and also when cars are leaving the facility, the screeching of tyres.

Another neighbour has complained to me that these louts have urinated in her garden and her neighbours' gardens. She is so fed up with their behaviour that she is contemplating moving out. Elderly residents in the vicinity of the park-and-ride are feeling quite intimidated by the constant noise every weekend, which is not only disturbing their sleep but also their quiet enjoyment of their homes.

I have made contact with the Manningham City Council, the National Bus Company, which runs the facility during operating hours, and the local police. I have suggested that there needs to be a security barrier installed to stop these hoonos getting access to the facility after hours. Immediate action needs to be taken to ease the fears of residents.

What was most shocking was the contact that was made yesterday. The scout hall immediately across the road from the park-and-ride is now the subject of graffiti and vandalism attacks. The hall has had windows broken, rubbish has been scattered around, people have urinated in the doorways, the car park has been used for burnouts and doughnuts, pine bollards have been broken down to get access to the property, and the chain and lock on the gate have been cut. This scout hall has now suffered the finding of a syringe with a needle stuck in the hall door and used condoms and tissues left lying around. There is evidence of drug taking. Not only does this raise issues of health risks to those who volunteer to remove such disgusting litter, but the scouts are concerned about the sheer costs involved in repairing the damage, which now amount to \$4000 to \$5000.

The residents have complained to the police, but the police are unable to get there in time to stop these things. The Doncaster police have told me they regularly patrol the parks and reserves and have made a number of arrests. That is a great result, and I place on record my appreciation of their efforts, but they are under-resourced. We have a new police minister, and I hope he will increase the resources available to the people of Manningham in the electorate of Doncaster.

Angliss Hospital: paediatric services

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Health regarding the range of services available at the Angliss Hospital. The action

I am seeking from the minister is an assurance that current paediatric services will continue to be available. The Angliss has provided paediatric services with dedicated paediatric nurses and a range of paediatric specialists for many years. The well-respected service has long enjoyed the support of the local community as well as the medical staff. The Angliss Hospital has recently opened a new emergency department incorporating a short-stay unit and a special paediatric section set aside for child emergency patients, which are much-sought-after innovations at the Upper Ferntree Gully site.

Recent misleading reports regarding the possible closure of paediatric services at the hospital have caused undue concern to both the community and the staff at the hospital. I seek the minister's confirmation of the assurances by Eastern Health that the excellent paediatric services in a child-friendly, non-threatening and non-clinical environment, together with specialist staff, will still be available to the youngest members of our community.

It is extremely disappointing to have rumours and innuendo of the kind purveyed by the Honourable David Davis, the shadow Minister for Health in another place, being given coverage that has caused such distress to the community and to the excellent staff at the Angliss Hospital. Despite being given an unequivocal guarantee that paediatric services would be retained at Angliss, Mr Davis has continued scaremongering amongst the most vulnerable members of our community. His views can hardly be considered credible on this issue when the party he represents, when last in government, planned to downgrade Angliss to little more than a community health centre. In the last financial year 36 500 people presented to the Angliss emergency department — and the rabble opposite wanted to take this hospital away!

Mr Davis's current posturing on what can be reasonably described as a reconfiguration of existing beds and services is a disingenuous and spurious piece of propaganda intended to cause distress to our local community. I encourage members to read the transcript of an extraordinary interview on the Neil Mitchell program of 9 February. In this interview Graeme Kelly, spokesperson for Eastern Health, repeatedly gave unequivocal assurances to Mr Davis in terms of service level, beds and staffing. Like the proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand, Mr Davis did not listen or did not understand the assurances he was being given by this senior public servant. I will read a little from the transcript. Mr Kelly is reported as saying:

I give an assurance there is no reduction in staffing. There is no reduction in beds at Angliss Hospital.

Mr Mitchell asks:

And there's no proposal for that?

To which Mr Kelly responds:

No.

Mr Davis then goes on to say:

They are certainly very concerned about their future, and you know, I don't blame them.

Mr Kelly replied:

Well, Mr Davis, perhaps if we didn't perpetuate the rumour. It's not correct. Secondly, this is not related to financial issues, the suggestion that it's part of some, you know, hit list to reduce services. Totally incorrect.

Mr Davis said:

Do you deny that there is a financial plan that's been worked out with state government to bring Eastern Health into a stronger financial position?

As if that is a bad thing. Mr Kelly said:

No, there certainly is a plan —

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

Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative: funding

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I wish to raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in another place. The Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative urgently needs the help of the Victorian government. The elections at the recent annual general meeting on 3 February have put the viability of the cooperative in serious jeopardy. The chief executive officer, Garry Letts, has been dismissed and an unqualified community member has been put in as acting CEO. The governance skills of the new board are questionable. Worse still, there is new influence from a person called Ray Kennedy and his family. This will ruin the cooperative, which will result in curtailment of state and federal funding.

The action I seek — and that the indigenous community seeks — is that the government place conditions on the board of directors, such as appropriate levels of governance skills, and insist on the return of Garry Letts as CEO before state funding programs continue to be managed by the current cooperative.

Until recently Ray Kennedy had been running the Robinvale and Murray Valley community development employment program (CDEP) for about seven years, and the theft and ransacking of taxpayers money is unparalleled in my experience. For example, these are the programs that they started and failed: a gymnasium, a furniture shop, gardening services, a motor panel shop, which cost \$1.6 million and folded in 14 weeks, and a cinema concept. They lost \$2 million on an indigenous housing repair program — and the money is still missing. Missing equipment includes 1 minibus, 24 chain saws, 1 houseboat, 200 computers, 6 canoes and \$50 000 in woodworking equipment. On 17 December they put \$7000 on the bar, which was consumed in one night, plus there were several carloads of grog taken away.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SAVAGE — They were. They did \$2000 in about an hour. Some of the workers were made to pay \$20 a week for free clothing provided by CDEP grant. Ray Kennedy and his family have misused millions of dollars and should have no involvement in the Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative.

It is sickening to see that this has been done with the tacit approval of the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The indigenous community members I have been in touch with have for some time been raising these concerns with the federal government, and until now nothing has been done. I call upon the Victorian government to be more proactive and to insist that any programs that are managed are done with appropriate governance skills — and on the removal of the current acting CEO. They have written a letter to Mr John Forrest, the federal member for Mallee, headed ‘Koori community crying out for urgent help’. So this is not a call that is just levelled at me. I will read one line from the letter:

Serious concerns are now about the governance of the newly elected board and the directions it will take, as the old board terminated the services of the CEO — —

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

Consumer affairs: Ellis Bros Constructions

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I want to raise an issue this evening for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs in another place. The matter relates to the pressing need to have Consumer Affairs Victoria more actively assist a Mitcham couple who have been left high and dry by a dodgy builder. I seek from the minister her direction to CAV to do so.

It is a highly unusual case. The Mitcham constituents engaged the company Ellis Bros Construction to renovate their home in 2002. I have previously outlined to the house the misdeeds of the company, thanks to the monumental incompetence and dishonesty of the former director, Mr Noel Scarff. The works he undertook to complete for the constituents were never completed, and he left the couple with a debt for having the works rectified of some \$30 000.

Mr Scarff and his company have chalked up huge debts all over Melbourne, and I have detailed those to the house previously. In August 2003 the couple made a claim under their building warranty insurance policy. The insurer responded by saying that claims could only be made under the policy if the builder was dead, had disappeared or was insolvent. Noel Scarff is none of these, but he is now a self-declared bankrupt. Under corporate law, according to the advice of the constituents’ solicitor, his company cannot trade. So in every sense bar the strictest legal one the company is insolvent, but the insurer refuses to pay.

Despite their repeated representations, all Consumer Affairs Victoria will do for this couple is encourage them to pursue their rights through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the courts. The difficulty is that they are being advised that this route will cost them at least another \$10 000 — money they certainly do not have. There is absolutely no guarantee of success, and all of this is in order to claim \$30 000 in recompense under their building warranty insurance policy.

It is a bizarre situation, made more so because CAV refuses to actively assist the couple. I have asked CAV to take action to do so in view of the rare nature of this case, but the organisation says it is not able to. I disagree. I believe Consumer Affairs Victoria is there to protect consumers, albeit in — —

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — I will not do that, because the member for Doncaster has already done it probably six times today and we are still only halfway through the first sitting day! Consumers Affairs Victoria should undertake to do more to actively assist this Mitcham couple. I am seeking the minister’s direction — —

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

Chlamydia: incidence

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for

Health. The action I seek is that the minister introduce a comprehensive public health campaign to reduce the prevalence of chlamydia in our community. Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease, the most widespread STD in Australia. Chlamydia is also tragically one of the major causes of infertility in our community.

A recent study by general practitioners in Warrnambool found that 20 per cent of women under 25 who had changed their partner in the past two years were infected with chlamydia. This prevalence is not uncommon right across Victoria and Australia. The disease is common. Thirty thousand new cases were diagnosed across Australia in 2003.

Fortunately chlamydia can be diagnosed with very reliable tests — a urine test for men, and as part of the Pap smear test for women. Chlamydia is also very easily treated, with a high success rate, by modern antibiotics. Unfortunately many people infected with chlamydia have no or only very mild symptoms; but infection often leads to pelvic inflammatory disease in women, and about 20 per cent of women infected with chlamydia subsequently become infertile. A very high percentage of the women and couples undergoing in-vitro treatment, which is very expensive, are there because of infertility associated with chlamydia.

What I am seeking from the minister, and I believe the state government can do it, is the commencement of a public health campaign to increase the awareness of chlamydia, particularly so that sexually active men and women are aware of the disease and of how it can be prevented, how routine screening is essential and how this routine screening can lead to treatment which can reduce the prevalence and incidence of chlamydia in our community. It is a very important public health role that the state government can play.

At the same time I ask the Minister for Health to join with me in pursuing the federal government to ensure there is Medicare funding for screening tests. Currently a diagnostic test for a suspect chlamydial infection is done under Medicare, but if a person seeks a routine screening test for chlamydia it is not a Medicare-funded procedure. I absolutely believe it should be.

There needs to be a comprehensive approach across Victoria — and, I would suggest, across Australia — to increase awareness of chlamydia as a sexually transmitted disease which has significant implications for our community as well as the ease with which we can conduct a screening program, a testing program and a treatment program to reduce the prevalence and incidence of this insidious disease.

Footscray Community Arts Centre: funding

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise with the Minister for the Arts an urgent request for emergency funding for the Footscray Community Arts Centre following a savage and debilitating funding cut made by the federal government through the Australia Council, which has seen a \$120 000 annual reduction in funding to \$67 000 a year.

This cut, which has resulted in an urgent request for increased funding from state and local government sources, almost saw the closure of the centre over the holiday period. Some of the impacts have been the closure of the Gabriel Gallery, ending its active program of exhibitions of multicultural and innovative arts; the elimination of the holiday program for people with disabilities; the reduction of public events by two-thirds; the closure of the centre to casual public access; and a dramatic reduction in workshops. The centre has had a national profile for its work with multicultural communities, people with disabilities and innovative art forms. It has spawned such groups as the Women's Circus.

The bizarre circumstance surrounding this cut is that the federal government asked for a review some 12 months ago. The review was conducted by a consultant recommended by Canberra, the recommendations were signed off by the federal government and implemented by the arts centre, yet still the crippling cut came.

It seems to me that the cut in funding is related to the announcement that the Australia Council has dissolved the Community Cultural Development Board, which is the funding board for the arts centre. I understand that the announcement was sudden and that the decision was made with little or no consultation with state arts agencies. It is very obvious to those in the sector that the federal government is becoming far more conservative and elitist and far less interested in the community having access to the arts.

I ask the minister to make urgent representations to prevent an unreasonable funding load being placed on state and local government. I was a member of the board when I was a member of Footscray City Council. The centre is part of the heart and soul of the Footscray community, particularly for recently arrived communities. It is where they find their voice and where they reconnect with their art forms. This is an absolute tragedy that is being forced on the local community, and I ask the minister to address it urgently.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on the question of relevance, this is the first sitting day, and two of the matters have been raised with the Minister for the Arts. Given her new portfolio responsibility I would not think it would be so arduous — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! What is the point of order?

Mr Perton — It is that the minister is not here on the first day of sitting — nor indeed is the police minister here on his first parliamentary sitting day — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! There is no point of order. I call the Minister for Agriculture.

Mr Perton — I put it to you, Acting Speaker, that it is inappropriate on the first day of the sitting that matters raised by Liberal and Labor members and the Independents — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! I call on the member for Doncaster to desist and to sit down. The member for Doncaster will no longer be heard. I call the Minister for Agriculture.

Responses

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Agriculture) — Ten members have raised matters for various ministers, and I will refer those matters to them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 10.31 p.m.