

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 20 December 2006

(Extract from book 1)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

Professor DAVID de KRETZER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

Premier, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. S. P. Bracks, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change	The Hon. J. W. Thwaites, MP
Minister for Education	The Hon. J. Lenders, MLC
Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. J. M. Allan, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Minister for Victorian Communities and Minister for Energy and Resources	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Regional and Rural Development and Minister for Innovation	The Hon. J. M. Brumby, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. J. Helper, MP
Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Information and Communication Technology	The Hon. T. J. Holding, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Minister for Community Services and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs ...	The Hon. G. W. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. L. J. Kosky, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Children and Minister for Aged Care	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Roads and Ports	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Health	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Industry and State Development, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. T. C. Theophanous, MLC
Minister for Housing and Minister for Local Government	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr A. G. Robinson, MP

Joint committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Carli, Mr Jasper, Mr McIntosh and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmr and Ms Pulford.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. JENNY LINDELL

Deputy Speaker: Ms A. P. BARKER

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:
The Hon. S. P. BRACKS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:
The Hon. J. W. THWAITES

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:
Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:
The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Lobato, Ms Tamara Louise	Gembrook	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Lupton, Mr Anthony Gerard	Prahran	ALP
Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman	Hawthorn	LP	McIntosh, Mr Andrew John	Kew	LP
Barker, Ms Ann Patricia	Oakleigh	ALP	Maddigan, Mrs Judith Marilyn	Essendon	ALP
Batchelor, Mr Peter John	Thomastown	ALP	Marshall, Ms Kirstie	Forest Hill	ALP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Yuroke	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Morand, Ms Maxine Veronica	Mount Waverley	ALP
Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip	Williamstown	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield	Broadmeadows	ALP	Munt, Ms Janice Ruth	Mordialloc	ALP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Cameron, Mr Robert Graham	Bendigo West	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Carli, Mr Carlo Domenico	Brunswick	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Overington, Ms Karen Marie	Ballarat West	ALP
Crutchfield, Mr Michael Paul	South Barwon	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Tarneit	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Lowan	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane	Melbourne	ALP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Powell, Mrs Elizabeth Jeanette	Shepparton	Nats
Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese	Macedon	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Robinson, Mr Anthony Gerard	Mitcham	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann	Evelyn	LP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian	Gippsland South	Nats
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Seitz, Mr George	Keilor	ALP
Haermeyer, Mr André	Kororoit	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Smith, Mr Kenneth Maurice	Bass	LP
Harkness, Dr Alistair Ross	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar	Burwood	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Thwaites, Mr Johnstone William	Albert Park	ALP
Hudson, Mr Robert John	Bentleigh	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Treizise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2006

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Photographing of proceedings</i>	53
<i>Adjournment</i>	54
CONDOLENCES	
<i>Donald Neville Saltmarsh</i>	53
PETITIONS	
<i>California Gully Primary School: access road</i>	53
<i>Falun Gong: human rights</i>	53
<i>Parliament: responsible government</i>	53
<i>Mornington Peninsula Freeway: extension</i>	54
<i>Rail: Melbourne–Shepparton line</i>	54
DOCUMENTS	54
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Parliament: 150th anniversary</i>	55
<i>South East Water: dams policy</i>	55
<i>Alfred Centre: project completion</i>	55
<i>Water: tank rebates</i>	55, 59
<i>Neil Treyvaud</i>	56
<i>Brauer College: science wing</i>	56
<i>Legislative Assembly: former members</i>	56
<i>Mount Waverley electorate: election result</i>	57
<i>Water: restrictions</i>	57
<i>Tom James</i>	57
<i>Mordialloc electorate: election result</i>	57
<i>Bushfires: Gippsland East electorate</i>	57
<i>Frankston electorate: election result</i>	58
<i>Mary Yeaxlee</i>	58
<i>Family violence: anger management support</i> <i>group</i>	58
<i>McKinnon Secondary College: achievements</i>	58
<i>Police: Caulfield assault</i>	59
<i>Macedon electorate: election result</i>	59
<i>Cranbourne electorate: community kitchens</i>	60
<i>Planning: Stonington Mansion</i>	60
<i>Greater Geelong and Surf Coast: mayors</i>	60
<i>Eltham electorate: community service awards</i>	61
MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	
<i>Water: management</i>	61
GOVERNOR'S SPEECH	
<i>Address-in-reply</i>	82, 98, 134
SENATE ELECTIONS AMENDMENT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	88
ABSENCE OF MINISTER.....	89
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services</i> <i>Board: chief officer</i>	89
<i>Schools: government policy</i>	89
<i>Roads: funding</i>	90
<i>Water: Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong supply</i>	90
<i>Gaming: public lotteries licence</i>	92
<i>Hospitals: funding</i>	92
<i>Planning: local government</i>	93
<i>Industrial relations: WorkChoices</i>	93
<i>Local government: funding</i>	94
<i>Government: financial management</i>	94
WATER AMENDMENT (CRITICAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	95
MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AMENDMENT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	96
CONTROL OF WEAPONS AMENDMENT (PENALTIES) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	132
INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	133
PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS AMENDMENT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i>	134
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Rail: V/Line retail promotions</i>	145
<i>Oak Park Tennis Club and Hadfield Netball</i> <i>Club: funding</i>	146
<i>Water: irrigators</i>	147
<i>Multicultural affairs: grants</i>	147, 148, 149
<i>Fitzsimons Lane–Parkwood Place,</i> <i>Templestowe: safety</i>	148
<i>Rosebud Hospital: obstetric services</i>	149
<i>Australian Labor Party: election promises</i>	150
<i>Special Olympics Victoria: funding</i>	151
<i>Responses</i>	151

Wednesday, 20 December 2006

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Photographing of proceedings**

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that I have given approval for still photographs to be taken from the public galleries, the Hansard box and the government advisers' box before and during question time today. No additional lighting will be used and the photographs will be used by the Parliament for promotional and educational purposes.

CONDOLENCES**Donald Neville Saltmarsh**

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house of the death of Donald Neville Saltmarsh, member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Waverley from 1976 to 1982 and member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Wantirna from 1982 to 1985.

I ask members to rise in their places as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

Honourable members stood in their places.

The SPEAKER — Order! I shall convey a message of sympathy from the house to the relatives of the late Donald Neville Saltmarsh.

PETITIONS**Following petitions presented to house:****California Gully Primary School: access road**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of California Gully Primary School Community, Staley Street, California Gully, 3556 (suburb of Bendigo and part of the Bendigo West electorate) draws to the attention of the house the need for improvements to vehicle access and parking at California Gully Primary School.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria support the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the department of education and training in providing funds for the sealing of the access road and parking area to minimise windblown sand and dust blowing across the school playground. This would

eliminate a major health and safety risk in terms of children not being subjected to dust as well as having a safer and more organised parking area for parents to drop off and pick up their children from school.

By Mr CAMERON (Bendigo West) (11 signatures)

Falun Gong: human rights

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that we support the coalition to investigate the persecution of Falun Gong (CIPFG) to investigate the alleged forced organ harvesting allegations and the illegal detention of Falun Gong practitioners in detention centres, labour camps, prisons and hospitals.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

1. request to the Victorian government that it:

end Victorian funding agencies, medical organisations and individual health professionals participation in any government of China-sponsored organ transplant research, meetings or training;

inform residents that donor organs sourced from the Peoples Republic of China may be from non-consenting prisoners of conscience including Falun Gong practitioners; and

assist CIPFG with the research and investigation of the alleged harvesting of organs from, and the illegal detention of, Falun Gong practitioners;

2. request the state government to ask the federal government that it:

prevent Australian citizens from travelling to China for organ transplants; and

prevent companies, institutions and individuals providing goods and services to China's organ transplant programs until such time as it is satisfied that no organs used have been harvested against the will of the donor;

demand an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China; and

assist CIPFG with the research and investigation of the alleged harvesting of organs from, and the illegal detention of, Falun Gong practitioners.

By Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (1586 signatures)

Parliament: responsible government

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that in the year of the 150th anniversary of responsible government in Victoria it is essential that the Parliament continue to provide good governance and effective management of the state.

The petitioners therefore request that the Victorian Parliament continue to provide effective government for the people of Victoria, and to ensure peace and fairness for all.

By Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) (1874 signatures)

Mornington Peninsula Freeway: extension

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth the Parliament that the Bracks government's decision to not proceed with the building of the Mornington Peninsula freeway extension as promised to the citizens of the city of Kingston on several occasions, by both the Premier and the member for Carrum, is contrary to the wishes of the people who elected them.

Your petitioners therefore pray that:

1. The Parliament undertake to ensure that the state government begin construction of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway extension to that design and capacity as originally promised by the Bracks Labor government, and
2. Complete the project by June 2010 being two years later than promised by Labor in 1999, and
3. That the project not be funded by a tollway like the Scoresby (EastLink) project.

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

By Mr MULDER (Polwarth) (509 signatures)

Rail: Melbourne–Shepparton line

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria requests that the Victorian government takes action to ensure that the new V/Line timetable for the Melbourne–Shepparton line be reviewed and that V/Line consult with the users of the line, as there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among members of the communities of Tatura, Murchison and Kyabram with the changes that have been made. With the new times there is an extra half hour travel on the early morning and evening services, while other services can take an extra hour at least according to the times given by the information service. Also there is a lot of confusion as Tatura and Kyabram are now listed under the Echuca to Melbourne line.

By Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) (736 signatures)

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Shepparton be considered next day on motion of Mrs POWELL (Shepparton).

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 — Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan under s. 33E

Financial Management Act 1994 — Budget Update 2006–07

Financial Management Act 1994 — Report from the Minister for Health that she had received the 2005–06 report of the Mildura Cemetery Trust.

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 19 December 2006:

Catchment and Land Protection (Further Amendment) Act 2006 — Sections 3, 4, 5(1), 5(3), 7, 8, 13, 16(1), 21, 23 and 25 — 24 October 2006 (*Gazette S284*, 24 October 2006)

Courts Legislation (Jurisdiction) Act 2006 — Section 10 — 1 November 2006; Part 2 — 1 January 2007 (*Gazette G40*, 5 October 2006)

Groundwater (Border Agreement) (Amendment) Act 2005 — Whole Act — 31 October 2006 (*Gazette G43*, 26 October 2006)

Health Services (Supported Residential Services) Act 2006 — Sections 9 and 17 — 12 October 2006 (*Gazette G41*, 12 October 2006)

Justice Legislation (Further Amendment) Act 2006 — Remaining provisions (except Part 4) — 18 October 2006 (*Gazette S273*, 17 October 2006)

National Parks (Otways and Other Amendments) Act 2005 — Part 4 — 24 October 2006 (*Gazette S285*, 24 October 2006)

National Parks and Crown Land (Reserves) Acts (Amendment) Act 2006 — Sections 13(2) and 16(2) and Part 3 (except s. 26(6)) — 19 October 2006 (*Gazette G42*, 19 October 2006)

Water (Governance) Act 2006 — Part 3 — 31 October 2006 (*Gazette G43*, 26 October 2006).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 13 February 2007.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Parliament: 150th anniversary

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — The petition I presented this morning had signatures gathered as part of the travelling exhibition of the Parliament's 150th anniversary celebrations. Over the past year the travelling exhibition has visited nine country towns as well as spending a short time at the Royal Melbourne Show and Parliament House.

It was very successful and enabled country people to get a feel and a taste of the Parliament of Victoria without having to travel to Melbourne. Many of the comments received by our staff who were working with the exhibition show that it was widely appreciated.

One of the reasons for the success of the exhibition is the hard work of a large number of staff from the Parliament of Victoria who volunteered to work on the exhibition as it travelled around the towns. In particular the Legislative Assembly attendants made a great contribution in guiding tours through the exhibition. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the 150th project officer, Sharon Morris, and Parliament's education officer, Rod Espie.

The exhibition was visited by over 400 people a week, and they were able to see question time in action, not that I think it gave them a good view of Parliament but they did get to see what Parliament was like.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the former President of the Legislative Council, Monica Gould, and thank her very much for her work. I also wish her all the best for the future.

South East Water: dams policy

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to draw the attention of the house to the blatantly party-political nature of a water authority which should be independent. The authority is South East Water. The latest bill sent to consumers by this water authority shows that it is doing the government's bidding by mouthing the minister's propaganda on dams on the actual water bill.

South East Water has a four-page bill which is joined together in the middle. There is some information on water restrictions, which is legitimate. However, the water bill refers to the ALP policy on dams and states that building dams does not create more water, it simply diverts the flow from already stressed rivers. I am quite happy for the ALP to have that policy. The

Liberal Party had a different one at the last election. We said we would build a dam at Arundel.

This is part of the actual bill from the water retailing authority, which has got nothing to do with dams and having ALP propaganda on its bills. More so, this bill was sent out during the election campaign to a batch of customers in that group. It is unacceptable that water authorities have got government propaganda on consumers' water bills. It is the same syndrome as the ALP using taxpayer-funded resources to produce its own ALP campaign on water. It is unacceptable, and it should be stopped.

Alfred Centre: project completion

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — I draw members' attention to the Alfred Centre for elective surgery in Prahran. The Alfred Centre will be officially opened in February 2007, and as chair of the community participation panel for the Alfred Centre I pay tribute to everybody who was involved in the successful completion of the project — in particular, all the other members of the community participation panel who gave up a considerable amount of their time to be involved in the development of the project. I also thank the project team and its director, Brian Stephenson; the builders, Baulderstone Hornibrook, the Department of Human Services and everybody at The Alfred hospital who made a great contribution to this project.

It was a Bracks government initiative to develop and build the Alfred Centre for elective surgery — a \$90 million project that is the first of its kind in Australia. It will provide a new model of care focused on patients, families and carers. This centre will provide elective surgery with reduced waiting times and separate the elective surgery from emergency surgery at the Alfred so that elective surgery will not need to be cancelled due to emergency arrivals.

I congratulate the government and everybody involved in the successful completion of this project, which will lead to greatly improved medical services for the people of Prahran district and the wider community of Victoria.

Water: tank rebates

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — Water, or the shortage of water, is challenging the Lowan district. In fact all of country Victoria, and now Melbourne, is feeling the pressure of water shortages. This city-centric government stands condemned for its discriminatory policy on rebates for water tanks which you can only get if you are on a town supply. Many people in

country Victoria live outside the towns, on farms or in small businesses like tourist facilities and do not get any rebate. That is why country people supported the policy of The Nationals, which is to provide water tank rebates to all, no matter where they live.

With the water shortage the government and the water authorities must do more to inform country communities of details of where they can access water, speed up permits for such things as bores, and access potable water. My office is inundated with concerns about water. One example is an email I have received which states:

Some old designated drought ... bores on DSE's web site are locked and access is being denied

...

I am frustrated. I do not know who else to plead the case with ... hopefully someone can get some sanity back into the argument.

...

I and the community want the dam[n] thing reinstated as a drought bore asap ... for livestock and fire purposes.

Shortage of domestic and stock water requires the government and the water authorities to work with country communities to better inform them of access to water and water grants which will assist them through this very difficult time.

Neil Treyvaud

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — Tomorrow the education system is set to lose one of its stars, as Neil Treyvaud, principal of Craigieburn Primary School, begins the next phase of his life and commences his retirement. I wish Neil all the very best, but it will be very sad to see him go and I know that both the school and his wider community in Craigieburn will all miss him very much.

As principal for 12 years and as a member of the school community for 24 years he has worked tirelessly for the benefit of students who have attended school, and lobbied with great enthusiasm and effort to ensure the best resources and opportunities have been made available to his school and the students.

With pride he led the school to its new home in Grand Boulevard. His valuable contribution to the development of this site as a significant community resource not only for the education of our primary-age children but also as a hub of community activity and spirit has been of great benefit to the Craigieburn residents. I know the school community will be very sad to see him go, but I know all too well that the very

proud foundations he has built and the legacy he has left for Craigieburn will benefit generations of Craigieburn children to come.

I attended the graduation at Craigieburn Primary School on Monday night and it was a fitting tribute that one of the students had put together a little cameo of Neil's 24 years at the school. It was delightful.

Brauer College: science wing

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — During the election campaign both major political parties promised funding to rebuild the 35-year-old science wing at Brauer College in Warrnambool. Unfortunately the Labor Party-promised funding of \$1.5 million will only be provided in next year's state budget, which means that work will not be able to be commenced until July 2007. Brauer College has already spent \$80 000 of its own funds drawing up very detailed plans for this much-needed upgrade because Labor previously promised funding for this rebuilding in the May 2006 state budget, but it failed to deliver then and the school is worried that it will fail to deliver in May 2007.

The school is ready to go. The works are needed urgently, and I therefore urge the government to provide a Treasurer's advance to commence this project immediately. The current science rooms are too small; they are cramped and unsafe, and there are numerous breaches of occupational health and safety rules. There are blocked sinks, there are no working fume cupboards, there are holes in the flooring and there is no safe, secure storage for chemicals. This is the largest secondary school in country Victoria. It is a magnificent school that is doing a great job, but it is being hampered by a lack of facilities and continued promises from the Labor government which are not delivered. What we want is a Treasurer's advance so work can commence immediately on the science wing and so this much-needed upgrade can be completed as soon as possible.

Legislative Assembly: former members

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — May I first congratulate you, Speaker, on your election as Speaker of this house.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the seven Labor members of the Legislative Assembly from the 55th Parliament who were not successful at the recent state election. The former members are Heather McTaggart in Evelyn, Dymrna Beard in Kilsyth, Rosie Buchanan in Hastings, Anne Eckstein in Ferntree Gully, Brendan Jenkins in Morwell, Ian

Maxfield in Narracan and Peter Lockwood in Bayswater. All of them worked very hard as local members, serving their community and making a tangible difference to those communities in many different ways. You would not find a kinder or more caring person than Dympna Beard, and in Rosie Buchanan you would not find a person more passionate about social justice, equity and women's rights. We will all miss the good humour, laughter and companionship of Heather McTaggart and Brendan Jenkins. We will miss them all!

Mount Waverley electorate: election result

Ms MORAND — I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mount Waverley constituents for their support at the election. I particularly thank the many people who offered their support and good wishes to me during the election campaign and during the long 10 days between election day and the declaration of the poll. I am committed to continuing to work hard for my constituents to the very best of my abilities, and to continuing to represent Mount Waverley residents in this Parliament and as part of the Bracks government.

I wish all my constituents and members a very happy Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

Water: restrictions

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I place on the record the concerns of a constituent, Alan Clapham, that have been forwarded to the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change. His letter states, in part:

I believe you have a flaw in the water restrictions you recently announced.

It is the even-odd system that is causing grief and will probably result in me using more water rather than less.

The water timers I have work on a weekly cycle. That means if programmed for Monday, Wednesday and Friday in one week they will be odd days and the next even days.

I am advised by your office that I cannot use my timers unless I reprogram them each week. As I cannot reprogram them myself this is not possible. I will therefore need to revert to manual operations.

After discussions with representatives and SE Water I went and bought timers that would do an every-second-day cycle as required by your restrictions. I gave my old timers away.

I now note in stage 3 restrictions you are moving to a Wednesday and Sunday system. My new timers will not work on this basis. I can do every three days or even four days, but once again I cannot comply!

While I am all for water restrictions, they should be implemented with some level of pragmatism! I buy new timers to suit the level 2 rules and now find out that level 3 requires different timers.

Your strategy is costing me a lot of money.

Tom James

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — Speaker, I would like to join other members in congratulating you on your appointment and wishing you all the best. I know you will be a wonderful Speaker of this house.

I would also like to congratulate Mr Tom James of Cheltenham on his receiving the Australian Defence Medal. I attended the presentation ceremony with Mr James on 1 December, when the medal was presented by the Honourable Simon Crean. Mr James has served our country in our armed forces. He has also served our community for many years and is a very proud member of the Cheltenham-Moorabbin RSL club. I was very proud to accept Mr James's invitation to attend the awards ceremony as a mark of recognition of his wonderful service to Australia and to our community, and also as a mark of respect to all who have served or are serving our country. I acknowledge the contribution of Mr James. I know that, like me, his family must be very proud of his achievements.

Mordialloc electorate: election result

Ms MUNT — I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of my electorate for once again putting their trust in me as their representative for the next four years. I really look forward to serving them in the Victorian Parliament and achieving more wonderful results for our community, particularly the rebuilding of our schools. We have made a great start in the last four years, but there is more work to be done.

Bushfires: Gippsland East electorate

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I would like to put on the public record my thanks to the emergency service volunteers from the Country Fire Authority, the State Emergency Service and the Red Cross and the firefighters from the various government departments, the army and New Zealand, who are battling the blazes that are spreading across large areas of my electorate. I would like to recognise the efforts of the contractors working on the fire lines, particularly the timber bush workers, for their expertise and equipment is essential for effective control and management of the fires. I would like to thank the incident managers and staff at the incident control rooms at Heyfield and Bairnsdale

for their assistance in providing information about the fires.

I would also like to send my condolences to the family and friends of Donald Dosser, who was killed whilst protecting his mate's house from the fires in my electorate, at Seaton near Heyfield.

In the last few days a number of issues in relation to the fires have come up. One is the impact of the ongoing fires on the tourism industry in my electorate. I would like to place on the public record that Gippsland is a very large place, as is East Gippsland. Many areas in East Gippsland are still open for business. I would like to encourage members of this place and the media to particularly get the message across that East Gippsland relies very much on the tourism industry. We should encourage people to come there, because places like Mallacoota, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and Metung are open for business. We should encourage people across the Christmas period to ensure they do get —

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

Frankston electorate: election result

Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) — Speaker, I too wish to congratulate you on your appointment to your office. I would also like to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the Frankston community for re-electing me as the member for Frankston. I am once again very humbled to stand up for Frankston and I am very much looking forward to implementing my commitments as outlined throughout the election campaign.

A lot has been achieved in the Frankston community, but there is a lot more to be done. The next four years are going to be very exciting for the Frankston community, with the further upgrading of Frankston Hospital and new initiatives to tackle the growing issues of obesity and mental health, renewed and upgraded trade wings in every government secondary school and 4500 new apprenticeships, tackling water and climate change challenges, and more affordable public transport owing to the abolition of zone 3.

A busy election campaign in Frankston was made all the more interesting with the arrival on 2 November of Kirsten Elle Harkness.

Mary Yeaxlee

Dr HARKNESS — On a very sad note, however, one of Frankston's true treasures passed away suddenly on 25 November. Born in Ireland, Mary Yeaxlee

emigrated to Australia in 1964 and settled in Frankston two years later. Mary was a great friend to many Frankston people. For 28 years, Mary had a bric-a-brac stall at the Frankston Sunday market. In recent years she occupied stall no. 1 at the market and following her sad passing the market will no longer have a no. 1 site, as a lasting tribute to this Irish charmer.

As a regular market stallholder myself, located opposite Mary's stall, I developed a friendship with her, as many other stallholders and patrons did. A very genuine and decent person, she will be very sadly missed.

Family violence: anger management support group

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Four years ago, before I was so rudely interrupted, I made a speech in this house about the refusal by the then Minister for Women's Affairs to allow a victim of domestic violence, Kay Nesbitt, to speak on the same platform. It was therefore disturbing and saddening that the first person to come through my door after this election was a distraught woman who told me that due to funding cuts and changes to criteria the domestic violence anger management support group that she had been a member of for some time could no longer continue. Originally run by Anglicare, Yarra Ranges Family Services has now secured the program. However, changes mean that it is limited and available only for newly identified clients.

For all its platitudes about caring for families, this government has cut off the lifeline for women like Kerry, literally throwing them out into a world of loneliness, anger and despair. Victims of domestic violence do not want to continue being victims; they want and need help. They have a right to support and understanding from others; they need access to long-term counselling tailored to their situation.

As recorded in *Hansard*, this government throws money at people who conduct races — it has given those who race dogs \$15 000, horses, \$41 000, and fast cars, \$94 000 — but cannot find \$15 000 for a program to support women who genuinely and desperately need help. I call on the Minister for Women's Affairs to stand up for these women and demand that they get the funding support they so desperately need.

McKinnon Secondary College: achievements

Mr HUDSON (Bentleigh) — Speaker, may I congratulate you on your appointment. I know that you will serve this Parliament well.

Last week I had the pleasure of attending the presentation night at McKinnon Secondary College, where the school's Victorian certificate of education (VCE) results were announced. McKinnon has demonstrated once again that it is one of the top non-selective government schools in this state achieving outstanding results with all its year 12 students. Out of 209 VCE students, 100 received an equivalent national tertiary entrance rank (ENTER) score above 80, and 67 students, or over one-third of all McKinnon VCE students, received an ENTER score above 90.

In the last five years there has been a steady increase in the percentage of students achieving a study score above 40. In 2001, 10 per cent of all study scores were above 40; in 2003, 11 per cent were above 40; and in 2005 it was 19 per cent. In 2006 again 19 per cent of all study scores were above 40. Overall, 33 per cent of McKinnon's year 12 students ranked in the top 10 per cent of students in the state and 65 per cent in the top 30 per cent of the state, which is an outstanding achievement.

However, McKinnon Secondary College does not just produce outstanding academic results, with several individuals and teams featuring in statewide sports finals. In addition, the fine musical talents of students at the school were on display at the presentation night through various ensembles. The school is ably led by principal, Alan Lawrence, assistant principals Pitsa Binnion, Andrew Newton and Andrew Chisholm, and the year 12 student managers.

Police: Caulfield assault

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — Of great concern to the Jewish community in my electorate was the alleged bashing by drunken members of the Ocean Grove football club of a young Orthodox Jewish man on the Sabbath of 14 October in the presence of his children. They were returning from the Caulfield Cup in a bus being driven by an off-duty policeman who, it is claimed, attempted to drive the bus away from the scene. The perpetrators not only assaulted Menachem Vorchheimer but screamed racial abuse at him and other community members who were walking along Balaclava Road at the time. All provided detailed reports to police, yet police to date have failed to charge those responsible for this uncivilised attack on Menachem.

The Premier, when asked what steps his government is taking to ensure justice is done, hides behind the skirt of the separation of powers, as if suddenly the responsibility of ministers to this Parliament under the

Westminster system has disappeared. If it is good enough for the Bracks government to do secret deals with the police over campaign promises, then ensuring the law is enforced is the least that should be expected. The hypocrisy and lack of sincerity of the Premier and the Labor Party is now there for all to see!

Macedon electorate: election result

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I rise this morning to thank the people of the electorate of Macedon for the honour and privilege of representing them for a further four years. I have represented this area for the last seven years, and much has been achieved in that time. An amount of \$23 million has been allocated to capital funding for our schools and roads have been upgraded. There is a new hospital in Kyneton and a new community health centre in Sunbury. There has been a complete rebuild of tracks and signals on the Bendigo railway line, with extra services. Gas has been rolled out in four towns, with another three towns to go.

I look forward to continuing this work with the continued rollout of gas, the ongoing capital works programs on our schools, the construction of a day hospital at Sunbury and the duplication of Vineyard Road, with traffic lights at Mitchells Lane. I look forward to continuing these good works and getting on with the job of improving local infrastructure and services, especially in the area of public transport, with an average of a 20 per cent reduction in V/Line fares from March 2007.

I would like to thank my campaign team and those many volunteers who staffed the polling booths. I thank all the people who had the confidence in me to represent them for another term. I will continue to do all I can to ensure their confidence is not misplaced and to make sure the electorate of Macedon continues to benefit from the good governance of the Bracks government.

I would also like to wish all in the electorate a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Our thoughts are with all those involved in the firefighting efforts across this state as we look forward to one of the worst fire seasons in this state's history.

Water: tank rebates

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — The state government must immediately implement a uniform water tank subsidy scheme across Victoria and end the current discrimination against those householders not serviced by a reticulated water supply system. I have been working extensively making representations to the

water minister throughout this year on the basis that there are inequities in the scheme that need correcting.

Put simply, people living outside the cities and towns who do not have a reticulated water supply are ineligible to apply for the subsidy arrangements. My question to the minister is, 'Why discriminate?' The response from the minister indicates that rebates are provided to encourage water-saving initiatives and that those outside the water-serviced areas are well aware of the need for conserving water, therefore they do not need financial assistance. Surely there is an even greater need to support financially the installation of water tanks outside reticulated water areas.

The situation is emphasised by the current drought situation in country Victoria, and the shortage of water has now been further emphasised and complicated with the fires in north-eastern Victoria and in Gippsland.

I again call on the minister to review the water tank subsidy scheme to include all people installing tanks and, in particular, to support country Victorians outside water reticulation areas. They cannot understand the inequity of this scheme, why they cannot be involved in it and why they are not eligible for the state government subsidy support scheme.

Cranbourne electorate: community kitchens

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — Firstly I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Speaker, on your elevation to this high office. I am sure you will serve this Parliament very well.

In conjunction with a network of community champions, I have been part of a team that is delivering successful community kitchens in the electorate of Cranbourne, including the areas of Cranbourne, Frankston North and, shortly, Carrum Downs. I am pleased to note that our Christmas community kitchen held last night in Cranbourne saw over 500 meals served. Santa and his two helpers also made an appearance and presented all the children with Christmas presents.

With the increase in interest rates, rising petrol and child-care costs and the general pressures on young families, there are families in Cranbourne that are doing it tough — and some are doing it tougher than others. Most of them cannot afford the luxury of eating out and socialising frequently.

The community kitchen is a success in view of the sound partnerships that work tirelessly to deliver this initiative to our community. I take my hat off to Reverend Paul Creasey of the Cranbourne Uniting

Church; Mr Phil Sealey, the coordinator at William Angliss Institute of TAFE; all the hospitality students at William Angliss; Cr Steve Beardon; Ann Douglas from the Cranbourne branch of the National Australia Bank; Megan Powell and Santa Claus Visits; Bakers Delight, Cranbourne North and all the businesses in Cranbourne that kindly donated toys for the young ones of Cranbourne to enjoy.

Planning: Stonington Mansion

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Stonington Mansion is a Malvern and Victorian icon, having served as a home to Governors, convalescent soldiers and, most recently, Deakin University. It gave the name to the very municipality in which it is located. It is a treasured part of our heritage, but today it is under threat. When Stonington Mansion was entrusted to Deakin University by the state, it was to foster learning — not to be sold off for development to the highest bidder. But that is exactly what Deakin University proposes to do. What is worse, the university has an accomplice in this breach of trust, because the sale cannot proceed without the approval of the Bracks government. If Labor's Minister for Education withholds approval, the sale cannot proceed. There is no urgency to sell, as Deakin University does not plan to move out for a year.

The government has a choice: it can actively conspire in the sale and destruction of our cultural heritage or it can sit down with Stonington City Council, the federal government, Deakin University and local residents to plan a way forward that can accommodate the university's needs with the preservation of a historic building. The opposition is committed to the preservation of Stonington Mansion for the benefit of the Victorian community. If the Labor government fails to match that commitment, it will stand condemned.

Greater Geelong and Surf Coast: mayors

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — I congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your position.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected mayors of the City of Greater Geelong and Surf Coast Shire. The new mayor of the of the City of Greater Geelong is Bruce Harwood, a detective with Victoria Police and a councillor of my old ward of Kardinia. Bruce is a fiercely independent individual who has friends on both sides of politics. Bruce and his wife Jennifer have a long connection with the sporting community. In particular, Bruce was president of the Geelong Amateurs Football and Netball Club in the last year it won a premiership. Bruce has ensured a very smooth and non-acrimonious transition of mayoralty

from Cr Shane Dowling to Cr Peter McMullin and now to Bruce. It is a credit to the current council.

I also congratulate Cr Rose Hodge, who has taken over the mayoralty of Surf Coast Shire. Rose has a work ethic inferior to no-one's, and even prior to being elected she was on nearly every committee in Torquay. She also has a very strong sport and recreation background. Rose, like Bruce, will be a very good grassroots mayor for her community.

I also thank former mayor of the Surf Coast Shire, Libby Mears, and former mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Peter McMullin. Both have been strong supporters of their communities and very strong advocates for Geelong, and particularly for the ring road — in more recent times, for stage 4 and federal funding in particular. They are now part of a group of councils that want Stewart McArthur and the federal government to match the Bracks government's commitment to stage 4 of the ring-road.

Eltham electorate: community service awards

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

I rise today to congratulate the winners of the 2006 Eltham community service awards. This is the fourth year that I have presented these awards, which were instigated for young people whose actions have assisted others — whether it be within their school, local community or more broadly across the nation. This year I presented the awards for the following students: Sarah Jupp from Catholic Ladies College, who won an award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the college leadership, the Students Representative Council and social justice activities; Sean Currie of Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School, who won an award for his terrific participation in the World's Greatest Shave fundraiser; and Rebecca Cherubin, who won the award from Sherbourne Primary School for leadership and participation in extracurricular activities.

At Greenhills Primary School Frederica Shakespeare and Biljana Cvijetic won the award for their leadership and assistance to the school community. I am told they are both fantastic role models for other students. At Holy Trinity Primary School Nyssa Jaworowski won the award for her work with a missionary, helping to raise funds for underprivileged children in Libya. William Phipps, from Eltham North Primary School, won the award for his coordination of student environmental work groups, which have achieved an enormous amount in beautifying the school and helping it save water. Caleb Johns from St Francis Xavier

Primary School won the award for his initiative in a whole range of activities in assisting the school — —

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

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Water: management

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Speaker has accepted a statement from the member for Brighton proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house condemns the Bracks Labor government's mismanagement of Victoria's water resources and in particular its failure to provide water certainty and to take adequate action on supply, recycling and infrastructure.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — A matter of public importance is often a misnomer for something the opposition or indeed the government wants to debate on a certain day, but this is a genuine matter of public importance. It relates to one of the great failures of the Bracks Labor government — that is, the government's failure to play its part in water management. It has made a lot of demands on irrigators and it has made a lot of demands on domestic consumers, but the government has not played its part.

The government cannot make it rain, and no-one is suggesting it has that power, but the government does have the capacity to provide infrastructure, and the government has failed on this point. The government does have a capacity to influence the level of supply of water, and it has failed on this point. The government does have the capacity to invest in many things that would have improved the situation had the government addressed this matter seven years ago, and the government has failed to act.

I want to go through a number of reasons why we on this side of the house condemn the government so strongly for its failure on water. First of all the government regards the water authorities as a cash cow. It takes out dividends from the water authorities and it takes out tax-equivalent payments, environmental levies and so on. In broad terms the government has taken out \$1.8 billion of revenue from the water authorities, and it has not put that money back into water infrastructure. The government claims it has invested \$1 billion. I think that is a very rubbery figure, and I am sure I will have more to say on that over the course of the next year or so.

The fact of the matter is the government treats the water authorities as a cash cow. It has taken out \$1.8 billion in revenue and it has not reinvested that amount of money in water infrastructure. That is one of the great failures of this government — diverting revenue from water to other areas of expenditure.

The second area of failure is what I refer to as the seven-year syndrome. The government has been in power for seven years and has done nothing. It has made a series of announcements recently — I grant that — but they come after years of inaction on the water front. It is all very well for the Premier to say, ‘Water is one of the great issues of our times’, but over the last seven years the government has not acted as if water were one of the great issues.

I also make the observation that the area where the government has probably shown the most action on the water front is its \$13 million advertising campaign, Our Water Our Future. That campaign was given to Shannon’s Way, Bill Shannon being a Labor mate involved in Labor’s fundraising arm, Progressive Business, and that contract was awarded without an open tender, but that is not the major point. My point is that the government has spent \$13 million on an advertising campaign about its slogan Our Water Our Future, but it has not done the hard work. It has not looked at security of supply, it has not looked at infrastructure and it has not dealt with the issue of recycling sufficiently early or enough.

There are many, many things the government could have done on water and has failed to do. I again make the point that no-one expects a government to make it rain, but we all expect government to invest in infrastructure and to look at alternatives that other states are looking at. It is, again, an example of where this government will not do the hard work.

One of the things the government could have done is look at dams. The government does not like the ‘dam’ word, presumably because of its association with the Greens. At the last election the Liberal Party had a proposal to build an \$80 million Arundel dam — a small dam which would supply 17 000 megalitres of drinking water for Melbourne and deal with the issue of flood mitigation on the Maribyrnong River. The Labor argument — which I referred to earlier today in a members statement as being perpetuated wrongly by a water authority on consumers’ bills — is that a dam does not create water. A dam does not create water, it stores water, and unless we have water storage, we do not have water. I find that quite ironic, coming from a water authority which bills people for the provision of water from dams. That is like saying the Thomson Dam

should not have been built. A glass does not create water, but a glass stores water. Labor has done nothing on water storage — nothing at all — in its seven years of office.

Another thing the Labor Party could have looked at in office was recycling. We have heard the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change make a number of comments on recycling of late times, with very small targets. Again I urge members of Parliament not to believe this government but to look at the government’s track record on recycling. I instance — as I always do — the Federation Square development. That development had a water recycling system. State-of-the-art tanks were being put in, and that water was going to be used to cater for the bathrooms and the gardens. It was a state-of-the-art water recycling project in Federation Square. What did this government do? Because of its failure with cost overruns, it actually pulled the water tanks out of the Federation Square project to save \$350 000. Do not listen to this government on recycling — it was prepared to dump this project to save \$350 000!

Similarly on the Spencer Street redevelopment — I refuse to call it by the new name — there was again an opportunity for water recycling, and the government said no. One of the things the Liberal Party did several years ago was come out with a policy that would require developers of government-sponsored major projects — whether it be the government alone or the government in partnership with a public-private partnership — to have water recycling as part of them. Again we have seen doubts expressed in the press this week about the way the Labor Party has managed water recycling. At the last election we made a number of substantive proposals in relation to recycling.

The public does not believe the Labor Party. Its track record is one of walking away from recycling. It has made a couple of late announcements during the election campaign. It has failed on this issue.

Another issue the Labor Party has failed on is the opportunity for establishing alternative supplies. During the last election campaign the Liberal Party proposed a desalination plant — a proposal that was initially greeted with ridicule from the Labor Party. The proposal was for 145 million litres of fresh drinking water to be produced, which would equate to one-tenth of Melbourne’s consumption when the plant was completed. I refer to the example of Perth’s water supply. In a press release dated 19 November 2006 the Western Australian Labor government stated:

Western Australia has become the first state in Australia to use desalination as a major public water source.

The Labor Premier, Alan Carpenter, is quoted as saying:

By harnessing water from the ocean, we have acquired an abundant source that is not dependent on rainfall.

The press release went on to state that when the plant is fully operational it will produce 130 million litres of water per day and supply 17 per cent of Perth's needs. The plant was built by that Labor government in less than two years, on time and on budget.

I take up the point made by the Labor Party in comments about costing. I have no doubt that if the Victorian Labor government built a plant like this, it would be over budget and late. But I think if Perth can do it, we can do it too in Victoria. I also note that other Labor states are prepared to look at this option. In terms of a possible alternative supply, the government has failed on this front as well.

Another area of failure of this government is that the main thrust of its water policy is to ask domestic consumers to use less. That is the whole thrust of its *Securing Our Water Future Together* white paper — to have domestic consumers use less water. I think there has been a significant amount of public goodwill in this regard, but the government is at the stage now where it is risking this public goodwill on water restrictions. One needs to look at the government's performance with industry. It is here where the government has failed again. I grant that industry is different — industry is tied up with jobs — but the way the government has handled industry compared with the way the government has handled domestic consumers is not equitable.

What the government set out to do in its *Securing Our Water Future Together* white paper — I refer to page 104 — was to encourage industry. It was demanded that consumers reduce consumption, but industry was to be encouraged to cut down water usage. The government set up a scheme to work with the top 200 water users, and it was a voluntary scheme — note again that for consumers it was obligatory.

There is no requirement on industry not to waste water. Most damning of all, according to this paper, is the fact that industry was given three years to draw up water-saving plans. We do not have three years. We are in a drought and supplies are dwindling; we do not have three years. If you refer to the chapter 'Progress towards securing our water future' on page 32 of the paper you will see that in 2004–05 the government has remained on this track of only encouraging industry to reduce water use and not demanding reduction of use the way the government has with consumers.

I instance a matter that came to light last week involving a petroleum company at a Yarraville terminal. The petroleum storage tanks there hold 170 million litres, and from time to time they require maintenance to check for leaks. This particular company puts top-grade drinking water into the tanks to test for leaks, and then throws it away — 170 million litres of water!

The government should require industry not to waste water. I note that the competitor of this company does not waste water. Instead it treats it to a recycling level and then gives it to councils to water ovals and the like. I again make the point that there is no requirement on industry not to waste water, while there is a requirement on consumers. We are not allowed to water our driveways — nor should we, and I accept that — but the way the government has treated consumers is inequitable compared with the way it has treated industry. I invite the minister to come out to the suburbs and hear the reaction to the differential ways in which different groups of consumers have been treated.

There is also the matter of the significant amount of seepage and leakage within the metropolitan system. The amount of money being ripped out in dividends instead of being put back into the system to deal with seepage and leakage again shows negligence by the government. I also make the point that if the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change deigns to participate in this debate, and I can see the junior, newly appointed parliamentary secretary waiting to speak, members should not believe him — and they should not believe the parliamentary secretary either. It is a darn sight easier to run an advertising campaign or issue a press release than it is to actually do the work on storage, on recycling and on alternative supplies.

I refer to the question I raised in the house yesterday. On *Stateline* on the ABC on 10 November, in a debate with the shadow Minister for Water, the Minister for Water said in relation to the Gippsland proposal, 'We've released the feasibility study'. In the heat of a debate during the election campaign, that is what he said. Of course yesterday in Parliament he was obliged to concede that he had not released the feasibility study. I would urge people to remember that this minister says the first thing that comes into his head. This minister goes for spin rather than substance every single time.

In conclusion, the government has not played its role. It has certainly asked country Victorians and metropolitan domestic consumers to play a substantial role, but the government has not played its role. It has put out advertisements, it has put out press releases and it has put out glossy brochures. But it has done nothing about

storage, and it has done nothing about desalination or an alternative supply, as employed by the Western Australian Labor government. It has done very little on recycling, and what it has done is incredibly late. It has spent insufficient money on infrastructure.

We see a government that talks and makes a lot of noise about water being important, but it has been a government of inaction for the bulk of its seven years in office. The tragic thing about the minister for water is that he has held the portfolio for over four years but has done nothing other than run a \$13 million advertising campaign to convince domestic consumers that they should cut their consumption. That is not good enough.

I invite the minister to come out to the suburbs and hear what the people are saying about their water management. I go back to my fundamental point: this government has ripped out \$1.8 billion in revenue from the water authorities and has not invested sufficiently in storage and in infrastructure. That is one of this government's great failures, and for that the minister and the government should be condemned.

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this matter of public importance. I would like to start by congratulating the proposer of the MPI, the member for Brighton, on her appointment to the position of shadow Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, particularly in relation to water. I had hoped that she would bring a fresh approach to the opposition's perspective in this area, but I fear from her recent contribution that that is not the case.

This year Victoria has experienced its worst drought on record, with rainfall at only a fraction of its long-term average. What is the very first response to this crisis that we see in this Parliament from the opposition? We see a matter of public importance proposed simply to try to score political points.

Do we see opposition members offering a bipartisan solution to Victoria's water problem? No, we do not see them offering anything like that. Do they offer any hope whatsoever to the thousands of farming families desperately worried about the impact the drought is having on their livelihoods and families? No, they do not; they offer no hope to those people. Do they offer any real solutions to ensuring that the economy of our regional centres and of our state is not crippled by the shortage of water? No, they offer no hope whatsoever. Instead they whine, they carp, and they seek to undermine attempts by this government to produce sustainable and long-term solutions to Victoria's water situation.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HERBERT — I hear comments from those — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Brighton was heard in relative silence. I ask for the same courtesy to be shown to the member for Eltham.

Mr HERBERT — In fairness to those opposite, including the member for Brighton, the Liberals did have a plan — for a dam on the Maribyrnong. They thought the dam would be their silver bullet for the water crisis, but it was ridiculed by industry, ridiculed by water authorities, and ridiculed by ordinary Victorians. In the end it was completely shot down in flames by the realisation that it would pose a major threat to commercial aircraft due to birdstrike.

Ms Duncan — It has been rejected for 40 years.

Mr HERBERT — 'Rejected for 40 years', we hear the member for Macedon say. This is a shoddy matter of public importance. It is a very poor start to the Parliament, and it masks the simple fact that inflows to Victoria's water storages have decreased across the state as a result of a massive reduction in rainfall in our catchment areas. This winter was particularly bad, with our storages receiving virtually no water at a time when they would usually be filling ahead of the summer. On top of this, our catchment areas are now so dry that they will need really heavy and sustained downpours over a substantial period before we see them recovering and water storages filling.

The impact of climate change is clear for all to see. The CSIRO estimates that there will be 8 per cent less water available for Melbourne by 2020 and 20 per cent less by 2050. That is why we need sustainable solutions, and that is why we are putting in place the plans we have today.

It is clear that across the state everyone is doing it tough. Farmers are having their water allocations reduced, with irrigators in the Goulburn system receiving about 24 per cent of their water entitlements. In other parts of the state households are carting water for household and stock use. Many regional hubs like Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong are at their highest levels of restrictions — and I will speak more about that later — and in Melbourne we will be starting stage 3 water restrictions in January.

Mr K. Smith — It's a bit late.

Mr HERBERT — 'A bit late' we hear from the member opposite. The truth is that the circumstances we are in would have been much worse if the Bracks

government — unlike the opposition, I might say — had not taken up the water challenge back in 2002 and developed an absolutely comprehensive response to the drought. It is clear that without our response over the last four years, here in Melbourne alone we would have been consuming an extra 100 billion litres per year of water and our circumstances would have been more dire. The government has detailed a substantial — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HERBERT — What have we done? We have detailed a substantial and well-thought-out plan for water that is based on four major areas, not on a shoddy little dam on the Maribyrnong. It is based on conservation and conserving water; on a better use of alternative supplies, such as recycled water and stormwater; on connecting up a water grid; and on looking after the rivers and aquifers that provide our water. The plan will deliver something like 260 billion litres of water for Melbourne alone by 2055. Unlike the opposition, which has no plan, we have a plan that has been acclaimed by water experts such as Peter Cullen and by industry and farming groups. The plan means that we are better placed than any other state across the country to deal with the water crisis.

It is clear from the silence over there that we are better placed. Those across the road know that this is a national drought, and they also know that the Prime Minister held up the Victorian model at the national water summit on Cup Day as a model for other states to follow and as a way of getting across the water crisis this country is facing. He, like other experts, recognised that despite the current crisis Victoria's water plan is working.

I would like to outline just briefly some of the aspects of that four-point plan. I turn firstly to conservation. In Melbourne we are already using 22 per cent less water per person than we did in the 1990s, and we will boost that to 25 per cent by 2015 and 30 per cent by 2020. Despite the claims of the opposition, that is hard-core, factual information.

The farming community is saving water through better irrigation and on-farm improvements. You just have to go up to Mildura to see some of the fantastic water-saving initiatives that are happening up there across a lot of the irrigated areas. We are also building the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, which will save 1 billion litres of water a year.

I turn to schools. The local schools in all the electorates that we all represent are incorporating water-saving programs in their school curriculums. They are

installing tanks, they are recycling water in the toilet systems and they are putting in low-water-use gardens.

We come to local government. We are seeing some terrific initiatives being carried out with this government. One of them — one more small example — is the WaterSmart sportsgrounds project in my electorate. This is a \$2.6 million project which will transform the surfaces of grounds and the way they are watered across Nillumbik. It will save something like 12 million litres of water a year, which is about a 70 per cent saving on the current water patterns. What a terrific initiative! Not only that, it will result in better quality grounds that young people and old people like to play on.

Mr K. Smith — A federal government initiative?

Mr HERBERT — It is a local initiative. The member for Bass asks whether it was a federal government initiative. If it had been a federal government initiative — as we found out today — it would unfortunately be tied up in red tape for another decade. No, it was a local initiative that we got going quickly.

In water recycling we are making significant gains. We have already boosted recycling, and we have a plan to recycle 20 per cent of our wastewater in Melbourne by 2010. That will be a tremendous achievement, and industry will no doubt play its part in it. In 1999 we were recycling a measly 2 per cent of our water — that is not too long ago. Today, we are recycling some 14 per cent. We are also pursuing innovative recycling projects in regional Victoria. Members of the opposition hate this, because they seem to think that they own that area.

In Bendigo, crucially, a recycling project has started which we are jointly funding with the local water authority and the federal government. It will boost water supplies by 4 billion litres. In Geelong the Victorian government has committed to a recycling project to be carried out with the local water authority and the Shell refinery which will save something like 2 billion litres a year.

Dr Napthine — Federal-government funded.

Mr HERBERT — It is funded by the Victorian government and the local water authority.

One of the major issues here is the water grid. This is one of the great innovations of this plan. The water grid will connect our water system so that water can be used across the state where it is needed the most and where it will provide the greatest value.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HERBERT — It seems a lot of people opposite do not realise that Victoria is made up of many different and often independent water systems. Our plan is to connect up these systems into a far more flexible and responsive entity. We are going to connect Bendigo and Ballarat to the Goulburn system in the north — a system that has an annual water entitlement of about 1000 gigalitres.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HERBERT — Probably the only contribution on this one that those opposite have made for their federal counterparts is to try to sabotage it, particularly the Ballarat component.

We are going to do this through the goldfields super-pipe — a 155-kilometre pipeline from the Waranga West channel all the way to Ballarat via Bendigo's Lake Eppalock. We have committed \$101 million to this project on top of the water authority's funding.

Dr Napthine — When is it going to deliver water to Ballarat?

Mr HERBERT — That is a good point. The major hold-up on this project is of course not the Victorian government but the federal government; we have seen that today. We have committed \$101 million to this pipeline. The water authority has committed \$52 million to this pipeline. We are getting the pipes; we are awarding contracts — and we are waiting for the federal government's \$119 million. Where is it? What did we hear today from the federal Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull? He wants more red tape! It does not matter that we have given business plans to the federal government. We have given it more information than it could ever look at. The water catchment authorities and the water boards have done the work; they have worked it all out; we have given the federal bureaucrats their information; but no, Mr Turnbull wants more. He wants to delay the whole thing with red tape.

Well, we will not delay it; we will keep going. The tragedy will be — and I hope those opposite are taking note here — when they have to tell people, if the federal government does not kick in, where the extra money will come from. It will come from taxpayers and water users. So I would hope that, rather than just knock and whine, members opposite actually get onto their federal Liberal counterparts.

The other part of our water strategy is to improve our rivers and streams, and that is an important aspect. The Our Water Our Future package provided an additional \$100 million over four years for natural water resources. In 2005–06 alone \$10.2 million was invested in large-scale river restoration programs, with projects in every region of Victoria. The drought makes it imperative that we ensure that our river systems and aquifers are operating efficiently and effectively not just for water conservation but also for the environment.

Approximately \$600 million is being invested right now in a Yarra River package to improve flows in the Yarra. We are improving flows in the Thomson and Macalister rivers. Something like 10 000 megalitres has already been returned to the Thomson River to boost its flow. All 10 regional river health strategies have been developed through catchment management authorities and Melbourne Water.

An auditing system on the health of our rivers is in place. We are also fully committed to identifying water-saving projects to provide something like 214 000 megalitres to the Murray River. These initiatives, as well as the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan, will save something like 44 000 megalitres of water annually, and they will improve flows in the Snowy River, the Murray River and other rivers.

Dr Sykes interjected.

Mr HERBERT — There seems to be some opposition! It is a problem. Do you in fact have a better way? We hear the opposition — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Benalla will cease interjecting across the chamber.

Mr HERBERT — We hear the opposition saying — —

Dr Sykes interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Benalla will cease interjecting across the chamber.

Mr HERBERT — We hear the member for Benalla saying they have a better strategy, but let us look at the facts on this. Let us look at this year alone and the contributions from the opposition leader up until this first sitting of the new Parliament. How many times has he spoken on water? Four times. One of those was about water polo! How many questions on water has he asked in question time? The answer is zip, zero and zilch! There is the better plan from the opposition leader — not one question!

What about the policies the Liberals took to the Victorian public, which were absolutely denounced and rejected? What were they? A dam on the Maribyrnong River, which I have spoken about before and which would have resulted in 1 per cent extra water for Melbourne and a major threat of bird strike to commercial aircraft. They have no saving target, and they have no water recycling target for Melbourne. They have opposed the government's water pricing reforms. I understand they even oppose the five permanent water-saving rules for regional Victoria. They have produced no legislative proposals for industry water savings. When they were last in government they decommissioned the Tarago Reservoir. They have absolutely no plans whatsoever. They have no policy on regional water infrastructure investment.

This is an important issue that deserves serious consideration. It does not deserve this shabby matter of public importance that does nothing more than knock, knock, knock. Our state is in trouble with water. I ask those opposite, instead of just carping and whining, to actually do something.

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

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — The matter of public importance (MPI) that has been proposed by the member for Brighton asks this house to condemn the Bracks Labor government's mismanagement of Victoria's water resources and in particular its failure to provide water certainty and to take adequate action on supply, recycling and infrastructure. The Nationals believe it is a very good MPI to put forward, and we support it 100 per cent.

You only have to go back to question time yesterday to understand that the Bracks government does not get it when it comes to water policy. There is a high level of anxiety in country Victoria over the Bracks government's management of water and its future water policy. There has been an unforeseen high level of permanent water trading out of a lot of our irrigation districts, which is going to do irreparable damage to the social fabric of those communities. Apart from the drought, one of the reasons for the high level of trade is the fact that New South Wales will not allow water trading out of that state. The Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, in answer to a question yesterday, said, 'The national water initiative says we cannot do anything'. I thought the minister was the minister for water in Victoria and was here to stick up for his Victorian communities.

We have seen the example of the federal industrial relations laws. The state government here does not like them, so there is a hue and cry. The government has helped fund a High Court challenge to them, and the Premier and other ministers have spoken at public rallies against that federal government initiative. But when it comes to water and water being traded out of our communities here in Victoria, there is absolute silence. There is not one squeak of opposition to that happening and nothing about finding a way forward so we may be able to save some of those communities.

We could be cynical, but perhaps if the Victorian Farmers Federation was a member of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the government might do something about it. But the government does not seem to want to do anything about it for the communities out there. There is an opportunity under the national water initiative, as I understand it, for the government to use third party impact clauses to review some of this and to have a look at the socioeconomic cost to the communities. There is also an opportunity to look at the issue of stranded assets to see how it might do things better and hold things up for a while until New South Wales comes to the party.

There is a lot of water being traded down the Murray River at the moment. There are unseasonably high flows going down that river, and there are bank cave-ins because of those high summertime flows. There is damage being done to the river channel, which is one of the Living Murray icon sites, but there is deathly silence again on the other side of the house as to what damage might be being done to the river because of the changes in flow that are happening at the moment.

There is also the issue of trade anomalies. As I understand it, if someone trades out of the Goulburn system to the Murray system, particularly into South Australia, they immediately turn what is a 25 per cent allocation into a 95 per cent allocation. That allocation can then be temporarily sold on the market within that system at a huge profit to the people who are there. But what do we hear from the government? Nothing. Instead it says, 'We will just let these things happen. We will let our own Victorian communities suffer because of the trading rules that are there at the moment'. The government will not do anything about it.

What The Nationals would like to see is a moratorium on permanent trade out of the existing irrigation districts until the drought is over and until public policy can catch up with what is going on. Country people feel betrayed by the Bracks government when it comes to water policy. We are in a severe drought. We have had

similar droughts in history, but the situation does not need to be as critical as it is at the moment. If you look at the history of what has happened over the last seven years, you find that the Bracks government has collected \$1.8 billion in public sector dividends from the water authorities. It is now also collecting \$60 million a year in the secret environmental tax. There is a lot of money that could have been reinvested in water initiatives so that the crisis we face now would not have needed to be as bad.

What is worse is that in the last week of the previous Parliament we rushed through changes to the Water Act that mean the Treasurer can also demand capital repayments from the water authorities. So not only do we have \$1.8 million being ripped out of the water authorities in public sector dividend taxes, and not only are we getting \$60 million a year taken out in a secret environment tax, but we now have the Treasurer being able to go to the water authorities and say, 'I want a capital repayment from you this year'. It is not about investing in water savings and not about securing water for the future of our communities; it is about getting money for consolidated revenue. That is not what water authorities are about. They are about making sure we have water for our communities, not about supplying money to consolidated revenue. We are creating haves and have-nots when it comes to water. If you live in the city, it is going to be fine, because the government will pay for a super-pipe to get water to the cities. But if you live in the country, that water will have gone to the city.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr WALSH — This is where the government just does not get it. It is not about paying for it. It is about the government taking water away from viable country communities to send to the cities, which will destroy those country towns. It is time we put the word 'decentralisation' back on the public agenda here in Victoria and thought about where we want to locate industries in Victoria and where we want to locate populations in Victoria. If all this government — —

Mr Herbert interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Eltham should cease interjecting.

Mr WALSH — If all this government wants to do is build a water grid and build a super-pipe to take country water to the cities to make the cities bigger, it just does not get it. That is what the whole issue is about. We should be seriously considering how we get industries into the country where the water is and how we develop all of Victoria, not just Bendigo, Ballarat,

Geelong and Melbourne. The government just does not get it! The 200 largest water users in Melbourne use a significant percentage of Melbourne's water. Why do we not look at relocating some of those industries? Why do we not look at — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — If the other side of the house would like to listen, I am very prepared to tell them what they should be able to do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Swan Hill knows the rules of the house. He should ignore the interjections and get on with it.

Mr WALSH — Thinking about how you develop all of Victoria, you could put in place some incentives whereby the largest water-use industries could relocate to where there is water instead of spending a fortune to build pipelines to bring the water to them. At the moment we are talking about transferring wealth out of our country communities to benefit the cities. Look at the Colbinabbin pipeline, which is about taking water from the Goulburn Valley to send to Bendigo. Coliban Water should be condemned for being asleep at the wheel for the last decade, as should the state government. The government had done nothing about piping the Bendigo rural supply, which could have saved a lot of water, until recently, when the federal government got involved and put money on the table for recycling water in Bendigo. The government has done nothing about harvesting stormwater in Bendigo.

Damian Drum in the other place has been pushing very hard for a stormwater harvesting project, but because the government did not think of it, it will not entertain his thoughts about the issue. The government has done nothing about examining the emergency use of groundwater — such as water out of the Campaspe deep lead or water out of the Loddon deep lead — which could get Bendigo through the current drought and then be recharged in the future.

The last thing I would like to talk about is Lake Mokoan. The decommissioning of Lake Mokoan is an absolute disgrace. The government has not honoured its commitment to provide security of supply to the irrigators, it has not addressed the issue about flood mitigation for Benalla, it has not addressed the issue about wetland rehabilitation and, more importantly, it has not thought outside the square. We can look at what has happened with the Barren Box Swamp project out of Griffith in New South Wales. For once New South Wales may have done something right with water. It has actually done it well there with a win-win situation,

whereas Lake Mokoan seems to be about a win-lose situation for the people there.

Lastly, I turn to the results of a survey published in the *Weekly Times* of 13 December. It shows that 84 per cent of country people felt that the Bracks government was doing a poor job of managing water reforms, 81 per cent of country people felt that the Bracks government was managing drought issues poorly, and 74 per cent of country people felt that the Bracks government had been negligent in failing to build new irrigation infrastructure.

We have heard a lot said about how the state election endorsed the Bracks government's water policy and that it had a mandate. You could ask the ex-member for Morwell and the ex-member for Narracan what they think about the Bracks government's water initiative and whether they were endorsed for the future, because the loss of those two seats was a result of the government's proposal to send Melbourne sewage to Gippsland and take back good water.

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

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — It is always a great pleasure to speak on an issue such as water and about how important it is. I note the Leader of the Opposition spoke four times on water in the last Parliament — so did I — and he did not ask any questions. I asked a question on water in the last Parliament. If they look back through *Hansard*, members of The Nationals and the Liberal Party will see that as the member for Seymour I take the issue of water very seriously. Even before the start of the last election I chose to sell the water achievement to the electorate, especially to Seymour. I am very proud of being a part of a government that has delivered that.

We have had record low rainfalls over the past 10 years, and they are leading to record low inflows to our dams for both urban and rural consumption. It is true that the government cannot make it rain; it is true that we always need to do much more. We are finding that out. The Victorian community knows that we have to keep on doing many more things to develop our infrastructure.

At the state election we took a plan to the Victorian people about what we were going to do to improve infrastructure, the water situation and water security for our state, as did the Liberal Party. The people weighed up the ideas of the Liberal Party and the Labor Party and they said on balance that the Labor Party plans for our state were the best plans. As a result they supported

the Labor Party to its second-largest victory in Victorian history. That should be noted and taken into serious consideration by those on the other side.

The government is fast-tracking infrastructure projects by introducing bills in the Parliament to make sure that that happens. The goldfields super-pipe is one of those projects. Liberal Party members in my electorate tried to divide the community on that issue. Much to my pleasure and surprise a constituent, through no prodding from me, had the moral fortitude to get up and say to a Liberal Party member, 'My mother lives in Bendigo and she is facing no water. She needs it, and I support some of our water being shared across the state'.

Members of The Nationals from Shepparton through Rodney, Swan Hill and to Mildura are utilising water from the upper catchments around my electorate and further east — —

Dr Sykes interjected.

Mr HARDMAN — And from Benalla, that is correct, because we are sharing that resource. I can also remember that not all but definitely some Liberal Party members rejected the farm dams legislation, which was about sharing a water resource right across the state, no matter where you lived, and having a secure supply for everybody. The hypocrisy is appalling. They still do not realise it now.

The Eildon Dam wall, including the spillway upgrade, is important infrastructure that has been implemented under the Bracks government. At a total cost of \$52 million half of it was funded by Goulburn-Murray irrigators and the remaining half — \$26 million — came directly through the state government.

Dr Sykes interjected.

Mr HARDMAN — The member for Benalla fails to realise that the Eildon Dam can hold the equivalent of six times the amount of water in Sydney Harbour. Before the Bracks government and the Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority fixed up the wall and the spillway it could hold 65 per cent of its capacity because of the fears of the 1-in-10 000-year drought. In other words, that investment by our government and the irrigators of Goulburn-Murray Water has meant that the equivalent of another two Sydney Harbours full of water can go into the Eildon Dam. But that is ignored by the other side

In the last election the towns of Wallan, Kilmore, Broadford, Wandong and Heathcote Junction were on ridiculously high water restrictions. We were trucking

water into the Broadford supply so that the others could be on stage 10 water restrictions in their towns. We said that we would find the best solution to this problem. We did and we invested \$22.6 million to connect Wallan to Yarra Valley Water, which has taken the pressure off the Sunday Creek Reservoir for those other communities in my electorate.

We did that; we said we would make the plans and we have done it. At the election we told the Victorian people that we had the plans for Victoria. Obviously irrigation is a serious issue and there are serious problems further down, particularly in the Goulburn system where I believe people are currently on about 24 per cent of water entitlements. The issue is bad, but we should look at the dryland farmers as well because they are in the same situation. Their dams are getting dangerously low and their feed is not growing.

There are people from the member for Benalla's electorate and my electorate who have never had to feed out at this time of year. They are now buying in hay, which would not normally happen until the winter months. That is how serious it is. Those people know that the government cannot do anything about those particular problems, but we have to find ways of better managing our resources. The Bracks government's \$15 million Water Smart Farms initiative — obviously for irrigators — is one way to do that. Already it has saved significant amounts of water on many farms by looking at where the wastage is and at how water can be better utilised. We should be doing more and more of that into the future because there is wastage.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about domestic users being somehow mistreated because they have been asked to contribute to water savings with a 22 per cent reduction in their water use. I do not see too many people suffering as a result of that but what I do see is a lot less suffering occurring in the future because of the permanent water savings introduced by the government.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said we have done nothing about industry and the way in which industry uses water. Industry can make improvements too but it is also about people in industry, business and the whole community realising that we have a real crisis; we have climate change. I think the Prime Minister may have discovered it, but I am not too sure. I heard the Prime Minister on the radio the other day and he still sounded sceptical.

The fact of the matter is that people are realising that. Our top 200 companies are already saving significant amounts of water. I believe the Pathways to

Sustainability program is now saving 12 per cent of the water that industry was previously using, so it is playing its part with the 200 to 1000 industries which use more than 10 megalitres of water in their businesses. We are making headway in that particular area. The Bracks government, through its Our Water Our Future campaign and the research which was undertaken to develop that campaign, has a proud record in this area because it has taken the community with it in making these water savings.

There has been a great deal of hypocrisy from the opposition over climate change. I remember some opposition members saying during the election campaign that they supported wind farms but did not support the location of any of the proposed wind farms — in other words, they support wind farms but not where there is wind. That is hypocritical and is exactly what they have said. Wind farms are placed where there is wind, which is why people are building wind farms in those particular areas. You cannot have your cake and eat it too.

We have to make some hard decisions at times. People in my electorate are concerned about wind farms but there are plenty of processes for them to go through if there is a real issue. Hopefully that will not happen. We all have to share in the responsibility for this.

We are suffering from the lowest rainfall for 10 years and it seems to be getting worse. The humidity levels are going down, which is the reason for the bushfires spreading at the present time. It is about time that people stopped looking to be opportunistic and got on board to find good, decent and practical ways to solve our problems into the future.

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — Victoria is facing a water crisis as a result of a number of very dry years. That crisis has been exacerbated by the mismanagement and inaction of the Bracks Labor government. There is absolutely no doubt that the government's mismanagement of our water and its inaction on water is making what was a water problem into a real water crisis.

Melbourne is going on to stage 3 water restrictions. I will talk about what is also happening in regional and rural Victoria. Many rural towns and cities are on stage 4 restrictions and have been on stage 4 restrictions for some time. People in Melbourne who think they are suffering with stage 3 restrictions ought to talk to some of their country cousins in Bendigo, Balmoral and in some of the country towns that have been on stage 4 water restrictions for many months.

On top of that the farmers across the state are facing significant problems because of the lack of water. There are irrigators who have zero allocations. When you sit around the table with the Campaspe irrigators, who have a zero allocation again this year after a zero allocation last year, you see that they are absolutely at the end of their tether. They deserve our support, our sympathy and a much better response from the government than the way the government has ignored their plight in the past and seems to be still ignoring them. The Campaspe irrigators deserve better treatment than that.

The Goulburn irrigators are only getting 24 per cent of their entitlement. Many of our farmers on dryland farms are facing major problems through the lack of water. There is not only a lack of feed for their stock but also a lack of access to emergency water supplies. More and more farmers are now facing problems such as the closure of the local emergency bore, which will not be reopened by the Bracks Labor government. The local water authorities and the government are closing access to standpipes, so that farmers are not only facing a water crisis but they are facing a situation where they are being forced to cart water hundreds of kilometres because this government has not responded appropriately in an emergency situation, which is an absolute disgrace.

There is a shortage of water for firefighting, there are increasing problems with groundwater, there are disputes among farmers and among communities about access to groundwater and there is competition between irrigators and groundwater users. Bores are drying up and the water authorities are simply not able to respond to the needs of those communities. They are simply refusing to respond to farmers who are facing water crises through groundwater bores drying up.

Now we find the Labor government taking water from farmers to supply cities without investing in water-saving infrastructure. The Liberal Party supports the pipeline from Colbinabbin to Bendigo; it has always supported it. Indeed, the Liberal Party announced its commitment to that pipeline ahead of the government, but we believe the water for that pipeline should come from water-saving infrastructure and investment in water-saving infrastructure rather than simply taking it from our farmers, because that is cutting off your nose to spite your face. If you take water from farmers you take away the economic lifeblood of Victoria that depends on the farming community to generate the billions of dollars that are the lifeblood of the economy of this state, the lifeblood of country communities and the lifeblood of Victoria. It is folly to make a short-term decision to take water from farmers to supply the cities

when the government should be using funding to invest in water-saving infrastructure like the Wimmera Mallee pipeline, which we support.

Similar projects should be instigated throughout our irrigation system to generate significant water savings to provide additional water for the environment and additional water to meet the needs of cities. The decommissioning of Lake Mokoan is an absolute disgrace. It is a situation where there could be a win-win outcome. There is a win-win opportunity to get a better environmental outcome and a better water security outcome, and the government is simply ignoring that opportunity.

We have a crisis in water in our provincial cities. Water storages in Bendigo are at 9.2 per cent. It is interesting to note that through the Governor's speech yesterday the government committed to:

... secure enough water for Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat, Westernport and the Latrobe Valley ...

but there was no mention of Bendigo. Bendigo is left high and dry by this government. There have been water restrictions in Bendigo since 2002. It has had restrictions for four years and this government sat on its hands and did nothing to help that community secure water supplies. It has only been in recent months with federal government assistance that a water recycling project, which has been on the books for years, has got funding to go ahead. It should have been done years ago. There is no commitment from this government to pipe the Coliban rural system, which is losing heaps of water through leaks, evaporation and seepage. Nothing has been done to fast-track the pipeline project which the Liberal Party supports.

We support the Colbinabbin to Eppalock pipeline. It was announced in May but not one sod has been turned on the project — not one sod in six months. The government came in here yesterday and said, 'We are going to bring in legislation to fast-track that project'. The project has been on the books since May! The government could have put the legislation through in June. It could have built the project by now.

As at 19 December there were only 11 000 megalitres of water in the Ballarat supply system — 17.1 per cent. This is a real crisis facing individuals, families, businesses and investor confidence in Ballarat. What has the government delivered? False promises, uncertainty and a lack of commitment to Ballarat. Let us have a look at what the government promised. In 2005 it said in its discussion paper on the central region sustainable water strategy:

An agreement, in place since the construction of Lal Lal Reservoir, provides for Barwon Water to transfer its share of the reservoir to Central Highlands Water for Ballarat, with the understanding that Central Highlands Water will assist Barwon Water to access an alternative water source.

So in 2005 the government said, 'Let's give Lal Lal to Ballarat'. In November 2005 the document, under the plan for Ballarat, stated that as part of the Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy, the government, Central Highlands Water and Barwon Water would transfer Lal Lal to Ballarat. So that was the government's policy 12 months ago in 2005.

In the Ballarat *Courier* in April 2006 the government said it had dumped that policy and would connect Cairn Curran Reservoir to Ballarat to secure water supplies for the next 50 years. We said at the time that the Cairn Curran option was absolutely ridiculous because there is no water in Cairn Curran — less than 5 per cent — and the pipeline was too long and too expensive. Lo and behold, by August 2006 the government had dumped that policy. So we are now on the third policy for Ballarat and the government has announced a pipeline to take water over the Great Divide from Eppalock to Ballarat. The minister promised this pipeline — and I interjected when the previous speaker was speaking, which was inappropriate, and said, 'When is this pipeline going to be delivered?'. In the lead-up to the election the Minister for Water said it would deliver water to Ballarat by the summer of 2008. But what he did not tell the people was that his own sustainable water strategy — and this is about the fourth one — released in October 2006 says there would be interconnection to the Goulburn system by 2010.

Further, the pre-election budget update released in November says that \$20 million would be provided for this pipeline in 2008–09 and \$40.7 million in 2009–10. So there is no way this pipeline is going to deliver water to Ballarat by 2008. The earliest will be 2011, if it goes ahead at all. Given we have had four changes of policy in 12 months for Ballarat, how can anybody in Ballarat have any confidence that this government knows what it is doing with water and will deliver on water for Ballarat? Is it any wonder the people of Ballarat are in a water crisis and are suffering a loss of confidence in this government?

Similarly, Geelong has only 24 per cent in its system, and the government is proposing to connect it to Melbourne. Now Melbourne is facing stage 3 and stage 4 water restrictions.

The Labor government has failed regional and rural Victoria on water. It has failed the farmers who are vital

to our economy; it has failed country towns; it has failed our major provincial cities, and it has absolutely failed to deliver on water recycling. It has been in office for seven years. Yesterday through the Governor's speech the government had the temerity to say it is going to upgrade the eastern treatment plant. It should tell the people who are facing the Gunnamatta outfall how many litres of water are being wasted there that should have been recycled and reused over the last seven years. It has failed to deliver by not adopting desalination; it has failed to deliver by not adopting new dams; it has failed to deliver by not using our aquifers to the maximum and it has failed to deliver by not fixing the 8 to 10 per cent we lose in leaks in our system.

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — In rising to speak on the matter of public importance this morning I welcome this matter being raised by the opposition. It is good to see it starting to talk about water after seven years and starting to take water seriously. I am pleased it has made its former leader the spokesperson on water. It is a great catch-up to this government that has really been going on about water. People in my electorate think I bang on about water all the time, and have done for the last five or six years. But it is better late than never that the opposition is now starting to realise that we are in serious trouble.

The thing that worries me about the debate in this chamber is that there seems to be some suggestion that there is a quick fix to this problem. This is not a problem that is going away. If we look at forward estimates, they show that this problem will be with us for many years to come, and in fact some would question whether we are in a drought or whether this is now the normal pattern of rainfall in this country. It is quite frightening to see some of the forward estimates. It really worries me to see opposition members trying to play politics with this. They seem to think that any government can resolve this problem without requiring any commitment from every individual water user to contribute to this effort.

We started this campaign prior to 2002. The first rule in the management of any natural resource is conservation. It is the smartest, most economical, social and environmental way to manage this problem. Conservation is no. 1. When the government ran the excellent advertisements in 2002, with the Premier flying over water storages trying to highlight the problem we had with water in this state and this country, the response from members of the opposition was to laugh. They thought it was a joke and were critical of the money that was spent on that advertising.

We know what the outcome of those advertisements has been.

We now see Victorians using 22 per cent less water than they were using in the 1990s. This is the most logical way to resolve this problem. Look at the misguided promise of the Liberal Party at the last election for the dam at Arundel. I think from memory it was promised it would cost \$80 million, only \$20 million of which was funded by the opposition; it was relying on the federal government to contribute the other \$60 million for that project.

I cannot remember the figures for the water that that \$80 million dam would supposedly have captured, but in return for the \$6 million spent on refitting water-efficient shower heads we will save more than we would by investing \$80 million in the very dodgy and questionable savings that might have been made through the water captured in that Arundel dam. The way members of the opposition are trying to play the politics of this issue is by suggesting that the state build big infrastructure — ‘big this’ and ‘big that’, with loads of money invested — and that doing so will somehow solve the problem but will not, which is the most frightening part of this debate, require any effort on people’s part.

We must get over this attitude to how we use water. I have been on tank water for 12 years, and I have been acutely aware of the drought for 10 years. I think most people are Water Wallys. When I go into people’s homes and see how they even wash their hands under a tap, it seems to me that people think we must have so much pressure that we virtually sandblast the dirt off our hands. It is always frightening to me to watch people turn on the tap and see the water going straight from the tap into the sink, with nothing in between to capture it and with it not being used. All of us, including people in industry, agriculture and urban areas, can do a lot more to save water. No doubt we will have to do that in the future.

This is a really serious issue. The most logical way to start, as this government has, is to push the issue of conservation. People do not want to hear that, of course. It is fairly simple, but it requires effort. The misguided way that members of the opposition are handling this issue is by suggesting that the problem can be solved by putting a pipe here, there or wherever, giving the impression that there are all manner of quick fixes to this problem. There is no solution to this problem which does not require effort and investment and which will not result in an increase in the cost of water in this country. The other day I heard a woman on the radio talking about Dubai. She said that as far as she knew

people in Dubai are not on water restrictions. I do not know — I have never been to Dubai — but I would absolutely guarantee that the cost of water in Dubai is hugely greater than it is in this country. There is no solution that will not have a huge impact on the cost of water and on the way we use water in the future.

Since January 2003 more than 145 000 rebates on water-saving products have been claimed across the state. That money, which has come from the Victorian Water Trust, has saved more than 1200 megalitres of water per year. The government has committed to extending the program for a further four years. The government’s increased rebates on water tanks connected to toilets and laundries will come into effect from 1 January. In March 2005 the government introduced permanent water-saving rules. From memory, the opposition’s response to that was again to scoff. Those permanent water-saving measures have been introduced statewide. The government has also introduced a tiered pricing system for water users. Again, from memory, the opposition’s response to that was to scoff and to try to suggest that this was some secret tax, or whatever. There is not a water authority in the world that would not say that that is the way to go, but the opposition’s response was to simply play base politics and scoff at all these measures.

A lot has been said about people in industry not pulling their weight, but they are contributing to this. With the tiered water prices they have a greater incentive than ever to save water. Since 1999–2000 people in industry in Melbourne have saved 24 per cent per capita. People in industry are doing their bit, and they will be doing a lot more because some of the legislation that the government has introduced requires people in major industries to implement energy and water-saving measures.

As I said, the government has rolled out \$6.5 million for water-efficient shower heads. Again, it is one of the simplest, most efficient ways for any government to encourage water savings. Members of the opposition do not like it, because it requires effort. Heaven forbid that we should require anyone to make any effort! Under that program 180 000 shower heads save more than 2000 megalitres of water annually. On-the-spot fines will be put in place in 2007, targeting the very few Victorians who do not do the right thing. Again, members of the opposition do not like it, because it actually requires some effort.

The government has also shown leadership through the national water efficiency labelling and standards scheme by introducing mandatory water-efficiency standards and 6-star labelling for a range of water

appliances. Previously the government introduced 5-star building regulations that applied from 1 July 2005. From memory, the opposition was critical of that as well. I do not think we have ever had the support of the opposition for all manner of things that the government has done.

I am pleased to quickly highlight the efforts of my local water authority, Western Water, which is recycling approximately 80 per cent of wastewater in my area, so leading this country in water recycling. I will refer quickly to the sorts of recycling measures we have seen. There has been a \$160 million upgrade of the Western Water treatment plant; \$19 million for the Werribee recycling scheme; the implementation of the eastern irrigation scheme, which recycles 5800 megalitres for agriculture; the use of third pipes in households; the introduction of third-pipe recycling in Cranbourne, also proposed for Epping and Werribee; and \$3.5 million for the Sunbury–Melton pipeline, which has been in place for many years and is very well used.

There is loads to be done in this area, and there is no quick fix. As has been said by the previous speaker, the people of Bendigo and Ballarat understand that this is a crisis, but at the last election they also showed that they believe this government is in the best position to manage it. As I said, there are no quick fixes. This will take a lot of investment and a lot of effort by a lot of people, and it must start with conservation and recycling. Based on the predictions, this drought will continue for many years. We must start to appreciate the value of water. This requires bipartisan support. We must all play our part.

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — Deputy Speaker, I take the opportunity to congratulate you on your election.

There is no more fundamental obligation for a government than to provide its community with secure water supplies. I do not think anyone in this house would have any doubt about that. Yesterday the opposition put a fundamental question to the Premier, asking whether the Premier of this state could guarantee water security for Victorians — that is, adequate water supplies — not forever into the future but for next year, 2007. You would imagine that any government that had a handle on its fundamental obligations would be able to guarantee water security for the next 12 months. What did we get from the Premier? Nothing. He would not give that guarantee. It was an extraordinary admission.

We asked, in the event that the Premier would not provide that fundamental guarantee, what the contingency plans were for our three major regional cities, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. I invite members to look at the record, because they will see that there are no contingency plans. As other members have pointed out — and the member for South-West Coast gave us the figures — those cities are facing a dramatic crisis, yet this government cannot deliver contingency plans or even the simple guarantee of water supplies in the next 12 months. ‘What happens next?’ is the clear question.

The view of members on the government side of the chamber is that everything is okay. We heard the member for Eltham say that Victoria’s water plan is working.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — Indeed the member for Eltham has repeated it, saying that it is working. If it is working, then you would imagine that the Premier of this state could assure Victorians that they will have adequate water supplies next year — but he cannot, he did not and he will not.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — The government has an absolutely comprehensive plan, according to the member for Eltham — but that is not the case.

In fact we have just heard the member for Macedon admit that we are in serious trouble. After seven years, with all the drought statistics we have had, we have the member for Macedon admitting that we are in serious trouble in this state. What has happened is that the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, who has been the minister for a number of years, has conned his backbench. He has conned the cabinet, he has conned the media, and he has conned the public. Labor’s management of water in this state has been a con. After seven years we have not advanced and we have a crisis.

As the member for Brighton pointed out, we have had no investment in water savings, no investment in additional water storage, virtually no investment in recycling, and we have achieved little; and the policy from the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change has been to encourage Victorians to shower together and pray for rain. That has been the policy. It is a policy of prayer, and it has not delivered. Sadly it has not delivered. All the precautions that should have been taken have not been taken.

Indeed, the Premier claimed during the last few months — and he is on the record as making the claim — that the Labor government made water the no. 1 challenge in 2002. If it is the no. 1 challenge and now his own backbencher admits we are in serious trouble and the government cannot guarantee the fundamental supply of water, then the challenge has not been met and this government, as the member for Brighton said, has failed.

It is very aptly described in the *Herald Sun* this morning. As cartoonists do, Mark Knight in this morning's edition describes well the mismanagement of water by Labor with an illustration of the Premier and the water minister struggling, stationary, doing nothing on water. It has been a con. What do we find is the excuse now? The great big finger of the Bracks government is now directed back at Canberra: 'You have to take responsibility'. It is Labor's responsibility in this state to deliver water security, and it has not delivered it. It has been a joke. What we have seen instead is a series of claims which can only be described as a con. We have heard them repeated in the press releases and in briefs given to the back bench — the poor old backbenchers have been conned.

We have heard this figure of a 22 per cent saving — that has been trotted out since the 1990s. But if you go back and look at the details and the figures you see that it was originally published in the *Herald Sun* that there has been a 22 per cent saving since 2003. The minister had to walk away from that when he was tripped up. He had to say that he was sorry, that was not true. It was the mid-1990s — that was the vague claim; then it was the average of the 1990s, now it has gone even vaguer. Go back and look at the figures and you see that the savings have not been delivered.

We have heard again this morning that there has been 15 per cent recycling in Victoria. That is absolute rubbish; it is more like 1 per cent or 2 per cent. The additional percentage points are made up of the two treatment plants at Carrum and Werribee washing themselves with their own effluent. There has not been an investment in recycling, and in terms of washing themselves with the effluent the water minister ought to be doing it himself.

We have heard talk about the pricing of water. What has the government done in the last six months? It has put up the price of recycled water. It has put it up, discouraging investment by the private sector in recycling. Talk to the developers and they will tell you that this government has put every obstacle in the way of developers introducing third-pipe systems; we have had virtually none. How many homes in Melbourne are

actually piped with a third-pipe system? After all this talk and all these years it is a handful. Then ask yourself: of those that are piped, how many are connected? Even fewer. Barely 100 to 150 homes in Victoria have third-pipe systems connected, despite the fact that more than 20 000 homes a year are built on the fringes of Melbourne.

We heard yesterday and again today the water minister being picked up. He misled Victorians again on *Stateline* during the election campaign in regard to the Gippsland water project. He said he had released the feasibility study. It was a lie, and we heard that admission yesterday — another con.

When it comes to the drought response protocols, we have seen the government deliberately avoid introducing stage 2 restrictions when they should have been introduced much earlier. The government said it could not be done. The Premier said it publicly. We called for them to be introduced. The member for South-West Coast in his former role called for these restrictions to be introduced. The government said no, it could not be done. Now we have seen the government itself, in the form of the Premier and the water minister, say, 'Now we can do it with stage 3'. This is what we have been arguing for for ages. What is it based on? The drought response protocols. When were those restriction protocols updated last? In 2001. The government has not updated those restriction protocols for climate change or drought from 2001, an act of incredible negligence.

We have seen the Thomson Dam and Melbourne's water supply figures plummet, and we have had misrepresentation from the government about that. The bottom 17 per cent of the Thomson Dam holds inaccessible or unusable water. This government resisted that claim, and only when the evidence from the original studies on the Thomson Dam about where the Bells portal outlet is was put on the table was that revealed. We had the government talking about accessing water from the Swingler Weir inlet. Unfortunately that inlet is 15 metres above the water level now. That was a con.

We have heard talk about the success of the restrictions. With stage 1 restrictions we should have expected a 4 per cent reduction, but in fact during the time of those restrictions water consumption increased. With stage 2 we should have expected 11 per cent savings. In fact nowhere near that has been met. We have heard about the Ballarat super-pipe, and the member for South-West Coast has pointed out that it has been a con. We have heard more recently about shower heads, the magic bullet from the Minister for Water, Environment and

Climate Change. He loves to get out there and hand out the shower heads. How many has he handed out? Fewer than 5000, because that was the limit on the program. It has been a con.

We have a crisis. We have a government that has mismanaged this from start to finish, and we are going to be facing a situation where stage 4 restrictions will be on us. Dennis Cavagna, the chief executive officer of South East Water, said on radio the other day that after stage 4 there is nothing. This government does not have the plans in place.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I also congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

Like the member for Macedon before me, I welcome the fact that the Liberal Party has finally started taking an interest in water. But it is playing catch up. It brought in the Leader of the Opposition — the big water cannon — late in the debate, and you can see why he needed to change his water spokesperson. His sacked water spokesperson, the member for South-West Coast, made mistake after mistake during the election campaign. He contradicted his leader.

The member for South-West Coast challenged the house and Melburnians, who are now on stage 3 water restrictions, to take pity on their country cousins, who are on stage 4. We as a government govern for all Victorians. We know what is going on there — and I think Melburnians do too. They have respect for their country cousins, as the member for South-West Coast described them. Unlike the Liberal Party this government does not treat our country cousins like village idiots. During the election campaign the now sacked shadow spokesperson for water, the member for South-West Coast, took his roadshow from town to town, promising the same water to one town and the next.

I had a look at the Liberal Party web site during the election campaign —

Mr Dixon — I bet you did. That's where you got all your ideas from.

Ms GREEN — No, I got no ideas from there!

I thought, 'I hear the Liberal Party is talking about water in Ballarat and Geelong. What is it talking about in the rest of the state?'. There was not one jot of water policy for the rest of the state. This was typical of the short-term, lazy policies of this opposition. I agree with the Prime Minister — not on his position on water and climate change but on what he said about this lazy opposition — that you cannot fatten the pig on market

day. That is what the opposition was trying to do with its thin, lazy, shallow agenda on water. There was nothing there, no substance whatsoever.

Mr Herbert — Half empty.

Ms GREEN — The glass was not even half empty, it was totally dry. There was a drought in the glass!

We as a government have taken the issue of water extremely seriously. We put it on the agenda before anyone else was talking about it, well before the start of the previous term. For the new shadow spokesperson for water to start with this matter of public importance (MPI) and say there has been no investment just shows not only that the Liberal Party cannot develop policy but that it cannot even read. After proposing the MPI this morning one would think the new shadow spokesperson for water would have bothered to stay for the debate, but where is she? She is not in here.

I turn to the sacked shadow spokesperson on water, the member for South-West Coast, who produced some real purlers during the election campaign that were very entertaining. I will give you his top five contradictions of his leader. The Leader of the Opposition said water was the top issue — although we know how thin the Liberal Party's policy is from looking at its web site — yet the member for South-West Coast's own survey of his electorate listed 12 key issues and water was not amongst them. Is there any wonder that he does not have the job anymore? He backed away from his leader's plan for an Arundel dam, saying in the *Age* of 17 October that it was:

... fundamentally a flood mitigation proposal, it wouldn't be operated as a water catchment.

He also said in the *Herald Sun* of 4 November:

We are going to do a full environmental impact statement before deciding if the dam will be built.

I see the Minister for Mental Health, who is the member for Bellarine, is at the table. She would take an interest in the issue in Geelong. The member for South-West Coast said Geelong could afford to give up water for Ballarat and called for greater restrictions in Geelong. He said, and I quote from the *Geelong Advertiser* of 11 October 2006:

There is greater capacity in Geelong to respond to a crisis ...

We just heard the Leader of the Opposition asking 'What greater crisis is there than stage 4?', which is what Geelong was on. A month later the *Geelong Advertiser* of 11 November quoted the member for South-West Coast as saying:

My assertion, which I believe to be accurate, is that the government, through Minister Thwaites, has stopped the move to stage 4 for political reasons.

On the goldfields super-pipe, the member for South-West Coast said he supported providing water from the Goulburn system for Bendigo but did not support securing Ballarat's water supply. I quote from a press release of 24 May 2006:

Dr Napthine said this pipeline would guarantee a secure, long-term and sustainable water supply for Bendigo ...

But then in a *Herald Sun* article of 30 August, Dr Napthine is quoted as saying the super-pipe is:

... absolutely the most ludicrous, stupid thing I have ever heard in 20 years of politics

Mr Herbert — All over the shop.

Ms GREEN — Yes, he was all over the shop.

The final contradiction — not on water but on forming a coalition — was that the member for South-West Coast said on 3AW on 10 November 2006:

I am glad the Prime Minister and I are on the same wavelength, and I'm sure Ted Baillieu would happily be a Premier of a coalition government.

But the Leader of the Opposition said on 10 November:

... we are standing in every seat, and we are looking to win government in our own right.

Is there any wonder the member for South-West Coast could not be trusted with the water portfolio any longer — and he is supposed to be a friend of the opposition leader!

The Liberal Party and The Nationals are not in coalition, but while I am talking about it, we heard an interesting contribution from the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, the member for Swan Hill. He contended that the government is ignoring issues around water trading. He quoted several articles from the *Weekly Times*, but it seems he only deals in the back issues and is quite behind the times. We know The Nationals are living in the last century. They do not believe in climate change; they are naysayers, just like their conservative friends in the Liberal Party. Today's *Weekly Times* has an article headed 'Water trading shift'. The Deputy Leader of The Nationals has not even read today's *Weekly Times*.

As a firefighter and the Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, I know that climate change is here. I was at a briefing this morning from the Emergency Services Commissioner, and he is

absolutely convinced that climate change is here. Traditionally we would be able to deal with fires overnight. There would be dew on the ground and you would be able to do back-burning and control things a lot more. The fire behaviour now — I saw this personally at Tolmie two weeks ago — is suddenly changing, because the temperature is even going up overnight and the humidity is just not there. We are not getting the dew on the ground at dawn that we used to get and that we expected to get. Climate change is absolutely here.

I am really appalled at the short-term solutions of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. We have long-term problems with water, and I think the government and the community are facing up to these things. Our conservative opponents are interested only in the short-term fix. That is why they have water policies only for Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. They do not care about the rest of Victoria. They told lies down in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland about what was really going to occur with the recycling and the very well-thought-out proposal to ensure that potable water is not wasted in electricity generation into the future and is used where it should be for drinking and for washing. That plan will work, and to lie to the community and try to say that Melbourne sewage was going to be sent down to the Latrobe Valley for drinking was absolutely shameful.

That is the level of the policy discussion and debate that we get from both the Liberal Party and The Nationals. They are not interested in long-term solutions and they will not face up to climate change. We can see again their short-term thinking with this matter of public importance. The well is dry with policy for the lot on the other side in this house. I certainly oppose this matter of public importance and support the government's investment in water, and I will continue to do so in the future.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Deputy Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your elevation to your position. I know you will bring great humour, goodwill and a certain presence in this place to your role.

It is a pleasure to join in debate on this matter of public importance raised by the member for Brighton, especially the issues regarding the government's mismanagement of Victoria's water resources and its failure to take adequate action on recycling and infrastructure, which I will address.

As members in this place know, I have been talking about the Gunnamatta sewage outfall and the eastern treatment plant for some years. For the member for Yan

Yean to say that the Liberal Party has taken only a recent interest in water issues and that she could not find very much in the way of water policy during the last election shows that she obviously cannot have looked very deeply. She certainly did not look at my web site, and she did not look at the Liberal Party web site that talks about the upgrade of the eastern treatment plant — which has been a matter of policy for a number of years — and the eventual closure of the Gunnamatta sewage outfall.

This issue was reflected in the election, because this government has been dragged kicking and screaming to recognise the fact that 420 million litres of sewage is dumped into the ocean at Gunnamatta every single day of the year. The government has just ignored this issue and said, 'It can't happen. It's too hard. We can't do anything about it, and it's not worth tackling'.

During the election campaign the people of the Mornington Peninsula saw through the government's promise and knew that the government was never, ever serious about it. It has promised things and never delivered them, and it has never been serious about the issue. That is why the member for Mornington had a swing of 10 per cent and I had a swing of 9.5 per cent. That is why the Labor government lost the seat of Hastings — because the people of the Mornington Peninsula knew that the biggest single water issue in Victoria was on their doorstep and that the government has done nothing about it for seven years.

What is that problem? The problem is that the eastern treatment plant treats 42 per cent of Melbourne's sewage, and it treats it only to class C standard. It is then piped through a pipeline out into Bass Strait at Gunnamatta — 420 million litres a day of C-class-treated sewage. When you are down there, you see it is brown. There is this massive brown stain heading out into Bass Strait and moving up and down the coastline. You can smell it when there is an onshore wind. Among the surfers who try to surf down there, there are hundreds of documented cases of ear, nose and throat infections. The smell affects the people who live down there. A lot of people live down there and a lot of people holiday down there, and the only way you can appreciate the effect of this sewage outfall is to go down there. There is not one documented case of any single member of this government ever going down there to see and to smell the sewage outfall. If they had taken themselves out of Melbourne and gone down there to see it and smell it, they would understand the size and the nature of this problem.

At last count, 12 members of the Liberal Party, every single leader of the Liberal Party and every shadow

environment and water minister has walked down that track and smelt and seen the sewage outfall. The member for Brighton is next on my list to go down there, but everyone else I mentioned has been down there to see that.

The sewage outfall and the government's lack of action was a big election issue on the Mornington Peninsula. The Clean Ocean Foundation, which is a community group working down on the peninsula and throughout Victoria, is made up of ordinary people. It is made up of surfers, it is made up of people who are members of the Greens, it is made up of people of all political persuasions and it is made up of environmental scientists and environmental lawyers — people who love the area and have a real interest in it and who have knowledge about this total issue. When the Labor candidate for Nepean went down there and accused the Clean Ocean Foundation, with which I have worked for a number of years because it is a representative community group tackling a big issue in my electorate, of being a front for the Liberal Party, goodness me, did that bring the house down! No matter how that candidate tried to backtrack, once she had said that she lost all credibility and this government lost all credibility on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Clean Ocean Foundation is a wonderful group that is working very hard to heighten awareness of the issue, to do the research and to lobby all governments and all political parties to make a change down there at the outfall. I remember that the Labor candidate gatecrashed a seniors forum and had a go at the Clean Ocean Foundation there. She was quite rightly booed by 300 seniors on the Mornington Peninsula when she dared to say that. This government has completely lost the plot and just does not understand the problem down there.

The government vaguely promised it would do something in 1999 and did not do anything. It vaguely promised it would do something in 2001, but the excuse after the 2002 election for not doing anything was, 'We'll wait and see what happens with the Gippsland recycling water project, and we'll make our decisions after that'. Again the government has come up during the 2006 election and said it will upgrade the treatment plant, but it has no credibility on this issue. It has promised it three times and it has never been serious about it.

One point that illustrates the government's lack of knowledge or real interest and its surface treatment of this issue is the fact that it still intends to extend the pipeline outfall 2 kilometres out to sea at a cost — a conservative cost — of \$65 million. Why take the

problem 2 kilometres out to sea? All that will do is spread the problem further around and send it down to the electorate of the member for Bass. The tidal movements will take it into Port Phillip Bay. Why do it? To construct this pipeline would require the levelling of hectares of the duned area on the Point Nepean National Park. All the government needs to do is to rule out this extension. The Liberal Party has ruled it out; there is no need to do it. The government has refused to rule it out. It will not budge on it, and it knows nothing about it.

Another issue in relation to infrastructure and the recycling of water on the Mornington Peninsula is the Nepean sustainable water project. This will be a joint project. It is being managed by the Mornington Peninsula shire but it involves South East Water, the state government, the federal government and a large number of major water users on the Mornington Peninsula such as the market garden industry and the golf courses down there. All those users are taking water out of the Nepean aquifer, which is under extreme pressure at the moment. I imagine it will be contaminated very, very soon. They are taking all this water out of the aquifer and, as I said, it is under extreme pressure.

This project involves upgrading the Boneo treatment plant at the back of Rosebud to A class and putting in pipelines throughout the southern peninsula to supply A-class-treated water to all the market gardens, golf courses and other major users of water on the Mornington Peninsula. The representative group that has been formed put in a submission to the National Water Commission for funding, but it was knocked back last year. The reason it was knocked back is that this state government refused to put in the full amount, the one-third it was asked to put in, and under the water commission grants guidelines it has to be an equal share. This government refused to put up the extra money.

The project is again up for funding with the federal government, and I hope this time the state government and South East Water show their commitment to real recycling projects. It will save a lot of water. It will save the aquifer, and it has the potential to be expanded throughout the Mornington Peninsula and make a real dent in the amount of water that flows out of the Gunnamatta outfall. In fact, if the project goes ahead and then grows in even a small way, it will reduce the Gunnamatta sewage outfall by 10 per cent. When you look at the 1 per cent this government has contributed to recycling, it just pales into insignificance.

The government should take a leaf out of the Liberal Party water policy of a number of years by immediately upgrading the eastern treatment plant to A class and actually setting a target date for the Gunnamatta outfall to be closed. We set it for 2015. I challenge the government to set a date to close down that outfall and actually do something and achieve something.

As I said earlier, the government should rub out the ridiculous idea of extending the outfall 2 kilometres out to sea. It will achieve nothing and will just waste money. That \$65 million would be far better spent on many other worthy water recycling projects in Victoria.

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — Deputy Speaker, I too want to take the opportunity to congratulate you on your elevation to the position of Deputy Speaker. After four years of sitting next to you in the house, I will miss your company, but I congratulate you on your appointment. I know you will do a fantastic job in that position.

This matter of public importance has been put forward by the Liberal Party. Essentially the Liberal Party seems to be blaming the Labor Party for the drought. Most of Australia, and certainly south-eastern Australia, is going through one of the most severe droughts since European settlement. People talk about it as a possible 30-year drought or 100-year drought. It is certainly an enormous crisis for Australia, and it is a crisis that we are dealing with in Victoria, and dealing with very effectively. It is also true that in the past seven years the Victorian government has acted on water very effectively.

At the moment we have a reduction in per capita use of water throughout the state, particularly in metropolitan Melbourne. Recycling levels have risen, and there is increasing investment in recycling and the use of recycled water. The government is also maximising the use of reliable water supplies from different areas of the state and linking up other parts of the state with those supplies. These investments being made by the government are both short and long-term investments that deal not only with the drought but also with the longer term issues around water.

In the Liberal Party there are climate-change sceptics — people who do not believe in climate change — who immediately rush to blame the state government for the fact that there is a drought. We have to confront not only the fact that there is a drought at the moment but also the fact that the mean temperature throughout Victoria is increasing and the likelihood is that as a result there will be less rain in south-eastern Australia. We have to deal with all the various issues,

but the Liberal Party wants a dam on the Maribyrnong. The best thing the member for Brighton said about the dam on the Maribyrnong was that it would not provide a lot of water — around 1 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne's use — but it would largely act in flood mitigation for Melbourne. It is not a solution for the water supply, and there is no rain. That dam is, at best, a little bit of propaganda that was used by the Liberal Party in its election campaign.

During the time of the previous Liberal government we saw the Tarago Reservoir being decommissioned. This government is now putting the Tarago Reservoir back into the water system for Melbourne. It is important that we ensure that reliable sources of water are utilised. Certainly further dams, such as a dam on the Maribyrnong, are not the solution. We have a severe drought. The drought will eventually break, but we have to deal with the bigger issues of climate change and the environment and ecology of our water system.

I want to particularly focus on the issue of environmental flows, because it is in that area that the Bracks government has made an enormous contribution. Environmental flows are difficult to maintain in our rivers at the best of times, and very difficult in drought conditions. They are incredibly important and fundamental to the ecology and to the health of those rivers. It is the water from those rivers that supplies 4 million people across Victoria with reliable drinking water and supports \$5.2 billion of agriculture. If we want to allow Melbourne and Victoria to expand in population and to ensure that our irrigation areas function, we must protect the ecology and deal with the variability of those rivers so that they remain healthy.

We know that we are in a harsh continent — the driest continent in the world — and that our rivers change over seasons and between years. It is important that we get a sense of what the environmental flows are for those rivers. A lot of work has been done by the Bracks government to ensure that we have an understanding of and a management plan for all our river systems. It is vital that we manage that water and provide the environmental flows necessary for the ecology and that we deal with the differences between the rivers throughout the state.

It is also important that we restore stressed river systems and restore water where there has been severe environmental damage. The Snowy has been a big feature in this house in the last seven years. It was a big reason why the Bracks government was able to govern in its first term, and it was with the Snowy that we showed our determination to get agreement between

New South Wales and Victoria to ensure that there were improved environmental flows over a period of time and there was improved sustainability and better management of groundwater to deal with catchment issues around that river.

Water supply and water management are crucial to the Bracks government, and there have been major investments with Our Water Our Future, which I think the member for Brighton referred to as an advertising campaign. It is certainly not an advertising campaign; it is a detailed water management plan for this state. In the plan we allocate \$100 million over four years for our river systems and our natural water resources along them. In just the one-year period of 2005–06, \$10.2 million was invested in large-scale river restoration programs right throughout the state of Victoria. There is water management for you. I have not heard any opposition members get up and talk about the management of our river system, yet it is fundamental to drinking water for Victorians and also for our irrigation, our tourism and our environment.

We are making major investments in the Yarra River. An amount of about \$600 million is being invested in a package to improve Yarra River water quality, with improvements to sewerage works, the acceleration of septic tank replacement, litter traps and better stormwater management. For example, in my own electorate a mains sewer system replacement is going on along the northern corridor to ensure that the current spillage of sewage into our creek system and eventually into the Yarra River does not continue. That is a massive project that this government is getting on with. It is about managing our water systems in this state.

We are returning water to improve the health of the Thomson and Macalister rivers in Gippsland. Already 10 000 megalitres have been returned to the Thomson River to boost its flow. The 10 major regional river strategies have been developed through catchment management authorities and Melbourne Water for our major river systems. We have set about compiling a river health report card which documents progress towards targets we have set for our river systems in terms of environmental flows, ecology, sustainability, and water management — and that is progressing. We have set out the projects and we have a health card to ensure that we are doing them properly and that we have quantifiable data.

All of this demonstrates that we are dealing with the issue of water management in this state. Previous government speakers got up and spoke about how we are improving the water catchment, with better management, demand management and all of that. I

want to add that we are also dealing with our river systems. It is our river systems that ultimately underpin good water management in this state and underpin our economy — certainly our agricultural economy — and our capacity to have drinking water for the vast majority of Victorians. We are not simply dealing with left-field issues like a dam on the Maribyrnong or attempts to find a high-tech, high-cost, high-energy solution like desalination plants. We are actually dealing with water in terms of our catchment and river systems.

We have also decommissioned Lake Mokoan. That will save 44 000 megalitres of water annually. We have had that debate in this house, and we have had a number of speakers from the opposition criticise the government for decommissioning Lake Mokoan, but that has been really important in our ability to save water and to ensure that we have better environmental flows back in our river system.

Victoria has identified water-saving projects; we are committed to those — —

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

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — I will not congratulate you today, Deputy Speaker, as I did so yesterday! I join with the member for Brighton in the debate on this matter of public importance in condemning the Bracks government for its mismanagement of Victoria's water resources and particularly its failure to provide water certainty and to take adequate action on supply, recycling and infrastructure.

I am very disappointed that the member for Brighton had to bring a matter of public importance like this to the house when we are probably in the middle of the worst drought this state has ever suffered in recorded history. This government had an opportunity to regard this as being an important enough issue to have brought it before the house itself and to have had some sort of summit on the problems we have here in the state of Victoria. The last speaker from the Labor Party stood up and devoted most of his speech to the aim of putting more water down our rivers for their environmental flows. Certainly rivers are important, but I would have thought people are more important than our rivers.

Water is one of the basic necessities of life. It is one of those things that is needed for us to survive as a society. It is going to be important for us to address this problem. This is something this government has not been prepared to do. We have been seven years in a drought in this state and this government has had seven

years to do something. What has it done? It has produced a number of documents. It has produced a lot of television and video propaganda, which it has had running on our screens and which has been driving people crazy. It has put out \$6 million worth of shower heads that will be used or exchanged by the people of Victoria — not this year but over four years. In four years time, if the government has not done something better, there will not be too many people taking showers!

Yet the government sees that as a major initiative. It is providing shower heads for people, saying, 'If you would like to take your old one off and bring it in we will exchange it' — that is, as long as it has not used up the supply that has been allocated for this current year. I cannot quite understand where this government is going. It just does not seem to understand that we have a crisis here in the state of Victoria with regard to water, which is one of the basic necessities of life.

I come from San Remo, where we are connected to Westernport Water. The current readings show we have 29 per cent capacity in our water supply. We are coming up to Christmas, probably one of the busiest times at Phillip Island, Inverloch, Wonthaggi and Cape Paterson. Large numbers of people will be coming down to an area with a very limited water supply. We have been on stage 4 restrictions down there now for at least two months, so our gardens are dying. But that is all right; since we are running out of water down there we are prepared to try to preserve some of the water so that we will be able to survive. We are looking at serving the people, not so much the plants.

We have a water board down there that is desperately boring bores into our aquifers to try to get some water supply for the people in that area. Four bores have been put down so far and one of them has been successful and is providing a reasonable flow. The water board is now looking at going in to the state coalmine area around Wonthaggi and boring there to be able to draw water for our water supply. Yes, there is plenty of water there; there is no doubt about that, but you should think a little bit about what is going to happen when the kilometres of mines underneath the ground all of a sudden lose their supply of water. That is going to cause a great deal of problems as far as the ground and subsidence is concerned around the Wonthaggi area — and kilometres beyond Wonthaggi, because that is how far the mines stretch. One does not really know the damage that might cause.

Consideration was given to connecting to Melbourne's water supply. Discussions started some years ago about the idea that we would be able to connect into and use

some of South East Water's water to give us some certainty of supply down in that area, particularly when the tourists come down.

But what was the problem? We were looking for about 2 gegalitres of water per year to keep the supply of water going. But what has happened? As part of the negotiations South East Water — and we have heard it mentioned today — has said it wants payment upfront, which Westernport Water, our water supply company down there, cannot afford to pay. We have a government organisation like South East Water, which is still a corporation of this government, making unreasonable demands on our local water company. It seems absolutely crazy that this could happen and that we have a government that is not prepared to waive those costs to give us some certainty of supply.

I am wondering what this government is on about and what it is trying to do to the tourism industry down at Phillip Island and beyond. I supported the proposal to take the recycled water down to the Latrobe Valley; I thought it was a great idea. It was not about taking Melbourne's sewerage down there. As far as I was concerned the water going down to Gippsland was going to be treated to class A level. That would have meant that all the potable water that is currently being used by the electricity companies down there and by APM was going to be used not for industrial uses but for drinking water. And it would not have been a great burden for the people down there to be able to use the recycled water stored there for industrial use.

The government has not done anything about it. All it has done is talk about it for two years. I just worry about why this government is not doing something. I do not think it understands, as I said earlier, that a crisis has developed in this state of Victoria in the time it has been in government. The government cannot blame Jeff Kennett for this anymore. I know that is a shock to some of you on the other side of the house. You are trying to blame John Howard for the problems we have here in Victoria, but you are the government here in Victoria, and it is up to you to be able to make the decisions that are going to give us certainty of water supply here in Victoria. You have a big enough budget to be able to provide —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass should address the Chair.

Mr K. SMITH — That is what I am doing. They have a big enough budget to be able to provide the finance to make sure some of these things happen. Those of us down in the Phillip Island and Bass Coast area would have some certainty of supply if the

government was prepared to waive some charges and get in, try to help and do something.

We have an opportunity now to do something — and the government can do it. It will certainly have my support and, I am sure, the support of the people on this side of the house if it actually does something about providing certainty of supply. Do not talk about putting it down the rivers, do not talk about not recycling and do not talk about putting a pipeline another 2 kilometres further out at Gunnamatta. Talk about using recycled water. Talk about supplying the people of Victoria with potable water that they are able to use because industry will be using recycled water and not potable water. It is about being seen to be good and being seen to be smart, but I think delivering it to the people of Victoria may be well beyond this government.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for the consideration of matters of public importance has expired.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 19 December; motion of Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) for adoption of address-in-reply

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — It is an honour to rise to give my inaugural speech here today. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate you on your rise to the speakership. It is a long time since I first met you at a meeting probably about 10 years ago.

To be elected as a member of Parliament is a great honour, and I am deeply humbled to be entrusted by the electors of Preston with this duty. No person rises to public office alone, and I would like to thank the following people: my parents, Don and Amanda Scott; my brothers, Tom and Alex Scott, and their wives, Nicola and Kyoko; my grandmother and lifelong Labor supporter, Marjorie Burton; my long-suffering girlfriend, Shao Jie Wu; the politicians who have employed me — Sherryl Garbutt, Bob Sercombe, Hong Lim, and of course Michael Leighton; my supporters and friends in the Labor Party, Adem Somyurek, Stanley Chiang, Marlene Kairouz, Phillip Bain, Peter Stephenson, Terrie Seymour, Mendo Kundevski, Chris Kelly, Vince Fontana, Youhorn Chea, Sucettin, Perihan and Remzi Unal, David Feeney, the Honourable Anthony Byrne, Jeff and Kathy Jackson, Christina Han and Steve Gagen; my old friends Christian Zahra, Michelle MacDonald, Robert Larocca,

Kate Dunn, James Kemp, Heather Watkins and Renee Fry; and of course the electors of Preston.

Election to public office is about election to the highest form of public service. In Victoria members of Parliament are responsible for the welfare of over 5 million people. This is a weighty burden, the gravity of which I will never forget. The real achievement and glory in public life is to improve the lives of the citizens who elect us. My mind always returns to Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* when contemplating the pointlessness of seeking personal glory and power for its own sake. In the poem an inscription at the base of an ancient ruined statue reads:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

When any MP starts to believe in their own greatness, they should remember how unlikely it is that anyone other than historians will remember a single one of our names in 100 years, let alone 1000 years. Real greatness lies in the debate of ideas. As John Maynard Keynes said:

Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.

In this context this Parliament has an importance beyond Victoria. We belong to a community of ideas which stretches back thousands of years through recorded human civilisation. Through the use of observation and reason, new policies are developed. Falsifiable hypotheses are then tested in the real world. Through this process new public policies allowing improvements in the human condition are developed. This is a continuous and worldwide process, and our Parliament plays its small part in the betterment of humankind.

Concepts like the secret ballot, which were once known as the Australian ballot, were first introduced in Australian parliaments, including the Victorian Parliament, in 1856.

I am proud to be a parliamentary representative of the Australian Labor Party. As a Labor member in this place I will take due heed of the labour movement, of the trade unions, of rank-and-file Labor Party members and of Labor voters.

The electorate of Preston, which includes much of the suburbs of Preston and Reservoir and a small section of Coburg, is a wonderful place. Preston is a multicultural and diverse community, but it is a changing community with a growing middle class and areas of entrenched poverty. Seventy years ago places like Preston were

communities of real, absolute poverty where the majority of citizens worked and lived frugally. Today poverty still exists but is not so universal. It is hidden in pockets of the community, often out of view. In East Preston and East Reservoir there are areas of real disadvantage. If at the end of my parliamentary career this disadvantage has not been reduced, I will consider my time in politics to have been a failure, regardless of what high office I have managed to hold.

Despite all the problems of drought, bushfires and climate change, today most Victorians are lucky to live in what is a golden age. For most of human history, fear, poverty and ignorance have been the birthright of the vast majority. Now we live in an era of wealth, and even the old limitations of time and space have largely been conquered.

There is enough food to prevent starvation; modern communications mean that I can personally call any of the 2 billion persons in this world who own a mobile phone; modern transport allows goods from the other side of the globe to be transported and sold in Victoria, almost as if they were produced here; and most of the collected knowledge of the world is only a click away on the Internet.

We are all beneficiaries of thousands of years of human civilisation leading to free societies where reason is valued over ignorance, the rule of law has replaced arbitrary punishment and representative democracy has replaced self-serving oligarchies and where the absolute power of the state has been tempered by the human rights of individuals.

But not everyone shares in this bountiful harvest. One of the key challenges for this Parliament is to create the circumstances where more Victorians are able to share in this embarrassment of riches.

It is useful to consider the cause of this material wealth — the market economy. In recent years there has been a radical expansion of the global capitalist economy with the addition of over 2 billion persons from China and India. This has underpinned the recent economic boom both internationally and in Australia. Globalisation is a positive for Victoria. We have a successful open-trading economy with a growing service sector. Victoria must embrace the global economy, not retreat into the fantasy of a better yesterday. Trade, both within our society and with other countries, is the lifeblood of growth. Economic growth leads to a wealthier society which allows for the funding of world-class education and health systems.

Our future lies with the production of high-value manufactured goods and services. We need to readjust our thinking to a future based more on producing educational services than on producing pots and pans. The only nation I know of that preaches an economy philosophy based on pure self-reliance is North Korea, and I would not suggest that we follow its dear leader's economic path to paranoid isolation and mass starvation.

But at the heart of capitalism is creative destruction. Capitalism is efficient because of competition, and competition means that inefficient companies are destroyed, replaced by competitors in an endless cycle. Improving competition cuts the prices of goods and services, increases economic growth and fosters innovation. Low prices are a greatly underrated source of economic empowerment. Most of the poorest are on fixed incomes — pensions and other benefits — and thus lower prices increase the wealth of the poorest in our community. This is one of the reasons national competition policy is vital for the future prosperity of our community.

But markets fail. The market is not a perfect mechanism, and the state is still required to intervene in society. Monopolies and cartels constantly seek to avoid competition. Businesses with asymmetrical access to information use this imbalance to reduce the market power of consumers. Further, the market fails to accurately price the external impacts of business activities. For example, the market sets no price on pollution. For these and many other reasons government should intervene in the market, not to replace it but to ensure its effective operation and that it does not cause negative consequences for Victorians.

In addition, there are failures of the market which are of a moral rather than material nature. The price of any good or service is determined not by central planning but by the demand for that service among consumers. But in the market the value of the labour of a disabled person without the capacity to work is close to zero. Even when the market functions successfully its creative but destructive nature has significant negative impacts on individuals and communities. The state has an important role in helping those disadvantaged by the market's creative destruction.

We in the Australian Labor Party believe that all should have a fair share in the wealth of our society. Every person should have a decent life, because all human beings have a value beyond what someone will pay for their labour. We believe that the market should be civilised. This civilisation is linked to two important concepts: equality of opportunity and the constant

struggle against absolute poverty. The success of an individual in their life should be based on their talents, willingness to work and intellectual capacity, not the wealth of their parents. This is why Labor is committed to free quality universal education.

Last year I was lucky enough to travel to South-East Asia and there, in a slum outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia, I witnessed real absolute poverty. As the stench of sewage and the sight of flyblown children greeted me, my life changed forever as I realised my own problems were simply luxury's disappointments. Victoria is a wealthy community, and there is no reason why absolute poverty should exist here. All Victorians should have access to enough food, decent shelter and quality medical services.

At the heart of much of the struggle to achieve a fairer share of the wealth in our society is industrial relations. A fair industrial relations system gives a greater share of the wealth of our economy to working families. I firmly believe that ordinary working families have the wisdom to determine their own future. Self-appointed experts should not be trying to determine the spending habits and life choices of working families. Labor governments seek to give working families the material resources to make their own choices; Labor governments help families have a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. This is the surest path to personal empowerment.

However, in fighting inequality the corrosive nature of welfare dependence must be acknowledged. The writings of Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson pose a strong challenge to the notion of a welfare state without personal responsibility. Work and personal responsibility must be at the centre of the modern social democratic project.

When I was a teenager there was a debate in Australia about Asian immigration. My aunt is Japanese, and I was deeply influenced by this debate. I have a simple belief about bigotry in all of its forms: it has no place in modern Victoria. All forms of bigotry must be fought so that all citizens can live free of discrimination. Victoria is a migrant society and should remain a migrant society. People from around the world should be able to come here to create a better life for their families.

Victoria must remain an open, outward-looking society, welcoming diversity as an expression of the universal value of human life and of the liberal democratic value of the freedom of the individual to live as they see fit. But for diversity to be maintained the human freedoms of all individuals must be maintained. There are no

collective rights which allow for the advocating of violence as a legitimate means of political expression in Victoria.

Women and children should not have their freedoms limited as part of the expression of traditional cultural practices. So I believe in a society where any woman has the right to wear a head scarf as the expression of her religious belief but where no person can force a woman against her will to wear a head scarf. All Victorians should accept that others have the same freedoms that they accept for themselves. Without respecting the freedoms of others we can have no freedoms ourselves.

I would also like to add something about my predecessor as the member for Preston. Michael is a friend as well as my former employer. He is someone who taught me the value of loyalty. If you were ever in trouble and he was your friend, he would never abandon you, no matter the cost. In politics there are many allies but few friends. He was a true friend who would sacrifice anything for his friends. I know he perhaps did not achieve as much as he would have wished in politics in the time he was here. He made a number of choices based on his loyalty to his friends, which cost him, but I know of no other person I would rather have in the trenches with me — a person who would show loyalty to his friends and be willing to cast aside his own ambitions for those to whom he had promised his loyalty. That is a lesson I hope to take with me throughout my career.

In conclusion, during the next four years I have the honour of serving the electors of Preston and Victoria. I hope I serve them well and add my small part to the development of human progress both in this place and, hopefully, to the contribution of this Parliament to the wider debate on ideas in the world itself.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Doncaster) —
Congratulations, Speaker, on your election to your office.

I recognise at the start the firefighters and emergency services personnel who are putting their lives at risk to protect families, homes and people's livelihoods throughout Australia.

It is an honour to be here today representing the people of Doncaster. In doing so I follow in the footsteps of two distinguished members of Parliament: Morris Williams, who initially represented the seat of Box Hill and then the seat of Doncaster from when it was formed in 1976 until 1988; and Victor Perton, who ably represented Doncaster for the subsequent 18 years.

Victor has been a great support to me over the past nine months, and I thank him for his assistance and encouragement.

Doncaster is a vibrant and active community best known to most as the home of Doncaster shopping town. Retail and business services dominate the business activity. Doncaster stands out as an electorate due to its very high proportion of people born overseas, its ageing population and the fact that a disproportionate number of its people get into their cars every day to go to work. They do this because public transport options are limited and do not provide real choice for commuters. As the growth of Melbourne continues, government must not forget the much-needed infrastructure for established areas that has been overlooked to date.

It would be very easy to believe that a commuter suburb such as Doncaster lacks soul; however, nothing could be further from the truth. The heart of the Doncaster electorate is the thousands who volunteer to keep community, ethnic and sporting organisations alive. From the Manningham Men's Shed and DONCARE (Doncaster Community Care and Counselling) through to the Doncaster Junior Football Club and the various ethnic senior citizens club's, everyday people are giving their time and skills to assist children and young people, recently arrived migrants, the elderly and families in need.

As a 16-year-old I went to Canada as a Rotary exchange student and ever since have moved regularly, living interstate and overseas. My one constant has been local activism for positive outcomes in and for the communities in which I have lived. This has taught me that those who have a voice must use it for those who are unable to do so. I see these actions throughout the Doncaster community and pledge to support all those who do so for the benefit of our community, and I pledge to continue to do so myself for people in Doncaster and throughout Victoria.

A wonderful aspect of the Doncaster electorate is its ethnic diversity and the vibrancy that this brings, represented in schools and workplaces, shops and restaurants and community organisations. In Doncaster over 40 per cent of people are born outside Australia and speak a language other than English at home. Doncaster is a microcosm of the success of multicultural and multiracial Victoria. This success is one of the key qualities that defines Victoria at the beginning of the 21st century. We are all the richer for the different backgrounds and the vibrant cultures we bring to our society, and we are stronger when we live with respect and acceptance of our differences.

I come to this house as a Liberal. For me Liberalism is based on respect for the individual, on his and her liberty, dignity and freedom, and on the right to be successful, to take on responsibility, to work as hard as one wishes and to be rewarded for it. The individual's success is the community's success. Milton Friedman said:

Some people see freedom as the promotion of greed and self-interest. But a truly free society is one that releases the energies and creativity and abilities of everyone. It prevents some people from arbitrarily suppressing others. Most important freedom means mobility and diversity. It enables today's disadvantaged to become tomorrow's privileged. And along the way it enables everyone from top to bottom to enjoy a richer and fuller life.

These are the principles that will form the basis for how I intend to represent the people of Doncaster, to hold the government to account and to develop policies that underpin my vision for Victoria.

My son, Jamison, is 18 months old, and when I think of the future he will inherit I have some very simple hopes for him as he grows up. It is a future where he can achieve his potential surrounded by a supportive family and cohesive community, a future where he can learn the skills and develop the capabilities that will equip him for jobs as yet unimagined, a future where he can form caring and meaningful relationships with the rich diversity of people who make up our community, and a future where he can contribute to the wellbeing of that community. This is a future for all Victorian children regardless of their social, cultural or geographic background. Liberalism is genuinely about equality of opportunity.

I chose to stand for a seat in the Parliament of Victoria as I am most passionate about the areas for which the state government is responsible — education, innovation, health care, public transport and community safety. Delivering effective policies and appropriate services in these areas has a real and positive impact on people every day and is fundamental to individuals and families being able to lead happy and productive lives.

However, Victoria is at a crossroads. No longer can we assume the prosperity we have enjoyed in the past. In the 1800s Victoria enjoyed growth and income that came with the gold rush, and Melbourne was one of the wealthiest and fastest growing cities in the world. Following gold we had agriculture, particularly from the Western District, and then manufacturing as the drivers of our quality of life. At the same time Melbourne was the home of philanthropy, and the business and philanthropic communities engaged like nowhere else in Australia with the medical fraternity,

and as a result 10 out of 13 of Australia's largest medical research institutes are located in Melbourne.

This is what my generation has inherited, but the world is now globalised and highly competitive. It is knowledge that drives prosperity, and there are no prizes for second place. As a state, therefore, we have no option but to create an education system that stimulates, challenges and extends all children. In our competitive world we cannot rest on our laurels. While Australia ranks well in international comparisons in maths and science, there is room for improvement. Korea ranks the highest in the world, with Western Australia achieving similar results. Japan is the second-highest performing nation and South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory achieve similar results. While Victoria is above the world average, we do not achieve at the same level as those previously mentioned countries and Australian states. In a state that prides itself on its scientific innovation this will not underpin future excellence. In fact a 2006 report from the Productivity Commission shows that Victoria has the lowest public spending per student in both primary and secondary education in Australia.

A 2005 national benchmarking report shows that the Victorian curriculum has the least evidence of academic rigour of the mainland states in the areas of physics, fractions and decimals, literature and early-years reading. What this translates to in terms of outcomes is that in year 10, 19 per cent of students cannot read, 18 per cent cannot write and 27 per cent cannot do mathematics — and that is from the government's own budget papers. How will we have an innovative business environment which encourages the growth of small business and therefore jobs if our children cannot do maths and science? Why will global companies choose to locate in Victoria if our young people cannot read to the standards achieved in other Australian states and by our Asian neighbours? Why do we have no sense of urgency as our children keep slipping behind? Our children must have a top-class education to ensure their future opportunities in a prosperous and successful state.

At the end of the 1980s, as an ambitious young person I felt I had to leave Melbourne. I moved first to Sydney and then to the United States of America to pursue opportunities and to develop my career. Ten years later I returned to Melbourne because I love Melbourne, I am a proud Victorian and this is my home. It is my aim over the coming years to work to ensure that our children can compete in the international market where skills, knowledge and human capital will flow even more freely than they do today. More importantly, we

must ensure that they do not feel they have to move interstate or overseas to find opportunities; but if they choose to do so, we must create a state to which they will want to return.

With one eye on my son, but also understanding the trends more broadly, I am also particularly concerned about boys' education, as I see the results for boys slipping further and further behind those for girls in terms of literacy, retention rates and participation in higher education. This is not to take anything from the strong push over recent years to attain excellence in girls' education, but it shows we must also focus on boys. We must recognise different learning styles and approaches and encourage more male role models in schools.

I also wish to talk about community cohesiveness. Individual and collective grassroots action is what brings about positive outcomes and sustainable change. There is a role for government to encourage, facilitate and fund such activities, but it must be driven from the community for the benefit of the community. There has been concern about the decline in social cohesion, but there are positive trends such as the emergence of social entrepreneurship, a growth in volunteering and an increase in business, family and individual philanthropy.

Community building has become a topic of debate and investigation, and while citizens turn their backs on formal structures they are forging ahead with initiatives to craft their own community rather than passively awaiting it. At the same time corporate social responsibility is being widely incorporated into business strategies as directors and management recognise the mutual benefit from engaging with the communities in which they operate. My Liberalism says we must enable communities to get on and make the change they wish to see, understanding that government's role is as a facilitator, and it is individuals who will successfully drive change.

Finally, on federal and state relations, there is ongoing debate about the relationship between federal and state governments as we see further involvement by the commonwealth government in areas that were traditionally thought to be state responsibilities. I say it is not unreasonable for the federal government to get involved when that involvement is as a result of a vacuum created by state inactivity. Why does the federal government have to put \$19 million into a program for boys when education is a state responsibility? Why does the federal government have to put in place programs for drug and alcohol rehabilitation when it is a state responsibility?

Collectively, again and again, the states fail to take the lead on areas of core responsibility. However, it has been shown that when a state chooses to take the lead it can influence a nation.

Maree Tehan's activism when she was health minister in this place had a direct consequence in terms of creating the national mental health strategy which over 15 years has transformed mental health in Australia at the same time as Australia leads the world. Through their service delivery role the states have a unique knowledge and connection to the needs of the community that the federal government does not have. We must use this knowledge to ensure we are taking responsibility as appropriate but also to inform federal policy agendas for the benefit of this state and for the country as a whole.

In raising these issues I am mindful that I have not talked about mental health or aged care, for which I have shadow ministerial responsibility. I have done this deliberately, as I will have many opportunities to talk on these particular matters.

No person gets to this place without incredible support and encouragement. I would like to acknowledge my parents, Anne and Philip Wooldridge, who are here in the chamber today and who taught me that individuals have to take responsibility for the change they wish to see, that doing your best in any endeavour, and doing it with integrity, is more important than the outcome but that hard work and perseverance are the most likely characteristics of success. My family is no stranger to parliamentary representation, with my brother, Michael, a former federal health minister, who is also here today, having made a real difference to the Australian community in many areas including immunisation, medical research and indigenous health. He has always been and continues to be a role model, mentor and friend, which I value enormously.

An overwhelming aspect of running a local campaign is the support which comes from hundreds who believe in Liberalism and are prepared to put their effort and time into convincing the community of the benefits of a Liberal government. I thank many personal friends, the Doncaster branches of the Liberal Party and in particular my campaign manager, Brent Rodrigues, for a substantial effort which was reflected in our result in Doncaster.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Andrew Barling, for his unwavering support. Andrew grew up in the Mallee and continues his commitment to the country through the two days every week that he spends in Bendigo as a specialist surgeon. I strongly

support this work, as I believe people who live in rural and regional Victoria have a right to access local specialist services. Andrew is a true example of an individual making a difference, having founded, raised funds for and run the Otis Foundation, a network of rural retreats for women with breast cancer. Over the past six years he and the Bendigo community have raised over \$1.8 million for the Otis Foundation. I am proud to work with him on the board of Otis for the benefit of women all over Australia at a particularly vulnerable period in their lives.

I am here because I believe that a committed and passionate individual can make a difference, be it at a local level, in a community or for a state. I will support those who seek to bring about positive change, I will champion communities who work for a better future and I aspire to make the changes which will ensure that a future Victoria is a state built on world-class education, cutting-edge innovation that creates wealth and employment, and engaged and vibrant communities.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

SENATE ELECTIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill is necessary because of recent changes made by the federal government to electoral processes.

The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Act 2006 (Cth) (the federal act) was passed by the federal Parliament in June 2006. The federal act amended the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 to reduce the close of rolls period. Prior to the amendments, the act provided for the rolls to close seven days after the writs for an election had been issued.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 now provides that the rolls for a federal election will close for new enrolments on the day the writs for the election are issued with the exception of 17-year-olds who turn 18 before election day and applicants for citizenship who will become citizens before election day. The rolls will close for enrolment updates on the third working day after the issue of the writs.

The Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, issues the writs for the House of Representatives and the four territory senators, but the Senate is the states house so the individual states issue the writs for Senate elections in their respective states. In Victoria, this is done under section 4 of the Senate Elections Act 1958. Section 4 provides that the date fixed for the close of rolls for Senate elections shall be seven days after the issue date of the writ.

Once the amendments to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 commenced operation, section 4 of the Victorian Senate Elections Act 1958 became inconsistent by virtue of the operation of section 109 of the Australian constitution. The proposed amendments will bring the timing of the close of the rolls for federal Senate elections into line with the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 by providing that the rolls close three working days after the issue date of the writ.

The Victorian government does not support the earlier closure of the rolls. As the commonwealth does not have fixed election dates, the Victorian government is concerned that the federal government's changes to electoral legislation could disenfranchise many people who are unaware that an election may be called. This is because of the reduction in time between issuing of the writs for an election and the closure of the rolls.

Judging from recent elections, closing the rolls when an election is announced could disenfranchise about 80 000 new voters and impact particularly on young people.

Many people do not enrol until an election is announced. Instead of accommodating these people, the federal government has made it more difficult. These changes mean that the electoral roll closes for new enrolments at least 33 days (almost five weeks) before an election. Compare this with similar democracies that are trying to increase electoral participation. Canada allows citizens to enrol on the day when they turn up to vote and New Zealand gives its citizens until the day before the election.

The Victorian government is also concerned about the integrity of the roll, because many people who need to change or amend their enrolment details can be prompted by an election being called. In the three weeks leading up to the closure of the rolls in Victoria, 34 268 additions or amendments were made to the Victorian roll in preparation for the recent state election.

The Victorian Electoral Act 2002 provides that, for state elections, the roll closes seven days after the issue

date of the writ, which is the same time currently specified in the Senate Elections Act 1958 for closure of the rolls for Senate elections. However, our hand is forced by the operation of section 109 of the federal constitution to bring the arrangements for Senate elections into line with the commonwealth legislation. As Attorney-General, I have received advice that, in this case section 109 of the constitution will mean that the commonwealth laws, to the extent of any inconsistency, will override the state laws. Failure to amend section 4 of the Senate Elections Act 1958 will mean that the section is invalid. Even if the federal government did not challenge section 4, uncertainty and inconsistency would prevail with the possibility of some electors being eligible to vote for the Senate but not the House of Representatives.

Section 155 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 uses the term 'working day' in providing for the close of the rolls. The definition of 'working day' does not include weekends or a day on which there is a public holiday. For consistency with the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 a definition of 'working day' is included in the Senate Elections Act 1958 because time is normally calculated slightly differently under Victorian legislation.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.01 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Public Transport and Minister for the Arts will be absent from question time today. Questions for the Minister for Public Transport will be answered by the Minister for Roads and Ports, and questions for the Minister for the Arts should be directed to the Premier.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board: chief officer

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm

that the chief of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Peter Akers, resigned yesterday and that this resignation was in protest at continuing government-sanctioned interference in the operation of the MFB by the United Firefighters Union?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I am not aware of any of those details. If a decision was made by someone who heads up the fire services, they would make that decision independently. The answer to the question is that I am not aware of any of those details.

The reality is that we are very confident in the management — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — Good old contrived interjections!

We are very confident in the management of all our fire services and the cooperative nature of fighting this fire fight in Victoria.

Schools: government policy

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — My question is to the Premier. I refer him to the government's commitment to ensuring that education remains its no. 1 priority and ask him to detail for the house the government's plans to invest \$2.3 billion in Victorian schools.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Northcote for her question, and I congratulate her and other members on their inaugural speeches which have been delivered over the last two days.

One of the core commitments we made in the election campaign was to rebuild every public school in Victoria — primary and secondary, city and country. Every school in this state will be rebuilt, modernised and upgraded. We can achieve that because over the last seven years we have upgraded and rebuilt some 400 public schools in this state. Because of the base we have built we are able to make the commitment that we will spend \$2.3 billion, which includes money in this financial year and money in future financial years, which will allow the upgrading of another 500 schools which will be built or modernised in this state.

As we have heard, tech wings will be renewed in every government secondary school in Victoria. There will be better science and maths facilities and two new selective entry schools in this state, in addition to those we already have. Of course we will also be building a

significant number of children's centres around the state.

We have indicated that education is one of the highest priorities we have in this state. It is interesting to note, from the inaugural speeches I have heard, that that is reflected across the chamber on both sides of the house — that one of the best things we can do in Victoria is to have a highly educated, highly skilled state, a state that prides itself on being one of the best-skilled states in Australia. Of course this investment will do just that by modernising and upgrading every school — primary and secondary, country and city — and making sure that the facilities match the excellent curriculum and teaching in our Victorian schools.

This is a program which has the highest priority in our government. It is the centrepiece of what we committed to, and I am looking forward very much over the coming four years to implementing our policies in every part of Victoria.

Roads: funding

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Ports. What initiatives will the government adopt to provide additional funding for local roads in those many country municipalities now battling drought and fires, with the consequent impact on their rate base?

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. Since 1999 over \$3 billion has been invested in building better roads across Victoria, including \$1.5 billion in regional roads. Not only is this government committed to building better roads, but it is committed to making sure that our roads are better resourced going into the future.

We are putting \$1.3 billion into outer metropolitan arterial roads and \$687 million into rural and arterial roads. In addition to that, the government has put \$597 million into the next generation of Arrive Alive road safety programs. VicRoads road safety spending has increased by nearly 280 per cent since this government has been in office. There are over 2000 road safety projects in place. Over 53 000 —

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, I appreciate this general information about road safety measures, metropolitan roads and so on, but the question was about local roads. I would ask the minister to respond to that question.

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

Mr PALLAS — The story of this government and its commitment to rural roads is second to none. We are doing for Victorian roads, and country roads in particular, what the previous government did not do. We have not turned our back on country Victoria. The translation of all this investment in country roads is demonstrated in a very tangible way: 360 Victorians are alive today as a consequence of the Arrive Alive strategy we put in place. We know country roads are among the greatest contributors to road casualties in this state — about 30 per cent of casualty deaths occur on country roads.

In respect of the issues relating to the fire, of course the government is monitoring the closure of roads. We are working through VicRoads to ensure that that monitoring occurs. In the recuperation stage following the fires the government will remain open to reviewing the situation once we get a full assessment of the damage and the ongoing needs of country Victoria.

Water: Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong supply

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change. I ask the minister to detail for the house the government's plans to secure extra water for Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change) — I thank the member for Ballarat East for his question and congratulate him on the outstanding result he achieved in the recent election.

Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong are all facing an unprecedented water challenge.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr THWAITES — Members of the opposition groan because they have no policies for water for the future — and certainly none for Ballarat, Geelong or Bendigo. The stream flows into Lal Lal Reservoir and Lake Eppalock, which service Ballarat and Bendigo and also provide water for Geelong, are at unprecedented lows. Just to give an indication of that, the average inflow to Lal Lal Reservoir for the filling period from July to October is around 27 000 megalitres; this year it has been less than 400 megalitres. All these towns are facing a huge water challenge.

The Bracks government's plan to deliver extra water for Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong was strongly

endorsed in the recent election. That plan comprises the goldfields super-pipe, which will deliver 18 000 megalitres of extra water; the Bendigo recycling project, which will deliver 4000 megalitres; the Barwon Downs groundwater project for Geelong, which will deliver 8000 megalitres; and the Shell recycling project, which will deliver 2000 megalitres.

On 25 November the Victorian public supported the goldfields super-pipe and the extra recycling because they know that these extra sources of water are needed. On 25 November the Victorian public roundly rejected the opposition's policies on water. Just look at Ballarat: neither the Victorian public nor the Ballarat people nor the Ballarat business community supported the opposition proposal, which was to take water from Geelong and give it to Ballarat. None of them supported that. The Committee for Ballarat supports our policy; the Ballarat City Council supports our policy. I am pleased to say Central Highlands Water is getting on with the job, despite the whingeing of the opposition. The tenders are already out for the Ballarat leg of the pipeline, and they are due back this Friday.

Let us look at Bendigo. Most people in Bendigo believe the super-pipe should go ahead. The only people who do not support the super-pipe are some elements of the opposition. The other elements of the opposition say that they support the super-pipe, but it has to wait till infrastructure savings are available. Just to give a picture of what Bendigo thinks of this, I quote from the heading of a *Bendigo Weekly* article by Walkley award-winning journalist, Anthony Radford, on 10 November: 'Liberals' water policy could leave city ... high and dry'.

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has been speaking for almost 4½ minutes. Perhaps he should not be debating the question; he should come back to the question and conclude his answer.

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

Mr THWAITES — The super-pipe tenders have already been awarded for the supply of pipes and pumps for Bendigo.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr THWAITES — Your side does not want to do any work; you want to stop it forever.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should ignore interjections. Interjections are disorderly.

Mr THWAITES — I am very pleased to say those tenders for the pipes and pumps have already been completed. This will be a great project for Bendigo, as will the Bendigo recycling project. Construction of that is under way. I was there with the member for Bendigo East. The recycling project is under way — pipes are being built — and that is going to deliver an extra 4000 megalitres of water for Bendigo next year. Once again all we get from the opposition is whingeing, carping, no policies and no funding.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should conclude his answer.

Mr THWAITES — What about Geelong? The people of Geelong strongly endorsed our government's policy for a major water recycling plant at Shell that will provide 2000 megalitres extra. They supported our policy, which has already been delivered, to provide extra water from groundwater from Barwon Downs. The people of Geelong roundly rejected the idea that Geelong should have to give up its share of Lal Lal for Ballarat.

Mr McIntosh — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has now been speaking for well and truly over 6 minutes. If he wants to make a ministerial statement, he should allocate the time and not do it during question time. I ask you to ask the minister to conclude his answer.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should conclude his answer.

Mr THWAITES — I just emphasise that Geelong is on stage 4 restrictions, yet opposition members want Geelong to give up more of its water for Ballarat — or at least that is what they said when they went to Ballarat. In conclusion, I call on the opposition to respect the views of the Victorian public as expressed on 25 November.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should conclude his answer.

Mr THWAITES — I call upon the opposition to respect those views and —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, to conclude his answer.

Mr THWAITES — In conclusion, now is the time for all of us to get behind the super-pipe to provide water security for Ballarat and Bendigo.

Gaming: public lotteries licence

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Minister for Gaming. I refer to a letter from the Secretary of the Department of Justice dated 4 October 2006 to lotteries bidder Intralot which states:

I write to assure you I am confident that the integrity of the public lotteries licensing process is being maintained to the highest standards, and I have been assured by the probity auditor for the licensing process that it holds the same view.

I ask the minister: what further communications have there been between the departmental secretary and representatives of Intralot, and have these communications been cleared by the probity auditor?

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Gaming) — I thank the honourable member for Malvern for his question. The integrity and the probity of this public lotteries licensing process have been confirmed by the probity auditor, Pitcher Partners, which has carriage of this matter, on three separate occasions. So on three separate occasions the probity auditor, Pitcher Partners, has confirmed the decision making and the probity of the interdepartmental steering committee which has oversight of this matter.

Earlier this year a request was made by the steering committee for more time to complete the public lotteries licensing process. The government, having received that request from the interdepartmental steering committee — that is, a request for more time — granted extra time. It is important that an appropriate amount of time is allocated to this process to get an outcome that has integrity, an outcome that has probity and an outcome that serves the best interests of all Victorians.

I can confirm that, as I said, the probity auditor in these matters, Pitcher Partners, has signed off on the work of the interdepartmental steering committee on three separate occasions. This government is committed to an outcome in relation to the public lotteries licensing process that has integrity and probity and serves the interests of all Victorians.

Hospitals: funding

Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to continuing to invest in Victoria's health system, and I ask the minister to detail for the house how the government is employing more doctors and nurses in Victorian hospitals.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for Frankston for his question. We have been

investing in and rebuilding our public hospitals so that they can continue to deliver world-class health care, and in fact the budget of Victoria's public hospitals has increased by 83 per cent since the Bracks government came to office in 1999. That means that every single public hospital, whether it is in the metropolitan area or in our rural communities and regional towns, has had an increase in its budget every single year the Bracks government has been in office.

We need to increase those resources because the number of people coming to our hospitals is increasing. In fact in 2005–06, 2.15 million patients — that is 500 000 more patients than in 1999 — were treated in Victoria's public hospitals. We have also embarked on the largest ever rebuilding program of our hospitals in this state's history, rebuilding and upgrading 58 of the state's public hospitals. All of that rebuilding and all of that record investment is attracting more doctors and nurses to seek employment in Victoria's public hospitals.

Today an independent report was released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. That report is on the medical work force, and it shows that Victoria is ahead of every other state when it comes to growing our public hospital system and employing extra doctors. These are the figures: Victoria has seen a 42 per cent increase in the number of doctors employed in our public hospitals. Compare that with the other states: a 30 per cent increase for the Australian Capital Territory, 27 per cent for Tasmania, 22 per cent for Western Australia, 21 per cent for Queensland and only 19 per cent for New South Wales. So Victoria has had a 42 per cent increase in the number of doctors, and when we translate that to raw numbers it means that 1576 additional doctors are working in our public hospitals and 7263 additional nurses have been employed in our public hospitals since 1999.

This is not the first independent report from Canberra that shows that Victoria's public hospitals are leading the nation. Whether it is about the employment of doctors or whether it is about performance in emergency departments, Victoria's public hospitals are doing very, very well. But of course we know that there is a lot more that needs to be done. We have been investing in the services that matter, but we have to continue to do that. We are getting on with the job of tackling the very serious challenges that lie ahead and that are facing Victoria's public hospital system.

Earlier this year the government, together with the Australian Medical Association, the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria and our universities, mounted a very strong and, I am pleased to say, a very successful

campaign to lobby the federal government for additional medical school places. This campaign — all of our combined efforts along with those of other organisations — resulted in an additional 220 undergraduate medical places for Victoria. To add to that, we allocated \$30 million of capital funding to Deakin, Melbourne and Monash universities so that they can have the infrastructure to support this growing number of medical places.

We have allocated a further \$6.45 million over four years to the hospitals to meet the growing demand for clinical placements and an additional \$6.6 million for 40 additional medical interns next year. That number will increase to an additional 75 by the year 2009–10. On top of that, because we know it takes time to train these additional doctors, we are investing \$5.2 million over the next four years in international recruitment, and the extra \$13 million that we promised during the election campaign for payments to doctors who work in a non-core way within our rural hospitals will help to sustain the rural work force.

In conclusion, the government has been given a mandate by the Victorian people to implement the very comprehensive package of health policies that we took to the election. What the Victorian people also did was reject the policies of the opposition, because they knew that trying to find savings in Victoria's public hospitals — trying to take money away from Victoria's public hospitals — would mean cutting services and sacking nurses. That is a policy we reject, and it is certainly a policy the Victorian public rejected. What our investment has meant, and what our continuing investment will mean, is that Victoria's public health system will continue to be the very best in Australia.

Planning: local government

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by his comments of 23 November on 3AW that under a re-elected Labor government the planning powers of local councils and councillors would not be reduced and would remain as they are now?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — Yes, we have set out all our policies in the election campaign. Those policies will be adopted by our government over the next four years. And of course one of the things we want to do, and we have committed to, is have a new agreement with local government which enshrines and upgrades its powers and reinforces local government as the third tier of government in this state.

We can actually remember the previous government that abolished councils, amalgamated councils without effective consultation and trampled over the rights of councils in this state. We have reaffirmed the primacy of councils. It is up to the public to decide whether it is happy with the work of councils, not up to a government to describe them as a previous minister in a previous Liberal government did. He said they were the postbox of the state government and they were a creature of the state. We do not agree with that view.

Industrial relations: WorkChoices

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to working Victorians and ask him to update the house on the government's efforts to protect workers from the federal government's extreme industrial relations regime.

Mr HULLS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I thank the honourable member for Preston for his question. As he would know, this is really the first Christmas since WorkChoices commenced its relentless march on the rights of working Victorians. For many, WorkChoices is indeed the Christmas Grinch, having stolen workers penalty rates, stolen their overtime pay and their family time, and even, in some cases, stolen their jobs. The Bracks government is particularly worried about the impact of WorkChoices on young Victorians.

Christmas and the new year are times when thousands of young Victorians are entering the work force for the first time. They may obtain a summer job to help them fund their studies for the coming year. Many, of course, will be asked to sign Australian workplace agreements (AWAs). In almost all cases these AWAs will seek to cut the wages and conditions that young people may have been entitled to under an award or a collective agreement.

In fact a new analysis of AWAs by Griffith University Professor David Peetz shows that they have actually reduced award conditions more than was previously understood. The study revealed that of 250 AWAs lodged at the Office of the Employment Advocate, all of them — every single one of them — excluded some protected award conditions. Sixty-three per cent of them excluded penalty rates, 52 per cent excluded shift loadings, 51 per cent excluded overtime, 46 per cent excluded public holiday pay and 40 per cent excluded rest breaks.

This is not the type of thing we want to hear at Christmas time. It is Christmas time, Speaker, I remind the house.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — It is Christmas time. It is a time for good cheer in abundance, not fear of unpaid redundancy!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — Kids should be waiting for Santa Claus rather than being hit by Howard's industrial relations laws. Families should be looking for full Christmas stockings rather than being hit with large wage dockings!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — I warn all workers, but especially the young, to be aware of the WorkChoices Grinch and not to sign away their rights to penalty rates or public holidays if presented with an Australian workplace agreement. I also urge parents to be vigilant and help their kids avoid being exploited this Christmas.

The Bracks government, as we know — and this was endorsed wholeheartedly by the Victorian public less than a month ago — has set up a workplace rights advocate. That workplace rights advocate, indeed, should be the first port of call for workers to obtain advice before signing an AWA.

The Bracks government will always stand up for young Victorian workers, and the workplace rights advocate legislation is just one example of at least 10 pieces of legislation that we have introduced into this place to protect Victorian workers against WorkChoices — and every one of those was opposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

I conclude on this note: Christmas and summer should be about relaxing on sunny days, not about being forced to sign AWAs!

Local government: funding

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Local Government. I refer to a quote from the president of the Municipal Association of Victoria, Dick Gross, in the *Herald Sun* of 16 December:

... 10 per cent of our councils are under financial stress.

I further quote:

... we don't go bust, we just under-repair and things start crumbling, so it's bad for the next generation.

What is the government doing to ensure regional councils in financial difficulty have the capacity to repair and improve basic infrastructure such as roads, bridges and other public assets?

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Local Government) — Thank you for the opportunity to answer the question from the Leader of The Nationals. In the 2006–07 state budget the state government increased funding through grants and transfers to local government by over 10 per cent. These grants exclude funds provided to local government for services under programs such as the home and community care program and the maternal and child health program, and community services generally. There has been a 55 per cent increase in the maternal and child health budget since 1999–2000.

The important aspect, which the Premier has already indicated in relation to local government, is that this government stands together with local government and is very, very supportive of local government as a third tier of government. We enshrined local government in the constitution as an important third tier.

There are a number of councils that over the years have approached the Office of Local Government to provide support and mentoring to them. In particular, as I indicated to the Leader of The Nationals in a conversation yesterday, one of those councils was the Buloke council. The Office of Local Government has provided ongoing support, mentoring and monitoring of that particular council — indeed, at the request of that council. We will continue to provide support to councils as required and upon their request.

But the important message that I would leave with local government and with the other side of the house is that we are supportive of local government and we are in a partnership with local government, and that is in stark contrast to the Liberal Party, which treated local government as a mendicant level of government and which it had a derisory relationship with. We have a strong relationship with local government, and it will continue to grow and prosper under the Bracks Labor government.

Government: financial management

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — My question is for the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to the government's commitment to governing in a financially responsible manner, and I ask the Treasurer to detail for the house the most recent economic data that

demonstrates the government is delivering on that commitment.

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Narre Warren North for his question. This morning I released the *2006–07 Budget Update* for the state. It shows that Victoria is in a strong and healthy position. I want to assure the house first and foremost in relation to this document today that the numbers do add up.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew and the member for Scoresby! The Treasurer should have the opportunity to respond to the question in some level of quietness.

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast is warned.

Mr BRUMBY — I am surprised that the opposition is talking about numbers today, because I would not have thought its record was too good. There is no \$285 million error in this document. The big question that this house wants to know the answer to is: has the Liberal Party paid the bill to KPMG?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — Have you paid the bill?

The SPEAKER — Order! Conversations between two individual members of Parliament across the table — I think I spoke about this yesterday — will not be tolerated.

Mr BRUMBY — What the house wants to know is whether the Liberal Party paid the bill once or whether it paid it twice!

The budget update shows a revised surplus of \$374 million for 2006–07 and an average surplus of \$352 million a year over the forward estimates period. The only difference between the document I have released today and the pre-election update is that since the election we have announced implementation of the tax cuts. They take effect from 1 January, so those costings are built into the update today.

There are challenges that do face the state of Victoria and indeed the whole of the Australian economy. We have been hit by a number of interest rate rises, we have a high Australian dollar and we have the worst drought in more than 100 years. Despite those, the performance of the Victorian economy remains robust and strong, and we are predicting growth in the 2006–07 year of

2.75 per cent. The latest employment figures — the November figures — show that Victoria's unemployment rate fell to 4.7 per cent. The growth over the year has been 2.25 per cent, which is an upwards revision reflecting the strong employment and jobs growth we have had.

In the house yesterday I mentioned the population figures in relation to provincial Victoria. For the state as a whole, population growth over the last year has been 1.36 per cent, which compares with population growth for Australia of 1.31 per cent. This is an extraordinary growth performance by our state, one that I think has been brought about by the plan we have had to welcome migrants, particularly skilled migrants; to make our state competitive in terms of taxation arrangements; and to build a quality of life which is enviable in terms of other Australian states. As a consequence of that people have been moving to Victoria. In fact in 2005–06 our population increased by a massive 68 502 — well over 1000 people per week and easily the highest increase in population over a 12-month period on record in Victoria.

Finally, I turn to building approvals. I also mentioned these for regional Victoria yesterday; but regarding the state as a whole, Victoria had in the 12 months to October the highest level of building approvals of any state — \$16.6 billion versus Queensland's \$15.5 billion and New South Wales's \$15.3 billion.

We continue to govern the state responsibly. We have delivered budget surpluses in every year we have been in office, and we will deliver budget surpluses going forward. We have a strong AAA credit rating. This budget update confirms the strong fiscal position of the state. We have the policies in place to get us through the challenges we face — the interest rates, the bushfires and the drought. We will get through them, and we will get through them with a strong fiscal position.

WATER AMENDMENT (CRITICAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS) BILL

Second reading

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the fast-tracking of critical water infrastructure projects.

Record low rainfall and inflows to Victoria's reservoirs over the past decade are threatening the security of the state's water supply. To improve this situation, a number of water infrastructure projects are in the implementation phase with major augmentation options for Melbourne and Geelong in the medium to long term also being developed. One of these projects is the goldfields super-pipe, which will connect Ballarat and Bendigo to the Goulburn system. This project was announced as part of the government's sustainable water strategy for the central region. This comprehensive plan sets out the actions that will be taken to secure water supplies for homes, farms, businesses, industry and the environment in the central region of Victoria for the next 50 years. Of course, as the sustainable water strategy makes clear, new infrastructure projects are one of many initiatives that are required.

The failure of winter and spring rains this year has significantly worsened the water situation with many country towns on severe water restrictions. If this trend of low rainfall and inflows continues through autumn and winter of next year, Victoria will be faced with extreme conditions and challenges with many storages running out of water. If this eventuates, it will be extremely important that there is certainty in critical water infrastructure projects being delivered in a timely manner. For this reason, the government made a pre-election commitment to legislate to fast-track approval of critical water infrastructure projects.

This bill will give the Premier the power to declare projects to be critical water infrastructure projects. The Premier will only be able to declare a project on the recommendation of the minister for water, after the minister has consulted the Treasurer and the Minister for Planning. The Premier will have broad discretion to determine which infrastructure projects are to be declared. This will give the Premier flexibility to declare infrastructure projects other than those that will simply improve the security of water supply. This could include environmental projects.

A declaration will have two important consequences. First, the Minister for Planning, rather than the local council, will make planning decisions in relation to a project area. This will mean that decisions relating to a project located within more than one municipal district will be made by one decision-maker in an integrated way.

Secondly, a water authority responsible for a critical water infrastructure project will be able to commence the formal process of acquiring land compulsorily without having to arrange for the relevant planning

scheme to be amended to apply the public acquisition overlay to that land. The bill will also ensure that water authorities have all the functions and powers necessary to deliver critical infrastructure projects.

Water authorities will still need to obtain the usual approvals concerning environment protection, native flora and fauna conservation, Aboriginal cultural heritage, forests, and national parks. Although no exemptions from approvals have been provided in this bill, the declaration of a declared water infrastructure project by the Premier will send a clear message that the consideration of any approval applications are to be given priority.

The government will undertake a review of current planning and environmental approval processes with the aim of expediting critical water infrastructure projects and the results of this review may require further legislative change.

Summary

This bill delivers on the government's pre-election commitment to legislate to fast-track important water infrastructure projects. This represents an important step in improving the security of Victoria's water supplies.

To enable the impacts of this bill to be felt as soon as possible, it will commence on the day after royal assent.

I commend this bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms ASHER (Brighton).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to approve and ratify an amendment amending agreement to the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement 1992.

As some members would be aware, the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement is an agreement between the commonwealth, NSW, Victoria, South Australia,

Queensland and the ACT, that articulates how governments will work together to manage the shared water, land and environmental resources of the Murray–Darling Basin. In doing so, it creates both a ministerial council and a commission.

The Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, and its predecessor, the River Murray Waters Agreement, has been in operation since 1914 and, over the years, has been refined to reflect our better understanding of best practice water management.

A major improvement in water management occurred in 1994 when the original COAG water reform principles were adopted by governments. Since that time, it has become apparent that the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement should be amended to better reflect these principles.

Negotiations between governments on the form of these amendments have extended over several years; however, final endorsement by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council was received earlier this year. The details of the agreed amendments are articulated in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement Amending Agreement 2006.

In order for the amending agreement to take effect, approval by each jurisdiction's Parliament is required. Members may recall that legislation to this effect was previously introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 9 August 2006.

However, at the commencement of debate on the bill, a minor error was discovered in clause 20 of the amending agreement relating to changes in auditing arrangements, which had the effect of duplicating clause 78(3) in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Due to the potential for confusion arising from this duplication, it was determined that the bill should not proceed in its present form.

A revised amending agreement correcting this error was approved by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council on 29 September 2006. Due to the minor nature of this change, first minister re-approval of the revised amending agreement has been effected through an exchange of letters between the chair of council, the Prime Minister and relevant state-territory first ministers.

As a consequence, the commonwealth government on 7 December 2006 introduced legislation giving effect to the revised amending agreement. It is now appropriate that legislation containing the corrected amending agreement be once again put before the Victorian Parliament for approval.

The amending agreement will amend the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement to:

enable improved business practices for River Murray Water, which is the commission's water business;

clarify Queensland's liability in relation to activities in which it has no part; and

include supplementary details and correct a minor typographical error in schedule C of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement — the basin salinity management schedule.

The first of these matters relates to the response of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council to the COAG water reform principles adopted in February 1994.

Specifically this involves enabling powers:

to establish and manage a long-term renewals annuity fund to provide for capital renewals and major cyclic maintenance. The intention of this amendment is to reduce the fluctuations in annual contributions and allow greater certainty for contracting governments in their financial planning;

for the commission, with council's approval, to undertake borrowings for the major renewals and cyclic maintenance previously mentioned;

for the council to reassign the management of critical infrastructure between the relevant state governments; and

for the council to increase, from time to time, the financial thresholds above which specific council and commission expenditure approvals must be obtained.

The second matter aims to put beyond doubt the extent of Queensland's liability.

Currently, the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement does not specifically ensure that Queensland cannot be held liable in damages for matters in which it takes no part.

For example, Queensland plays no part in the management of the natural resources of the Murray and Lower Darling systems. Queensland should therefore not incur any liability in these matters.

Whilst the ministerial council has recognised this principle, the agreed view is that an indemnity should be enshrined in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

The third matter is to add to schedule C of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, which is the basin salinity management schedule, a detailed description of the authorised joint works and measures approved and implemented by the council. Opportunity is also taken to adopt a typographical correction.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms ASHER (Brighton).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) for adoption of address-in-reply.

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Narre Warren South, I remind members that this is an inaugural speech.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — I rise to deliver my address-in-reply to the Governor's address after my election to the seat of Narre Warren South on 25 November. I commence by congratulating the Speaker on her elevation to that important role. In standing I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand here today — the Kulin nation — and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

I offer my congratulations to the Premier for the exceptional fashion in which he led the Australian Labor Party to victory in Victoria.

I will take this opportunity to thank my campaign team, especially Lisa Carey and Efstratios Staikos who managed everyone involved in an expert manner and with outstanding results. I think everyone felt it was a job well done.

I also take this opportunity to thank Tim Holding for his generous support.

I thank the people of Narre Warren South for continuing to support a Labor candidate, and I wish the retiring member, Dale Wilson, and his family all the very best for the future.

One of the greatest challenges we face today is our capacity as human beings to deal with the problems we

have created in our environment. This affects not only Victorians and Australians but the current and future population of this planet. The findings of the recent *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* put the unpalatable prospect that ours may be the first generation to leave a worse environment for our children than we ourselves have enjoyed, which of course brings less opportunities for the next generation.

In one Aboriginal language the words 'narre warren' have the following meanings: 'narre narre' means she-oak tree, and 'warren' or 'woran' means ocean or water. One translation given for 'narre warren' is 'creek water by she-oaks is no good'. In Narre Warren, like everywhere in Australia, we face the challenges of providing good water and of securing our water supply for the future.

At a local level in Narre Warren South we are tackling the water issue in several innovative ways. I see houses being built featuring a 5-star energy rating; new gardens blooming because they are being watered using recycled water from the newly installed water tanks; and children and parents together building an expansive wetland — featuring she-oaks — at the Berwick Fields Primary School. They are wonderful, practical examples for securing our future.

I have always believed in the vital role that government can play in not only leading the community but convincing members of the community to do their part in making their homes and their neighbourhoods even better places. I truly believe, as Paul Kelly sings, that 'from little things big things grow'.

I applauded at the time the Bracks government's initiative of establishing Australia's first Minister for Water, and I look forward to further initiatives from the now Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change. When I was mayor of the Mornington Peninsula we led the way in establishing a sustainability framework. If you have visited the Mornington Peninsula in recent years you will have seen signs welcoming you to the Sustainable Peninsula. They symbolise that economic, social and environmental issues are the basis of all decision making to ensure that a fair and good quality of life can be enjoyed by everyone now and in the future.

The values of sustainability, equity and solidarity are core Labor values. They are values that I hold true and act upon. They are also the basis on which we can successfully build a sustainable Victoria. There is a lot to be done in making a better future. A laudable start has been made, and I hope that as both a

parliamentarian and community member I can continue to make a significant contribution.

Narre Warren South is the capital of working families in Victoria. It is an electorate that is only four years old, with over 30 000 households, and it is the fastest growing area in Victoria — we had an extra 10 300 voters this election. We have more children aged under five than anywhere else in Australia, and the streets are full of parents pushing prams, which fills me with great hope for the future.

Fanny Brownbill, the first female Victorian Labor MP, was not allowed to deliver many speeches in the Parliament, but the words she did speak in this place were important ones. In arguing for the right of women to alight trains with perambulators in 1938, Fanny said:

Let us not forget that the children of today will be the citizens of tomorrow and, shall I say, the powerhouse of the future.

These words have truth to them still. Narre Warren South is growing and its citizens are growing. Next year will be the first year in which the Narre Warren South P-12 College will have year 12 students — the class of 2007. The electorate is growing up fast.

I am especially hopeful that the many young people that live in Narre Warren South will take a leading role in caring for their fellow community members and their environment as well as securing their own personal success. I will be there to support them in any way I can.

When I speak with local people from a diverse range of backgrounds about what helped them to make a decision to move to the area, they tell me they wanted a new house in a nice area and better opportunities for their family. Like so many generations of Australians the people of Narre Warren South want to create a new home and better lives for their children.

As Narre Warren South is a new and changing place it was important to begin all my campaign talks in the local area by giving my potential constituents some understanding of my own story and my own family. Like many other Australian families, my origins lie beyond our prosperous shores. Ignace Eduouard Couacaud migrated to this country in search of what so many others have sought in Australia: opportunity — Australia Felix — and happiness. Ignace picked up what little he had in Mauritius and set out for the Victorian goldfields hoping to find prosperity, freedom and a better life for future generations than the one he had lived. Each subsequent generation has tried to do that little bit better for their children.

My father, a soldier in World War II, was a panel beater by trade, and I recall one day at the family home in Tottenham — after a Bulldogs win — his telling me very loudly, ‘You won’t be leaving school, because you’ve got some brains and you’re to bloody use them!’.

Jean and Roderick Couacaud, my parents, have sadly passed away, but I remember fondly that they always placed their family first. Part of the reason I am a proud member of the Australian Labor Party is their respect for families and their support of services for families.

The Premier launched Labor’s campaign in his home town of Ballarat — where it all began seven years ago at the launch in 1999 and which resulted in Labor’s return to government. He spoke about the need then for:

... hope for this place and others like it all across our state. Hope for our streets and suburbs and towns. And hard work, because that is what good government is about — delivering decent services and building a better future.

Ballarat is home to a proud Victorian tradition of standing up for workers’ rights, being the place where the Eureka Stockade occurred. That event helped to shape Victorian identity. In fact being in this room evokes powerful feelings of that time. It is almost overwhelming to be standing here in this beautiful and significant chamber that reflects the prosperity of the gold rush in Victoria and the dreams of the colony’s leaders for their very own local democracy.

A highlight of the long election day was to see people from Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Cambodia and other places — some for the first time — voting without fear or favour. In this, the 150th anniversary year of the Victorian Parliament, we should be more proud that the secret ballot — the Victorian ballot — has been our significant contribution to democracies everywhere.

The charter presented by the Ballarat Reform League during the Eureka insurrection asserted that ‘the people are the only legitimate source of all political power’ and therefore the interests of the people need always to come first. We expect fairness, freedoms and respect from those who govern us, and these form a vital part of our Victorian constitution. The Australian Labor Party’s heritage is sourced, in part, from the Eureka tradition, and we will fight state and nationwide for the rights of the people to be respected and the voices of the people to be heard. The Premier and this Victorian government’s fight against the new industrial relations law is important and encouraging for all of us living in this state.

As I mentioned, my father insisted that I get an education for myself. Without the proper resources, however, it is impossible to pursue this. I thank the Whitlam government for providing me with my educational opportunities. I am proud to be part of a government that is dedicated to providing a quality education for all Victorians. The commitment to rebuild or modernise every single public school in Victoria shows that this government values education. With education as our no. 1 priority the Bracks government has begun work on the new Berwick Technical Education Centre, and thousands of children are now learning in the electorate's six new schools built by this government. This is a tremendous effort and a proud record that we will continue. Already the Bracks government has pledged to build a new school, the Casey Central Secondary College, in my electorate, and this is something that will help the hardworking families in Narre Warren South. This is a meaningful promise that demonstrates Labor's commitment to families.

As my own children went off to school, I re-engaged with politics in the 1990s and became actively involved with my local community. At that time good people were missing out on opportunities and feared what might happen to their families in the future. Market fundamentalism was on the ascendancy. I learnt very early in my political life about the power of ideas, good and bad, and that joining with others to take action was more potent than tackling anything by oneself, although the value of leadership should never be undervalued. The establishment of the Southern Women's Action Network, or SWAN as it is affectionately known, began with meetings around my kitchen table — our first guest speaker was Joan Kirner — and it furthered my political education by connecting me with some wonderful women full of ideas, such as Val McKenna, Maureen McPhate, Amy Duncan, Jennifer Halley, Fran Rule, Suzan Blackburn Mitchell, Debbie Roberts and Janice Gray. Some are Labor members, others are women always working hard on a worthwhile, often unfashionable, cause, and some are practising Christians. They have in common their capacity to work hard in the quest for social justice. They have all changed my life for the better and supported me on my road to this place.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too.

These words are important to bear in mind when entering into this, the 56th Victorian Parliament. They are, incidentally, taken from the pages of the Holy Bible, in a letter from Paul to the Philippians.

On the hustings many people asked me about my beliefs and my commitment to God. It is topical in many suburbs. I believe we are responsible for each other as well as ourselves, or, as my never-christened mother, who never feared death, would remind me: treat others as you want to be treated, and just be yourself. I have been disturbed to see in our cosmopolitan Victoria the preaching of views of exclusion and fear. We are all fallible and flawed individuals. It is up to all of us to find and use our own particular moral compass, to determine our values and to make our own choices. As an MP I will be following my faith in justice, equality and compassion and will be representing all families.

I finish by thanking my two great educators, Professor Robert Manne and the late Dr Graham Little. I thank Professor Manne for showing me how to use my brain and not to be fooled by extremism of any sort or by simple solutions to complex political matters. His role as a public intellectual is of benefit to us all in Victoria. I thank Dr Graham Little for teaching me how emotions sharpen and deepen our thinking and how they can be used to great effect in public life.

I am so fortunate for all the opportunities I have been given, and I pledge to represent all the constituents of Narre Warren South to the best of my ability with both my heart and my head. I am especially committed to using my experience to benefit other women in Narre Warren South. 'Choice' is a bit of a buzz word, but it is one which can have much substance to it. It is important to assist women to have more choices so they may, as Hannah Arendt has identified, complement family life and paid work with the *vita activa*, the public life. This point of women balancing family life, paid work and a public life seems to be a fine one to conclude on. In doing so, I thank my family — Stephen, Vanessa, Rebecca and Lucas — for providing me with the support and love to pursue a rich and balanced life.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — In this address-in-reply debate I should like firstly to congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your election to the high office you occupy, and secondly, to congratulate the other newly elected members of this house.

It is a privilege to be elected as the first Liberal member for Ferntree Gully. The electorate of Ferntree Gully lies to the west of the picturesque Dandenong foothills. Located within the municipality of Knox, the electorate comprises the established suburbs of Ferntree Gully and Boronia to the north. To the south lie the suburbs of Rowville and Lysterfield, which over recent years have

experienced significant growth as many young families have established their new residences within these two suburbs. I am a passionate advocate for the needs and aspirations of residents in the Ferntree Gully electorate. It was this passion that inspired me to serve this community as a councillor with the City of Knox and now as a member of this house.

I firmly believe that the Ferntree Gully electorate deserves a greater range of services and infrastructure. This community has demanded improvements to public transport, road infrastructure, law and order, education and health services. Over the next four years I commit myself to being a strong advocate for my constituency. It is clear that the Ferntree Gully electorate requires significant improvements to public transport. The Rowville community is demanding a long-term solution to solve its transport needs. As a Rowville resident I understand the frustrations of my constituency and will continue to advocate for the completion of the Rowville rail feasibility study. Furthermore, to overcome concerns about community safety I will continue the fight to upgrade Ferntree Gully railway station to premium status.

Law and order is a major concern to my community. The Rowville police station is currently operational for only 16 hours a day. This situation is untenable and I will continue lobbying for this station to be operational for 24 hours a day. The road network throughout my electorate requires significant upgrade. Many residents complain that there appears to be no clear planning to overcome congestion on our local roads. I commit to fight for the duplication of Napoleon Road. Once completed, this will allow for the construction of the long-awaited Dorset Road extension.

Health and education services in the region also require significant upgrades. I will continue to lobby for important upgrades to the Knox Community Health Service and also continue to push for the upgrade and redevelopment of our local school infrastructure. It is not acceptable for my constituents to be educated in substandard facilities.

The Ferntree Gully community has been well served over many years by a number of highly regarded Liberal members of Parliament. Sir George Knox served the region with distinction for 33 years. In April 1927 Sir George was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the member for Upper Yarra. In November 1945 he was elected as the member for Scoresby, a position he held until his death in 1960. During his period in Parliament Sir George served as Speaker of the house between 1942 and 1947. Prior to his tenure in Parliament he served as a commanding

officer with the 23rd Battalion, which included service in Gallipoli. He also served as a councillor with the Shire of Ferntree Gully for five years. In recognition of his service to the Ferntree Gully community the City of Knox was named in his honour.

The Honourable William Borthwick represented the region with distinction, serving as the member for Scoresby between 1960 and 1967 before serving as the member for Monbulk until 1982. During his tenure in Parliament he served at various times as a minister of water supply, lands, soldier settlement, conservation, health and also as Deputy Premier between June 1981 and April 1982.

The Honourable Geoffrey Hayes represented the region as member for Scoresby between 1967 and 1976. He also served the Parliament with distinction as a minister for planning and housing. Mr Hurtle Lupton, who would be known to many in this house, served as the member for Knox between 1992 and 2002. Hurtle was committed to the Knox community, having served as a councillor with the City of Knox for 20 years, including three terms as mayor.

I am proud of the contributions my ancestors have made to life in Australia. My maternal ancestors emigrated from England and Ireland in the 19th century. James Tomkins and his wife Maria produced 10 children in their native Dublin. Like many victims of the potato famine the family travelled to Australia on the *Midlothian* in 1853 in search of a better life. Upon arriving in Victoria with his family James obtained employment as a member of the Victorian public service, serving as a messenger and housekeeper in the office of the Master in Equity. Another maternal ancestor, Thomas Hoskin, and his future wife, Tryphena, emigrated from Cornwall to Melbourne in the 1850s in search of a new life. After marrying in Melbourne the couple travelled to the country, where they helped pioneer the community of Violet Town in Victoria's north-east.

My maternal grandfather, Norman Tomkins, worked as a chauffeur for Sir Henry Wrixon at his property named Raheen in Kew. Sir Henry served as President in the Legislative Council. With the outbreak of war Norman immediately enlisted for service. Serving with the 6th Battalion, my grandfather was a proud Anzac, having landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Upon returning to Australia after sustaining an injury at the front, Norman and his new wife, Elsie, raised four children during the height of the Depression. I am proud of their contribution and the manner in which the couple raised my mother, Jacqueline.

My paternal ancestors emigrated from England. John Layburn emigrated to Australia in the 19th century and took up residence in the rural New South Wales township of Carcoar. His son, John Joseph Layburn, later served his country on two occasions as a member of the Bushmen's Regiment during the Boer War in South Africa.

Another paternal ancestor, George Alfred Wakeling, and his wife, Jane, moved to Manly, New South Wales, with their three children. George established a small business in Sydney. His son Reginald was passionate about political discussion and instilled in my father, Bill, and his three brothers the significance of political philosophy and debate.

I am proud to serve in this house as a member of the Liberal Party. The late Sir Robert Menzies, founder of this great party, developed the Liberal Party on a philosophy of smaller government and encouraging the right of the individual to grow and prosper. One only needs to look at the proposal by the then Chifley Labor government to nationalise the banking system. Menzies, as Leader of the Opposition, declared in the House of Representatives that such a move was:

... a tremendous step towards the servile state, because it will set aside normal liberty of choice, and that is what competition means, and will forward the idea of the special supremacy of government. That is the antithesis of democracy. Democracy rests upon the view that the people are the rulers as well as the ruled; that the government has no authority and no privilege beyond that granted by the people themselves; that while sovereignty attaches to the acts of Parliament, that sovereignty is derived from the people and has no other source.

It was this philosophy of free enterprise, small government and hard work that encouraged my father to join the Liberal Party at an early age and later serve as a ministerial adviser in the former Hamer government.

During my formative years I was taught about the Liberal philosophy around the family dinner table, a philosophy which supports the concept that wealth is created in the private sector and the health of the private sector determines the ultimate health of the economy. My philosophy was further developed through my experiences in both my education and employment.

My education at Haileybury College, my political studies at La Trobe University and my postgraduate studies in industrial relations at both RMIT and Monash universities provided me with the opportunity to explore and debate a range of political philosophies. I can recall many passionate philosophical debates with lecturers and fellow students during these formative

years. I also look back with fondness on my time in student politics. As the new member for Malvern would recall, in the early 1990s spirited debate was led by Liberal students throughout university campuses regarding the need for voluntary student unionism, a dream finally realised with the recent passage of legislation through the Senate.

I bring to this house a range of business experiences in both the private and the public sectors that have enabled me to understand the impact of government regulation on Australian industry. Working in the industrial relations department of the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce allowed me to understand the significance of the small business sector to the Victorian economy.

Small business is the engine room of the Victorian economy, and it is vital that the Victorian government develop the best mix of policies to encourage these businesses to prosper. Furthermore, my more recent role in a senior industrial relations position with the Adecco Group has provided me with a unique opportunity to understand the employment needs of many Australian businesses. Working for one of Australia's largest employers that on-hires over 10 000 employees to thousands of businesses throughout Australia has enabled me to develop a range of employment models with a large number of businesses throughout this nation.

Developing employment models on a national level has also demonstrated the disparity in legislation amongst the states in a range of portfolios. These experiences highlighted the need for greater harmonisation of government regulation throughout the commonwealth. The former Kennett government should be commended for achieving harmonisation at a national level with respect to industrial relations. I believe it is incumbent on future governments to explore greater opportunity for harmonisation amongst the various legislators.

I have been provided with a wonderful opportunity to represent the needs and aspirations of my electorate. I remain steadfast in my desire to see the delivery of better services and infrastructure for the Knox community. I also commit myself to working for a better Victoria, a state in which business is encouraged to grow and prosper to allow all Victorians the opportunity to achieve a better quality of life through the benefits of full-time employment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wonderful campaign team and supporters for their hard work. I am indebted to the commitment of Liberal Party members in both the Rowville and Ferntree Gully

branches, who committed many months to my campaign. I would also like to pay credit to my fantastic campaign committee, in particular Glynis Allan, Dawn Keast and former member Hurtle Lupton. I will always be sincerely grateful to my campaign chairman, Graeme McEwin, who is here today, for his commitment, drive and passion. Graeme is unswerving in his commitment to the Liberal Party in the Knox region. Graeme put his faith in me many years ago, and I am sincerely indebted to him.

I would like to thank my state colleague Kim Wells, the member for Scoresby, plus my federal colleagues the Honourable Chris Pearce, the federal member for Aston, and Jason Wood, the federal member for La Trobe, for their support and counsel. The efforts of these members demonstrate the resolve of Liberal parliamentarians to assist their colleagues wherever possible.

I will always be proud of my parents, Bill and Jacqueline. I will always be very grateful to my mother, who put aside many issues to make sure that my education was the no. 1 priority in her life whilst trying to cope on a single fixed income with the 17 per cent interest rates in the 1980s. I would like to pay credit to my brother, Tim, and my wonderful parents-in-law, Colin and Judy Golding, for being so giving of their time to my campaign.

I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Levili, and my two children, Thomas and Emily, who are not here today, for being such a fantastic family. Members in this house would know only too well the impact that an election campaign has on our immediate families, particularly those who fight an 18-month campaign.

I would also like to thank my work colleagues at Adecco who are here today for their support and friendship, and the many companies within the recruitment industry for their support.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the electorate by the former member for Ferntree Gully, Ms Anne Eckstein. I wish her and her family well in the future and on behalf of the constituents of Ferntree Gully thank her for the work she did during her term in office.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is indeed a privilege to rise to speak for the first time in this chamber. I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your election to that position.

It is a great honour to have been elected by the people of my own community to represent them in this Parliament. My electorate is truly a great one to

represent. There is a real sense of community and a willingness to work together in the Bundoora electorate. People care about what happens in the local neighbourhood: they look out for each other and are always ready to lend a hand. I have often wondered why that sense of community is so strong in my local community and whether it is related to the fact that many older residents moved to the areas around Bundoora when they were only outlying townships around metropolitan Melbourne. Those small communities banded together to build their futures. That original community spirit has endured, and it has been ingrained in younger generations and in others who have moved into the area.

Ask me some time and I will talk to you proudly about a local church, All Saints in Greensborough, that runs an innovative community legal service to help people in need; or the Diamond Valley Little Athletics Centre, one of the largest in Australia, where families gather on Saturdays to compete in their own friendly games; the friends groups that care for Bundoora Park and the Plenty River; and the Watsonia RSL, which provides scholarships to locals kids starting high school. Then there are the volunteers at Banyule who link eager volunteers to grateful organisations, and the people at the Diamond Valley Foodshare who provide food for those who are caught short. Then there is the Kingsbury Society, whose members are seeking to memorialise the great Bruce Kingsbury, VC, within the suburb that bears his name. These are just some of the fantastic groups of people in the Bundoora electorate. I have no shortage of reminders of why I am fortunate to represent the people of Bundoora.

In representing Bundoora I follow in the footsteps of a great woman — the previous member, Sherryl Garbutt. Sherryl stepped up to represent the electorate of Greensborough in a by-election in 1989 after the death of Pauline Toner. Then, following a redistribution, she was elected to represent Bundoora in 1992 and continued as the member for that electorate until retiring at last month's election. Sherryl stepped out of public life, having served in the Bracks Labor ministry in the portfolios of environment, women's affairs, community services and as the state's first Minister for Children. She has left a legacy of many great achievements, including the establishment of marine national parks. She served the people of Greensborough and Bundoora well, with many local achievements including better schools, transport and other facilities.

I fondly remember working with Sherryl to secure funding to upgrade the popular Watsonia library and to provide a new netball stadium at Macleod. I also remember her leadership, along with others, in the fight

to save the Austin hospital from being sold off by the previous government. It is great to travel through Heidelberg these days and see the new Austin and Mercy hospitals, thanks to the Bracks government. That modern health facility that stands on Heidelberg Hill just eight or so years after the previous government was trying to sell the old hospital is not only a great health facility for Melbourne's north-east, it is also a concrete example of the difference between the major political parties in this state.

Sherryl Garbutt should be proud of her many achievements, and I wish her well for the future. I am sure that I will be calling her from time to time to seek her friendly and supportive advice.

I have also worked with other members and ministers over the years and have learnt much from them. They are people like the member for Ivanhoe, the member for Kororoit, the member for Yan Yean and the new Minister for Education in the other place, all of whom I thank for their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank the new member for Northcote for her loyal support.

My election campaign in Bundoora was typical of Labor Party local election campaigns — that is, it was made possible by literally hundreds of volunteers who all did their bit. Whether they were members of the Labor Party or friends and supporters of mine, I am extremely grateful and humbled by their efforts. It would be impossible to name them all in this speech, but a few deserve special mention.

My campaign director, Stephen Paul, was ably assisted by Helen Coleman, Anne Paul, Sue Dyet, Rosie Bray, Frank Beard, Ernie Gallie, Michael Paul, Terrie Earl, Ermioni Aivazidou, Andrew Lanigan, Brian and Ellen Smiddy, and Sandra and Tony Murphy. My wife, Melinda, and family members who are here today, along with my daughter, Ally, and son, Thomas, are a great support to me and have already endured much of the strain of political life. My mother, Kay, and brother, Robert, travelled from Sydney to attend yesterday's opening of Parliament. My father, Bill Brooks, could not be here, but along with my mother is truly an inspiration to me and others who know him. He is a humble man of courage and determination, and I know he would have loved to have been able to travel to Melbourne if he could. Then again, he cannot stand politicians, so it would have been an interesting experience for us all.

Whilst my father's disability will never define who he is, and my mother's care for him will similarly not define her, it is very true that their experiences have had

a very profound effect on me and my beliefs, in particular my strengthened belief in the role of governments to provide high-quality health care for everybody and responsive services to people who need them, and my belief in the role of governments to support carers who often do not seek recognition or reward but deserve some respite from the routine and pressures they are under.

Having served for eight years as an elected councillor in local government, I have developed a strong interest in the planning of our cities and towns. I congratulate the Premier on his appointment of the new Minister for Planning in the other place. I am sure he will do a great job in that role, just as his predecessor, the Attorney-General, did.

Governments at all levels must play a role in guiding the development of our cities to ensure the best possible outcome for the community, whilst ensuring that growth is not stifled. Clearly defined planning strategies and efficient planning systems encourage the right sort of growth in our cities. We have seen that occurring here in Victoria. Melbourne, and in particular my electorate of Bundoora, is a great place to live and raise a family. Family-sized homes are affordable, and there is room for children to grow up. Bundoora electorate boasts great schools, La Trobe University, excellent sporting and recreational facilities, and it is serviced by an extensive transport network. You could not create a better place to bring up a family if you tried.

It makes sense to utilise this community infrastructure by promoting these sorts of areas as family-friendly areas and to protect family-sized homes from high-density development. Just as sensible is the planning for an older generation and the shrinking average household size. Meeting these housing demands will be one of the key planning challenges in middle-ring suburbs and in electorates like Bundoora. In particular I hope to be able to contribute to further thoughtful and well-considered planning policy in the life of this Parliament.

Serving in Parliament is about making society a better place, changing things that are wrong and ensuring that we do things in a fairer way for everyone. It is about rising to the challenges that confront us and most importantly ensuring that the load is evenly spread. It is about ensuring that we make the right decisions for our children and the generations that follow them.

It is important for me to state in this, my first contribution to the house, the unwavering faith I have in the Australian Labor Party to serve the interests of working people. I joined the Labor Party after working

as a tradesman on building sites, becoming involved in the union movement at job level — at that stage with the Electrical Trades Union. I have witnessed the disregard that conservative governments have shown for workers conditions and their safety. My political beliefs have been galvanised by the values of my family. With respect, other parties will never deliver the things I have spoken about for Victorians. It is only Labor that has done so in the past, and only Labor will do so in the future. For all the words that are spoken, it is what governments do that counts.

I am immensely proud to become part of a government that has rebuilt so much of our community's vital social infrastructure, a government that has a plan for a sustainable future and a government that does business in a financially responsible manner, ensuring that our state's economy remains strong. My role in this place and my journey are just beginning. I am sure that most if not all members feel the same way as I do when they are first elected — that is, they are full of enthusiasm and ideas. I look forward to sharing those ideas and putting that enthusiasm to good use. I look forward to honouring the trust that has been placed in me.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I begin by congratulating you, Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker on your appointments. I very much look forward to enjoying your displays of fairness and impartiality. My congratulations extend to all elected members. Your presence in the house today clearly indicates that you share with me a deep desire to improve the lives of our fellow Victorians. In particular I congratulate newly elected members. The six months since my preselection have given me a newfound respect for the dedication required to achieve this office.

The people of Warrandyte have done me a great honour in electing me to represent them in this Parliament. I am humbled by the trust they have placed in me, and I thank them for their overwhelming support. I have learnt that one of the most important qualities we must possess as our communities' representatives is the ability to listen. My predecessor, Phil Honeywood, who was respected by both sides of this place, enjoyed great support in the electorate over many years because of his firm connections with the community and his ability to positively tap into the issues as they arose. To the best of my ability I aim to emulate this behaviour by actively listening and providing the representation my electorate deserves. Our electorates will judge us all on our ability to listen — to truly listen — understand and respond to the concerns and needs of our communities. In order for me to have the opportunity to listen, I intend to make myself both approachable by and accessible to my constituents. I look forward to

working with my community to achieve my goal of making the Warrandyte electorate a better place in which to live.

The Warrandyte electorate is a special place in metropolitan Melbourne. Its mixture of semirural and urban settlements sees it comprising suburbs with their own distinctive identities, intrinsically with specific needs of government.

The first sale of land in Ringwood occurred in 1854 and saw many flocking to the area to join the timber, quarrying and orchard industries that were flourishing at the time. The electrification of the railway in the 1920s and the building of Eastland shopping centre in 1967 were both landmark events that fuelled the creation of the major activity centre we know today.

The Warrandyte township, once known as Anderson's Creek, has its own claim to fame. It was arguably here that gold was first discovered in Victoria in 1851, kicking off the gold rush and helping to establish a large part of Victoria's rich history. The township now boasts beautiful parkland and an unspoilt atmosphere, with local residents taking a keen interest and involvement in preserving that nature.

Park Orchards, originally known as The Park, was once the site of a 560-acre orchard established in the early 1900s, with subdivision of the land for residential use beginning in the late 1920s. The creation of the Hundred Acres reserve in Park Orchards is a fine example of the government responding to the community's wishes. Community action led to the local council purchasing the land with state and federal funding for recreation and appreciation of the natural habitat. Nowadays within the boundaries of the Warrandyte electorate we can enjoy the beauty of the Yarra River and state forests, a thriving entertainment and shopping district, and a growing suburban community.

By virtue of the unique position in which the Warrandyte electorate finds itself, it is a wonderful place to live. There are, however, many areas in need of immediate and ongoing attention. Most of the state schools in the electorate are in desperate need of funds for pressing maintenance issues. The police in the area are under-resourced or are too often engaged in non-core policing tasks. The local railway station is in dire need of renovation. The bus services are insufficient, and there are many roads that are unsafe or cannot cope with the current traffic volume. Our iconic Yarra River is at its most polluted through Warrandyte, and the current plan to address this is progressing at an alarmingly slow pace.

Throughout my campaign, each time I had the privilege to talk with a school principal, a police officer, a local commuter or simply a family in a shopping centre these messages were the same. My constituents' issues and the gravity of their concerns must no longer be ignored. I do not raise these issues to attack the government, I raise them to put the government on notice to indeed govern for all and to urgently address the needs of the Warrandyte community.

It is vitally important that we start to lead Victoria forward. There are many challenges ahead, not least in the areas of water conservation, health and relieving the tax burden on families. Sounder management of the resources at this government's disposal can and must meet these challenges to provide a bright and ever prosperous future for Victoria.

All governments must show evidence of real leadership. They do this by exhibiting decisiveness and establishing vision. It is easy to bask in the glory of popular decisions gone well; it is similarly easy to lay blame at the feet of others when issues spiral out of your control. What is difficult, however, is taking full and absolute responsibility for things gone wrong. The public demands this form of accountability.

I am passionate in my beliefs, and my passion leads me here today. I believe in the rights of the individual and the provision of structures through which hardworking individuals can set and achieve their goals in life.

I left my family home in Queensland at the age of 17. My success in life thus far is a result of my ability to take care of my own needs. I have orchestrated my own life experiences, which have seen me achieve and exceed the goals I have set myself. The results have been far more than I initially thought possible in both the personal and professional sense. I achieved this result by working hard and finding the right opportunities.

I further believe we must help those in need and provide the resources for those who cannot manage on their own. In recent months I have had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with the parents of disabled children. Their stories have stirred in me an understanding of the hardships they face and a deep desire to help where I can. It is imperative that we are able to provide assistance to these families. All members of our community have a right to live their lives with dignity. We must manage our resources so that the maximum benefit is achieved for those who are unable to manage for themselves. This is an extraordinary challenge and one to which we all must rise.

I believe in the family unit as the basic building block for a productive society. We must support families where support is needed and help to relieve any burden and hardship they face. I believe in supporting those communities that proudly represent our heritage and in protecting our environment for future generations. It was a Liberal government that introduced the concept of green wedges, and I will continue to argue for their necessity and importance.

I am proud to be a Liberal. Our party platform encapsulates my beliefs, and I am committed to supporting those beliefs, both in my electorate and in this Parliament.

My professional life prior to this has prepared me well by providing me with many of the skills that will be needed in the coming years. I worked for almost 20 years in the foreign exchange and money markets. This took the form of a variety of roles with several of Melbourne's premier banks and corporations. The ability to source sound information through the building of quality relationships was vital. This information had to be cautiously considered before the next move was made. There was a strong need to take decisive action and to keenly anticipate and accept the consequences of those actions, both negative and positive. I see similar requirements in our roles today — the need to form worthy relationships within our community, and the need to consider all the possible outcomes of our actions and confidently go down the road we deem most suitable, despite the fact that it may not always be the most popular route electorally.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have had such an enormous impact on my life. I thank my wife, Avril: while I certainly had the personal motivation to be here today, Avril's encouragement and belief in me has been truly invaluable. My one-year-old son, Brodie, provided me with many joyous times throughout the campaign period, and he made an intense and sometimes stressful time a great deal easier. My parents, Jan and Glenn, set me on life's journey with a finely tuned moral compass. They have always offered their unconditional love and support. My close friends, who all know who they are, have been a major part of my life over many years and have been instrumental in shaping who I am today.

I would like to place on the record my thanks to the Liberal Party secretariat, my electorate council and the local Liberal members of the Warrandyte electorate. The amount of work that goes into a campaign would stagger anyone who has not been involved in one. My success is due in no small part to the efforts of the many

who gave of their time, and to them I offer my enormous appreciation.

I would finally like to thank my Liberal colleagues in the leadership team in both the upper and lower houses in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. Their support, guidance and companionship were invaluable during the campaign.

I would like to close by pledging my commitment to the Assembly and by voicing my great respect for our democratic system of government. Albert Einstein said:

Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.

By honouring the Liberal Party's core ideals and being true to my own beliefs, it is my intention to be a man of value in this, Victoria's 56th Parliament.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — It gives me great pleasure to rise in reply to the Governor's address. I am not certain if this is technically my inaugural speech, but it certainly feels like it is, and I certainly feel as though I am the new girl on the block. Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your role and also the Speaker on her elevation to the role of Speaker. Today we certainly saw how she will chair the procedures of this Parliament in a fair and very determined way.

To the Premier I also would like to add my congratulations for the election of a historic third Labor government — a victory that I do not think would have been possible without his style of leadership. I want to talk a little bit about what our government has been all about. Through the Premier we have seen all ministers and members of Parliament develop and implement policies that have made a real difference to the lives of Victorians rather than policy that is steeped in ideology with little care or concern for the detrimental effect that it may have on sections and segments of our community. An example of that is industrial relations. If ever there were a policy driven by ideology with little concern for the people it would affect, it is the current 'WorkNoChoices' legislation that we have seen come from the Howard government.

We have not been afraid to make hard decisions in government when we have had to make them. We have certainly had a vision for what Victoria can be, and we have set up a framework to deliver that vision. This vision was developed with the work that we did with business, with the trade union movement, with the not-for-profit sector, with the broader community and with members of the Australian Labor Party's policy committees. We first developed *Growing Victoria Together*, a document that saw a total change in the

way government did business. It was about bringing communities together, it was about providing services that were needed by all the members of our community, and it was about meeting those needs and sharing our wealth.

The Premier also stressed to us the importance of discipline and team effort, and certainly for the last two terms that has been evident. I am certain that with this, the third Bracks government, that discipline and teamwork we saw in the first two terms will continue.

I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Footscray, who put their trust in me and the Australian Labor Party to represent their interests — a trust I intend to live up to. Can I also say on behalf of all the members of the Labor Party who represent the west that we will be a strong team and a strong voice in ensuring that we meet their needs and keep the commitments we made during the election campaign.

The people of Footscray have a long tradition of electing Labor representatives. They have done so continuously since 1927. There has also been established a tradition of local members serving the people of Footscray for extensive periods of time, the longest serving being Robert Fordham, who served the Parliament and the people of Footscray for 22 years. He was only a young man when he left, too! Robert played a key role as Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party in preparing the party for government in 1982. He served as Deputy Premier and held numerous portfolios, his first as education minister.

Then came Bruce Mildenhall, who served 14 years from 1992 until the recent election. Certainly Bruce maintained the tradition of his predecessors, even to the extent that when we were cleaning out his office we discovered Robert Fordham's Christmas decorations. They had been there so long that I am sure they should be listed as items of historic state significance.

No-one can doubt Bruce's commitment to the people of Footscray. He worked tirelessly for them with humility and quiet determination. I doubt if you could ever take Bruce out of Footscray, and you certainly could not take the Footscray out of Bruce. I hope he enjoys his retirement. I know he will still be active in Footscray and in the west. I hope that he and Karen have the ability to share some quality time together. I wish to thank him for his support, his wisdom and his friendship, which I have come to value greatly.

The electorate of Footscray is diverse. It is a community where many live comfortable lives but where for many others every day is a struggle. Nearly

half the population speak a language other than English. It is a multicultural community, but it is one that works together. The community sector is interrelated. Every organisation knows every other organisation, and there are multicultural festivals to ensure that those from different cultures experience other cultures.

The city of Maribyrnong and the city of Brimbank make up the seat of Footscray. But I can say, as many have said before me, that there are, however, many challenges ahead. Like many inner suburbs of Melbourne, the demographics are changing. There are distinct communities with different needs and expectations.

Footscray is now both a residential and an industrial area, which is a long way away from its establishment for brick makers and quarries of the past. There are major areas of new residential development, and in Braybrook and Maidstone the government is undertaking a large neighbourhood renewal project.

There are the relatively newly arrived people from the Horn of Africa. Many, like refugees before them, have horrific but heroic stories of survival. Many have recognised qualifications that would put most of us in this chamber to shame, yet they are unable to get jobs in their field and are relegated to driving taxis.

There are many communities with equally challenging issues. Footscray has one of the highest incidences of type 2 diabetes, a disease which has a huge impact on the individuals who suffer from it and also on their families and the broader community.

The Bracks government has committed to the largest ever investment in education, health and community safety in Footscray. But there is more to be done, and the government will meet the commitments it made before its election, and then some.

In my inaugural speech in the other place I talked about my Jewish heritage and that from it I had learnt the importance of tolerance and the need to learn from those who are different so that we may enrich our lives. This has never been more important than today. I am proud to be a member of the Bracks government, which truly embraces multiculturalism and promotes community harmony and understanding, unlike the federal government, which feeds on ignorance, fear and division.

I also mentioned in my inaugural speech that my father taught me to challenge and question, but most importantly to fight for what I believe in. In keeping with this my first foray into political activity was at the age of 14. It was to organise with some friends a

demonstration protesting what we thought was the sacking of an extremely popular teacher. It turned out that our good intentions were misguided. I would like to think that my political judgment has matured since then.

It certainly did not stop me from embracing feminism, joining the Movement Against Uranium Mining, becoming a member of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, and getting involved in local youth unemployment groups, local environment groups and of course the Australian Labor Party.

My mother taught me generosity. In fact, I lived in a home that welcomed all. If you knocked on the door at a meal time you were expected to sit down and actually have a meal. Visitors from overseas were welcome to come and stay, as one son of a friend of my mother's decided to do. He arrived from Israel intending to stay for three weeks, and he was still there three months later.

In my inaugural speech I thanked many people, and that gratitude remains. But I do want to thank some additional people. The Labor Party members in Footscray truly embraced me and the campaign. They worked hard and tirelessly, not just for me but for the Australian Labor Party. I thank Clive Bracey and Damien Wieland, who have now become my electorate officers. I thank Cuc Lam, Sarah Toohey and Dick Lee, who never watched a clock or ever went home. Ron Palmer is Footscray; there is not an organisation in Footscray that Ron Palmer either is not a member of or has not been a member of. I thank Michael Clarke, who is the mayor of Maribyrnong; Senator Stephen Conroy; and Nicola Roxon, the federal member for Gellibrand, and Bill Shorten, who will soon be the federal member for Maribyrnong — the two federal seats in the seat of Footscray — for their ongoing support and friendship over many years.

I wish to thank my ministerial staff: Rob Acton, Shaun Thomas, Robert Larocca, Nicole Rich — who thought she would get through being a ministerial adviser without being named in Parliament; I have fixed that now — and also Peter Marzenko and the others who have worked in my office. My list of achievements as a minister are long, and they could not have been achieved without their support and the support of my parliamentary colleagues.

I would also like to thank Rob Gell for his personal endorsement during the campaign and for his commitment to our environment.

I look forward to working with my Labor Party colleagues in the west to ensure that the west, and Footscray in particular, is a great place to live, work and raise a family.

President Bill Clinton said in his State of the Union address in January 1999:

... we have a government for the information age, once again, a government that is a progressive instrument of the common good, rooted in our oldest values of opportunity, responsibility ... determined to give our people the tools they need to make the most of their ... lives in the 21st century, a 21st century government for 21st century America.

You could easily transpose 'Victoria' for 'America' in that statement: it would still be true. I am very proud to be a member of the third Bracks Labor government.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — Congratulations, Deputy Speaker; and I also pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on her appointment.

Firstly, let me congratulate the government for its recent success at the polls. May I also congratulate the Premier and executive, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals for their election to positions of such high office, and more broadly all members of the Parliament for their election or re-election.

I am sure I echo the words of many past members when I say what a privilege it is to stand here today. It is a true honour to be a member of the 56th Parliament of Victoria.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Brendan Jenkins, for his service. Mr Jenkins has been a long-serving public figure in the Latrobe Valley and has worked hard in the community in a multitude of roles. I wish him and his family all the very best in their future endeavours.

By way of introduction I would like to share some of the events that have led to me standing here today. I was born in Traralgon 40 years ago and have lived in the Latrobe Valley for all but six months of my life. I am part of the third generation of my family to have lived in Traralgon, along with my siblings, Jim and Sandra, and their families. My father, Peter, has passed on but my mother, Betty, still lives in Traralgon. My wife Jennifer's parents and three brothers and their families also reside in this wonderful region.

I believe my best qualification for my new role here is my passion for the area I live in. Being born and raised in Gippsland has meant my most wonderful and cherished memories were created in the region I call

home. The many adventures I had growing up have made me appreciate how good we have it in Gippsland, and in particular I have great memories of my adolescent years in school, although some teachers may not look back at this time so fondly.

The bulk of my working life was spent as a technical officer in the power industry, while over the last few years I have managed a business in Morwell. Outside of work I have been an active member of various local sporting clubs over a long period of time. I am passionate about country football and I have involved myself at all levels of the game, serving as player, coach and administrator for several clubs over the years.

Having been involved in the Traralgon Football Club as well as Gippsland Power, the Rosedale Football Club and my children's club, I have been privileged to meet many others in my community who share my passion for the game. I am a life member of both the Traralgon Football Club and the West Gippsland Latrobe Football League after playing in excess of 300 senior games of football, and have been lucky enough to coach some fantastic teams.

The leadership skills I have learnt on and off the field have certainly helped me in business. When you are involved in sport you mix with people from all walks of life and you learn to work together as a team for the greater good of everyone involved. This is an approach similar to that I will be adopting in politics. I will work with anyone who is passionate and positive about the future of the Latrobe Valley.

While I have had a 40-year involvement with my local community, I admit to being on a steep learning curve since my preselection in June this year. I have met with many of my fellow community members, and there is no doubt that the constituents of the Morwell electorate are extremely passionate and committed to improving their region. Many acknowledge that there have been improvements made during these times of prosperity; however, many argue there is still much to be achieved. I aspire to work with all levels of government, community groups, local businesses and individuals to achieve their goals for our region.

The Morwell electorate is a wonderful place. It is a relatively quiet part of the world; yet it is only 2 hours from the bright lights of Melbourne, less than 2 hours from the ski slopes, an hour away from the Ninety Mile Beach and very close to the beautiful Gippsland Lakes. All this is not to say there is not much to offer within the Morwell electorate. We have it all and more — beautiful walks in Morwell National Park; fishing or

camping along our many rivers, creeks or lakes; shopping; having a bite to eat or a coffee at one of our renowned eateries; and visiting the Latrobe Regional Gallery, the brown coal museum in Yallourn or PowerWorks in Morwell. Water enthusiasts are well catered for with the uniquely warm water of Hazelwood Pondage providing a great base for boating, swimming and waterskiing. We have a variety of golf courses and tennis and bowling clubs and access to Latrobe Regional Airport. But most of all we have passionate and loyal people, with many dedicated community groups working to better our region.

The Morwell electorate is also, I believe, unique in many ways. On the one hand we have major industry in the three local power stations and Australian Paper's Maryvale mill. On the other hand we have world-class primary producers in the Yinnar and Toongabbie districts. In between we have many small and medium-sized businesses along with a number of attractions with untapped tourism potential. We are also fortunate to be home to a great educational facility in the Monash University campus at Churchill and a talented and enthusiastic student population.

The major towns in the electorate include Morwell, Traralgon and Churchill, whilst surrounding towns include Boolarra, Toongabbie and Yallourn North. The population in the major centres like Traralgon continues to grow, but there are some concerns for townships such as Yallourn North, where local business has seen less custom over recent years and school enrolments have reduced as the local population has declined.

It is the tendency of governments and the bureaucracy to base decisions about resource allocation on population trends. However, I believe we need to be very careful when making such decisions concerning smaller regional townships. It makes sense to retain a basic level of services in towns like Yallourn North, because people's decisions to move to an area are usually predicated on access to quality local schools, police and other services. Once we strip small towns of such assets, further population decline is inevitable.

Providing better health and aged care services, giving our kids every chance to succeed at school and helping our small business community create jobs are all issues that should be above party politics, and it is my intention to work with the community to allow our region to achieve its full potential. I plan to work hard in this term to gain funding for school upgrades in the Latrobe Valley. The government has done some work in this area, but much more remains to be done. I welcome the government's pledge to spend \$1.9 billion on the upgrade of 500 primary and secondary schools,

and I will be doing all I can to ensure that a fair share of this money is spent in the Latrobe Valley. And great is the need for that to be so — Latrobe Valley parents were alarmed by a recent Australian Education Union report that suggested their children were being taught in substandard schools. The survey revealed that Morwell is the 11th worst electorate when it comes to school facilities, with work needing to be done to attract teachers to the area and improve inadequate infrastructure.

Water is another key issue of concern in our region, as it is across the state. Many people are worried by the eastern region recycling proposal, and while we understand all options need to be considered, the majority of my constituents do not want to see Melbourne's recycled water being sent into the Latrobe Valley in exchange for more of our potable water.

The future of brown coal power generation in the Latrobe Valley has also been the subject of much discussion. This industry is an integral part of our region, and we must continue to support local research and development in clean coal technology that will both improve our domestic emissions profile and make us a world leader in this area. Recent news that International Power Australia will spend \$289 million retro-fitting low-emission technology at Hazelwood power station is very welcome, as is news the state government will provide \$50 million towards a \$750 million clean coal power station to be built by HRL Ltd. These are precisely the kinds of projects needed to guarantee Victoria's future energy supply and prosperity.

Domestic demand for electricity is growing, and I believe we now need to consider the possibility of a new coal-fired plant. Renewable energy projects and gas-fired plants have their place; however, we will soon need to decide how to supply Victoria's future energy needs. With its abundant coal supplies and highly skilled local labour, I believe the Latrobe Valley is ideally suited for the construction of a new, clean-coal, base-load plant.

Another large employer in our electorate is Australian Paper, based at Maryvale. Maryvale mill can produce more than 500 000 tonnes of paper every year, qualifying it as the largest pulp and paper-making complex in Australia. As a major exporter of products, this business is a crucial player in Victoria's future, and I look forward as local member to doing all I can to support it. I will also seek to support the many small to medium-sized businesses that continue to grow and prosper in our region and will champion reforms to encourage further growth in this vital sector.

Despite the presence of major industry in the Latrobe Valley, unemployment in some of our townships remains at an unacceptably high level. There need to be further incentives for business and industry to settle in our region. If we can work with training facilities such as TAFE and with business to ensure that people are being equipped with the skills actually required by industry, we will ensure that more people have the opportunity to find gainful employment locally. As a father of three I want to see my children grow up in a region where jobs are plentiful, and if we play it smart this can be achieved. But again, we have some work to do.

Located next to the Latrobe Regional Airport is the Latrobe Regional Hospital. Unfortunately this facility has been in the local media in recent times for the wrong reasons, as it has struggled to deal with the burden of caring for those with a mental illness in our community. The crisis in mental health services impacts upon the whole community. A lack of beds, allied health professionals and support services means not only that patients suffer but that families, health care workers, police and the wider community also suffer. I acknowledge that the state government has some plans to improve the current situation; however, I cannot stress enough that the need is urgent, particularly in rural and regional Victoria.

The government's appointment of a Minister for Mental Health is a positive step, and I will assist the minister where possible to improve the situation in my electorate. I believe the government's first project should be to ensure that young Victorians with mental health problems are able to seek treatment in a specialised publicly funded mental health service that is focused on meeting their unique needs.

Waiting lists for community health services are also very much a concern in the Latrobe Valley, but I again welcome the government's commitment of \$21 million to redevelop Latrobe Community Health Service in Morwell. Over the next four years I look forward to working with the Minister for Health to advance this and other projects.

This brings me to the wonderful work of volunteers and carers in the community. The Morwell electorate is home to many who voluntarily care for loved ones with very little respite. I would like nothing more than to see improved government support for carers and expanded opportunities for respite care in the Morwell electorate, and I will do what I can to assist in this regard.

Like other parts of the state, the Latrobe Valley has suffered greatly in the recent fires, with many homes

lost within the Morwell electorate. Areas such as Cowwarr and Toongabbie were very hard hit from the Coopers Creek bushfire, which police believe was deliberately lit. Even as I speak fires are threatening Walhalla, which, while not in my electorate, is an icon of the Latrobe Valley. In addition to destroying homes, fences and assets, the Coopers Creek blaze led to the death of 48-year-old Donald Dosser of Longford in the most tragic loss of all.

I take this opportunity to commend the Country Fire Authority and its volunteers, plus all other departmental staff, paid firefighters and individuals who have teamed together and attempted to minimise the destruction wrought by these fires. It is in these most difficult times that communities rally together. The commitment from all involved has been nothing short of amazing. I will continue to work to obtain support for those affected by bushfires until they have the opportunity to get back on their feet. It is my hope that those responsible for this terrible destruction and devastation are caught and made to face the full force of the law. The hearts of some may be broken but not the spirit of the Latrobe Valley community.

In closing, let me thank The Nationals for the tremendous opportunity to represent the Morwell electorate. Since being elected I have had a wonderful response from my colleagues, and I fully intend to be an integral part of what is already a great team. A special thankyou to my campaign committee and the many volunteers, family members and friends who helped out during my campaign. I am most grateful to the constituents of the Morwell electorate who have instilled their faith in me by electing me to this esteemed position. Credit for my election must also be attributed to my proud parents, Peter and Betty, my wife Jennifer and children, Tim, Matthew and Thomas, who are sitting over here; my siblings, Jim and Sandra, all other family and extended family, those schoolteachers that I mentioned previously, my employers and employees, football coaches and managers and friends and acquaintances in general. I shall do my utmost to achieve the best outcome for those who reside in the Morwell electorate over the next four years and am greatly looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today, and I wish you all and your families a very safe and merry Christmas and New Year.

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I should point out that this is not my inaugural speech, just in case some members are under that misapprehension.

I would like to thank the Governor very much for his speech yesterday, which outlines a program of reform for the 56th Parliament, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond today. In doing so I would like to congratulate the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their election, and I know they will do a terrific job in the next four years.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my former ALP colleagues who did not continue after the 55th Parliament. To Sherryl Garbutt, Mary Delahunty, Mary Gillett, Brendan Jenkins, Dale Wilson, Ian Maxfield, Peter Lockwood, Heather McTaggart, Rosie Buchanan and Ann Eckstein — I wish them all well for the future.

May I also say how pleased I am to be returned by the good people of Essendon for the fourth time and, as I am sure the member for Bass would say if he were here, to join my pinko commie union mates for another four years!

Mr K. Smith — I am here.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mrs MADDIGAN — One of the chardonnay-swilling members — I thank the member for South-West Coast, because I left that bit out. May I also congratulate the Liberal Party candidate for Essendon, Conrad D'Souza, and the Greens candidate, Bob Muntz, for their professional attitude during the campaign.

As other members have said, the support of your family, friends, the state electoral campaign committee, electorate officers and most particularly the very generous residents of Essendon has enabled me to be here again. I have to say that Essendon is a great place to represent. Even the Liberal voters are nice in Essendon — even though there are fewer of them now than there used to be. I often say to people that Essendon is like a country town. It has a very low mobility rate and people like to live there all their lives. I guess one of the difficulties for some of our younger residents is that increasing house prices in Essendon — and Essendon is now a very expensive place to buy a house — are making it difficult for them to stay in the area they would wish, but I have noticed that for many young people their second house is back in Essendon where they were born. That gives a really strong sense of community.

The levels of volunteers and the great interest in the community make the job of a member very easy, because people are always very willing to contribute, always very willing to raise issues for you that they

think they should take up and also very willing to support you in what you might be doing as well. I must say that sometimes when I have heard other members talk about incidents they have had in their electorates, it makes me very glad that I represent the people of Essendon because they are extremely nice people.

My electorate is ageing, which in a way is quite good. A lot of my residents think I am really young because I am about 50 years younger than they are, so it does make you appear to be young in your electorate! One of the areas of concern for my residents is health services. Some of the improvements we have made over the last few years have been of great benefit to the residents, and some of the proposals we put in the budget earlier this year and our election commitments will be very well received by my residents. The establishment of the women's mental health service at the Royal Melbourne Hospital is something that is badly needed in the west and will be a great service for my residents.

The upgrade of the Sunshine hospital is also of great benefit to the area, although probably most of my residents would attend Royal Melbourne Hospital. Over the years the increases in the number of emergency hospital beds, the helicopter landing base there and the other services have really improved the area of health services for them.

When I was elected in 1996 and the Labor Party was in opposition I had a continual stream of people coming through my door complaining about waiting lists, complaining about dirty hospitals and complaining about the lack of nurses. I am glad to say that that has just about died away totally. I think that shows the significant investment that this government has made in health over that period of time.

The continuing improvement of the Doutta Galla Community Health Service is also very much appreciated by my residents. Preventive health services are the best way to try to prevent people from having more serious illnesses and spending longer terms in hospitals. The old Essendon hospital, which we all recall was closed by the previous Liberal government, has now been partly taken over by the Doutta Galla Community Health Service, and it is establishing health services particularly for older residents in the area.

In addition, the new service that was opened two months ago at Niddrie provides extra dental chairs and other health services, and as part of the election campaign, funding has been allocated to redeveloping the site at Kensington, which means that we will have an excellent community health service right through the

area of Essendon and indeed right through the City of Moonee Valley.

There have been significant funding investments in the Essendon area by this government, and they have changed the face of Essendon. Two are very obvious to people who come to the area. The first is the redevelopment of the Melbourne showgrounds. It would be fair to say that the showgrounds were in financial trouble for many years and had sought funding from state governments for some time. It was not until we were elected in 1999 that the state government — and I particularly thank the Premier and the Treasurer for their support in this project — provided funding of over \$100 million to allow the showgrounds to be redeveloped and set up to generate income to keep them going successfully in the future. That project was completed within the time constraints set down — two years.

Those who may have attended the show this year would have seen what an extraordinary change there has been. The redevelopment of the historic buildings and the new areas give the whole face of the showgrounds a different look. My constituents who reside around the showgrounds in Ascot Vale are glad that they can finally see into the showgrounds. There is no longer a huge fence, which was there for years and years and closed off the showgrounds from the rest of the community.

The further development of the showgrounds site means it will be integrated as part of the Union Road shopping centre and become more of the community of Ascot Vale, while at the same time retaining that special showgrounds character. The showgrounds have a warm place in people's hearts. People often tell me stories about when they went to the show or how they have loved going to the show over the years. If members here did not go to the show this year, I recommend they go next year and have a look at it.

The other significant investment for which many people sought funding is the Calder–Tullamarine interchange, which has been a high accident spot for many years. That has been funded mainly through tolls that were put on the Tullamarine Freeway and were strongly fought against by local residents. In some ways that is about the only thing that came out of that. What really annoyed residents in the western area about those tolls was the fact that the Tullamarine Freeway was not a new road. Residents had been using it for years and the introduction of tolls meant that you could not drive the same way to work as you used to without paying a toll. That is very different to the tolls on EastLink, which is a new road altogether.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Tolls on EastLink seem to be a bit of a delicate matter with the opposition. I am not quite sure why that would be. If the member for South-West Coast would like to talk to residents about the Tullamarine Freeway and their views, I am sure they would be more than happy to discuss them with him. If he can find his way to Essendon, he would be welcome. As shadow Minister for Racing he might like to come to the Moonee Valley Racing Club — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast!

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am sure the residents of Essendon would be interested to know about the member's view that the Cox Plate should be removed from the Moonee Valley racecourse, because that is certainly not the view of the Moonee Valley Racing Club, nor is it the view of the residents of Essendon. It was not the view of the former opposition spokesperson for racing, so it will be interesting to see how the opposition policy develops in the future. I am sure my residents will be most interested in discussing this with the member for South-West Coast, if he would like to come down there one day.

A significant school project in Essendon is the development of the Victorian Space Science Education Centre at Strathmore Secondary College. This is a centre for the whole of the state which schools from all over Victoria, and possibly Australia, will be able to attend. The centre is set up to enable students to study some of those areas that are now becoming more important, especially in terms of providing extra job opportunities for young people in the future.

One of the interesting stories about the Victorian Space Science Education Centre, which was officially opened last year, is that it was significant in supporting the first team from Australia to go to the International Space Olympics in Russia. Russia has been running space Olympics for many years and teams from all over the world compete. Scouts Australia supported the team that went from Australia for the first time and won the space Olympics. It is the first team outside of Russia to win in 14 years. It is a great effort for an Australian team to win that in its first year, so I would like to congratulate those young students, who are mainly from Victoria but also from other states, who participated in the event.

However, there is more for us to do, as other members have said. Essendon is a dormitory suburb and as such

suffers from severe traffic problems in terms of people wishing to drive through it to get to the city. In some ways Essendon is lucky because, being an older suburb, it has an excellent public transport system. But it is having problems, as I raised in the adjournment debate last night, with people further out seeking to park in residential streets in Essendon to catch the Broadmeadows line train to the city. A number of measures in the transport plan released last year by the former Minister for Transport will have a significant impact on helping to alleviate some of those problems. Already extra train services have been introduced as well as improvement in some of the bus services. There will be later improvements in train services. Those will be quite significant in helping to overcome those problems.

Planning is another issue. It is always nice to have the Minister for Planning living in your electorate. I look forward to working with the Honourable Justin Madden in the other place to ensure that any planning issues in the city of Moonee Valley are overcome.

Because Essendon is basically a residential suburb with many historic homes, there is always conflict between maintaining that historic character and development. Melbourne 2030 provides a good answer for Moonee Valley, because it concentrates on major activity centres like Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds and North Essendon. By working sensibly with the council we can ensure that those residential areas are protected while density is improved in those activity centres. That work has started and I expect it to continue. Puckle Street is probably one of the most famous streets in the western suburbs and at the moment it reflects the prosperity of the area — it is booming. If you are looking to do a bit of Christmas shopping, that is probably the place to go.

Essendon is, being an older suburb, also blessed with many parks. My electorate is bounded by the Moonee Ponds Creek and the Maribyrnong River, and the work done on both those waterways over the last few years has significantly improved the look of them and also improved the quality of the water. My residents are extremely pleased now that the ridiculous idea of building an Arundel dam has been put to death — I hope forever — because such a dam would have dramatic effects on the lower part of the Maribyrnong River and the area I represent.

In fact, because of the drought, over the years the Maribyrnong River has had some problems with the North Pacific seastar, which has started creeping up the river because of the salt water, and if there were a dam at Arundel there would probably be North Pacific seastars all the way up to Avondale Heights because of

changes to the water quality. There was a great sigh of relief from the residents of Essendon when many people, not only the Labor Party, pointed out the real concerns about the proposal that was put by the Liberal opposition during the election campaign.

Many people choose to live in Essendon because of its great schools; we have terrific non-government and government schools. Essendon is one of three or four electorates that have more children attending non-government schools than government schools. That is because of the large Catholic network in our area.

Essendon is a great place to live. I look forward to working with the residents of the electorate to further their interests and to working with my colleagues in the Labor Party and with the Premier to implement the program of reform outlined by the Governor yesterday. I look forward to a very fruitful four years.

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Speaker, I begin by congratulating you on your election to this important position and acknowledge the work of the former member for Bayswater, Peter Lockwood.

It is the greatest honour to stand before you and my parliamentary colleagues as the member for Bayswater today. It is the realisation of a 12-year dream. The journey towards working with and for the community actually started many years ago. During my school years one of my favourite parts of each week was community service. I worked for some time for what was then known as the Spastic Society of Victoria. The personal satisfaction I gained when any of my charges achieved even the smallest success was beyond words.

And so when I left high school I sought to continue this type of volunteer work. I joined the Make-a-Wish Foundation — an international organisation for children with life-threatening illnesses — and was quickly elected Melbourne president and then gained a position on the Australian board specialising in public relations and development. When my term was over and our constitution demanded I retire I was approached to be part of the board of the National Council of Women of Australia — a position I retired from this year — which has taught me so very much. I was surrounded by women from all types of backgrounds, from parliamentarians to homemakers and lawyers, but with one common goal: we all wanted a brighter future for women and children around the globe.

Whether it was a project to build a school in India post tsunami, providing a grinding mill in Sudan or funding a well and educating villagers on how to grow crops

and be self-sustaining in New Guinea, we worked as one team to achieve greater good. I could very well have continued along this path, but in the back of my mind was a seed which had been planted when I was very young. As a child and then young woman my wonderful father, Karl, instilled high standards in me — everything from working hard to get ahead to giving freely of my time to community groups that could benefit from my skills and standing up for what I believe in. My mother, Jan, who was tragically taken away from us through a car accident 18 years ago, was also amazing and a selfless giver. She believed that unconditional love and a good education were the most important things she could provide. Now, as a mother, I believe she was right.

Our current schools have much to be proud of, and there are over 20 in the district of Bayswater. One in particular is worthy of note here. To understand why I dare to single out just one school it is important to understand the Bayswater area. It dates right back to the 1860s, when Bayswater, then known as Scoresby, was a German settlement. In fact the first school was run as part of the Lutheran congregation. Now Bayswater South Primary School has embraced the traditional settlers, their descendants and their culture. For the past 25 years it has pioneered a language immersion program which sees students become fully bilingual by year 6. Its learning method enables a firm grasp of another language.

As we all know, the earlier a language is introduced, the easier it is for young minds to grasp the concept and vocabulary. It becomes second nature. But the extraordinary outcome of this program is that it also develops the children's minds in a way which helps them excel at other non-language disciplines. Bayswater South Primary School's bilingual German program is world renowned and serves as an important resource for both Australian and European educators.

In light of this one of my duties to my constituents is to establish why this program will close by the end of 2007. It troubles me greatly that 300 children per year will be denied the opportunity of fluent speech in a second language, which is a major benefit to them as they enter the commercial world. As my mother so rightly pointed out, it is our responsibility to encourage learning, not stifle it. It is also incumbent upon us as lawmakers to ensure that jobs are there when these children eventually leave school.

The Bayswater electoral district, encompassing suburbs such as Bayswater, Wantirna, Ringwood, Heathmont, Boronia, Knoxfield and Vermont, is an eclectic area that has developed a harmonious balance between

residential, commercial and industrial zones. In fact it was due to one of our first businessmen that the area was named. The local public school adopted the name of well-known bookmaker and publisher James John Miller's estate, Bayswater House. Strong post World War II growth in the suburbs bordering our beautiful Dandenongs was underpinned in Bayswater by decisions by companies such as Dunlop Rubber and British Nylon Spinners to build manufacturing plants in the area.

As the global work climate changes it is increasingly enticing for companies like these to move their operations offshore in search of increased revenue. Our job is to make it more enticing to stay. All businesses, regardless of size, spend a great deal of their resources on regulatory compliance. We need to make it easier for them. Through legislation we need to help provide a secure and viable future for them and our children.

I believe it is also important in an area such as Bayswater to get the mix right. As businesses become more secure, they employ more people. Employees move closer to work, so high-density housing can become a concern. In our area we have several such issues, not the least of which is retaining open space in Kingloch Parade, Wantirna. In an area affectionately known as the Triangle, residents have been fighting inappropriate development for over five years. It is illogical to rob them, their children, their grandchildren and future generations of the small plot of land earmarked for Office of Housing residences.

I am by no means opposed to low-cost housing. What the local residents and I are seeking for our neighbourhood is consultation about the appropriate placement and distribution of such housing. Once this piece of land is gone, it will be gone for ever. There will be nowhere for over 1000 residents to recreate without crossing major roads. Children should be encouraged to play outside, but it is difficult to do so as backyards get smaller and public reserves disappear.

It is vital for the health of future generations that everyone has room to run and play. We are seeing an increased incidence of type 2 diabetes as our children become more obese, and taking away such land can only help accelerate the statistics. Commonsense must prevail.

There are so many other issues to address over time, including the health and facilities of Dandenong Creek, so passionately looked after by the First Friends of Dandenong Creek, the need for road upgrades and the addition of pedestrian crossings to ensure the safety of elderly residents and children alike. My commitment to

the people of the Bayswater district is that I will gladly be their voice within these walls.

I thank all those who gave me this opportunity to serve the electorate of Bayswater. My gratitude goes to them all. My gratitude also goes out to those who had enough faith in my capabilities to vote for me. I am truly humbled by this honour and commit to working diligently to bring about positive change in our area.

May I also take the time to thank my parents, my sister, Ann, my husband, Jeff, and beautiful daughter, Charlotte. To them I say, 'Thank you for your support and understanding'. The campaign leading to this role was long and tiring and would not have been possible without the generous help offered by many. I thank the shadow ministers and our parliamentary leader, who gave so much of their precious time, and the administrative arm of the Victorian Liberal Party, including the patient and wise Simon Morgan. To Charles and Bernice Hogarth, Andrew and Matthew Conway, Jack and Bev Bailey, Sandra Reynolds, my entire campaign team and the 100-plus people who believed in me enough to do the hard work with me, thank you all.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I would like to join the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech and congratulate you, Speaker, on your appointment. I am sure you will be able to keep firm control in the house in a spirit of both kindness and friendliness and, on occasion, with a great deal of sternness. I also congratulate the Premier, Steve Bracks, and the Labor team for their wonderful victory and their third term in office. I agree with what the Governor said, because 25 November was, to the day, the 150th anniversary of the Victorian Parliament and marked the beginning of a new era in our democracy, with fixed-term elections and the reform of the upper house.

As the Governor mentioned, we now face a range of new challenges, including the challenge to our democracy, which in Australia is based on federalism. It is the responsibility of all of us here in this house to preserve, enhance and develop it without throwing the baby out with the bathwater, as I think the Prime Minister is looking to do. We face challenges at the moment with regard to the lack of water in our state, the twin impacts of drought and bushfires and the possible follow-on impacts on our economy. In this house we have to face these challenges and govern wisely for our people. That is allied to the much wider challenge that the world faces in terms of climate change.

In the 56th Parliament we also face the continued challenge inherent in good economic management and

fiscal responsibility. The Labor Party election platform indicates that the ALP and the Bracks government want to show national leadership in this area. We are looking for a new round of economic reform with an emphasis on skills development and continued infrastructure development. We also want to increase productivity, which has stalled so much over the past decade. Of course this means providing for job creation and a flexible, skilled work force while continuing to cut taxes, which we have already done in the first two days of the 56th Parliament.

The further challenge we face is to build on and further develop the excellent record we have had over the last seven years in service delivery, including in our schools. We promised to provide — and the Premier talked about it today — \$2.3 billion in additional capital funding for our schools. We want to modernise and rebuild all the schools in Victoria which need it, and we have already done 400-plus. Hospitals are also included in that service delivery provision, but there is more to be done. We have already done work on rebuilding and modernising over 50 hospitals, but we will do more. Similarly, we have already rebuilt over 100 police stations. The other area which is very important to the Bracks Labor government is public transport and roads, and we have a \$10 billion-plus program to deliver in public transport and to enhance our road network. The overriding aim of the Bracks government is to make Victoria a better and more democratic and inclusive place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

I would like particularly to thank the electors of Burwood, who put their faith in me for a third term. I said to the local press that our victory in Burwood was a victory for the community, because I place great store in standing up for the Burwood community and standing up for Burwood families, and in return the community has placed its trust in me. I pledge to continue to work hard to make our community an even better place to live.

There is much more to be done in all parts of the Burwood electorate, whether it be in the key areas of education, health, community safety, community development and transport and roads or whether it is in all sorts of other areas, such as neighbourhood houses, neighbourhood renewal or supporting local residents in meeting their day-to-day needs in housing. We even help local residents with council issues. Many residents come through our door, and our door is always open to help them.

For example, in our area we will continue to stand up for local families in Surrey Hills and Box Hill South. That will mean, as part of the program, funding new

buildings at Box Hill High School, which will get \$5.29 million.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr STENSHOLT — We are actually doing a marvellous job at Box Hill High School: the redevelopment is going to be excellent.

The government is also looking to fund new buildings at Surrey Hills Primary School, where they are working on a new design for the replacement of old portables. There will be funding for a new junior school and related buildings at Roberts McCubbin Primary School in Box Hill South. The Bracks government has dedicated itself over the next eight years to rebuild and modernise all the schools in Victoria that need it.

In the area of health, \$38.2 million has been allocated to stage 1 of the rebuilding of the Box Hill Hospital. I am very privileged to be a member of the community consultation group there, working with local residents and local people interested in this area to make sure that the rebuilt hospital is a fine hospital, delivering services for more than 700 000 people in the eastern suburbs.

The government is looking to rebuild the Box Hill police station at a cost of \$16.5 million. The government will eliminate the Middleborough Road railway crossing at a cost of \$54 million and upgrade various intersections in the local area, particularly along Canterbury Road, at Canterbury and Elgar roads and Canterbury and Middleborough roads.

The government is also paying attention to mental health. Work has already commenced and is a long way towards finalisation on a \$7.5 million child and adolescent mental health centre at Box Hill.

The government will also be standing up for local families in Bennettswood and Burwood. I have already mentioned the Roberts McCubbin Primary School. There will be more places at the Box Hill TAFE for those kids coming out of our schools who are looking to enhance their skills. The government is providing \$4.5 million for extra training for nursing and allied health workers at the Box Hill TAFE. Frankly, the government is standing up for local people in these areas, including for Wattle Park Primary School, which will get replacement classrooms over Christmas and the New Year, in time for the 2007 school year.

The Bracks government is also standing up for people in Camberwell and Hartwell. On the Thursday before the election the Premier came out to one of the great schools in Victoria, the Hartwell Primary School, where he said that a new junior school will be built there to

replace the old wooden temporary facilities, as an example of what will be done in all the schools throughout Victoria that need it.

The government will spend \$47 million in the transport area on the 700 red orbital SmartBus. It already comes from Mordialloc up to Box Hill and then it will go further out to Altona. Fares are being reduced on the NightRider bus on the Melbourne to Knox city route. There are extra trains on that line over weekends and extra tram services on Friday and Saturday nights. I should also mention that at the Burwood railway station, which serves part of Hartwell, the northern end of the Trent Street car park will be resurfaced and new electric gates will be installed for the pedestrian crossing. I will also continue to provide support for the Burwood traders and the Burwood village, which is between Glen Iris and Camberwell.

The government will be standing up and supporting the people in Glen Iris and Ashburton. There is a marvellous development at the Glen Iris Primary School. It has taken nearly 140 years for this to come about. We will see magnificent public institutions in Glen Iris Road, at the Glen Iris Primary School and next door with the Glen Iris-Hartwell Uniting Church, which will provide a preschool as well as a hall which can be used by the school, a before and after-school area there, as well as a couple of music rooms which will be able to be used by the schoolchildren. That culmination of dreams of many, many years will come to fruition in the next couple of years.

There will be extended hours for the train service on the Glen Waverley line. There will also be continuing support for the neighbourhood centres in Ashburton as well as \$60 000 for a new green at the Burwood Bowls Club. New traffic lights will be installed in Ashburton at the corner of Warner Avenue and High Street. This has been a high priority for a number of years. The residents have advocated it and the Bracks government will deliver it.

Keeping in mind the need to keep fit, the Gardiner's Creek bike trail will be built in Markham Reserve, to make sure that a link can be provided to the major bike trails in that particular area. Some work is being done on the crossing at Warrigal Road to ensure there is a final link in that particular bike track which goes up further along Gardiner's Creek and ultimately right into town. The government will also continue to provide support for that marvellous group of business people, the Ashburton traders. I also commend them for their support for the Edge Community Fund, our local charity in Ashburton, Ashwood and Chadstone.

The government will be working with the Boroondara council towards achieving a new kindergarten at the Craig Centre in Ashburton. Over the next eight years it will look at having schools like Ashburton Primary School and other schools in my electorate among those to be upgraded and modernised, along with all schools in Victoria that need it.

In Chadstone and Ashwood the government will be working with the Ashwood College in building a \$1 million-plus performing arts centre and a soccer-in-schools centre. The government will also extend the children's centre in Burton Street, Chadstone. In the health area there are plans for a new children's wing at the Monash Medical Centre and a new community health centre in Oakleigh. As well as these, the neighbourhood renewal program continues.

In the area of transport the government is looking to extend the hours of operation of the 767 and the 623 buses as well as providing additional lanes on the Monash Freeway and improving the Warrigal Road interchange, which is a rather large and extensive project.

The government is not forgetting housing. Public housing is very important. The government will provide \$25 million for new public housing in Ashwood as well as \$500 000 in funding for the Electra Avenue multipurpose venue for a range of organisations there.

I want to thank the many people who worked on the Burwood campaign, including Fiona, Pat and Christian from my office and the many volunteers from our local branches and the local community. We had some innovative forms of campaigning this year. I thank all the people in our local branches, particularly those in Glen Iris, Burwood, Ashwood, Waverley East and Canterbury and those who stood in the street and were photographed, as well as the community members who participated in the production of our local DVD, talking about what positive things are happening and will happen in our local neighbourhood.

As a grassroots local member of Parliament I am very fortunate to interact with many people in our local community. I guess by being associated with over 50 organisations — from community banks, to neighbourhood houses, to sports groups, and to traders associations and service organisations — one quickly learns to listen and also to contribute in the community. I thank all those in the community for their ongoing advice and support. Our future is built on the hard work and commitment within our community. I was delighted this year to hand out over 2000 certificates to

volunteers as part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Victorian Parliament.

Finally, I wish again to thank my family, my wife and children and our extended family. Their support means that I can in turn support and stand up for the Burwood community. Once again, it is an honour and a privilege to serve the people of Burwood in this Parliament as part of the Bracks government.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — Speaker, let me congratulate you on your appointment.

It is a real honour and privilege to stand here today as the 11th member for Benambra. The support I have received from the people of the Upper Murray and border region is humbling. It was particularly rewarding as the culmination of a 14-month campaign that was pretty difficult and at times acrimonious. I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all those who placed their trust in me. That trust will not go unrewarded.

The electorate of Benambra is a unique area geographically. It is the gateway to our great state on the Hume Highway and is bound to the north and the east by the Murray River and the Great Dividing Range respectively. It contains a diverse range of communities, from the inhabitants of the major population centre, the city of Wodonga, through to the many thriving smaller towns and the farming sector.

In 1852 the township now known as Wodonga was first surveyed and gazetted and named Belvoir, although some of the locals disparagingly like to call it 'Struggle Town'. The first police station was opened in 1854, some small farms were made available in 1856, the telegraph office opened in 1858 and the courthouse and customs house in 1859. The railway line from Melbourne opened in 1873 and was linked to the New South Wales system at Albury in 1883.

After decades spent in the shadow of Albury, Wodonga is now emerging as an equal contributor to what has since become one of the major inland growth centres in Australia. Its geographic location between Australia's two main cities has placed it in a unique position as a major commercial centre and distribution hub for the entire region. However, the rail line divides the city of Wodonga, and I look forward to the completion of its relocation by this government in this term. It is a major project that was initially budgeted for and funded by the last Liberal government, and we in Benambra are still waiting.

Similar to the situation in Wodonga, Benambra's smaller towns are continuing to carve a niche for

themselves in our regional economy. The old goldfield towns of Beechworth, Chiltern and Yackandandah, with their rich history and charming atmosphere, are widely recognised as being amongst some of the prime tourist destinations in this state. The Beechworth jail, built in 1860, accommodated both male and female prisoners until its closure in 1910, reopening in 1927 for males only. The jail is significant to our national heritage. With a history rich in our past, the jail is renowned for accommodating the likes of Ned Kelly; his mother, Ellen; Steve Hart and Joe Byrne. Ned Kelly's final trial began in the neighbouring courthouse before being transferred to Melbourne in 1880. All of us in this place today are the custodians of our history and traditions, and as such we have a responsibility to ensure they are not lost for future generations. To allow this piece of our heritage to be lost to development is something which would cause great regret and sorrow.

Corryong remains a focal point for the communities of the upper Murray, and Tallangatta, the town that was forcibly moved to allow for the construction of the Hume Weir, has enormous potential as a mecca for water sports and adventure tourism enthusiasts which has yet to be realised.

The farmers of the Murray, Kiewa and Mitta valleys are the custodians of some of the best grazing country in Australia. It is a sobering fact, however, that even those fortunate enough to farm such productive land are presently suffering as much as anyone from the devastating effects of the drought. I want Benambra's farmers to know that I am all too aware of this and the other challenges they face and that I will be their strong advocate in this place.

All the natural blessings of topography and location amount to nothing without people. It is the people of Benambra, both its pioneers and the people who live there today, who inspire me above all else. It is the entrepreneurialism of our business leaders, the spirit of our community workers and volunteers, the tenacity of our farmers and the promise of our children that drives me the most. Whilst I am discussing the admirable qualities of my constituents, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to the gutsy and selfless firefighters at all levels who, even as I speak here today, are putting their lives at risk to benefit us. They deserve our support and gratitude.

The seat of Benambra was created in 1877, and is one of the oldest in Victoria. As one would imagine, it has been served over such a long period by some unique individuals, each of whom has helped shape the community into its current form. I follow Tony Plowman, the former Liberal member for the electorate,

who has served it well for the last 14 years, and who in turn followed Lou Lieberman, who many may also remember was the predecessor to Sophie Mirabella, the current federal member for Indi. These two great past members represented all their constituents, no matter where they came from or who they voted for, and the government should remember this principle, even though it does not hold the seat of Benambra. As long as I am the member the government will not neglect this great electorate.

In light of that, may I take this opportunity to respectfully remind the current government of the election promises it made to the people of Benambra, particularly in relation to the relocation of the railway line from Wodonga's central business district (CBD). This project is of vital significance to Wodonga, and I intend to see that it is delivered as pledged.

To my constituents I make a pledge of my own: I will continue to fight to ensure that our region is not ignored and forgotten by any government.

It is also vital to the interests of Benambra that all three tiers of government work in harmony. The best outcomes are reached when a community at its different levels of representation cooperate to present a united cause. I want to incorporate an inclusive approach as our best chance to achieve favourable outcomes for our community.

Before coming to this place I served as a member of Victoria Police for 11 years, and I saw first hand the best and worst in people. Whilst acknowledging that some functions of human behaviour are beyond legislative remedy, I believe that a great deal more can be done to benefit the lives of individuals and families. There has been some progress over the years in respect of personal safety on our roads and in our workplaces, but unfortunately this has not been repeated in our homes. Domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse are challenges that need to be addressed. We can no longer just talk about the physical and psychological damage caused by social dysfunction and the real problems that arise out of those problems like the abuse of children in repartnered relationships.

This may be distasteful to some, but it is a reality that we need to face. These children who have so often become the innocent victims of abusive behaviour need our protection. At the moment I am sorry to say they are simply not getting it. The pathetic sentences being given out to the thugs who murder innocent kids are a sad indictment on the present state of our justice system, and that must be remedied. Sometimes there is no alternative but to be tough on criminals in order to

protect the most vulnerable. I believe that protection is our constant duty.

The state government must also stop playing the role of social engineer with our rural communities. We have our own challenges to confront without the added difficulty of having the criminal and socially challenged families that are a problem in Melbourne dumped on our doorstep. We fight to get our fair share of social infrastructure in health and education, which does not even keep pace with our own local needs. We cannot solve the problems of metropolitan Melbourne.

I make this plea to the current government and future governments: please do not change the fabric of our rural communities by deliberately transferring the less than desirable elements of society to our regions. It may be out of sight for you, but it is real and in our faces. We live in a society of fragmented families. As law-makers we have a significant role in determining how the social dynamic will affect our future communities. We must exercise that duty with real care.

I am mindful that about 96 per cent of working people in my electorate are employed by small business and that these enterprises are the backbone of rural communities. We need to encourage innovation by small business, not stifle it.

I would like to thank local Liberal Party branch members and supporters who gave of themselves because they hold dear the values of the Liberal Party. They gave of themselves, taking time away from their families, and worked because they are true believers who know that the interests of individual Victorians and their families are best served by the Liberal Party.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. I thank my mother and father for their love and support and for providing me with sufficient tools in life to be an effective contributor to the community. I thank my mother-in-law and father-in-law for their support and love in accepting me as their own son, something that means so much to me. Most important, I thank them for allowing me to marry their daughter. Much has been said by politicians of late about the importance of families, and this cannot be overstated. To my wife, Ruth — my strength, my friend, my harshest critic and the mother of our three amazing daughters, Isabella, Inez and Charlotte — I love you so dearly. Speaking in family talk, I love you all the way to the stars, below the sea and up to the stars again.

In closing, I wish everybody here a very merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year. I look forward to the next sitting in February.

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech at the opening of the 56th Parliament of Victoria. Firstly I would like to express my thanks to the people of Pahran for placing their confidence and trust in me for another term in the Victorian Parliament.

Pahran is a wonderful, diverse, vibrant area of the inner city of Melbourne. It is an enormous privilege and honour to represent my local community, where I have spent most of my life. Over the next four years in Parliament I look forward to building upon the achievements of the Bracks government, in particular in the areas of health, education, community safety and a sustainable environment. The Bracks government's record over the last four years, in these areas in particular, is one of which we can be very proud. Of course, as is always the case with things like health and education, there is more work to be done. But in Pahran great progress has been made in the area of health in particular, with the Alfred hospital and the development of the Alfred Centre for elective surgery.

At the hospital itself we now have 200 more nurses on staff than were employed when we came to government. That has meant an enormous improvement in the quality of health care for local people. In fact the Minister for Health announced today that in relation to increased numbers of doctors and nurses the Victorian figures are the best of any state or territory in Australia. We now have over 1500 more doctors and over 7500 more nurses employed in our health system than we did when the government came to office. The improvement in health care at important public hospitals like the Alfred in Pahran due to those sorts of increases and the reinvestment in our health system means that Victorians are getting the health care they need when they need it far more than they were when we came to office.

There have also been great improvements at the Alfred to the intensive care unit, the emergency department and psychiatric services. The health minister announced today a \$2.1 million upgrade to digital computerised tomography and X-ray services at the emergency department, which will greatly improve the ability of medical staff to very quickly diagnose trauma injuries arriving at the emergency department, when time is of the essence.

I am also very pleased to have been able to make a contribution to the development of the Alfred Centre for elective surgery at the Alfred hospital as chair of the community participation panel for that centre over the last four years. The new centre will open in February 2007 and will be an enormous boost to our ability to provide elective surgery procedures for the local community as well as the wider Victorian community. Importantly it will separate emergency department cases from elective cases, so there will no longer be delays and cancellations in elective surgery because of the arrival of emergency cases at the emergency department.

We have also provided greater funding and support for the Inner South Community Health Service, which runs terribly important programs in our local community and has managed to provide a great boost to local dental services. In the absence of federal government funding for dental services we have had to fill the breach, and doing that has provided a very important boost to local services for the Inner South Community Health Service.

In education we have continued to support our local state primary schools, in particular with big increases in teacher numbers, lower class sizes and a greater concentration on numeracy and literacy programs, as well as the employment of school welfare officers and improvements to schoolyards and the maintenance of buildings. Of course that is going to improve and increase under the commitments made during the election campaign by the Bracks government.

We have also made sure that we have seen improvements in funding for needy independent schools, basing our funding on equity and the ability of those independent schools to provide the very important services they provide. I am very pleased to have been able to make a contribution in that regard, particularly in relation to the Catholic primary schools and the Jewish schools in my electorate.

Community safety, of course, is another of the Bracks government's priorities, and the increases in police numbers and resources have been very welcome in my area. Over the last four years I have had the opportunity to chair the inner city entertainment precinct task force set up by the police minister. That task force has played a very important role in developing policies and programs for crime prevention and crime reduction, particularly around the inner city areas. One of the successful strategies that has been developed through that program is the assault reduction strategy. I was very pleased to see the government commit during the election campaign to increasing and extending that

successful assault reduction strategy program into the future.

As a result of our increases in police numbers and resources we have had reductions in the crime rate of over 22 per cent. The focus on crime prevention and the ability of police to target offences that are causing concern in the community have been important initiatives that will continue and increase during this term.

As I have said, a lot has been achieved in a number of areas, but of course there is always more to be done, in education in particular. The government committed during the election campaign to modernise or rebuild every public primary and secondary school in Victoria. In particular, the three state primary schools in my electorate, as well as a couple that are very close to the boundary of my electorate, will be beneficiaries of that program. That will continue to increase opportunities for all our young people to make sure that they get the best start in life.

A couple of other issues in education that I am interested in are science and maths teaching. I am very pleased to see that the government has made it a policy and financial commitment to increase science and maths education opportunities in Victoria to make sure that we continue to teach our young people the science and maths skills that are going to be terribly important as we move forward in the 21st century.

Of course education starts very early in life, and improving access to kindergarten programs is something that the government is committed to doing. That will involve raising the subsidies for low-income families with children attending kindergarten and providing kindergarten programs in long-day care centres, which will mean that kindergarten programs will be available to many more young people in our community. Also our commitment to building new children's centres to further improve access to child care and educational programs for young people will be an important boost in this area, and I look forward to those new centres serving our local community as well.

In health, of course, we will continue to build on the achievements of the past and continue to improve services and reduce waiting times for people who need medical attention.

I mentioned earlier in my remarks the new radiology suite which the health minister announced today at the Alfred hospital, and that will provide a great boost to the emergency department. We have also announced that the new government will bring in mental health

treatment teams in the emergency departments of our major public hospitals. As the key public hospital in the Prahran district, the Alfred will of course benefit from that program. Addressing mental health — making sure we address mental health issues — is a vital community concern and a vital concern of this government. It is a concern that we take very seriously, not only in terms of boosting finances but also in making sure that the services are delivered in the most effective way.

Another health issue that the government is committed to is dealing with the growing problem of type 2 diabetes, and I look forward to making a contribution to the debate on that issue.

Apart from education, health and community safety, the major challenges that the community is having to face up to and deal with are climate change and water. I am very pleased that the government has decided to establish an Office of Climate Change and to appoint the Deputy Premier as the first minister for climate change. I know we will be bringing a climate change bill into this Parliament and that it will be the first of its kind in Australia. We are determined to make sure that we reduce greenhouse emissions, and we have set a reduction target of 60 per cent by 2050, as well as targets to achieve 20 per cent renewable and low-emission energy generation by 2020 and reduce household emissions by 10 per cent by 2010. We will continue to lead the development of a state-based emissions trading scheme, and we will also continue to invest in solar and wind power to ensure that Victoria is a leader in renewable energy. We will implement the Our Water Our Future policy, which is based on conservation, on recycling and on making sure that we have the right water quality for use where and when we need it.

I am particularly interested in the government's pursuing the eastern treatment plant upgrade to class A standard and in its pursuing the business case for the eastern water recycling proposal, which will free up the equivalent of a quarter of Melbourne's drinking water from industry use. We also have important work to do in the areas of industry and innovation. I was honoured to be asked by the Premier to take on the responsibilities of Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation in this government.

Of course our success in achieving our policy aims in improving education, health and community safety is built on the sound financial management that the Bracks government is renowned for. Holding our AAA credit rating, continuing with our minimum \$100 million operating surplus and investing in world-class infrastructure are all part of that program.

We need to make sure that we are in a position to create new jobs and new markets and that we have the skills base we require for the new economy.

Government, business and academia need to work together on these issues. As Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation I am very keen to foster those relationships and ensure that we develop the policies that we need to make sure we are able to work together for the future prosperity of Victoria — in particular, by driving the national reform agenda that the Premier has championed and the national innovation agenda, of which the Treasurer and Minister for Innovation is a great supporter. Our science, our technology and our medical research are all very important parts of innovation, and the Alfred medical research and education precinct (AMREP), located at the Alfred hospital site in Prahran, is a very important part of that, with organisations like the Burnet Institute, the Baker Heart Research Institute and the National Trauma Research Institute. We will also be locating the International Diabetes Institute at the AMREP site.

They are all very important parts of making sure that we position Victoria for the new technology and new economy ahead. Innovation is something that we need to ensure all businesses and governments make a contribution to. All businesses across Victoria need to innovate and to be productive, and we need to create the new skills and new jobs that will be necessary to drive our prosperity in the future.

I look forward to being part of the third Bracks government over the next four years and to making sure that we continue to govern for all Victoria, continue to address disadvantage, continue to deal with the important challenges facing our environment — of climate change and water — and increase the prosperity of all Victorians.

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. May I also congratulate your party on its success at the recent election.

I am extremely honoured to stand here today as the new representative in the Victorian Parliament of the people of the Rodney electorate. I consider it a great privilege and an enormous responsibility, and I will not let my constituents down. I look forward to building on the outstanding service given by my immediate predecessor, Noel Maughan, who served the Rodney electorate with distinction in the Victorian Parliament from 1989.

During his almost 18 years as the member for Rodney, Noel worked tirelessly for the community and earned the utmost respect of MPs from all political persuasions. Many referred to Noel Maughan as the 'gentleman of the Parliament', and I think we can all learn a valuable lesson from the example he set. Noel treated everyone he met with kindness, with fairness and, above all, with respect. I would like to sincerely thank Noel and his wife, Dorothy, for their support and assistance throughout my campaign to represent the Rodney electorate and wish them all the very best for their future together.

My decision to stand for election to the Victorian Parliament was based on a simple principle: I love the Rodney district, and I want to make it a place that my children will return to.

I feel very privileged to have lived my whole life in the Rodney electorate. It is a wonderful part of the world and has given me and my family many special moments, memories and fantastic opportunities.

I was raised on a dairy farm just outside the wonderful township of Lockington, where I lived my life with my parents, Gordon and Joy, my brother, Shane, and my two sisters, Clare and Gaye. My education started at Lockington Consolidated School and continued on at the Rochester High School, where I completed form 5 before becoming a dairy farm apprentice.

I was raised in an environment of social responsibility and willingness. My father was active in agropolitics as a regional counsellor for the Victorian Farmers Federation and was a member of many water committees. My mother is a past president of the Country Women's Association and a former councillor and mayor of the Rochester shire.

Like my parents, I have always been active in the local community, and I continue to participate in and support the likes of the Country Fire Authority, sporting clubs and service clubs in my electorate.

On a broader scale, I was president of the Victorian Farmers Federation from 2002 to 2005 and, up until my election last month, was a member of the board of directors of Murray Goulburn Co-operative Co. Ltd.

Between 2002 and 2005 I was chairman of the National Farmers Federation water task force and chairman of the Victorian state planning group for FarmBis. Over the years I have also been vice-president of the Victorian Farmers Federation and senior vice-president of its dairy group, the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria. I have been chairman of the Victorian Farmers Federation land management committee, chairman of

Vic Stock, a company owned by the Victorian Farmers Federation that deals with livestock, a director of the Victorian Farmers Federation property trust and a director of the National Farmers Federation property trust. My family has a long tradition of leadership in agribusiness and business and I am determined to continue that with a strong emphasis and commitment to the communities of the Rodney electorate.

Continued viability of agriculture and agribusiness, first-class regional services, profitable local businesses, and improved education and quality health care are fundamental rights of all people living in regional Victoria, and I intend to ensure my constituents receive them.

I would like to thank the electors of Rodney for placing their trust and faith in me to represent their views and interests in the Victorian Parliament. It is an honour and an obligation which I do not take lightly.

The Rodney electorate is already one of the best electorates in Victoria, and I intend to make it better. The Rodney district covers an area of 7808 square kilometres, has a population of around 49 000 people, and includes the major centres of Echuca, Kyabram, Cohuna, Rochester, Heathcote, Rushworth, Nathalia and Barmah. They are just the major ones.

The electorate's prosperity is based primarily on agriculture, with the industry accounting for 25 per cent of all jobs in the district. The main industry is dairying, followed by beef, cattle, sheep, cropping, viticulture and horticulture. The main employers associated with the agricultural industries are processing plants including Greenhams, Bonlac, Nestlé, Simplot, Cedenco and Murray Goulburn Co-operative Co. Ltd, which is the biggest user of the container port of Melbourne.

The tourism industry is also of vital importance to the Rodney electorate, particularly in Echuca, with the historic wharf area; in Rushworth, which was an important goldmining area; and in Kyabram, with the Kyabram Fauna Park. In Echuca alone the tourism sector employs 1500 people and contributes around \$220 million per annum to the economy. The historic port of Echuca receives more than 75 000 visitors a year.

The Rodney electorate is normally a thriving agricultural and agribusiness region generating millions of dollars for the Victorian economy. Unfortunately, with 10 years of low rainfall and water storages at a record low level, we are now experiencing the worst drought on record.

The Goulburn, Murray and Campaspe irrigation systems are vital for the future of my electorate. This season Goulburn irrigators, who would normally receive 100 per cent of their water entitlement, are receiving only 24 per cent. Campaspe irrigators are on zero allocation. The cost of water, at \$1000 a megalitre, combined with the cost of fodder for animals, is causing great hardship for our farmers.

Of course there are also the flow-on effects of the drought right across the community, but particularly to our small businesses, which are being severely affected. Some are making decisions to retrench staff because their incomes have been drastically reduced.

While we acknowledge the support this government has given to some, the people of Rodney want the government to do more. They do not want to pay for water not delivered. They want the trade of water out of the district stopped until there has been an environmental and social impact study. They want full compensation for individuals and communities if water is diverted to the environment, and the reintroduction of the \$20 000 cash grants for farmers.

Importantly, during times of drought as we are presently experiencing, the government should be investing in roads, bridges, irrigation and power infrastructure to ensure money continues to flow in country communities. By supporting our farmers and financing infrastructure, the economic activity generated will flow on to the small business community.

On the contentious issue of pipelines, the people of Rodney are vigorously opposed to the purchase of water for urban use from distressed farmers. We strongly believe that urban users should only be permitted to secure water from rural systems if they first invest in water infrastructure that will generate equivalent water savings. This way urban authorities can secure the water they require, irrigators do not have their entitlements reduced, and the environment benefits from better water infrastructure.

The government's current proposal to purchase water on the open market from distressed farmers when they are on their knees after 10 years of drought, 10 of the driest years on record, is unconscionable. It is inappropriate, particularly in the current circumstances, for the government to go into the market to purchase water for urban use, and consequently inflate the price, when many farmers are on a knife edge and fighting for their very survival. Reducing the amount of water for agriculture will lead to a loss of jobs in the food processing, transport and service industries. It will

cause some businesses to close and will lead to a decline in the towns in the irrigation areas.

Aside from tackling the critical issues of drought and water there are many other important matters I will be working to address during my time as the member for Rodney. Heading that long list will be the Echuca-Moama bridge. We desperately need a new river crossing at Echuca, and we need it now. In 1973 the then member for Rodney, Eddie Hann, told the Victorian Parliament during his inaugural speech that he was hopeful the Echuca bridge issue would be resolved in the near future and that a new bridge would be built to provide a better link between Echuca and Moama. In 1989, when the new member for Rodney, Noel Maughan, made his inaugural speech in this place, he too referred to the bridge issue, saying that he hoped it would not be too long before a new bridge across the Murray River was opened.

This issue has existed in my community for more than 30 years, and I am absolutely determined to see that it ends. Like the large majority of the community of Rodney, I strongly support the western option, and I believe the Yorta Yorta's decision to refuse consent must be examined. It will be my objective to ensure the lodgment of a new application for a bridge in the west, and if the decision is not favourable, to appeal it to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Among the other issues I plan to pursue in the weeks and months ahead are the extension of natural gas to Nathalia, Rushworth, Heathcote, Elmore, Lockington, Cohuna and Leitchville; an upgrade of power supplies at Rushworth, Colbinabbin and Corop; and a new secondary school at Nathalia, new primary schools in Echuca West and Echuca South, a major upgrade to Colbinabbin Primary School and funding for the new Kyabram P-12 school.

I will also be working to secure funding to complete stages 2 and 3 of the Echuca regional health redevelopment and to increase dialysis capability at the Echuca hospital. I want to see funding for the Kyabram hospital aged care facility and community health building as well as for a major redevelopment of health facilities in Rushworth, a new 16-bed nursing home at Cohuna and an upgrade of facilities at the McIvor Health and Community Services nursing home in Heathcote.

On law and order, I will work to ensure that our police stations are adequately resourced with staff and that we secure new police stations at Rochester and at Barmah on the River Murray.

Finally, I want to ensure that the Barmah-Millewa State Forest and the Gunbower State Forest are retained for cattle grazing, timber harvesting and tourism operations and are not locked up into national parks where they will be neglected.

There is so much that I want to achieve in Rodney, and I cannot wait to get started. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and very aware that I would not be in this place without the support of many others. I would like to thank a number of people who were instrumental in my success. Firstly, I thank the dedicated branch members of The Nationals in Rodney who supported me at preselection back in May this year. I thank also the members of my campaign committee, who worked tirelessly to ensure that I did become the member for Rodney. I also thank the band of wonderful volunteers who staffed the pre-poll centre, our campaign office, and 38 polling booths on election day. Their selfless contribution played a vital role in my success on 25 November, and I am forever grateful to them.

I am particularly grateful to the Leader of The Nationals for his guidance and strong support, provided even while fighting his own election campaign. I would like to congratulate him on his individual success at the election and that of the entire Nationals team, which continues to grow in both strength and unity under his talented leadership.

I give a heartfelt thank you to my parents, Gordon and Joy, and to my wife, Chrissy, and our children, Cassie, Jess, Jarrod and Aaron. They have all been of tremendous support to me throughout this process and have each made sacrifices in their own lives to help me achieve this goal. I could not have done it without them, and I am deeply grateful.

Finally, may I extend my congratulations to all new members here today and wish them luck as they set about working to represent and serve the best interests of their constituents. I look forward to serving the people of Victoria, and particularly the Rodney district, in this place, and I will do so with honesty, passion and integrity.

Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) — I would like to add my congratulations to you, Deputy Speaker, on your appointment as the Deputy Speaker of this Parliament, a role I know you will fulfil very well. Congratulations go too to the member for Rodney; I welcome him to the Legislative Assembly here in Victoria. I congratulate all the new members of this chamber, particularly the members for Bundoora, Footscray, Lara, Narre Warren South, Northcote, Preston and Tarneit.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of those MPs who are no longer with us, either through retirement or defeat. I wish them and their families well into the future with whatever endeavours they pursue. Congratulations go also to the members of the new ministry for their commissions and to other office bearers in the Parliament on their appointments. Finally in the thank you list, I would like to acknowledge the very hard and tireless work of my staff, Myles, Lambros and Mark. Also a big cheery thank you to my lovely wife, Tawny, and new baby, Kirsten, for their assistance. Kirsten is unable to do terribly much envelope-stuffing, but she was there in spirit if not providing a lot of practical assistance!

Ms Allan interjected.

Dr HARKNESS — That's right: she will be ready for campaigns into the future, I hope.

In my inaugural speech I started by asking whether there was a role for government in the 21st century:

It might be argued that in contemporary times there is not. It is nevertheless my contention that now particularly is the time that our society requires active leadership from government.

In 2006 more than ever the issues and challenges facing us require strong and active leadership. This will be provided over the next four years, just as it has been over the past seven years.

Government continues to have a very significant role to play in providing everybody with opportunity, free and equal access to a decent education, reliable and responsive health care, the ability to walk the streets at night without fear, or simply a roof over their heads. It has certainly been an honour over the past four years to stand up for Frankston, and I look forward to working with the Frankston community over the next four years to ensure that it continues to be a great place to live, work and raise a family.

The Bracks government went to the polls on 25 November with a very clear and responsible plan to further improve infrastructure and services throughout this state. We will continue to improve our health system by rebuilding hospitals and health services and employing even more doctors and nurses. We will maintain education as our top priority, ensuring we continue to rebuild every school throughout the state, improve our skills throughout the community and employ more teachers in our schools.

This government has also set out action plans to tackle some of the key challenges facing us, most particularly climate change and water issues.

I would like to turn my attention to two key projects within the Frankston electorate which I have been working solidly on for the past term and which will be coming to fruition in this term. The first is the proposed Frankston Regional Aquatic Health and Wellness Centre — and hopefully when it is opened it will have a catchier title than that. This is a key initiative that I have been strongly and actively pursuing over the past few years, and I am certainly looking forward to seeing this very innovative facility commence construction before too long. This aquatic centre will be funded by all levels of government, including a substantial investment by the Bracks government that will involve one of the legacies of the FINA world swimming championships early next year.

One of the Olympic-sized swimming pools used in the championships will be making its way to Frankston and to this particular facility for many generations to enjoy, along with a substantial capital investment from the Bracks government. Located at the Monash University's peninsula campus, this facility will bring great benefits to the Frankston community by encouraging more people to pursue healthy and active lifestyles throughout Frankston and the surrounds. Plans for this \$30 million facility, which will serve 150 000 residents, include swimming facilities, a gymnasium and sports courts; and a clinic providing services such as physiotherapy, sports medicine, stress management and relaxation massage will also be available. The centre will certainly be a major boost for the region, providing much more than just sport and aquatic facilities. It will indeed offer a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

A second project which is very exciting involves the Frankston Reservoir site. This is a 98-hectare site located within Frankston which has provided an open air water storage for Frankston for over 80 years. The reservoir was replaced earlier this year with a covered tank to ensure a higher quality of water supply for Frankston's families, which has prompted the need to consider options for the 98-hectare site. Located between Overport Road and Moorooduc Highway in Frankston South, it is a high regional conservation significant site containing areas of damp heathland, grassy woodland and gully woodland, all of which are regionally rare or endangered.

Over the last few years I have been facilitating public consultation and discussion about the future of this particular site through surveys and meetings. I have also had an overwhelming response from Frankston residents, illustrated by a public meeting early this year attended by 270 people who contributed their ideas and their views about the future of this site. The Frankston

community has certainly strongly supported the process of establishing a working group to bring together experts and local representatives to investigate the facts, determine what people want from the site and consider a wide range of future management challenges for the land. The then Minister for Water, who was also the Minister for the Environment, announced during the election campaign that the reservoir site would be wholly retained in public hands and committed \$1.6 million for the establishment of visitor facilities and a management plan for the new Frankston Reservoir site.

There is widespread support for the Bracks government retaining the site in public ownership and maintaining it as a park for the people of Victoria, particularly the people of Frankston and surrounds. I am very keen to see that money expended soon so that we can get this wonderful site opened up for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy. Many residents are thrilled that Frankston might finally have a public park with perhaps a network of walking paths and bike paths so that they can enjoy the beauty of one of the most pristine locations on the peninsula. I am looking forward to the opportunities that this piece of parkland will present to the Frankston community into the future.

These two projects are very important. As the Governor noted in his address yesterday, obesity is an ever-increasing problem amongst our communities, so facilities such as the Frankston Regional Aquatic Health and Wellness Centre and the Frankston Reservoir parkland are going to provide wonderful opportunities for Frankston families to engage in an active lifestyle.

We have heard many people talk about the importance of education. There is no doubt whatsoever that it is our no. 1 priority, and our Victorian schools plan commits us to a complete overhaul of government schools. Every Victorian government school will be rebuilt or modernised within 10 years under our plan as part of the biggest ever school building program — in fact it is the biggest program of its type since the post World War II baby boom. In particular Labor will be replacing or upgrading schools that were built in the 1950s, many of which are in Frankston as well, and building new schools in our growing suburbs and areas.

Over the past seven years we have built or modernised one quarter of the state's 1600 schools, and the third-term Bracks government will be spending an extra \$1.9 billion on education capital to complete another 500 schools, with the rest to be rebuilt or modernised by 2016. With funding of \$448 million already committed in the current financial year, this election

pledge takes the funding committed for education capital to \$2.3 billion. We have worked hard to rebuild our school system, but we know there is much more to do. Education is certainly very firmly at the top of our agenda. In Frankston, the Karingal Park Secondary College will be the first school to be completely upgraded.

Some other projects include the very innovative ultranet initiative for every local school, which will allow parents to keep track of their children's progress. New technical wings or equipment will be provided at every government secondary school, and \$30 million will be provided for needy non-government schools to replace facilities and improve student outcomes. All primary school children from prep to grade 2 will be offered free fruit on Friday as part of a \$129 million Labor plan to continue the fight against obesity and diabetes. The next step in the fight against diabetes will also give Victorian families the tools they need to change their lifestyles and avoid this disease, including a new Quit-style support and health promotion program. Indeed obesity and diabetes have replaced smoking as the major health challenges facing our community. The \$11 million which has now been committed to roll out the free-fruit Fridays is going to be very welcomed by schools throughout the state, particularly those in Frankston.

More patients are going to be treated more quickly in state-of-the-art facilities under a massive \$1.4 billion plan to upgrade hospitals right across Melbourne and create two dedicated elective surgery centres. The government will provide a massive boost to emergency departments, upgrade community health centres and improve the Metropolitan Ambulance Service. We will continue to invest in the health services that matter to Victorian families. We have done a lot to turn around the health system and to get waiting lists to an eight-year low, but we know there is a lot more to do. This plan includes providing \$15 million to perform 16 000 additional operations through the opening of two dedicated elective surgery centres at St Vincent's and at the repatriation hospital site at Heidelberg and through expanding capacity in our hospitals.

The Bracks government has committed to local projects. Very importantly for me, it has committed to an additional \$45 million upgrade of the Frankston Hospital to assist in further reducing waiting lists for elective surgery and to enhance critical care services for the region. The Frankston Hospital, being the major hospital on the Mornington Peninsula, services many residents of the peninsula and beyond. This is the second stage of the redevelopment of the Frankston Hospital. The maternity and paediatric facilities at the

hospital were rebuilt as part of the first stage of the redevelopment, which was completed in 2002.

Recently, as I noted at the outset, I had the privilege of experiencing the new maternity services at the Frankston Hospital first hand through the birth of Kirsten. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the chief executive of Peninsula Health, Dr Sherene Devanesen, and all of her staff, particularly those in the maternity ward at the Frankston Hospital.

We are rolling out a large number of things in education and in health. Some of these include upgrading the ambulance stations at Frankston and Hastings; establishing a new peak-period unit to support the Frankston ambulance station; \$2 million to plan for new children's hospital facilities at Monash Medical Centre; extra operating theatres and upgrades to the intensive care unit at Frankston Hospital; and \$456 000 to Peninsula Health over the next four years to extend mental health coverage in its emergency departments.

Throughout the election campaign we made several other commitments as well in the areas of public transport and roads: \$15 million to address the congestion issues at the intersection of the Frankston Freeway and Cranbourne Road; committing to an environmental effects statement for a future Frankston bypass; and improvements to the intersection of Baxter-Tooradin and Fultons roads in Baxter.

More generally in the area of the community we have committed \$2 million to completely rebuild the Frankston pier — a much-needed job — and \$500 000 to provide Frankston with a multicultural centre. In Frankston we have representatives from 34 different countries speaking 30 different languages. This multicultural centre is well on its way to becoming a reality.

Also \$35 000 will be provided for improved entry and exit points for Frankston State Emergency Service vehicles from their premises in Kananook; and \$5000 is committed for a much-needed airconditioner for the Orwil Street Community House, something that the people there are very pleased about. The Frankston community will also receive a share of an additional 350 sworn police officers.

I reaffirm my strong belief in the role and importance of government. In times of great and varied challenges people are looking for leadership. Government is not an impediment but a crucial force in building and realising the full potential of a robust economy, a just society and an environment in which biodiversity is assured. I will

continue to stand up for Frankston by delivering on my commitments and providing strong advocacy and representation for all members of the Frankston community.

In conclusion, as there will not be any felicitations in the Parliament this year, I extend my best wishes to all members of Parliament on both sides of the chamber for a happy and merry festive season and all the best for 2007 as we all tackle those important challenges. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work throughout the course of this year, as in previous years, of all of the parliamentary staff throughout the parliamentary precinct.

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — I thank the whip and the member for Benambra for reordering proceedings to allow my family to arrive in time for my speech.

I am honoured as the member for Kilsyth to rise to give my inaugural speech to the house. I commence by congratulating you, Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker, on your election to high office.

As the new member for Kilsyth I want to acknowledge the previous longstanding member for Mooroolbark, Lorraine Elliott, a member in the previous Liberal government who represented the Mooroolbark electorate between 1992 and 2002 and worked tirelessly to promote the interests of the local community. I also acknowledge Dympna Beard, who represented the electorate of Kilsyth between 2002 and 2006. I wish Dympna and her family all the best for the future.

Much of my life to date has been about serving the public. My career, my time in local government and many of the groups and organisations I have been involved with have been about giving back to the community. The experience I have gained over 23 years of working for the Australian government has given me an understanding of the machinery of government. I have also been fortunate to have had input into policy development and have been responsible for the delivery of government policy.

Over those 23 years I have been fortunate to have worked in many positions in the Australian public service, most recently as the District Registrar, Victoria, of the Migration Review Tribunal and the Refugee Review Tribunal. I have enjoyed my career to date and have gained much from the people I have had the privilege of working with. I would particularly like to pay tribute to the migration and refugee review tribunals registrar, John Lynch. I have learnt much from John's wisdom and experience.

As is the case with many of my parliamentary colleagues I chose to become more involved in my local community. Following the council amalgamations in 1994 I stood for the first local government elections in 1997. I was elected to the Shire of Yarra Ranges in March 1997 and re-elected in 2000 and 2003, and I was fortunate enough to be elected mayor on three separate occasions. Having the opportunity to serve the people of the Shire of Yarra Ranges as a local councillor and as mayor was an enormous honour, and along the way I learnt many important lessons and skills. I am grateful for the experience gained working with and on behalf of residents, businesses, community groups and organisations.

My time on council was extremely rewarding, and I take this opportunity to thank the Shire of Yarra Ranges chief executive officers I worked with — Eric Howard and, now, Rob Hauser — all the directors who served over those nine years and especially the hardworking, dedicated and committed staff. I also thank my former councillor colleagues who have worked hard to establish Yarra Ranges as a leading council in Victorian local government.

I have witnessed the benefits that can be delivered to local communities when state and federal governments work in partnership with local governments, and I will strive for strong relationships in all of my dealings with the Shire of Yarra Ranges and the City of Maroondah, which are in my electorate of Kilsyth.

Kilsyth, the electorate, is in a unique situation: it lies close to the outer urban fringe of Melbourne where it enjoys all the benefits of an urban locality, but it is also the gateway to Melbourne's Dandenong Ranges, the scenic Yarra Valley and beyond.

Kilsyth is a residential electorate with extensive parklands, sporting facilities, shopping strips and businesses. It is an area of small business.

Kilsyth has no huge shopping centres but rather the small, strip-shopping centres that many of us like for their personal, friendly service and village-like atmosphere. It is an area of manufacturing and of commuter workers who take public transport or use the roads to get to and from work.

Whilst I was doorknocking I found the demand for better public transport at the forefront of people's minds, and this issue was continually raised with me during the 18 months that I was a candidate. A significant portion of my electorate consists of people who came to Australia from England, Ireland and Scotland, hoping for a better life for themselves and

their families. My late father was one such person who migrated from Ireland. These people have special qualities, a determined independence, intense loyalty and a firm adherence to family and social values. The commitment to family values is evident among the churches and community groups in the local areas.

I could spend much time extolling the virtues of the district of Kilsyth. However, we are confronted with many significant local issues. Land use and development, issues around community safety and a lack of resourcing for our local police are of very real concern to the community; as is access to reliable, clean, safe public transport — an issue I touched on a minute ago.

What do people aspire to? That includes not only my constituents in Kilsyth but the people of Victoria. It is clear that parents want access to education for their children. After all, every child deserves to have the best educational opportunities possible. Parents want schools with outstanding, well-supported teachers, well-maintained classrooms and facilities that help stimulate learning. People want affordable and available health care. I have a great hospital in my electorate, the Maroondah Hospital, but people want hospitals to be sufficiently resourced so that waiting times are reasonable and older residents do not have to wait for excessive periods for important quality-of-life procedures.

People want safer communities. Many people in my electorate do not feel safe in their streets or homes. They want to see a police presence on the streets, around shopping centres, railway stations and entertainment precincts. People want to feel confident of their own personal safety and that of their children or older relatives in the area in which they live.

In my electorate people want efficient and reliable public transport. We must raise the standards expected of public transport. People expect our trains and buses to be clean, safe and on time. We want a public transport system that will get us to and from work, and home in time to see our families at night. In the district of Kilsyth so many people are dependent on public transport to get to work, schools and to cross the electorate to get to their homes.

People want high-quality government services and they expect state taxes, fees and charges to be kept as low as possible. Government must practise discipline when it comes to the management of spending, delivering value for money in the taxes Victorians pay to ensure funding makes its way to frontline services.

What do I stand for? Bessie Anderson Stanley is the author of a quote often incorrectly attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson:

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a little better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition . . . to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — this is the meaning of success.

That is what I stand for: being involved in my community, contributing and giving something back to the people and the area in which I live; working hard, earning respect, looking for the best in others and giving the best of myself, and leaving the place better than I found it. This is what drives me.

For me finding a place where I could make a difference was in joining the Liberal Party. I joined the Liberal Party because I believe in and connect with its values. I believe in the ideals of individual freedom, free enterprise and personal responsibility. I believe in hard work; I believe in reward for effort; I believe in enterprise, diversity and democracy. Above all, I believe in making the most of opportunity and potential. I joined the Liberal Party because it is a responsible party and the party for all Australians, not just some.

There are many things I want to achieve as the member for Kilsyth. As I stated earlier, community safety is an issue of vital importance in Kilsyth. We have problems in Kilsyth, as people everywhere have problems, which often manifest themselves in the family situation through domestic violence, children being placed at risk, homelessness and youth suicide. I bring to this Parliament an understanding of these sensitive issues and a commitment to all members of my community to assist people from all walks of life.

The bigger state issues of health, education, water, the environment, roads, public transport and community safety are all very important, but I do not believe one can be an effective representative for Kilsyth without being a strong voice on social issues. I feel that the taxpayer has a responsibility, through the government, to support those people, and I will work with local community groups, organisations and church-based organisations to deliver the services required by the community. These are some of the areas on which I want to focus as the member for Kilsyth. I am also committed to being a good and able spokesperson in this house for the people of my electorate and to represent the decisions of this Parliament adequately to them.

It is to my family that I finally turn. I am the person I am through the influence of my family. My father, Derek, was born in Ireland and migrated to Australia in 1952. He worked on the Snowy Mountains scheme. He had a strong work ethic and valued the principle of reward for effort. He married my mother, Betty, in 1961 and together they had three children. We have a strong family and I am proud of the achievements of my brothers Mick and Greg and their spouses and families who have always been a tremendous support for me. I extend this to my parents-in-law, brothers and sisters-in-law and I am truly blessed to have such a family and would not be here without them.

It is the family that gives us the strength and confidence to aim high and strive for excellence. It is family that encourages the best in you and provides guidance along the journey. To my wonderful wife, Christina: I am particularly grateful for the love, support, help, encouragement, advice, care and friendship that you have given me, especially during the past 18 months. I am thankful to our seven children, Ebonee, Amber, Ryan, Jaydan, Tayla, Breeanna and Baylin, and to all my friends for the support they have given me during those 18 months, and for the obvious pride they feel now I am here.

I am indebted to the members of my party who first chose me as their candidate and put their faith in me. I thank my campaign team, branch members and supporters for their tremendous work and dedication. I am particularly indebted to the people on my electorate committee including electorate chair, Steve Hobson, and my campaign manager, Fran Henderson. I thank my good friend James Martin for his tips and advice along the way. Thank you to the hardworking, professional people at the secretariat led by Russell Hannan, Julian Sheezel and Darren Disney. I thank Tony Smith, the federal member for Casey, and a former member of this place, the Honourable Phil Honeywood, for their advice, support and guidance during the campaign.

I thank the people and communities of Kilsyth for giving me the opportunity to represent them. It is a responsibility I take extremely seriously. I feel privileged to have been elected by the voters in Kilsyth to be their member. I promise to justify their faith in me.

In closing, I would like to thank members on both sides of this house for the warm welcome they have given both to me and to the other new members. I also thank the officers of the Parliament for the courtesy they have extended to me over the past few weeks. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to my term in this house,

getting to know other members better and taking part in the deliberations of this great Parliament. Thank you.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — Deputy Speaker, I offer my congratulations to you and to the Speaker on your appointments.

I take this opportunity to reconfirm my commitment not only to the Labor Party, of course, but also to the residents of South Barwon. Most members who have been returned have acknowledged the contributions they have made to their communities, but it is the reverse for me, because the residents of South Barwon have afforded me the privilege of representing them. Certainly I am privileged to be the only Labor member to be elected to the seat of South Barwon — and to have been re-elected, at the recent state election. It is a privilege, and I continually remind myself of that.

I get significant reminders of that from a former Liberal Party member for South Barwon, Harley Dickinson. Many members in this place probably still get phone calls from him: I get repeated phone calls and visits. Harley has instilled in me his philosophy about not taking anything for granted. I thank Harley for his continued presence, although hopefully it will not be quite so frequent next year.

I would like to thank my campaign team. Mike Atkinson is the president of the Torquay branch. He spent considerable time assisting me. As a campaign team we were small in number but big in work ethic. Ron Arthur is the president of the Belmont branch. His wife, Lesley, spent about one and a half weeks of her own time in my office assisting with the onerous responsibilities we have during a campaign. Tony White took three weeks of his annual leave to manage my campaign, and it is no coincidence that things improved when Tony came into my office. For a person to take three weeks of annual leave to work unpaid in an office needs my thanks, and in particular I sincerely thank his wife, Kerry. Roger Lawrey is another person who took time off work, and I thank him for his loyalty. I have known Roger since I was at Warrnambool High School back in 1979. I also thank the significant number of volunteers and party members who volunteered on the day and previously. I record my thanks to my staff, Denise, Denise and Linda. Only people in this place would understand what onerous and sometimes very unpleasant responsibilities the staff have, and I think we all thank our staff.

I thank my wife and family, my mum, Lesley, and my father, Paul, and my brothers, Philip and Peter, and their families. This is a particularly significant time for us as a family. I want to acknowledge my brother, David. It

was recently the fourth anniversary of his death and so I say, 'Cheerio, I know you are there'.

To Michael King, who was the Liberal candidate for South Barwon — —

Mr Mulder — A decent man!

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — I acknowledge the member for Polwarth, and I support his use of that adjective. He is a decent man. I have been in his spot before. I spoke to Michael at length on the Sunday after the election. When you put yourself in the public spotlight, as we all do, and you lose — and I lost in 1999 — you understand how he feels. I am certain he will pop up somewhere else. He can make a contribution wherever he pops up in the future, and I wish him the best. Perhaps he will learn that he should not take advice from the local federal member, but I will leave that alone as much as I can.

I thank Elaine Carbines, who is unfortunately now a former member for Geelong Province in the other place. She spent seven years in that place. Sometimes politics is very unfair, and she is another example of that. She is too good not to be in politics. Unfortunately there are examples on both sides of the house where very good people have lost their seats. It is not always because of those individuals; other more strategic issues can be the cause. There will be much reflection and analysis about what happened in Geelong Province.

I send my congratulations on their election to new members for Western Victoria Region, Gayle Tierney and Jaala Pulford in another place. I look forward to working closely with them. My understanding is that Gayle will open her office in Geelong in the new year. Well done to my lower house colleagues, including the member for Geelong, Ian Trezise; the member for Lara, John Eren; and Lisa Neville, who is now the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Children, and who is also the member for Bellarine. Having a minister from Geelong is long overdue, and the appointment has been very well received. Now we have a triumvirate of ministerial representatives from Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. It is long overdue, very welcome and has been very well accepted by the community.

I want to hit home to the local members the message of support. Our collective lobbying and advocacy has given the Labor Party a much-needed result in the Geelong region. We have set the bar high, as indeed we must, but we must continue to raise that bar as well. The residents of Geelong and South Barwon in particular will demand that. As all members know,

history is history, and the residents will judge us on what we are going to do, not necessarily on what we have done. Along with other members, my energies have turned to major commitments that the third-term Bracks government has made to the rather disparate communities in South Barwon. Whether it be Mount Duneed, Barwon Heads, Jan Juc, Bellbrae or Ceres, it is a quite eclectic mix of communities, both rural and urban.

I want to touch on a couple of projects in an extensive list. I do not want to name every one but I refer to a few, whether it be the continuing rollout of natural gas and the upgrade of the commercial area in Barwon Heads, the building of the first stage of a secondary school in Torquay or the increase in the new year in police numbers in Torquay. I look forward to the opening of the Torquay police station, which they tell me will be in February, although the date has not been set.

The 25-metre pool at Leisure Link in Belmont, where I swim, will be replaced. The new mayor of the City of Greater Geelong is Cr Bruce Harwood. As I mentioned earlier, he is the member for my old ward, Kardinia, which covers Belmont. I am keen to work with the City of Greater Geelong to start that project some time in the middle of next year. It involves a 50-metre indoor pool, one of the pools from the 12th FINA World Championships that has been donated to Geelong. That will ensure there is a 50-metre indoor facility south of the river in my electorate of South Barwon. That aquatic facility will house three pools, I think, in the Waurin Ponds-Grovedale growth area in my electorate.

As the Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment, who is at the table, will be well aware, there will be a continued upgrade of government schools. Oberon High School has been very patient in waiting for its turn for an upgrade, which is coming next year. I certainly look forward to working with Ralph Shaw, the principal.

In the expansion of health and aged care facilities, \$20 million will be provided for the aged care facility on Torquay Road in Grovedale. Work has commenced, with power being put on last week. The Geelong hospital will have an upgrade, and I know all local members will be working closely with Sue Stratigos and Claire Higgins and the board in finalising the master planning for the next stage.

There will be an expansion of recreation and sporting facilities, which are near and dear to my heart. Examples of that are Corio Bay and Barwon rowing clubs. The government has given \$50 000 for an urgent

upgrade of the Barwon Rowing Club facility, and the secretary said that no state government of any colour has ever contributed financially to those rowing clubs that are community-based, not school-based, clubs. It is a reminder to all members that rowing is a very worthwhile recreation and/or sport.

The securing of a sustainable water supply for the Geelong region is another priority. An aquifer in my electorate is being investigated for entering. The upgrade of the Barwon River park from Geelong to Barwon Heads is something that I am keen to pursue. I know a number of recreational and environmental groups are keen to have a bike trail cum walking trail cum running trail — whatever trail you like, within reason — from Geelong to Barwon Heads.

Finally, before I finish I will touch briefly on the last and very public project, the Geelong ring-road. Stage 3 is ahead of time at this stage, and we are looking at the end of 2009 for the completion of that stage and the commencement in 2008 of stage 4, the flyover on the Princes Highway, which I know all the G21 councils are now very supportive of. I know that as a group they will be keen to lobby the federal government to match the state government's \$62.5 million for that flyover. I think they will be keen to speak to the local federal member about the endorsement that the electorate has given the state government's particular options on both stages 3 and 4 and to change his mind.

The Surf Coast Shire and the Minister for Mental Health, the member for Bellarine, are very keen to finalise the Surf Coast link. That planning is almost finished. The draft Mount Duneed structure plan is on exhibition. It involves the link to the Surf Coast Highway. Again, the government has made a 100 per cent commitment to building that Surf Coast link, which I know the Surf Coast Shire in particular will keep me honest on.

Can I finish by wishing a merry Christmas and a safe new year, as many people have, not only to all in this house and the other place, but also importantly, as many have mentioned, to the long-suffering staff who keep this place ticking over. Let's all come back safe.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr BURGESS (Hastings).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

CONTROL OF WEAPONS AMENDMENT (PENALTIES) BILL

Second reading

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — Deputy Speaker, may I join with other honourable members in wishing you well on your election as Deputy Speaker of this great house.

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to enhance community safety by increasing penalties for offences under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the act. These amendments represent the first tranche of the government's proposed amendments to the control of weapons regime.

The Control of Weapons Act 1990 regulates access to non-firearms weapons in order to protect the community. Under the act, non-firearms weapons are divided into three classifications — prohibited weapons, controlled weapons and dangerous articles.

The bill amends section 5(1) of the act to increase the penalty for possessing, carrying, using, displaying or advertising for sale, selling, purchasing, causing to be imported or manufacturing a prohibited weapon without an exemption under section 8B or an approval under section 8C of the act. The bill increases the penalty from 120 penalty units or six months imprisonment to 240 penalty units or two years imprisonment.

The bill also amends section 6(1) of the act to increase the penalty for possessing, carrying or using a controlled weapon without lawful excuse. The bill increases the penalty from 60 penalty units or six months imprisonment to 120 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment.

The bill also provides for the automatic repeal of the amending act on 1 July 2008. This is in accordance with the recommendation of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee that all amending acts contain an automatic repeal provision. The repeal of this act does not affect in any way the operation of the amendments made by this act.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 makes provision for the construction, operation and the shortening of language used in acts of Parliament and subordinate instruments.

The bill has been recommended by Chief Parliamentary Counsel in order to provide for the updating of acts and statutory rules to bring them into conformity with current drafting styles. It also provides for clarification and authorisation of some procedural matters relating to legislative drafting and reprinting conventions.

While the amendments proposed in this bill may appear to be of a minor, technical nature, it is important for the sake of clarity and certainty in the interpretation of legislation that such stylistic conventions and procedures be enshrined in the act. This bill also reflects a policy commitment by this government during the recent Victorian elections to reform legislation by ensuring that all laws are modernised and written in clear English.

Clauses 1 and 2 are standard provisions dealing with the purpose and commencement of the bill.

Clause 3 clarifies a process in legislative drafting. Under current practice, the introduction print of a bill to the Parliament is entitled an 'act'. Technically, a bill is not an act until it receives royal assent. Chief Parliamentary Counsel has advised that until a bill receives royal assent, the word 'Bill' should be used in the title, rather than the word 'Act'. With the passage of this bill, this practice will now be adopted.

The bill therefore provides that the Clerk of the Parliaments will substitute the word 'Act' for the word 'Bill' in the title of a bill after it has received passage through both houses of the Parliament and before it is presented to the Governor for assent. This alteration will not be taken as an amendment of a bill; rather, it more accurately reflects the legislative process.

Clause 4 provides that in reprinting an act the government printer may omit the date of assent. This practice will avoid any confusion between the date of assent and the date of the reprint.

Clause 5 provides that in preparing an act or statutory rule for reprinting or other publication, Chief Parliamentary Counsel may authorise an alteration to be made to text or other matter forming part of the act or statutory rule, in order to give effect to any of the style changes set out in schedule 1 of the bill.

Clause 6 inserts the new schedule 1 containing stylistic changes. For example, it provides that in writing words such as 'subsection' a hyphen will no longer be used.

The purpose of these style changes is to make Victorian legislation consistent with the way other Australian jurisdictions draft their acts and statutory rules. These changes are also in keeping with a protocol on drafting national uniform legislation being developed by the Parliamentary Counsel's Committee. This committee is a national committee representing all drafting offices in Australia and New Zealand. The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General has also recently considered the matter of promoting greater consistency in drafting legislation arising from model legislative schemes.

Clause 7 provides that the act is to be repealed on the first anniversary of the first day on which all of its provisions are in operation, which is the day on which it receives royal assent.

In keeping with this proposal, Chief Parliamentary Counsel has indicated that in future all amending acts will be repealed in this manner, one year after all of their provisions commence. The period of one year is considered sufficient time for an amending bill to remain on the current statute books before being repealed, having served its amending purpose.

This proposal, which has been recommended by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, will save the time and expense of having to specifically repeal amending acts in statute law revision bills.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Under longstanding cooperative arrangements, the Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions and commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions have been able to prosecute offences against the laws of the other jurisdiction. This power is typically used to prosecute drug offences involving both commonwealth (e.g., importation) and Victorian (e.g., trafficking) offences. It is a practical arrangement, which has worked effectively. It avoids the need for two prosecutions to be run by two separate prosecution agencies in relation to the one case for their own jurisdiction's offences.

To facilitate those arrangements, the Public Prosecutions Act 1994 (Vic) enables the commonwealth DPP and his or her staff to be appointed as Victorian Crown prosecutors so that they can prosecute Victorian offences. Conversely, the Victorian DPP and Crown prosecutors are authorised under the commonwealth's Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983 to prosecute commonwealth offences. However, unlike the commonwealth act, the Victorian act does not contain an explicit basis on which the Victorian DPP and Crown prosecutors can receive and exercise this commonwealth authority. The bill will remedy that gap.

On occasions, the Victorian DPP or Crown prosecutors may be authorised to prosecute another state or territories offences. Such authorities may be given where, for example, there may be a perceived conflict of interest in the other jurisdiction prosecuting one of its own staff. There is currently no explicit basis in the Public Prosecutions Act 1994 on which the Victorian DPP or Crown prosecutors receive such an authority or exercise powers under it. The bill will make explicit their ability to do so.

There is also a possibility of such a conflict-of-interest situation arising in Victoria. Currently, there is no explicit means under the Public Prosecution Act 1994 of authorising another jurisdiction's DPP or staff (other than the commonwealth) to prosecute a Victorian offence in this situation. The bill will provide that another jurisdiction's DPP or his or her staff may be appointed a Crown prosecutor to enable them to initiate and conduct the prosecution of Victorian offences.

These amendments will provide an explicit statutory foundation for these cooperative arrangements to operate and assist to avoid any technical legal challenges in cases conducted under them.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

Sitting suspended 6.28 p.m. until 8.01 p.m.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I would like to start by congratulating you, Speaker, on your recent appointment.

It is a great pleasure to speak in the debate on the address-in-reply, and it is an even greater pleasure to have been elected the member for Hastings. I would like to record my sincere thanks to the people of the Hastings electorate for placing their trust in me. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my predecessor, Rosalyn Buchanan, for the hard work she performed on behalf of the Hastings electorate.

Hastings is a mixed rural and urban fringe electorate located approximately 42 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. It is roughly 600 square kilometres in area. BlueScope Steel and Inghams Enterprises are the two largest employers in the electorate.

The features of Hastings include the Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, Boggy Creek and the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. The HMAS Cerberus naval base, Watson and Kings creeks and Devilbend Reservoir are also wonderful assets of the area. It also encompasses such well-known localities as Balnarring, French Island, Crib Point, Somerville, Langwarrin, Devon Meadows and the coastal villages. But Hastings is much more than its geography; it is very much about the people who have chosen to make this magnificent area their home. Their needs are the needs of country people, manual workers, young families, business owners and retirees.

The electorate and people of Hastings draw together all the different threads of my life. My loving parents, Ron and Audrey Burgess, raised me, my six sisters and brother in the small country town of Tocomwal, where they owned and ran the Tocomwal Hotel. This was where the locals gathered after a hard day of work to relax, discuss their troubles and socialise. It taught me a lot about life. Being brought up in a small country town and in a very large family, I quickly developed a strong sense of community. I learnt that the family unit and a close community are two of the most important building blocks of happiness. These country values have never left me, and I see them throughout the Hastings electorate.

My first job was also in Tocomwal. I was the town postie by day and the telephone exchange operator by night. As the overnight operator it was my responsibility to ensure that the communication channels within the town and between the town and the rest of the world remained open. I was also required to coordinate the essential services whenever there was an emergency — fire, flood or car accident. This role highlighted to me the critical nature of the community's interdependence. It also taught me the vulnerability of the elderly to isolation. The experiences gained through these times instilled in me a passion for my community that renews itself every time I speak to somebody in the electorate of Hastings.

With its steelworks and port, Hastings is a working town full of working people. In my early jobs as conveyor belt operator in a flour mill, tractor driver on a potato farm and hay carter I learnt what it means to work hard and long. Having worked for Inghams Enterprises — the second-largest employer in the electorate — for five years, I developed a strong understanding of the challenges that face small and large businesses and the people who rely on them for their livelihoods. However, without question my favourite job has been as father of Kate, Emma and Justen — and just as I said that, Kate and Emma walked into the gallery.

There are many people without whom I would not be standing here today. I record my sincere thanks to my two daughters, Kate and Emma, and their wonderful mother, Shona, for their limitless love, understanding and patience; the federal member for Flinders and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Greg Hunt; Robert Breeschoten; Margaret Davis; Chris Watt; Peter Baulch; Rosemary Seeger; Frank and Angelo Lamattina; Jill Fletcher; Deborah and John Marton; Bill and Kathy Kettle; Vicki and Rod Bradshaw; Julie Owens; Don and Hilda Hodgins; and of course Mr Tim

Mirabella of Mirabella's seafood, former proprietor of Hastings' oldest business. To the many others who gave their time and energy unselfishly, my sincere gratitude.

The community expects and deserves someone who will work with them in the streets as well as for them in Parliament, and someone who will roll up their sleeves and work side by side with their people, get their hands dirty and experience first hand their challenges. There is no greater advocate for people than someone who shares their pain.

It is my intention to continue to work side by side with the people of Hastings so that we can together make our community a better and safer place for our children to grow up in, our families to live in, our people to work in and our elderly to retire in.

The journey to this house has for many been long, with significant challenges and sacrifices along the way. Some of these sacrifices are made by choice, and others are unexpected and deeply regretted consequences of what it takes to represent your community.

Representing my community will always be something of which I am extremely proud. However, it is of paramount importance that we bear in mind that the true measurement of whether or not this journey was worthwhile or justified lies not in the successful arrival but in the level of good achieved whilst here. The good that each member wants to achieve has as many iterations as there are members, and it is both a cause and a consequence of our healthy democracy.

One of the 'goods' that I am truly passionate about is improving the circumstances of families and, consequently, of the children of those families. The family is a pillar of our society. The systemic breaking down of family is a breaking down of our community. It is often said that the health of a community can be measured by how it treats its children, but how many of its children must be treated well to make a society a healthy one? In my electorate, as is the case across large areas of our great state, there is a significant issue with what has been described as youth lawlessness.

A typical example of such a problem is the situation that became a regular occurrence at the BP service station in Langwarrin. Until it was forced to cease opening 24 hours a day, it was common to find up to 200 youths on the Langwarrin BP site in the early hours of the morning. A typical night would produce theft, intimidation and assault. On one occasion there was a stabbing. Police resources are stretched across my electorate so tightly that having officers able just to

attend was a challenge in itself. Now that this service station shuts at night these young people have simply moved to another venue.

Langwarrin is not alone in experiencing these problems. This same situation is repeated in most communities across the state to a larger or lesser extent. Why does this happen? The link between dysfunctional families and wayward youths is unquestionable. One view is that our children need to have more to do and more to occupy themselves with. However, the majority of these issues occur in the early hours of the morning, and the participants are commonly aged between 10 and 14. I doubt that many would believe the problem is that a 10-year-old needs more to do at 2.00 a.m.

I believe the true problem is masked. Our lawless youths are simply the symptom of a problem within our community, not the problem itself. Our community suffers from the symptoms and continually acts to address those while ignoring the true illness. The disease is in the homes of the youths we see running amok. The level of dysfunction in the homes of an area dictates the severity of the symptoms experienced by that community. If we continue to treat only the symptoms, it will be like putting a bandaid on a serious infection — the problem may be hidden, but the damage will continue.

So what is the disease that infects the homes of an increasing number of our youths? What is it about these homes that makes them different from those with youths who do not become involved, in an ongoing sense, in serious antisocial behaviour? The point that must be made here, of course, is that these problems exist in a fairly low number of homes, but even a small number is too many. What solutions are there to this growing problem? What is available for our community to do?

While parenting education programs are a very worthwhile tool, they currently have an inherent limitation. Parents who have the desire and motivation to attend such a course are less likely to be in need of it. Parents who are interested enough to attend are at least interested in their children's development and lives. The parents less likely to attend parenting skills education are conversely, therefore, more likely to be the ones with the most to gain from it. Further, this means that the children with the most to gain from their parents receiving that training are unfortunately the least likely to receive that benefit.

Our children need us to provide skills to the parents within our community — and yes, it is difficult to get

the parents who are most in need to attend for those upgrades. Therefore, while we must continue to provide as many opportunities as possible to existing parents to improve their parenting skills, we must ensure that these crucial skills are provided to the parents of tomorrow. How do we get to the parents of tomorrow? The parents of tomorrow are in our schools today.

There are few skills taught in schools that are more important to the future of our community than the skills that will, when the time comes, enable our children to raise healthy and productive members of our community. I am committed to working with my colleagues to answer these questions, to identify the causes of the problems we see developing within our families and to provide Victorians with the policies that will help address these issues.

In leaving this topic I think it is worth reflecting upon the readiness with which we now rightly use environment effects statements to consider the impact of our actions, including legislative action, upon the environment, yet we fail to impose the same level of scrutiny on the possible impact of our laws and actions on our families and children.

The lead for my actions as a member of this house will come from my community. The Hastings community has clearly identified the following important local issues. In the area of roads, they are fixing the Stony Point and Frankston-Flinders roads intersection, fixing the Baxter-Tooradin and Fultons roads intersection, and completing the duplication of the Western Port Highway. In health they are providing doctors for Baxter, Tooradin, Cannons Creek, Warneet and Blind Bight and additional doctors for Hastings, and providing additional aged care facilities in Hastings. In education they are the completion of years 11 and 12 at the Somerville Secondary College, and an upgrade to the Elisabeth Murdoch College in Langwarrin.

In employment they are the completion of the Hastings submarine project, and the implementation of the Stony Point-Phillip Island car ferry. In security and the environment they are the provision of 24-hour police stations at Somerville and Langwarrin, with additional officers and resources, the attainment of the full contingent of officers at the Hastings police station, no bitumen plant for Crib Point, no freight train corridor through Pearce Dale, Devon Meadows and Clyde, the protection of Boggy Creek, Watson Creek and Kings Creek, the provision of natural gas for townships including Tooradin, Blind Bight, Warneet, Cannons Creek, Devon Meadows and Cranbourne South, the closure of the Gunnamatta outfall by 2015, and the retention of all of Devilbend Reservoir.

On the other hand there are things that greatly concern my community. The port of Hastings plan is one of those issues. If the planning and implementation of this project are conducted sensibly and are sensitive to the needs and desires of the local community, it has the potential to deliver great benefits both locally and statewide in terms of jobs and other opportunities.

If, however, the planning is conducted with insufficient community input or if it proceeds without the acceptance of the locals, the port of Hastings expansion could do more harm to the local people and the environment than it can do good for the state. The planning process to date has been flawed, with community consultation being patchy at best, and it has left many locals feeling as though the process has been secretive and the community has been intentionally kept in the dark. I take this opportunity to strongly urge the Port of Hastings Corporation to revisit its community consultation process.

In conclusion then, the question is: what does representing my community mean to me? It is about giving the people of the Hastings electorate back their voice, it is about fulfilling the promise of what is possible, and it is about recognising the critical role that families play in our society and putting in place the strategies needed to support that role. But more than anything else, I want to help make the Hastings electorate and Victoria a better place for Kate and Emma and all Victorian children to grow up in and grow old in.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call the member for Mulgrave — sorry, the Minister for Gaming!

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Gaming) — Speaker, I am more than happy to be addressed as the member for Mulgrave. I congratulate you on your elevation to high office. Along with all members of this place I am certain you will discharge your duties very well indeed. Congratulations to you, Speaker.

I am very pleased to join the address-in-reply debate this evening. Firstly, I want to thank the people of Mulgrave, my local community, which is a proud local community and one that has benefited under the seven years of this government. I want to thank the families in my local area for again placing their trust in me to represent them and their interests in this place, and now in a slightly higher role in government.

Over the last four years our government and I, as the local member for Mulgrave, have focused on the services that matter, the services that are critically important to local families in my area and that really

make a difference to the quality of people's lives, whether it be health, education, or community safety services. There is a raft of different programs and projects. They are things that really define state politics and that this government has made its clear priority with additional investment and much hard work. Our community has not been left behind; it has been given the support, the assistance, the funding and the resources that are critical to building a better future for families in our local area.

Tonight I want to talk a little bit about some of the commitments the government has made in relation to my local area that will directly benefit families in Mulgrave. I want to also reflect on some of the broader commitments we made in the area of health — an area in which I was very privileged to play a role for the last four years as Parliamentary Secretary for Health. I then want to touch upon our commitments to and the new responsibilities I have in gaming, in particular problem gambling, and in consumer affairs and assisting the Premier on multicultural affairs.

Before the election we committed to continue investing in those services and supports that are critically important to local families. I will run through a list of some of the commitments and promises that are critically important and relevant to my local community. As part of our health policy we committed to upgrade the Dandenong Hospital emergency department, which is one of the state's busiest emergency departments. That extends the work that we have undertaken at that hospital — a large and significant hospital in my local community.

On from that — and I will return to mental health in a moment — we committed to completely rebuild the mental health wards at Dandenong Hospital. Again, that is very important. In fact, as part of that program we will almost double the number of beds in the mental health wards of Dandenong Hospital.

We also committed to fund the stage 1 redevelopment of facilities at the Wellington Secondary College in Mulgrave. I was very pleased and proud to work to secure that additional funding. Earlier this year we secured around \$100 000 in planning funding, and the school, together with the school council and the broader community, worked very hard on that planning work. It was significant and secured a commitment to fund and construct stage 1 of the redevelopment of the school. It is among the fine government and non-government schools in my local community, and that was certainly welcomed and supported by local families.

I refer to other commitments we have made that are directly relevant to my local community. We committed to triplicate Ferntree Gully Road between Jells Road and Stud Road. This is an important measure and complements the funding and work that has been undertaken on widening Ferntree Gully Road between Cootamundra Drive and Jells Road, which was funded in last year's budget. Work is almost, if not already, complete on that important project.

A commitment to funding was also provided to begin planning for new children's services at the Monash Medical Centre. That comes on top of the very recently opened, brand-new emergency department at the Monash Medical Centre, which is similar to that at Dandenong Hospital. It is one of the state's busiest. Access to health services is critically important and first-class facilities to provide those health services in, which match the quality of our staff, is very important as we go forward. Just prior to the beginning of the election campaign the Minister for Health opened that new emergency department.

In terms of community health — and I will return to that in a moment as well — the MonashLink Community Health Service, which very admirably and competently provides primary care in our local community throughout the city of Monash, received a commitment to funding to upgrade two of its sites. That will be of great benefit as we continue to support community health — that vibrant, very important sector that is working closely and effectively with government to take action on chronic illness. It is increasingly an important part of our health agenda as we move forward.

A lot of planning work went into the MonashLink upgrade. We funded the stage 1 redevelopment, or the inclusion of MonashLink in the Monash City Council's Clayton Community Centre, with around \$8 million in total in this year's budget, and to get a commitment for two further upgrades of two further campuses is very significant. For all who worked on the project, particularly the members for Mount Waverley, Burwood, Oakleigh, myself and others, it is very gratifying to see the government commit to investing a substantial amount of money to bring the new campuses forward.

The list goes on and includes abolishing zone 3; rebuilding our schools, particularly tech wings at each government secondary college; and our broader plan for revitalising school capital. The government has made a whole range of other commitments and promises. It is no mistake that the Victorian community has continued to support a government that has

remained focused on those important matters and put forward a very clear alternative of sound economic management and investing the proceeds of economic growth in the services that matter, the services that define state politics — or at least they should — and the services that make a practical and tangible difference to the lives of so many people in my local community and in local communities right across Victoria.

I mentioned that I want to touch upon some of the work that I have done in the health portfolio over the last four years. That was a very challenging and extremely rewarding time. I note that the Minister for Mental Health is at the table. I want to congratulate her on her elevation to that significant role. I was pleased to play a role in mental health matters and also primary care.

I also want to touch upon the government's commitments in terms of mental health. I, along with all members on this side of the house, know that the new Minister for Mental Health will implement those with great passion and vigour. That is very important because, as we know, one in five Victorians suffer a mental illness, or will at some time in their life suffer a mental illness. Mental illness touches all of us. Over the last seven years the government has increased recurrent funding for mental health by 73 per cent. Put another way, that is a \$472 million increase in terms of our contribution to the national action plan on mental health signed off by the Council of Australian Governments. Our recurrent commitment, which is already funded, is \$329.5 million. That is a 73 per cent increase in terms of our support in this important part of our health system.

Of note are commitments to expand our very successful model of care — the prevention and recovery care centres, or PARCs as they are known — with funding to open another 80 beds across seven sites. That particular home-style model of care, usually a 10-bed service model, where clients can go after they have spent some time in an acute ward to build on the gains they have made in hospital — or alternatively they can step up into those beds instead of being admitted to an inpatient ward — was singled out for praise in a Senate committee report last year. It is a wonderful model of care. There is real leadership and real reform, which is providing new and different and better models of care. The model of care is supported by clients and families, the broader community and our dedicated medical and psychiatric work force. That is a wonderful step forward in an area that is very important.

I mentioned the Dandenong Hospital rebuild. I was pleased to travel with the Minister for Health to announce that out in my local community. That is a

very worthy project which is needed and has been needed for some time. It is a very substantial financial commitment to double the number of mental health beds there.

One further mental health matter that I will mention is the veterans mental health wing at the Heidelberg repatriation hospital site. I am sure honourable members from both sides of the house have been written to by veterans groups — RSL clubs and others, particularly the Vietnam Veterans Association of Victoria — about the inadequacy of the inpatient facilities there. Our government has proudly committed \$10 million to rebuild that particularly important facility, which not only caters for those who have served our state and our country but also other emergency service personnel. That is a particularly important commitment and one that I am proud of, as I know is every member on this side of the house. I am sure we are joined in a bipartisan way by those opposite in terms of that important project.

The list goes on and on in mental health and community health. I mentioned MonashLink and a whole range of other funding. Community health is a very important part of our plan for the future in terms of day hospitals. I heard the member for Macedon speaking about an important project, a day hospital in Sunbury, that we have committed to fund as well.

Primary care and community health are a very important part of our vision for the way the health system needs to work in terms of empowering people and giving people the tools and practical support they need to take control of their illness, rather than illness controlling them. These are simple things but very important in terms of empowering people and building a better future.

I will turn to the area of gaming and then to the portfolios of consumer affairs and multicultural affairs. In October this year the government released the most comprehensive plan to take action on problem gambling in Australian history. It is a \$132.3 million plan that will see us boost problem-gambling treatment services and important research into the causes of problem gambling — research that will help us to understand these issues better and to inform the policy development process. This record funding will also see us expand and continue our very effective social marketing campaign.

This \$132.3 million plan, very appropriately entitled Taking Action on Problem Gambling, will help us to continue to achieve very important results. We have halved the incidence of problem gambling in the

Victorian community over the term of our government. More must be done; whilst we have achieved a lot, there is more to be done in this important area. The government is committed through this record funding to continue to take action on these important issues.

Mr K. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass is out of his seat.

Mr ANDREWS — At the risk of running out of the time I need to talk about a whole range of other important matters, I simply point out to the member for Bass that we are fast approaching a situation in this state where in terms of investing and taking action on problem gambling this government will in one year spend almost as much as, if not more than, the previous government invested on problem gambling in seven years.

Mr K. Smith interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — We are fast approaching the situation where we will invest more in a year than the previous government invested in seven years! It is easy to talk about problem gambling; what is more important and a good deal more difficult is to invest and take action to address these issues. That is our record over the last seven years, and we will continue it through the most comprehensive problem-gambling strategy in Australian history.

In terms of consumer affairs, this government has a proud record of standing up for the rights of vulnerable consumers. It is important that we continue to do that — and our position on 'lemon laws' is supported by the Victorian community — as well as move on in relation to implementing the work of the consumer credit review, taking action to better protect the rights of those who live in caravan parks and rooming houses, and vigilantly standing up for those in our community who do not have a lot of market power. We will try to make the market work better for them and to be a passionate advocate on behalf of Victorian consumers. We have a strong plan for the future there, and I look forward to working hard to implement it.

I am sure the member for Bulleen will be very pleased to join me, in a bipartisan way, in my excitement at becoming the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. I proudly represent a very multicultural, very culturally diverse community: almost half the people living in my electorate were born overseas. I am delighted to be given the chance to play a role and work hard to support our cultural diversity, tolerance and harmony. In a practical sense I will be

supporting those many thousands of Victorians who volunteer their time to work hard to celebrate their culture and history and share it with all of us, thus valuing what is a great economic and social asset which makes Victoria such an interesting and dynamic place to live.

One of the election commitments we made when we came to office involved about \$750 000 a year in grants to support the work of our multicultural groups; that has increased to about \$3 million now, and we committed in the recent election campaign to increase that to \$4 million per year. We are very proud of that, and we think that it will work very well in terms of assisting the good work that so many different multicultural communities do in supporting our very rich, culturally diverse community. I look forward to the challenges ahead, and I am very grateful, pleased and proud to have been returned to this place as the member for Mulgrave and to now play a role in three very important portfolio areas. Again, congratulations to you, Speaker, and all honourable members.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to your high office and to wish you well in discharging your duties over the next four years.

I feel greatly honoured to stand in this place today as the member for Mornington — honoured to be a member of this house, of course, but particularly so to be representing the seat of Mornington. The electorate lies on the eastern shore of Port Phillip Bay and comprises three distinct townships, Mount Eliza, Mornington and Mount Martha. It also contains a good slice of the district and village of Moorooduc. Despite substantial population growth in recent years, owing to the foresight and planning of successive councils, the area retains its charm.

Unfortunately the Melbourne 2030 activity centre provisions now threaten. This is a critical time for the Mornington Peninsula. We are in serious danger of becoming simply a southern extension of metropolitan Melbourne, a scenario emphatically rejected by the peninsula community. That is certainly a debate we must have, but perhaps it is more appropriate to leave it to another day. As I speak, much of the seat remains rural land, home to cool-climate viticulture, extensive grazing, fine food and, of course, the racing industry. We are on the metropolitan fringe. The Mornington Peninsula Shire is an interface council, with all the challenges that go with that particular designation.

I have spent most of my adult life on the peninsula. From almost my first day I was aware of the fierce local

pride that people who live on the Mornington Peninsula — and particularly those who have lived there for a while — have in the area. It is a pride which I quickly came to share and which has made me a passionate advocate for the community that I now have the pleasure of serving in this place.

The other constant in my adult life has been small business. It was small business that brought me to the Mornington Peninsula, and it is small business that to a large extent has guided the course of my life over the last 26 years.

As all good traders know — and I think as all good members of Parliament know — it is of vital importance to be involved in your local community. Early on in my time on the peninsula I joined a number of local groups, including the Mornington Chamber of Commerce. Not long after that the chamber developed a fairly strong difference of opinion with the then Mornington council as to what the future shape of the Mornington township should be. It was a difference that threatened to escalate and poison what had been previously a pretty good relationship between those two bodies over the years. In a bid to understand the council's view of things I started sitting in the gallery right through council meetings, and of course rather than simply taking note of what happened in terms of the planning issues, I started to get interested in all the other bits and pieces that were going on as well. Fortunately our differences were resolved pretty quickly, but not before I was well and truly bitten by the local government bug, and before long I had been elected to the Mornington council.

My local government service, which was in the pre-amalgamation days, was certainly one of the high points of my public life to date. To serve as mayor, or shire president as it was in Mornington in those days, was a great privilege, as was the opportunity to serve on public bodies such as the Peninsula Regional Library Service and the Westernport Regional Planning Committee, to advise the Minister for the Arts on library funding or to be nominated by my peers to negotiate the merger of the Shire of Mornington with the shires of Hastings and Flinders.

But undoubtedly the most rewarding part of local government was the opportunity it gave me to engage directly with so many people who make our community great — the traders who give their time, and often their money, to make local festivals happen; the Rotary clubs and the Lions clubs, which contribute so much in so many ways; the volunteers who support the Meals on Wheels services — and without the volunteers they simply could not happen; and many, many more. Such

people are an integral part of the active and vital community that is the Mornington electorate, as they are of so many other communities across Victoria.

In the past few days — and unfortunately now, weeks — there has been no better example of service to the community than the efforts of the Country Fire Authority volunteers, a number of them from the Mornington electorate, who have left their homes and their jobs to battle the menace of the fires which have laid waste to vast areas of our state. These brave men and women deserve our recognition and our thanks for their tremendous commitment to the public good. I am sure the thoughts of all of us are with them in their duties.

I come into this Parliament as a proud member of the Liberal Party, a party I joined in November 1975 at the age of 19. Over the years I have been an active member and have had the opportunity to contribute in many ways. I am a Liberal because I believe in individual freedom, in individual responsibility and in a society committed to freedom of thought and freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of association and free enterprise. I believe in a community that values initiative, enterprise and individual achievement over compulsion and conformity — a place where people are able to buy a home, raise and educate their children in the way they choose, and create the life to which they aspire.

I would not have the privilege of standing in this place this evening had I not had tremendous support from many people. I firstly want to recognise the support I have received from the former member for Mornington, the Honourable Robin Cooper. Robin has been a friend for almost 20 years, a great mentor and a great supporter. I also particularly want to thank Diana and Erich Goetz, Terry Leech, Alan Underwood, Frank and Trish Winter, Arthur Ranken and David Chapman. Their efforts have been way beyond the call of duty, as have those of Darren Disney, Julian Sheezel and all in their team. I would also be remiss if I did not mention another good mate — the Honourable Bruce Billson, Minister for Veterans Affairs and the member for Dunkley in the commonwealth Parliament. Bruce and I have shared many political adventures since we first crossed swords on a regional library committee in 1987.

I am also particularly fortunate to have enjoyed great support from my family for my political endeavours over what is now an extended period. That support has come from my parents, Bob and Dorothy Morris, from my sister, Robyn Tredinnick, and her husband, David, and lately their children, Caitlin and Andrew, and from my newer family, Simon, Tim and Carolyn Wilson, but

most of all from my wife, Linda, who worked at full stretch for every day of what was a 22-month campaign. I simply would not be here without her love and support.

I thank the house for the courtesy with which I have been heard this evening, and I look forward with great enthusiasm to the years ahead.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to participate in the response to the Governor's speech. I would like to offer my congratulations to you, Speaker, on your appointment. I also want to pay tribute to the volunteer firefighters, many of whom come from the Bellarine country fire authorities, and to the many communities that have been dealing with bushfires over the last few weeks. It is an extremely dangerous and stressful time for many Victorians, and my thoughts and prayers are with them tonight.

It was just under four years ago that I made my first contribution to this house. At that time I reflected on the sense of privilege and responsibility that had been conferred on me by the people of Bellarine.

On 25 November this year the people of Bellarine again placed their trust in me, and I am determined to again honour that trust. I thank them not only for their support on 25 November but also for their ongoing support during the last four years. It has been an absolute privilege to be their local community representative, as it has been to be the representative of the Australian Labor Party in the seat of Bellarine.

Politics for me is about service, because it is through service that we can make a difference in people's lives. Over the last four years I have learnt so much — about myself and about the value of government and its ability to change people's lives. I have learnt so much about the importance of a Labor government, and I have learnt so much about the issues and concerns that touch people's lives on a day-to-day basis.

People have shared extraordinary things with me over the last four years — the sad, the funny and the many challenging issues that confront so many of them on a day-to-day basis. I hope that over the last four years I have been able to assist them and to relieve them of some of their burdens.

There have been many achievements in the seat of Bellarine, and I know that over the last four years I have taken as many opportunities as I can to highlight some of those achievements. I want to touch on a few of those achievements again tonight. They are some of the things that people took into account when on

25 November they went to vote for who they wanted to continue to represent them.

We have seen massive upgrades in schools in Bellarine, from the rebuilding of Wallington Primary School and Leopold Primary School to the \$8.3 million rebuild of the Newcomb Secondary College, of which I am extremely proud.

There has been extensive investment in the health system, with the rebuilding of the MacKellar Centre for the aged — a centre that previously was to be privatised by the former government — the rebuilding and upgrade of the Andrew Love Cancer Centre and the upgrade of dental services across the Bellarine Peninsula.

We have seen the upgrade of boat ramps right across the North Bellarine. For those who do not know, Bellarine has one of the highest boat ownership rates in the whole of the state of Victoria. We have also seen the extension of natural gas through the North Bellarine. These touch on just some of the achievements we have made in the seat of Bellarine over the last four years.

During the last four years I have also had the opportunity to address some of the systemic issues that have contributed to many stresses for families in my communities. Although they are often hidden, there are a couple of communities in the electorate of Bellarine that struggle. These communities take great pride in the areas in which they live, but they are aware of some very systemic issues including unemployment, high drug use, mental health, community safety and a lack of engagement with schools and with other services in their areas. I have been proud to work with those communities and the government in delivering further investment in their areas through community renewal and community facilitators, particularly in Whittington and Portarlington.

When during the election campaign the government talked about what matters to families, fundamentally it was talking about what matters to all Victorian families. We have supported and encouraged community participation through our Fairer Victoria policies. This has nurtured communities by ensuring that the most vulnerable members in our society are active players in determining their own future. Through our investments in community renewal and in the community facilitation program we will ultimately ensure that our communities are healthier, stronger, more resilient and more cohesive. A just society can only be achieved when we make it our no. 1 priority to meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

For the first time the people of Whittington have seen a government that has invested money in their community and allowed them to talk about what they need in terms of services and jobs. These are tangible projects that are making a real difference to people's lives.

It is for this reason I am extremely honoured to have the opportunity not only to represent the communities of Bellarine but also to take on the role as Victoria's first Minister for Mental Health as well as the roles of Minister for Children and Minister for Aged Care. As the Minister for Gaming pointed out, mental illness directly affects about one in five people in their lifetime but touches many more of us through our families, children, carers and the community generally. The challenge for governments is to ensure we are continually improving services to meet the needs of those who are living with a mental illness and the families who support them.

Victoria is acknowledged as having one of the best mental health systems in Australia, but we know — and I know — that there is much more to be done. We made substantial commitments prior to the election. We committed \$472 million over five years to implement the national mental health action plan. During the election we committed a further \$129 million to implement significant reforms, and I will touch briefly on these, that will see the provision of more acute and community mental health beds. We are focused very much on ensuring that we are able to provide better emergency responses through mental health teams within our emergency departments across Victoria. We are focused on ensuring the better integration of our primary and acute services. We are also focused on improving access to mental health services and treatment for people living in regional and rural Victoria.

We are focused on expanding early intervention services for children and young people, thus reducing mental health rates as they grow into adulthood. Similarly in the area of early childhood services the government has outlined a program of significant investment. The experts tell us that early childhood experiences have an enormous impact on the future life opportunities of each child. Our goal is to ensure a more integrated system of early year services that are child focused, more accessible and more adaptable to the changing needs of today's families. I am looking forward to implementing the government's commitment to better supporting people with a mental illness, ensuring Victorian children get the best possible start in life and providing better services and support that acknowledge the value of senior Victorians.

I am also looking forward to the challenge of continuing to work closely with the communities of Bellarine in implementing our local election commitments. Some of those commitments are very significant and are ones that local communities have been working with me very closely on over the last four years. One key priority is the building of a Bellarine aquatic centre. That has been the aspiration of the local Bellarine community for over 20 years, and it is one that I am pleased to say this government has committed \$2.5 million towards building. We will start to see the progress of that in the middle of 2007.

We have committed to substantial bus fare reductions for Bellarine Peninsula residents as well. For historical reasons Bellarine residents have paid hefty bus fare rates, and I know from the feedback I received during the election that this is a welcome initiative.

We have also made a commitment to assist in the reopening of the beach area at the Dell. For those who know Bellarine and the Clifton Springs area, the one major beach access has been down at the historical Dell. This area has been closed for about five years, and during that time local people have not had access to a beach area. The money we are committing there will see a new breakwater, an upgraded beach and new groynes, and it will ensure that families and children in that community can enjoy a beautiful north-facing bay area.

We have committed to rebuild and upgrade the historic Queenscliff pier. We have also committed ongoing recurrent additional funding for the Marine Discovery Centre. Now in a new building, the centre is more widely used and visited by Victorian children than the museum.

We have also committed to rebuilding the Point Lonsdale Primary School, which is a leading school along the Bellarine Peninsula in terms of its curricula. That has been welcomed by the school community. We have also made substantial commitments to Barwon Health, and we have also committed to planning for the future redevelopment of additional theatres and additional mental health acute beds.

I am also keen to continue working closely with the local community on a number of key projects including Lake Connewarre, which is a key environmental asset within the Bellarine community and one that the community of Leopold has particular pride in. We have been working closely on a Lake Connewarre values project. I am also very keen to continue to work with the community of Portarlington on a safe harbour project which will support not only recreational boating

but also the development of the aquaculture industry in Portarlington. We are also working with the Queenscliff community on the redevelopment of the sports clubs.

Obviously there are a number of people whom I would like to thank for their support for my re-election to this Parliament. I acknowledge and thank all those people who volunteered many hours during the pre-polling period and on election day, particularly those who ended up with significant illnesses as a result of standing out in the cold.

I thank my campaign committee, especially Denise Sparks and Mark Donahue, who took on the role of campaign manager and did a fantastic job. I acknowledge the ALP head office: I have been a proud member of the Labor Party for almost 20 years now, and I thank it for its support.

There are so many of my parliamentary colleagues to thank, but I particularly acknowledge Ian Trezise, the member for Geelong, and Elaine Carbines, a former member for Geelong Province in the other place, who did a fantastic job representing the communities of Geelong. It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Elaine. I also acknowledge Michael Crutchfield, whose friendship and support I value. Michael is a fantastic local member and deserved to be re-elected to the seat of South Barwon. I acknowledge the support and advice of John Eren, and it is great to see him now in the lower house representing Lara. I thank Joanne Duncan, the member Macedon, next to whom I sat for four years. She taught me absolutely nothing, but she is a great friend!

I acknowledge Richard Marles, whose advice and support I greatly appreciate, for our shared responsibility for our son, Sam. I acknowledge my parents, who on election night were celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary. I do not think they imagined doing that, but I thank them for their continuing support and love.

I acknowledge my electorate office staff, Cameron and Sue. As all members here know, our electorate office staff are absolutely invaluable. They are our voice out into the community and I thank Cameron and Sue for being such a clear and loud voice in my community. I thank Hamish Park, who took holidays during the campaign to come down and make sure our campaign remained on track. I am not sure we would have done it without him.

I thank my son, Sam, who one night during the campaign said to me — as members know it can be a

relatively stressful time and one is not a good judge of how things are going — ‘Mum, whatever happens, we have each other’, which reminds you that the most important thing is family. I thank Sam for his patience and support. Without him none of it would be worthwhile.

Finally I thank the people of Bellarine, who have again placed their trust in me. I am committed to continuing to be a strong representative of their interests.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — I congratulate you, Speaker, on your elevation to the role of Speaker for the term of this Parliament.

I stand here today as a fourth generation Gippslander, proud of my state and my nation, of which we are all a part. My electorate of Narracan is a beautiful piece of Victoria all the way from the Baw Baws in the north to the rolling Strzeleckis in the south and from the gateway to Gippsland in the west to our coalfields in the east.

I thank the residents of Narracan for my election to this house. It is indeed a privilege to follow former Liberal members Balfour, Delzoppo and Andrighetto and to continue their determination to advance the interests, wellbeing and prosperity of the people of Victoria. Like these former members, who set a very high benchmark, I commit myself to the task ahead in recognition of the faith the electorate and the community have placed in my candidacy.

I have been active in Narracan all my life. I have been a member of the hospital board for nine years, and the health and wellbeing of the generations of families in Narracan is of prime importance to me. The West Gippsland Healthcare Group manages the West Gippsland hospital. Currently this hospital is experiencing unprecedented demand in its emergency department. However, the Bracks government has consistently underfunded the hospital to the tune of \$1.5 million annually. A further failing of this government is its lack of investment in the Coinda nursing home — the frail-aged wing of the hospital — which is now facing the prospect of not meeting the new guidelines and standards being implemented in 2011. I am about focusing the government's attention on these health care issues for Narracan families. The population in Narracan is growing, and we need a government that plans for this growth and invests in health accordingly.

I recognise the remarkable contribution generations of migrants have made to Gippsland, and I want to provide for them as they grow older and ensure that our

health facilities in Narracan are world best practice. I also want to provide for future generations. With six children of my own I have seen first hand the importance of education. I have been involved with school parent committees and junior sporting clubs. I am determined to ensure that the parents of Narracan and their children have the choice and quality of education they deserve. I am determined to ensure that no child with special needs is able to slip through the cracks because of this government's failure to provide the appropriate support for these special young people and their parents.

A previous Labor government decision to abandon technical school education has left businesses floundering with a lack of trade-trained people to fill the growing demand for these skills right across the state. This decision has also had a major impact on the lives of many young people in my electorate, young men and women left high and dry because they had no interest in pursuing tertiary education. They desperately wanted a job, but there was no formal training available. Sadly, many of these young people succumbed to alienation and despair as depression took control of their lives.

It is my wish that this Parliament takes a bipartisan approach to fix this situation, to broaden the work choices available to all young men and women, to help them maintain their self-esteem and stay connected with their communities and society. It is offensive to me that in the recent election campaign this government came out and admitted it had failed the education community of Victoria by promising to fix the last seven years of inaction. With the seven years of budget surplus and with abundant income from its GST receipts, the Bracks government should have been continually investing in the education of Victorian children. Education is this government's responsibility. Each time I get the opportunity I will call it to account and remind it of the promises it made to fix the Victorian education system.

As a timber family for five generations we have survived on the natural resources of the forest and placed crucial importance on caring for the regeneration of this precious resource. In fact, families like mine have done more for the protection of the forest than protesters who, in East Gippsland today, continue to deprive honest, hardworking timber families of their right to work and earn an income.

The Bracks government has reduced the availability of forest to industry across the state and in my electorate by a huge 50 per cent. It has closed public land and denied access. It has shut the cattle out of the high

country, and poorly managed this land so it is now a weed-infested fire hazard. In fact, we now have volunteers, timber workers and communities risking their lives fighting fires. There is no doubt these fires are more severe because of the drought, but there is no escaping the fact that poor land management decisions are also contributing to the devastation. In my opinion all of this has been for purely ideological reasons.

As long as I stand here country people will have a voice. I will work to influence policy so that it reflects the importance of the country to the city. City people need to understand that the beautiful timber furniture that takes pride of place in their homes, the milk they take from their fridge and the daily paper they read are the fruits of hardworking, country families. From now on country Victoria is not going to take a back seat. This includes ensuring that Gippsland water is secured for Gippsland farmers and residents. As part of the Baillieu team I am not interested in political point scoring over the challenges we face regarding water shortages. We will work with this government and the Australian government to ensure practical, cost-effective solutions.

In 1999 when this government took office it had no debt, a substantial surplus and an ever-increasing productivity growth rate. Today Victoria is losing its competitive edge, its ability to be innovative, its export prominence and its leading productivity position. This government has created barriers to success; it has created an environment where excelling is not made easy. Yet despite all this there are businesses in Narracan that continue to be resourceful and resilient. Despite the antibusiness attitude of this government, Narracan businesses are achieving.

The people of Narracan delivered a message in November that said, 'We have been missing out for seven years and enough is enough'. It is time to put Victoria back on the map, to ensure we create an environment where innovative businesses choose Victoria, where hard work and business excellence are seen as tools for success and not discouraged in favour of mediocrity. We had it in Victoria from 1992 to 1999 and we will have it again.

We need to assist business to tap into the growing markets of China and India. Working closely with the Australian government is essential if Victoria is to get its share of the wealth that can be created from the growing world demand for our goods and services.

I stand here today as the member for Narracan. My commitment is to the people I represent and to the responsibility of this position. I pledge to represent

everybody in Narracan to the very best of my ability. I am determined to make a difference to the lives of those less fortunate, to those with special needs and their carers, to those suffering depression and other mental health problems and to the aged, especially the frail aged. I will use my experience in small business, sport, education, health and local government as a catalyst for my contribution to policy development to advance the wellbeing and prosperity of all communities in Narracan.

I wish to acknowledge the former member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield. I congratulate Ian and his family for their commitment to the people of Narracan over the last seven years. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity today. I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for his leadership and vision. I thank my family and close friends for their unconditional support. In particular I thank my wife, and my good friend and adviser, Sally Cray, and I thank very much the federal member for McMillan, Russell Broadbent, and his family. I thank most sincerely the people of Narracan for giving me the privilege of being their member in this Victorian Parliament. Thank you all.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms GREEN (Yan Yean).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Gaming).

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Rail: V/Line retail promotions

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I call on the Minister for Public Transport to direct V/Line to promote shopping in rural Victoria and to stop promoting the Direct Factory Outlets complex at Southern Cross station to the detriment of retailers in country Victoria. I want to bring to the attention of the house the disgraceful way in which Labor's worst performing government agency, V/Line Passenger, is milking Victoria's country retailers dry.

V/Line has been caught out actively promoting the new Southern Cross station Direct Factory Outlets complex on the V/Line Internet site. Labor's V/Line is running a competition between 11 December and 5 January,

offering four \$500 shopping vouchers for country shoppers to abandon their local retailers. This is a blatant attempt to encourage country shoppers to spend their money in Melbourne and not in regional cities and towns. On its web site, V/Line is even encouraging travellers to 'spend the day in the city finishing off that all-important Christmas shopping' and 'shop 'til you drop'.

When West Coast Railway ran the Melbourne to Colac and Warrnambool passenger trains, every year it brought to south-west Victoria thousands of passengers on package tours and they spent money at local attractions and shops. With the exception of a Sovereign Hill promotion and the occasional race day promotions, V/Line fails to encourage Melburnians to visit rural Victoria's retailers through package tours.

Mr Lawrie Miller of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce says that each year already \$300 million in retail expenditure leaks out of Geelong, largely to Melbourne. Ms Tennille McLauchlan of Commerce Ballarat says that Ballarat's retail leakage is now above \$100 million a year. With retailing being a bigger employer than manufacturing in Geelong, we need to ensure that rural Victoria does not suffer further on top of the horrendous drought and bushfires and has every opportunity to increase investment and employment in rural retailing.

It is an absolute disgrace when you open up the V/Line web site and read these types of comments: 'You know the feeling. You have just spent the day in the city, finishing off that all-important Christmas shopping. The last thing you want to do is struggle your way up that 10-storey car park with all those bags and parcels in tow and then face the long drive home through traffic jams. V/Line offers you a much better way to track down all the latest and greatest labels'.

This is a country rail service directing people in rural and regional Victoria to abandon shopping in their own home towns, abandon shopping in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Seymour, Ararat and Warrnambool and take their money directly to Melbourne — and they are being offered \$500 bribes to do so. It is an absolute disgrace to use taxpayers money to leach retail spending out of rural and regional Victoria. This has to stop. The Minister for Public Transport must act. This garbage has to go off V/Line's site and the government has to support rural and regional retailers.

Oak Park Tennis Club and Hadfield Netball Club: funding

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — I congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to that important position.

Tonight I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. The action I seek is that the minister seriously examine the funding applications by two important sports clubs in my electorate, the Oak Park Tennis Club and the Hadfield Netball Club. Upon examination of these funding applications he might like to visit these clubs and see for himself the value of sport and recreation funding to the clubs.

First, if it is successful, the Oak Park Tennis Club plans, in conjunction with the Moreland City Council, to resurface four tennis courts at the John Pascoe Fawkner Reserve in Oak Park, three of those with artificial grass and one with a hard surface. The Oak Park Tennis Club is a vibrant, healthy association which boasts 276 current members making up 24 senior and 11 junior teams. Currently its members make good use of the nine courts, seven of which have floodlighting for maximum benefit. There is a large clubhouse for the use of members, families and supporters. It has a great committee of management whose members are vitally active in ensuring that this inclusive club provides not only sport and recreation but also a good community spirit.

The grant will not only assist the club to reduce its maintenance bill but also to avoid the necessity to water the current en-tout-cas courts. Should the funding be granted, it will allow the Oak Park Tennis Club coaching team to establish an elite sportspersons tennis training base. When I visited the club they were also keen to enable wheelchair tennis, which is a terrific initiative. I have no hesitation in commending this funding application to the minister.

The second club I would like him to visit on his trip to the Pascoe Vale electorate is the Hadfield Netball Club. I had the joy of going to that particular club the day after the election. A very vibrant president, Donna Gleisner, and one of the junior leaders, Kira Sinclair, showed me around. I had the pleasure of presenting to Amy Darmanin the under-11s good sports award. The club is a vibrant adjunct to the Hadfield sports precinct, which has a great football and tennis club. As one vitally interested in women's sport, I think it is essential that the 120 members have this facility.

Water: irrigators

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change regarding the issue of irrigators paying for water that they will not receive. The action I seek is for the government to compensate rural water authorities, such as Goulburn-Murray Water in my electorate, so that irrigators do not have to pay for irrigation water they do not receive. Before the election I wrote to the Premier advising him that people in my electorate were paying for 100 per cent of their water right, when in fact on the Goulburn system they will receive only 24 per cent of their water right. I received from the Premier's office a response saying that this is an issue or matter for the incoming government. The Bracks government has now been returned and it now must act.

The government must alleviate the unfair burden on irrigators who are already struggling with the drought and historically high water prices. Currently in the Goulburn system temporary water is selling for \$950 a megalitre. The predictions are that temporary water will reach \$1000 a megalitre by Christmas. The fruit growers will have to pay these exorbitant prices to keep their trees alive. Some are intending to put their trees to sleep, as it is called, which means that they will not get any income this year or next year. Many dairy farmers have already sold their cows or parked them in other regions. Others who are still milking are obviously just making ends meet or incurring a loss.

The government has continued to ignore requests by The Nationals to pay for the water not received by irrigators. Instead the government announced a \$5000 rebate for irrigators who receive less than 50 per cent of their allocation. After this announcement was made I received many phone calls from irate irrigators who said that this will help hobby farmers or those who have sold their water and received a very good return but will still be eligible to receive the rebate. It will mean very little to other irrigators who pay \$50 000 to \$100 000 for their water.

With the government's huge budget surplus, thanks to sales tax, gambling money and increased fines, fees and charges, and the \$1.6 billion in dividends it has received over the past seven years from water authorities as well as the \$60 million a year environmental tax, the government could relieve the burden on irrigators by paying for the water that irrigators will not receive. No other business would expect to pay or would indeed pay for a product that it does not receive. The money that the irrigators save could be spent in their own local community so that local businesses also benefit.

Yesterday the Premier said that he would govern for all Victorians. I urge him and his government to listen to the people in rural and regional Victoria and to ease the burden on these country families.

Multicultural affairs: grants

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — I direct to the attention of the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs the issue of funding for a number of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in my electorate. I ask the minister to take action to ensure funding for groups in my electorate whose members have applied to the Victorian Multicultural Commission for festivals and events funding.

I am very honoured to have been given the responsibility of Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Multicultural Affairs. The Bracks government has a track record second to none when it comes to supporting multicultural communities and promoting diversity. Our cultural diversity is one of our greatest economic, social and cultural assets. Our reputation as Australia's most multicultural and harmonious state has come about from sound leadership and also the hard work of multicultural groups. That is why we need to continue supporting their activities and recognise their valuable contribution.

I am quite proud to name the groups and to further elaborate on the matter. I am quite happy to name, amongst others, the Melbourne Murugan Cultural Centre for its Indian new year celebrations, and the Greek Cypriot Parent and Youth Club for its 17th annual Greek festival — Χρόνια Πολλά [*season's greetings*] as they say in Greek — as well as other organisations that have applied to the Victorian Multicultural Commission for funding to assist them with events to celebrate and promote diversity. Therefore I ask the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs to take action to ensure funding for groups in my electorate to assist them with their festivals and events.

I would like to put on record a number of important points. The first point is that Australia was a multicultural community long before the arrival of Europeans. It is well established that the indigenous communities of this land were in fact multiracial, multilingual and multi-ethnic amongst themselves. Today we can register the existence of some 250 languages purely and simply from indigenous communities. That establishes that this is a multicultural country. That is why I take offence, and I challenge the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs. A question ought to be asked of the Leader of

the Opposition as to whether he endorses the comments made by Mr Finn, a member for Western Metropolitan Region in another place. As I understand it, Mr Finn in his inaugural speech today attacked multicultural affairs and the very nature of our community.

I come back to the important point that we must all work to build up harmony and diversity — —

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

Fitzsimons Lane–Parkwood Place, Templestowe: safety

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I raise a matter for the attention of the minister for transport relating to the intersection of Fitzsimons Lane and Parkwood Place in Templestowe. Did the minister at the table, the Minister for Gaming, get that? It is for the minister for transport and relates to the intersection of Fitzsimons Lane and Parkwood Place in Templestowe.

Mr Andrews interjected.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Residents have contacted me on many occasions regarding this dangerous intersection. Despite having raised the matter three times with the former Minister for Transport, nothing has happened. The former minister sat on his hands and did nothing for the last seven years.

I ask the minister to provide funding for the installation of an additional detector loop at the intersection of Parkwood Place and Fitzsimons Lane. The residents have had enough of this government's inaction and rhetoric. Even VicRoads acknowledged that there is a problem with vehicles trying to exit Parkwood Place. In a letter dated 27 June 2005 VicRoads writes:

VicRoads acknowledges that, due to flow of traffic on Fitzsimons Lane, it is difficult to exit Parkwood Place, in particular, during the evening peak period ... VicRoads will:

...

Investigate the feasibility of installing detector loop on Parkwood Place to activate the nearby pedestrian signals on Fitzsimons Lane whereby a traffic gap is created, enabling traffic to safely exit Parkwood Place.

Twelve months later and after further calls to VicRoads the residents received a letter dated 2 May 2006. In this letter VicRoads said:

As you have been advised, VicRoads and Manningham council will trial the use of detector loops at the Templestowe Retirement Village to activate the ... pedestrian signals on Fitzsimons Lane.

...

The installation of an additional detector loop at Parkwood Place will only be considered if this trial is successful in assisting residents of the retirement village.

They are advised to call Mr Arthur Drepas, team leader, traffic inner, at VicRoads for further information.

Many residents tried to call this gentleman, and he refused to return their calls. On 6 December one of the residents called Mr Drepas who answered the phone and advised the resident that the survey showed that no additional detector loop was needed. How convenient that he decided to tell the residents after the state election. They did not have the courage to contact the residents before the election to advise them that no money was coming.

I call upon the new minister to provide the funding for this intersection. I also invite the minister to visit Bulleen, if she knows where Bulleen is. I am happy to drive her to Bulleen to show her the state of this intersection. It is very difficult for the minister to solve — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I think the member needs to raise the matter with the Minister for Roads and Ports, not the Minister for Public Transport.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I therefore ask the Minister for Roads and Ports to provide funding to ensure that the detector loop is — —

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

Multicultural affairs: grants

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — I, too, congratulate you on your appointment, Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the member for Bulleen just wants to get the Minister for Public Transport in his car for a drive out to his electorate.

I also want to raise a matter for the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs that concerns funding for multicultural groups in my electorate of Mount Waverley. I seek the necessary action to enable these important multicultural organisations to celebrate their events and festivals coming up in the new year.

In the first week of the election campaign I was very proud to be able to host the Premier when he visited Mount Waverley to launch Labor's multicultural policy. This important event was held in the community centre in Mount Waverley and was attended by many multicultural community leaders. I am proud to represent an electorate where over one-third of its residents were born overseas, based on the 2001 census.

I am sure the recent census will show that the number is now much higher than that. The suburbs of Mount Waverley and Glen Waverley are very much enriched by this diversity of cultures, particularly the growing and significant proportion of Chinese residents and also people born in India and Sri Lanka.

The Bracks government has already significantly increased funding to support ethnic and multicultural community organisations through the Victorian Multicultural Commission grants program and has increased the funding from \$750 000 in 1999 to \$3 million from 2006. This funding will be increased further to \$4 million a year.

There are two groups among the many that have applied for grants to which I draw the minister's attention. They are the Kala Kruthi Indian classical music school for their concert in 2007 and the Waverley Chinese Senior Citizens Club for their new year celebrations. I have greatly enjoyed the working relationship I have had with Frank Chau and other members of that club over the last four years. It is the largest Chinese senior citizens club in Victoria, and it does a fantastic job in organising lots of different events for its members. I congratulate the groups on their volunteer work for their community.

I am proud of this government's commitment to supporting the social, economic and cultural benefits of multiculturalism. As the member for Derrimut outlined earlier in his contribution, we do believe that a strong society is built on mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.

I seek the minister's assurance that support will be provided to these very important local multicultural organisations.

Rosebud Hospital: obstetric services

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Health regarding Rosebud Hospital. I am again asking the minister to release the review that has been held into maternity services at that hospital.

In the last sitting week before the election I raised this as a matter of urgency with the Minister for Health, asking her to tell me and the community why the maternity services had been reviewed and what the outcome of the review was, because that review had been completed and Peninsula Health was aware of the outcome of the review. I heard nothing from the minister leading up to the election.

Consequently, during the election campaign two of the staff who work in maternity services at Rosebud

Hospital informed me that that there had been a meeting between all the maternity staff and Peninsula Health regarding the review. In that meeting Peninsula Health admitted the review had taken place, but staff were told that they would not be told the result of the review before the election because the issue was too emotive. All the hospital staff who work in maternity services and the community are suspicious that maternity services at the hospital will be downgraded. In particular the outcome of the review seems to be that there will be no more birthing at the hospital.

Over many years the local community has contributed to the maternity ward at the hospital. It is a wonderful place and a very popular place for women to give birth. In fact they come from quite a large area — not just the immediate area — to do so, because it has a country hospital feel about it. If it is expected to be a complicated birth, mothers go to Frankston Hospital. I had a son and daughter born at each of the hospitals, and the service has been wonderful. The problem with Frankston Hospital is that it is so far away from the Mornington Peninsula — in fact, it is 45 or 50 minutes away from some areas of the peninsula. That is not only a problem in emergency situations, but in terms of the inconvenience of visits and what have you.

As a further complication, two of the hospital's four obstetricians left last summer. The hospital has been making do without them with some bandaid solutions. The last two obstetricians have given notice that they will leave in February. Staff and the community are very worried about the future of maternity services at Rosebud Hospital. I ask the minister to come clean and let us know what is happening.

Multicultural affairs: grants

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. The action I seek is that the minister provide funding for multicultural groups in my electorate for the purpose of putting on multicultural festivals and events, which are very important to the local community in Pahran.

The Pahran electorate is an extremely diverse multicultural area. I regularly attend citizenship ceremonies in my electorate, and I know that on average 30 different countries are represented at those ceremonies. People come from all over the world to live not only in Victoria but, in particular, in the Pahran area. It is a very culturally diverse area, and that is one of its great strengths. It is very important that groups in the area are able to put on important cultural festivals and events, and this is not only for the groups

themselves. It is also important to make sure the entire community is involved in cultural festivities and events from all around the world.

I want to refer to a couple of local organisations in particular. The first is the Victorian division of the National Council of Jewish Women Australia, which does a lot of great work with elderly citizens, particularly in Prahran. Among the events it wants to run in the area are festivals and events for what are called golden age clubs — senior citizens clubs for Russian Jewish migrants. I take a great deal of interest in this organisation; in fact, I addressed one of its meetings on Monday evening to celebrate the festival of Chanukah. I urge the minister to support its application for funding.

Another organisation based in my electorate — in this case on Chapel Street — is the Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria. It wants to stage a reunion of Indian volunteers for the Commonwealth Games, which was held earlier this year in Melbourne. That is another event I urge the minister to support by granting approval for its funding application.

A number of other organisations in the electorate have also sought funding, and I urge the minister to support their applications too.

Australian Labor Party: election promises

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I congratulate you, Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker on your election to high office.

I raise with the Premier the various election promises made by the Labor Party to the Box Hill electorate and I ask the Premier to specify publicly when each of these promises will be delivered and what the level of funding will be.

The Liberal Party promised early in the election campaign to provide \$5 million towards the long overdue redevelopment of Box Hill High School and \$2 million for the first stage of the much-needed upgrade for Surrey Hills Primary School. The government then rushed to catch up by promising that both these schools would be modernised, and the Labor candidate was even reported in the local press as saying there would be money for Box Hill High School in the next state budget.

The Liberal Party also set the agenda in relation to fixing roads, with commitments to upgrading four important local intersections. Unfortunately only the commitment to the Elgar and Canterbury roads intersection was matched by Labor.

The government also belatedly committed to the redevelopment of Box Hill Hospital. The hospital's redevelopment plans were scrapped by the government in 2002, and this delay has resulted in it having some of the worst waiting lists and waiting times of any hospital in Melbourne. This year the government finally announced that the redevelopment would proceed, and provided \$38.1 million for the first stage. However, no time lines or funds have yet been committed for the remainder of the redevelopment, estimated to cost upwards of \$600 million.

Labor also promised it would provide \$16.5 million for a new Box Hill police station, but again no time frame was specified.

Now we find that across the state Labor has made far more election promises than it has money in the budget to deliver. On 30 October Labor's accountants Deloitte Australia certified that the total value of Labor's election capital commitments were within the unallocated capital budget in the May state budget, which totalled \$2.2 billion. However, Labor's capital commitments ended up totalling some \$3.277 billion — well in excess of even the \$2.5 billion of unallocated capital shown in the pre-election budget update.

Ms D'Ambrosio — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I believe the member is reading his adjournment matter strictly from his notes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Is the member reading or referring to notes?

Mr CLARK — I am referring to notes, Deputy Speaker. Labor also made a commitment to deliver on its election promises without an additional dollar of debt. But today's budget update shows that Labor has failed to honour that commitment. Last night the Treasurer repeated the claim he made during the election campaign that the overcommitment was not a problem because he was going to spread his capital works spending over a number of years and it takes an average of three years to construct capital works. However, this confirms — as voters have come to expect — that there will be long delays in the delivery of many of Labor's election promises. Unless that delay is very long indeed, Labor will still be forced to go into additional debt to fund those promises.

Finally, the Treasurer has to fund not only his election promises but all the other capital needs within the budget which Labor did not include in its election policy costings. Residents of Box Hill know the trouble that is caused when Labor fails to deliver its projects on

time, with the grade separation of Middleborough Road — —

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

Special Olympics Victoria: funding

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — My matter is for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. I request the minister to fund Special Olympics Victoria, which is hosting its summer games in the city of Whittlesea on 31 March and 1 April next year.

Special Olympics Victoria grew out of the Special Olympics, which were first established in America in 1968. The aim of that event was to provide organised sporting and physical activities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The organisation soon grew to become a worldwide one, and we are very thankful that we have Special Olympics here in Victoria to serve our communities.

I was proud to have had the opportunity to witness some of the Special Olympics Victoria sportspeople at their winter bocce championships, which were held earlier this year at the Casa D'Abruzzo in Epping. Special Olympics Victoria has never received any financial assistance whatsoever from the government for its very worthwhile sporting activities. Special Olympics Victoria relies totally on volunteers, many of whom are the parents of the athletes.

The logistics of organising the special and at times very challenging and complex needs of these athletes is a great load for the volunteers, especially when they are required to travel long distances either within Victoria or interstate — and at times these trips require overnight stays. Nevertheless the volunteers and the athletes undertake these activities with great enthusiasm and great commitment.

The challenge remains, however, for Special Olympics Victoria to encourage more of these special people into well-organised sporting activities, and I think our government should help with that. Therefore it would be very fitting and appropriate for the minister to offer support for the holding of the summer games in the city of Whittlesea next year so that all Victorians, regardless of their ability, can derive a benefit from good, sound policies which encourage healthier living and exercise. Go for your life, Special Olympians Victoria!

Responses

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I call the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs

to respond to the matters raised by the members for Derrimut, Mount Waverley and Prahran.

Mr ANDREWS (Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs) — I am very pleased to respond to the important matters raised by the honourable members mentioned. Can I firstly congratulate the member for Derrimut on his elevation to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Multicultural Affairs. I know he has a great interest in these matters, and I look forward to working with him.

Mr Kotsiras interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — I assure the member for Bulleen that I very much look forward to working with the member for Derrimut. I also thank the member for Mount Waverley, and I congratulate her on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for Health, an area which I know from personal experience she will find very rewarding.

The member for Prahran also raised an important matter in relation to the funding of culturally diverse communities in his local area, and I congratulate him on his elevation to the position of Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation and his re-election to this place.

As I said in an earlier contribution this evening, this government has a proud record of supporting cultural diversity. We regard multiculturalism as one of our greatest strengths, and an important part of that involves continuing to invest in those culturally diverse groups within our community, many of whom are volunteers and do such a great job in supporting the cultural diversity that is at the centre of our way of life. It is what makes our local communities right across the state, both in the metropolitan area and in rural and regional areas, such vibrant, interesting and particularly dynamic places to live, work and raise a family.

To that end, when the government came to office in 1999 around \$750 000 a year was allocated to support the great work of our multicultural groups across the state. Some 900 groups were funded with that \$750 000 a year. Over the last seven years we have boosted the support for multicultural communities to \$3.1 million, which funds around 1600 community groups a year. As part of the recent election campaign we committed to increasing that to \$4 million annually. That is further evidence of this government's clear and practical support for our multiculturalism. It is about supporting those in our community who promote diversity, promote tolerance, promote harmony, invest back into their own ethnic groups and work so hard to share their

own cultural diversity and their own heritage with the broader Victorian community. We are all enhanced by that.

I am pleased to inform the member for Derrimut that 24 organisations in his electorate will receive funding, and that includes support for the 17th annual Greek cultural festival and the Indian new year celebrations.

The member for Mount Waverley will also be pleased to learn, I am sure, that 10 groups in her electorate will receive funding, including the Waverley Chinese Senior Citizens Club and the Kala Kruthi Indian dance school.

We will also fund 18 organisations in the electorate of the member for Prahran, including the National Council of Jewish Women for their performance and the Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria for its particular event.

I am pleased to say that I have signed off on those grants on advice from the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Those comprehensive grants, as part of our most recent round of funding — the second round — under the festivals and events category for 2006–07, total some \$769 500 for 605 different groups across Melbourne and our rural and regional communities. This is further evidence of this government's commitment to supporting cultural diversity and supporting the important work of our multicultural groups.

Again, we have a proud record of investment in this area, and we will continue to support the important work that so many multicultural communities do in promoting tolerance and harmony and in making our state such an interesting, diverse and tolerant place to live, work and raise a family.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The minister, to respond to the matters raised by other members.

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport in relation to V/Line.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in relation to funding for local groups.

The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change in relation to access to water in her local community.

The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports in relation

to a local intersection. If I am not wrong, it is the intersection of Parkwood Place and Fitzsimons Lane, which is an important matter in his community.

The member for Nepean raised a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to maternity services at the Rosebud Hospital.

The member for Mill Park raised a matter for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in relation to supporting Special Olympics Victoria.

And the member for Box Hill raised a matter for the Premier in relation to the government's comprehensive policies and plans to support families living in Box Hill.

I will raise each of those matters with the ministers as listed for their action and attention.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year.

The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 9.43 p.m. until Tuesday, 13 February 2007.