

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Wednesday, 29 March 2006

(Extract from book 3)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Standing Orders Committee — The Speaker, Ms Campbell, Mr Dixon, Mr Helper, Mr Loney, Mr Plowman and Mrs Powell.

Joint committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Cooper, Ms Marshall, Mr Maxfield, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells. (*Council*): The Honourable S. M. Nguyen and Mr Scheffer.

Economic Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Mr Jenkins, Ms Morand and Mr Robinson. (*Council*): The Honourables B. N. Atkinson and R. H. Bowden, and Mr Pullen.

Education and Training Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Eckstein, Mr Herbert, Mr Kotsiras, Ms Munt and Mr Perton. (*Council*): The Honourables H. E. Buckingham and P. R. Hall.

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House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr Cooper, Mr Leighton, Mr Lockwood, Mr Maughan and Mr Smith. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), the Honourables B. N. Atkinson and Andrew Brideson, Ms Hadden and the Honourables J. M. McQuilten and S. M. Nguyen.

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Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr Clark, Ms Green and Mr Merlino. (*Council*): The Honourables W. R. Baxter, Bill Forwood and G. K. Rich-Phillips, Ms Romanes and Mr Somyurek.

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Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crutchfield, Mr Hardman, Mr Ingram, Dr Napthine and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): The Honourables J. M. McQuilten and R. G. Mitchell.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms D'Ambrosio, Mr Jasper, Mr Leighton, Mr Lockwood, Mr McIntosh, Mr Perera and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Ms Argondizzo and the Honourable Andrew Brideson.

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

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| Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen | Murray Valley | Nats | Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas | Geelong | ALP |
| Jenkins, Mr Brendan James | Morwell | ALP | Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay | Swan Hill | Nats |
| Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice | Altona | ALP | Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur | Scoresby | LP |
| Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas | Bulleen | LP | Wilson, Mr Dale Lester | Narre Warren South | ALP |
| Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe | Ivanhoe | ALP | Wynne, Mr Richard William | Richmond | ALP |

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Wednesday, 29 March 2006

The SPEAKER (Hon. Judy Maddigan) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 112 to 114, 221 to 232 and 347 to 349 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires a notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing by 6.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Education: home-schooling

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Victorians who support home-schooling points out to the house extensive research in America, Canada, England and Australia has revealed that home education works both academically and socially and produces ‘literate students with minimal government interference at a fraction of the cost of any government program’. Home-educated children enter conventional schools, go on to university, enter the work force and become responsible citizens. The government has provided no evidence to show that regulation would have any beneficial effect. Moreover, the powers granted to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority under the terms of the exposure draft of the Education and Training Reform Bill in regard to home education are unlimited and would allow unfair and ineffective regulations to be imposed on Victorian parents to the detriment of their children.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria orders the redrafting of the clauses of the Education and Training Reform Bill pertaining to home education in line with the existing requirements of the Education Act of 1958 and Community Services Act of 1970 that parents provide ‘regular and efficient instruction’ without reference to a statutory authority. This provides for the parents’ rights to determine the manner of their children’s education and for the state’s responsibility to ensure all children are educated.

By Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) (7 signatures)
Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings) (142 signatures)
Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park) (6 signatures)
Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) (4 signatures)
Mr WELLS (Scoresby) (5 signatures)

Rail: Cranbourne station

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth that as a matter of urgency parking at Cranbourne railway station be increased to meet demand. Cranbourne is in the municipality of Casey, which is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. Current parking is insufficient, which necessitates commuters having to use surrounding streets for parking, which causes safety issues.

Your petitioners therefore pray that consideration be given to increasing car parking facilities at the Cranbourne railway station to alleviate this problem.

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

By Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (15 signatures)

Racial and religious tolerance: legislation

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that:

1. Religious freedom essentially includes the freedom to teach, preach and propagate one’s beliefs, and to express opinions about other world views. This applies to all religions, and certainly to the Christian religion where Christ commands His followers to propagate their faith — Matt 28:18–20.
2. The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 aims to outlaw vilification, but its enforcement places ‘an intolerable curb on religious freedom’ and threatens free speech itself.

In any case, the legislation is unnecessary in a community that has always had effective mechanisms for correcting intemperate or offensive statements (whether on religion, race or any other topic) — namely public forums in newspapers, open debate and discussion, talkback radio etc.

In view of the fact that the Australian constitution:

forbids the making of any commonwealth law ‘prohibiting the free exercise of any religion’ (section 116), and

decrees that ‘when a State law is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail ...’ (section 109) —

Your petitioners therefore request that the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 be repealed.

By Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (18 signatures)
Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings) (19 signatures)

Retirement villages: residents rights

To the Honourable the Speaker of the house and members of the house assembled in Parliament:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the continuing distress of many retirement village residents due to problems with the implementation of the retirement villages legislation.

We believe that the Parliament's decision, following the review of the act, provided reasonable exit provisions for new residents. These provisions have not yet been proclaimed. Further, we believe that existing residents do not have appropriate protection or avenues of redress where they have entered into complex and unfair contracts.

The petitioners call on the house to ensure that the Victorian government:

1. takes immediate action to proclaim all the amendments to the Retirement Villages Act adopted by the Parliament;
2. requires retirement village contracts to specify and protect residents rights;
3. regulates for contracts to be in a form that can be understood by residents, prospective residents and their legal or financial advisers;
4. provides accessible and affordable avenues of redress for residents with current contracts that include unfair provisions.

By Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) (66 signatures)

Schools: religious instruction

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of citizens of Victoria concerned to ensure the continuation of religious instruction in Victorian government schools draws out to the house that, under the Bracks Labor government review of education and training legislation, the future of religious instruction in Victorian schools is in question and risks becoming subject to the discretion of local school councils.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria take steps to ensure that there is no change to legislation and the Victorian government schools reference guide that would diminish the status of religious instruction in Victorian government schools and, in addition, urge the government to provide additional funding for chaplaincy services in Victorian government schools.

The petition of citizens of Victoria [is] concerned to ensure the continuation of religious instruction in Victorian government schools, and to provide additional funding for school chaplains.

By Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) (24 signatures)

Water: fluoridation

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth that the Victorian government has moved to mass medicate the population of Wangaratta by the fluoridation of the domestic water supply.

In view of the questionable ethics of this practice, the contradiction regarding health benefits and the lack of community consultation, your petitioners pray that:

the Victorian government acknowledges our opposition to mass fluoridation pending a referendum of the citizens of Wangaratta.

the government to be bound by the results of such referendum.

Mass medication is in direct contravention of the 1949 Nuremberg court ruling relative to compulsory medication. 'The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential' (Nuremberg Code).

By Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) (701 signatures)

Tabled.

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

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Murray Valley be considered next day on motion of Mr JASPER (Murray Valley).

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Hastings be considered next day on motion of Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings).

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Glenroy West Primary School: student leaders

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — Congratulations to the Glenroy West Primary School student leaders who were elected by their fellow students to the students representative council: Christian Neofotistos, Emma Lang, Chloe Bushell, Bridget LeRoy, Taylah Lambert, Stephanie Wong, Aida Zepcan, Jack Hurley, Jordan McLeish, Tara Ellison and treasurer Omar Ghazala. Congratulations also to the student leadership team of Casey O'Connell, Ben Van Mierlo and Kiarra Nicholson who gave great speeches.

This house should also acknowledge the house captains and vice-captains. The captains for York are Sarah Shirreff and Laura Shirreff and the vice-captains are Jessica Galea and Lauren Hill. In Clovelly the captains are Oshani Warnakulasuriya and Matthew Bushell and the vice-captains are Nicolette Kruse and Cory Bushell. In Chapman the captains are Daniella Megaloudis and Kyle Wills and the vice-captains are James Bruce and Lachlan Hart. In William the captains are Nicole Lonergan and Madeleine McGuigan and the vice-captains are Jack Tanner and Caitlin McGuigan. The flag monitor is Cody Lovell, the house challenges

monitors are John Faulks and Brendan Doyle and the house points monitors are Emily Bennett and Johanna Taylor. Congratulations to Ms Julie White for pulling together a fantastic school assembly, at which I, together with all the students, proud parents, staff and friends, enjoyed a very well-presented ceremony.

Land tax: increases

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Do not ever stand between this government and a Victorian business on a valuable piece of land. In February the member for Box Hill and I raised the issue of the land tax bill issued to the owner of Arthurs Hotel in Arthurs Seat in my electorate. Arthurs Hotel's land tax bill increased by 1300 per cent from \$1200 to \$21 000 — obviously making a mockery of the government's 50 per cent cap. As a result this successful business was going to close and 20 young people were to lose their jobs. Only after extensive media coverage did the government back down and reduce Arthurs Hotel's land tax bill to the 50 per cent cap. Under this government the only way you can get a mistake recognised and reversed is to haul it before the media. What a disgraceful way to run a state. Where is the openness and accountability? How many other businesses in my electorate and indeed in Victoria have had unfair and wrong land tax bills sent to them? They cannot all go to the media to force the government to back down.

Arthurs Hotel is happy with the Treasurer's backdown this year but the 50 per cent cap is only for one year. Will they have to go through it all again when the business and 20 jobs are under threat next year? I hope not. The Treasurer must sort his land tax farce out immediately, before any more Victorian businesses give up and have to sack their employees due to his incompetence.

Tarrawingee Primary School: site

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I wish to bring to the attention of the house my concern about the action taken by the Victorian government when seeking to maximise the financial return to the government through the sale of small parcels of Crown land when other, better options are available. This issue is highlighted even more when cast against the huge expense involved in providing the highly successful and acclaimed Commonwealth Games. I refer in particular to the closed Tarrawingee Primary School site east of the city of Wangaratta on the Great Alpine Road. The school site is adjacent to the Tarrawingee recreation reserve and ideally placed to be added to the reserve for management and development.

The recreation reserve committee sought my assistance in securing the land to develop tourist facilities, to beautify the area and to make it an attractive area for tourists and for local people generally. However, the response from the education minister to my representations was that the government policy was to offer land to other government departments first through the Minister for Finance, then to offer the land to the Rural City of Wangaratta for purchase or presumably for auction to the general public. Surely commonsense should prevail with a closed school site being offered to the voluntary recreation reserve committee to develop and manage for the benefit of local people, visitors to the area or others just passing through on the Great Alpine Road from Wangaratta East into the high country of Victoria.

Nathan Deakes

Mr LONEY (Lara) — It is time for Geelong to recognise the athletic feats of Nathan Deakes in a tangible manner. The efforts of Nathan Deakes in winning both the 20-kilometre and 50-kilometre walk events of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, thus defending the titles he previously won at Manchester, make him the first Australian male track and field athlete to achieve four individual gold medals. Deakes's efforts in both these events were truly world class. We recall the way that he spread the field winning by a number of minutes. The manner of his walking and the efforts that he has put in over recent years have certainly made him one of the world's top walkers in a sport that is more normally associated with parts of Europe than with the southern hemisphere.

Perhaps an appropriate recognition of Nathan Deakes's achievements may be to have a look at renaming part of the waterfront in Geelong as the Nathan Deakes Walk. It would seem to me that this would be quite an appropriate recognition of his achievements over recent years. Finally, I congratulate all involved in the Commonwealth Games, it was a magnificent achievement for the state, from the minister —

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

Industrial relations: WorkChoices

Mr JENKINS (Morwell) — It has not taken long for some reprehensible employers to take advantage of that disgusting WorkChoices legislation that has been put in place by the Howard government in complete concord with The Nationals. John Howard and Kevin Andrews have decided to wreak havoc on Victorian families, Australian families and workers. Now,

according to Kevin Andrews, an employer can dismiss an employee for a personality clash. An employee could walk in one day, having spent 10 years working hard for a company, and be summarily dismissed for doing nothing but smiling the wrong way at the boss. There goes the worker, there goes their family, there goes the mortgage, but we do not seem to care.

The worst people in this are The Nationals, the Homer Simpsons of the political process — ‘It wasn’t us; we did not do it’. The Nationals have been part of this legislation that is going to persecute in particular people in regional areas where work choices are slimmer than they have been in the past. Gone is the system of a fair go, gone is the feeling of mutual respect for employers and employees, gone are the principles of natural justice under the WorkChoices legislation, this disgusting reprehensible legislation that will be dismantled under Labor — but people will be on the scrap heap before it happens, and that is the sad thing.

Rail: regional links

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — The legendary Ghan is in danger of losing its icon status to a Victorian rail project, but for all the wrong reasons. Never in rail history has so little been achieved, for so few, with so much, than with Victoria’s botched farce rail project — a \$1.3 billion flop.

Originally the butt of all jokes, Victoria’s farce rail project has now become a constant source of anger and frustration for those who dare to put their jobs, education and health on the line by relying on this totally unreliable project. This so-called flagship project for the Bracks government has turned into a great white elephant. Commuters being offloaded from the new V/Locity trains and herded onto buses is becoming a regular event. One could argue that the Bracks government’s new public transport slogan should be ‘Better late than never’.

From personal observation the Premier and his hangers-on always seem to have a fleet of stand-by buses parked around the corner for each new farce rail train trip, just in case they are left stranded on opening day. No sooner has the Premier cut the ribbon and bolted than buses arrive to collect stranded passengers and get them to school, work and medical appointments — late yet again.

Recently the \$750 million upgrade failed dismally because the signalling failed on the Bendigo line due to bad weather. The only take you could get on that explanation is that every time the Minister for Transport gets a runny nose the farce trains will grind to a halt.

What a joke — a new signalling system that cannot cope with bad weather. Those close to the project inform me that extreme political pressure has been applied to all to get the project finished and the trains running.

Jim Killender

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — On Sunday, 19 March, I had the honour of presenting a Commonwealth Games flag to the family of the late Major J. E. (Jim) Killender, RFD, ED, RAA (retired), who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on 21 November 2005.

Jim was to be a volunteer in the Commonwealth Games and had been chosen to be involved in the flag-raising ceremony at the exhibition centre, a task he was really looking forward to. Jim had a lifetime of voluntary work, including involvement in the Banyule historical house friends group, the West Heidelberg community recreation centre, Life Education Victoria, the Nunawading Community Chest, the Rosanna fire station community house, the Deafblind Association and the Royal Australian Artillery Association. He was a tour guide for the Shrine of Remembrance and an Anzac Day marshal.

Jim worked for 31 years in the citizen military forces and army reserve, retiring on 31 March 1984. He then worked for 18 years for the Red Cross, many of those years as state coordinator for Red Cross Calling, before retiring from paid work in 1997.

Today I pay tribute to the life of Jim Killender. My condolences go out to his wife, Gloria, his two daughters, Lauren and Danielle, their husbands, Graeme and Darren, and his grandchildren, Todd, Josh, Chase, Kruse, Jesse, Zayn, Jett, Bailey, Max, Takoda, Deakin, Blaise and Emilie-Rose. Jim’s funeral was held on 28 November last year, and all the grandchildren let off balloons for Jim in heaven.

Templestowe Road: upgrade

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I call on the Minister for Transport to provide funds for Templestowe Road. I have raised this matter on numerous occasions, but unfortunately the minister has not listened.

The Templestowe Reference Group has had two recent meetings with VicRoads seeking money for four pedestrian crossings and five centre-turning lanes for vehicles turning westwards to the parks on the north side of Templestowe Road. However, it seems that VicRoads is not interested. According to VicRoads ‘funding commitment is dependent on so many

variants, but mainly funding is given to areas which have had three deaths'. It appears that Templestowe Road is considered a lower priority because it has had only one death. As far as we are concerned, one death is one too many.

I quote from a recent email from Mervyn, the spokesperson for the group:

It is a pity that the duty of care and commonsense in assessing the need for safety conditions for residents and vehicles is not taken into account.

He goes on to say that the reference group sincerely hopes commonsense will prevail and funding will be forthcoming.

I plead with the minister and this government to allocate money to ensure that no-one is killed or seriously injured. Once again I invite the Minister for Transport to visit my electorate and see for himself the poor condition of Templestowe Road. While he is there, he can also visit King Street. Both these roads are appalling, and they need to be upgraded as soon as possible before someone gets seriously hurt.

Eight-Hour Day: 150th anniversary

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — On 27 March 2006, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Eight-Hour Day, a walking group with members Frank and Leslie Whitby, John and Margaret Mottram, Mike Hassett, Peter Spehr, Bernie Shanahan, Bob Brook and my good friends Mike and Noline Moore came to Parliament House via the Brunswick and Carlton quarry sites as well as Trades Hall with its nearby 888 monument commemorating the Eight-Hour Day. It was my great pleasure to show the group first hand the impressive workmanship on display here.

In April 1856 construction began on the Assembly chamber, a month later on the Council. There was a short delay on the Assembly building when, in the strike culminating on 21 April, stonemasons working at Melbourne University joined the Parliament House workers, downed tools and marched on Parliament House. Only two days later contractors were instructed by the Victorian government to accept an 8-hour working day and allow the stonemasons to proceed with construction. Following the brief interruption of their work, the government added industrial invention to the various constitutional innovations later claimed by the Parliament.

Having made their point and won their case, back went the labourers, masons, carpenters, plasterers, painters and foremen, and — with hardly a pause and at a pace

that now seems remarkable — they completed the chambers. By November 1856, just 12 months after work commenced, both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly rooms were usable.

While Mike Moore and the walking group made a point of viewing the exceptional building created at that time, we here in the house are given the pleasure every day, and I thank those involved for creating such a beautiful working environment.

Snowy Hydro Ltd: sale

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I wish to raise the issue of the sale of Snowy Hydro, which is something that will have an adverse impact on irrigators in the future. I received a letter from Mr Max Talbot from Cooma North, who was an executive on the Snowy Mountains Authority at the time of the drafting of these agreements, including the 70-year water licence leading up to the corporatisation of the scheme.

He says that he does not believe the licence reflects contemporary thinking on water resource management and certainly does not optimise the use of our scarcest natural resource — water. He also says it is not recognised that the scheme was built with taxpayers money loaned to the Snowy Mountains Hydro Authority by the commonwealth. This was paid back after corporatisation, and now the states have had a windfall from that process. He also says:

As irrigators have the most to lose by having to negotiate with a private entity with a focus on profits, it is irrigators and their various associations that need to take up the cause.

This will be a very difficult future for irrigators, and it will be a very difficult future for the taxpayers, because this complicated system of channels generation will decline in serviceability and it will be the taxpayer who will be called upon or will lose the service.

Bellarine Agricultural Show

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — On 12 March I was pleased to open, jointly with the Minister for Agriculture, the Bellarine Agricultural Show in Portarlington. The new president, John Harris, the honorary secretary, Beryl Downey, the treasurer, Rick Peacock, and the committee did a fantastic job. They were ably supported by a great team, including Graeme Brown, the grounds manager, Marie Harcombe, Kath Caulfield and Kaye Harris, to name just a few. Unfortunately Roma Burns, who has been secretary and a committee member, is ill and was unable to be there this year. I take this opportunity to send my best wishes

to Roma and her husband, Bill Burns, who have both contributed so much over the years.

The show has become an important fixture on the Bellarine Peninsula's calendar of events and attracts visitors from Geelong and Bellarine and holiday makers from across Victoria. It is a powerful reminder of the region's agricultural heritage and the importance of the ongoing contribution from those involved in farming and country life in the Bellarine Peninsula. Despite the 38-degree heat, everyone seemed to be having a great time — although the dogs in the dog jumping competition did not want to jump.

The show provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase local agricultural produce and livestock and activities and displays of interest to all ages. Bellarine Estate is a great sponsor of the show, and it provided a number of gifts and prizes. Wonderful handcrafts were on display, and there were great competitions for the children. Warren the Magician was also very popular — I think he took \$10 from the minister; I am not sure if he got that back! Portarlington Church by the Bay did a great job with catering. Congratulations again on this show.

Crime: Sandringham electorate

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I wish to raise a matter during the 90-second members statements in relation to the lack of cohesion in a sector of the Sandringham electorate. I had a call from a constituent who raised her concerns regarding the screams, the bashing, people making demands for money, a shooting, drug dealing and a rape associated with a local neighbourhood.

In December last year there was a rape on this person's property, and she was concerned about the lack of advice she received from the local authorities. She is concerned about drug dealing in properties across the road from where she resides, and another woman in her street had her windscreen smashed because she had contacted the police. It is also a matter of concern in the neighbourhood that people are reluctant to contact the police because there is a fear of reprisal in the local area if the police come around. According to my constituent it is horrific living in the neighbourhood, and residents are in fear for their personal safety.

This particular constituent has two children and she is concerned for their welfare when they are in the street. She also raises the fact that people are too scared to open their mouths and raise this matter with the appropriate authorities. She asks what must she do to

protect herself. She would like to move away from the area, but she is not able to do so at the present time.

Preston: Creating Better Places program

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — The Preston district centre is a key retail and business centre and transport hub in my electorate which draws large numbers of people from across Melbourne and therefore has a major impact on the local economy. Preston was designated a principal activity centre under Melbourne 2030. It is a lively and vibrant area focused on the Preston Market and the High Street strip shopping centre. Future retail developments have the potential to contribute to economic growth and residential developments to provide exciting opportunities to live in a major business and transport hub. I predict that the population decline has plateaued and will in fact increase in central Preston by 2030.

The Preston community will receive \$300 000 from the 2005–06 Creating Better Places grants program. The funding will allow the Darebin City Council to improve the Preston railway station precinct. The Darebin City Council's Station Avenue, Preston, project will improve the area between Preston police station and Preston Market bounded by Murray Road, the railway line to the west, Cramer Street and the Preston Market. The project will involve the construction of a public transport interchange and a new road, to be known as Station Avenue, alongside the Preston railway station. It will involve both state and local governments and the Preston Market owners who are planning a substantial redevelopment of the market. The grant is part of the Creating Better Places program. With a \$13.5 million funding package over four years, the program is designed to implement Melbourne 2030.

Swan Hill: development

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — I would like to inform the house of exciting developments happening around Swan Hill. Some 22 development projects worth more than \$840 million have been started since July 2005, or will be started in the next two years. They will create 1870 jobs — three times greater than the number of people currently unemployed in the region. They are principally large-scale horticultural operations, but there are also three major manufacturing projects.

The projects include an expansion of Bob Woodard's Swan Hill Abattoirs, an almond-processing plant and the exciting development of a large-scale ethanol plant at Woorinen. The investments range in size from \$5 million to \$120 million and will employ between 8 and 217 extra people. This does not include projects

that are worth less than \$5 million or employ less than 10 people. The 22 projects have the capacity to increase employment in the rural city of Swan Hill by 19 per cent.

The water reforms of the Kennett government, and particularly the vision of the then member for Swan Hill, Barry Steggall, have been helpful in facilitating these exciting developments. I also want to praise the efforts of Gary Tepper, the Swan Hill Rural City Council's economic development manager, for his contribution to the region over the last decade. The concern I want to express is that if the Bracks government does not implement the current round of water legislation changes well, these projects will be placed at risk.

Crib Point: development

Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings) — Community-spirited residents of Crib Point have rallied to the call to provide ideas on how to improve their township at several recent public meetings that I have chaired. On 23 March they were joined by Mayor Brian Stahl and senior staff from Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, along with Elise Howard from the Department for Victorian Communities and Otama submarine representative, Max Bryant, to prioritise and progress key township improvement ideas.

Three local women, Sue Hawke, Wanda Tearle and Mary Budd, have impressed all with their passion and vision for their community, and in turn their enthusiasm has spread to a group of great residents who are committed to seeing local projects through. These residents and improvement plan supporters include Toni Munday, John Buckwell, Martin Purcell, Cecelia Witton, Peter and Jill Anderson, Bill Dickinson, Vince Raymond, Alison Adams, Roger Stanley, Rosemary Evans, Giselle Napiorkowski, Mandy Dietrich, Darren Adams and Danny Griffin from the mighty Crib Point junior football club, Nanette Cuming from the community garden project, Victoria Johnson from Communities That Care and Shane Murphy and Tania Treasure from the shire council. With the actions planned over the forthcoming months all Crib Point residents and businesses will have the opportunity to see many community building projects eventuate that will provide greater economic, social and environmental wealth for this community.

I thank the great staff at the Department for Victorian Communities who have shown through their actions that they care about Crib Point. They have done more than make the token gestures that this township has had to endure from previous governments. I am confident

that in the next few short years Crib Point will be one of the most popular and well-visited townships across the Mornington Peninsula because of the collaborative vision of local residents and businesses working with the local and state governments. Crib Point, it is your turn to shine!

VicUrban: Docklands marina

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to bring to the house's attention another example of government waste, and it shows that yet again the Minister for Major Projects has lost the plot. Earlier this year he announced that the government had spent \$645 000 on a new five-berth super yacht marina at Docklands, which he described as 'the ultimate status symbol for the rich and famous'.

According to the minister this will make Melbourne an attractive destination for people like Tiger Woods and Greg Norman. This, of course, is completely different from cruise ships, which add to the economy by the numbers of people who get off the ships and by the volume of supplies purchased in Melbourne. However, \$645 000 to provide facilities for the rich and famous is a waste of taxpayers money. It is unlikely to have the massive economic benefits — like those from cruise ships — that the government envisages. Even worse, this money came from VicUrban. One of the core principles of VicUrban is housing affordability. Funding for yachting berths for the world's super wealthy is not consistent with this objective.

In December last year I called for an inquiry into whether taxpayers were getting maximum benefit from VicUrban's land management. This needs to happen immediately. VicUrban is an authority that should be providing affordable housing, not yachting berths for the super yachts owned by the rich and famous.

Cranbourne and District Greek Senior Citizens Club

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — Last Monday I had the pleasure of visiting the Cranbourne and District Greek Senior Citizens Club, whose members have put so much into our local community since the early 1960s.

Victoria is leading the way in celebrating diversity and fostering community harmony. Members from the Cranbourne and District Greek Senior Citizens Club joined me in celebrating Cultural Diversity Week. This provided them with an opportunity to reflect on our achievements as a vibrant, inclusive and progressive state, to acknowledge the contribution migrants from

around the world have made to our great state, and to celebrate both our differences and the many things we have in common. We are different but the same.

I take my hat off to the members of the Cranbourne and District Greek Senior Citizens Club and also to the Cranbourne Italian Senior Citizens Club, which also meets in Cranbourne every week.

Mental health: Springvale centre

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave) — On Friday, 10 March, I was very pleased to officially open the prevention and recovery care service at Springvale, marking a new era in the care of people with a mental illness in both the southern and peninsula regions. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the generosity, imagination and hard work of the people who had made it happen. All good ideas have their time, and the prevention and recovery care service — or PARC, as it is known — is one that has found the right moment in the history of mental health service development.

Consumers, families and mental health staff alike have made it clear that this kind of short-term, step-down and step-up service holds a vital position in the mental health service system. The project at Springvale has been a strong partnership, bringing together not only Southern Health, the Eastern Region Mental Health Association and Peninsula Health but also the City of Greater Dandenong and many other organisations.

In a most generous move the City of Greater Dandenong, which owned the property, transferred the title to the Department of Human Services. This is a wonderful service, and I commend all those involved in it. It is about proper and appropriate care for the mentally ill in our Victorian community. I am pleased to have officially opened the facility, and I am pleased to say the government is further supporting those in our community who suffer a mental illness. I congratulate all those involved for building a better future for our mental health clients.

Hogar Español International Festival Day

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — On Saturday, 25 March, I represented Minister Pandazopoulos, who is the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, at the Hogar Español International Festival Day. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the organisers for a wonderful evening — Señor Philip Sacca, the president of the Beit Jala Palestinian Association; Señor Ricardo Pascua, who is the president of Hogar Español; and the many other community leaders who attended that wonderful event.

The celebration of our Cultural Diversity Week has grown from 50 events in the first year to more than 300 events this year right across the state. The theme for this year's week was 'Different but the same — all Victorians'. It recognises the spirit of commonality and solidarity that exists among the rich diversity that defines our state. Over the years our country's talented artists have led the way in promoting this ideal, as we saw that night. Throughout the evening we were treated to traditional folk dances from Russia, Greece, Ireland, Palestine, Spain, Uruguay and Asturias, in Spain.

I congratulate everyone involved on their enthusiasm and cooperative spirit. It was truly inspiring and a perfect example of what celebrating Cultural Diversity Week and multicultural Victoria in general is all about. Again I commend the organisers of that wonderful event.

Commonwealth Games: baton relay

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — I wish to outline to the house some of the exciting events that occurred in the Macedon electorate in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games. We had the Queen's baton relay go through Gisborne as it headed down the highway towards Sunbury. Gisborne looked a treat as the baton arrived, and schoolchildren and their parents lined the route of the relay. Music and activities for children began well before the baton arrived, and a real festival atmosphere was evident. The baton runners were so excited and were looking forward to their contribution to this event. I must acknowledge the work done by Gisborne Region Events and Tourism, known as GREAT, in organising this event in Gisborne.

In Sunbury the crowds were huge. It is estimated that up to 15 000 people turned out to see the Queen's baton relay, and again a real party atmosphere was evident. The live telecast at Hanging Rock of the opening ceremony was another hugely successful event. I congratulate the Bracks government on its financial contributions to all councils to allow them to support the Commonwealth Games by holding these local events. They ensured that regardless of where you lived around Victoria you did not need to have a ticket to the games to be united by the moment. We could all share in this wonderful celebration of sport and culture, and that is what these Commonwealth Games were all about — a celebration of our position in the commonwealth along with all the wonderful nations that make it up.

I congratulate the Minister for Commonwealth Games, the Premier, the organising committee and of course all the wonderful volunteers on making this such a

memorable event. I think Melbourne will never see the likes of it again.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians

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

That this house congratulates the Bracks government for ensuring that our training system will meet Victoria's future needs through the introduction of the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package, which builds on this government's already substantial investment in education and training and will deliver a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative work force into the future.

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — It is a great pleasure to propose this matter of public importance today to congratulate the Bracks government on the introduction of the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package, which certainly builds on our government's investment in education and training and will deliver a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative work force into the future. This new investment of \$241 million over the next four years was announced on 7 March this year by both the Premier and the Minister for Education and Training. It will make it easier for Victorians to get the right skills for the future and certainly encourage them to start earlier, learn longer and get smarter.

We recognise that we need to further invest in the skills of the current and future generations of workers if we are to meet the challenges of an ageing population, skill shortages and increased global competition. Since coming to office in 1999 the Bracks government has already invested an extra \$5.45 billion in the education and training system. Specifically in relation to Victoria's vocational education and training system we have invested an additional \$620 million — \$230 million for TAFE capital works, \$90 million for innovative training programs, \$12.5 million for 1600 additional pre-apprenticeship training places, \$11 million to assist parents returning to work, over \$65 million to employers in relation to the completion bonus for apprenticeship and traineeship contracts, and over \$10 million annually in fee concessions that enable access to vocational education and training (VET) for over 100 000 Victorians.

While we have already increased our efforts to provide an effective education and training system, we certainly recognise the number of challenges we face now and particularly in the years ahead — an ageing population,

businesses and industries which are demanding better skills and more of them across a range of sectors, and increasingly skilled and emerging economies which we must compete with. To do this we have identified four key actions to ensure that we can deliver a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative work force into the future, and those key actions are very clear. 'Starting earlier' is action no. 1 and will provide greater opportunities for students to participate in vocational education and training while at school. Action no. 2 is 'Learning longer', which will encourage new entrants, existing workers and adult learners to develop skills throughout their working lives, which means we retain workers and meet the future needs of industry.

Action no. 3 is 'Getting smarter', which is about providing access to all Victorians to increase their skill levels, particularly in a growing economy which is increasingly driven by innovation. Action no. 4 is 'Making it easier', which is about providing individuals and employers with easy access to information about training options.

Within the area of action no. 1 we will invest \$93.44 million to help Victorians start vocational education and training earlier. As outlined in the Education and Training Reform Bill which is currently before the house, we are guaranteeing to support young Victorians aged less than 20 years to complete year 12 or an equivalent training qualification. An amount of \$28.22 million will be provided for an estimated 6200 students and will support the provision of a guaranteed place in a TAFE institute or other public provider of education and training. We will invest \$33.22 million over four years to expand opportunities and provide an additional 4500 places for young people through pre-apprenticeship programs in areas with identified skill shortages. The priority areas in this part of the package include engineering, automotive, electrical and electronic engineering, building and construction, cookery, child care and aged care.

Pre-apprenticeship programs are very important to young people. They provide a unique opportunity to get to know a trade before they decide whether that trade is likely to become their future career. It is certainly welcomed by employers because they can select young people who already have a knowledge of the trade; they have more skilled and job-ready candidates for apprenticeships. Completion rates are improved in that area, because those entering an apprenticeship both have a better understanding of their chosen career option and enter it wanting that career option.

An earlier initiative in pre-apprenticeships in the automotive industry announced in late 2005 by the

Minister for Education and Training clearly shows that, with agreement with industry and unions, we can recognise competency in trade skills rather than relying entirely on the amount of time served as an apprentice. That agreement announced in late 2005 between the Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union means that young people who complete a pre-apprenticeship course and choose to go into an automotive apprenticeship will get full recognition for their completed training, and they commence their apprenticeship on second-year wage rates and have their apprenticeship reduced by a minimum of one year. That is an extremely important and exciting initiative that again is picked up within this skill statement.

We know that jobs in skill shortage areas can be filled faster by increasing both the number of apprentices and the time in which those apprentices fulfil their contracts. We will work with industry to ensure that early completion is a common feature, but we will also work to ensure that the quality assurance system for training organisations is rigorous.

An important part of the funding allocated in this area, and one which has attracted a good amount of publicity and very positive feedback, is the provision of \$32 million over three years to establish the technical education centres — or TECs, as they are being called — for senior secondary students. These new senior secondary campuses will cater for up to 300 students interested in taking up a trade and will offer a variety of programs. They will also offer high-tech, modern facilities and, importantly, trade teachers with current industry knowledge and equipment.

The new TECs will be linked to TAFE institutes. It should be emphasised that some people have wrongly attempted to link these exciting new facilities to the concept of the old technical colleges. The new TECs are for senior secondary students and will provide them with exciting career options that address our needs for a skilled work force into the future. Students will not enter these facilities after the grade 6 level as they did with the old system; they will make decisions to step into an environment at a senior level where they can begin their study and transition to a trade.

The first four technical education centres will be in Ballarat, Wangaratta, Heidelberg and Berwick, and I know a number of my colleagues will speak more on this very exciting area. However, I want to congratulate the member for Ivanhoe for his work in ensuring the establishment of a TEC in Heidelberg. I also note that this initiative has been welcomed by the Victorian

Farmers Federation (VFF) president, Simon Ramsay, as reported in the *Leongatha Star* of 14 March. He said:

The government's \$32 million commitment to establish four technical education centres in Wangaratta, Ballarat, Heidelberg and Berwick will go a long way towards improving education choices for young people in the final years of secondary education.

The second action in this important package is the investment of \$12.88 million to help Victorians learn longer. As I indicated earlier, one of the challenges we face is an ageing population which naturally means an ageing work force and therefore a heavy reliance on the skills of those older workers. A significant proportion of existing mature-age workers do not have post-secondary education and some do not hold a year 12 or equivalent qualification which most of our new entrants to the work force do. In terms of learning longer and continuing to learn throughout life it is easier to gain further skills and qualifications if you do hold that year 12 or equivalent qualification.

Some \$10.88 million will be invested to provide 1800 places for 35 to 64-year-olds to access certificate III level and above training. Research shows that more than one-third of Victorians aged 35 to 44 do not have a year 12 qualification and for people aged 45 to 64 that number is almost halved. It is also clear that many existing adult workers already have the skills and experience to meet the requirements of a certificate III, but they do not have the formal qualification — that bit of paper, if you like. Through the introduction of a process for mandatory recognition of prior learning for this age group we can ensure a formalising of the qualifications they already have with encouragement to either undertake that formalisation of their qualifications or go on to further training.

With the remaining \$2 million we will introduce industry skills advisers in high-priority areas. These advisers will build relationships between companies in selected industries, industry associations and training associations to develop better training opportunities. This initiative of the industry skills advisers will also ensure relevant and accessible opportunities for small to medium-sized companies and will also help with flexibility within the training system, which is very important. We will also assist adult workers by modernising trade qualifications, and by exploring whether some apprenticeships should lead to diplomas rather than certificates. I am aware of the perception that trade qualifications are sometimes perhaps considered to be less prestigious than diplomas or higher education qualifications. I consider that to be an incorrect perception. However, I recognise the need to ensure that we modernise our trade qualifications.

Action no. 3, 'Getting smarter', will see an investment of \$94 million over four years to encourage Victorian workers to upgrade qualifications. It will update TAFE equipment and boost specialist training in key industries. Some \$42 million will fund up to 3500 training places for higher level qualifications in key occupations, and importantly \$48 million will be available to ensure that our TAFEs keep pace with new and emerging technological changes and better align teaching equipment through obtaining better equipment.

I note that in the *Leongatha Star* of 14 March the VFF president, Simon Ramsay, also said:

We expect the \$48 million investment in upgrading TAFE equipment will be warmly welcomed by all regional TAFE institutions as the cost of keeping pace with modern industry standards continues to increase each year.

Again, this is recognition from one of the more highly recognised bodies in the state.

Within action no. 3, \$3.7 million will expand the specialist training centres in building and construction, information and communications technology, and automotive design. New VET specialist networks will be established in energy, competitive manufacturing, transport and logistics.

The final action, 'Making it easier', will see an investment of \$41.19 million to make it easier for Victorians to increase their skills. Part of the funding for that action — \$23 million — will be used to develop 13 skills stores across Victoria. This is a great initiative to create one-stop skills information shops which will provide one-to-one, face-to-face advice about further education and training. I think it is certainly recognised that there are a lot of occasions when people give up on the idea of undertaking further training or obtaining educational qualifications because they simply do not know where to get information and advice about them.

Nine of the skills stores will be based in regional Victoria in Ballarat, Bendigo, central Gippsland, East Gippsland, Goulburn, south-west Victoria, Sunraysia and Wodonga — and the Deputy Speaker will be pleased to note that there will be one in Geelong. Again, the skills stores have been welcomed by the Victorian Farmers Federation, whose representatives believe the stores are an excellent idea and will provide that essential advice to students. In conclusion, there are many more initiatives relating to the four key actions that will ensure we can invest in education and training and upgrade the skills of our workers into the future.

Unfortunately, time does not allow me to go through all of them today.

As a government we have recognised the need to invest in education and training. We also recognise the need to continually improve, reshape and invest in our systems. With this very important, very comprehensive and very well-funded package we will be able to continue our important investment in our people — our current and future workers. We will create in Victoria a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative work force, and we will build on our prosperity as a state and therefore create that important prosperity for our people and our economy.

It is a shame that while we are investing in our work force and ensuring it is ready to assist our economy in Victoria, the federal government is doing everything in its power to ensure that workers in this state are condemned to an industrial relations system which strips them of basic rights. It is doing everything in its power — —

Mr Delahunty — You said that 10 years ago.

Ms BARKER — The member for Lowan says I said this 10 years ago, but what I am saying is absolutely correct. We are doing what we can to provide a skilled, trained, happy and contributing work force so that our economy thrives and prospers. The Howard government is doing everything in its power to strip away basic rights from workers in this state and this country, and it should be absolutely ashamed of itself.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — As usual, when it is the government's turn to suggest a matter of public importance for discussion we get a nice, self-congratulatory MPI and/or a knocking of the federal government. We have had a bit of both today from the member for Oakleigh.

When the skills document arrived you could see it was just another glossy red, white and blue brochure. I photocopied mine, because I think it should be black and white. It is a document about skills: it should not be a document that is all nice and glossy. However, there are aspects to it that I think are positive, and I congratulate the government on making up ground on some of the spending that should have occurred in our training and TAFE sectors during the past six and a half dark years of this government.

I want to go through some of the issues that the member for Oakleigh mentioned with regard to where this money is going. As I said, I welcome the spending, because money is certainly needed in this sector. We

are seeing money going into guaranteed places in TAFE institutes so that anybody under 20 can complete year 12 or the equivalent. That is interesting, because we have an issue with the Education and Training Reform Bill which is going through this place at the moment and in which there really is no guarantee that anyone over 20 who wishes to complete their Victorian certificate of education will be able to do so free of cost. Quite a few speakers on that bill have asked for that guarantee from the government. We have yet to hear about that.

There is money for pre-apprenticeships, so there is money for the government to work with industry to accelerate apprenticeships. There are new technical schools, which I will talk about in a moment. There is money for 1800 places for 25 to 64-year-olds to take high-level certificates, which is welcome. There are 3500 vocational and education and training places relating to key occupations where there are real shortages, and that is welcome.

In relation to quality assurance, there is \$48 million to enable TAFE institutions to keep pace with technological changes. That is welcome too, because the capital needs of our TAFE institutes is a very important issue. Young people who are going through our TAFE institutes need to know how to use and be familiar with the equipment that is used in industry, and they need to do training on that equipment. It is very important to ensure that what they do in their TAFE institute is relevant to the business, the occupation and the trade they are moving into so as to make their training and them more relevant.

There are the 12 skills stores, and there is money from the government to help Victorian businesses plan for their future work forces, which is very important, and provide better access to information. A lot of what this skills document is about is the sorts of things that governments should be doing and should be spending money on. We still have our TAFE institutes, the most important providers of training in our state, but 17 out of our 18 TAFE institutes are in deficit.

Mr Kotsiras — How many?

Mr DIXON — Seventeen out of 18. The funding that goes into our TAFE institutes is the lowest in the country per capita. So here is some make-up money because, I hope, the government has finally recognised this. We have been saying this for years, and it is very important that the government has put some money back into the TAFE institutes to try to bring them up to the national standard. We are competing on a national level for the funding of our TAFE institutes. It is

incredible what they can do. They are the most efficient in the country because they are the least funded, but they provide great results. It is the government's job to provide the funding to keep that level up there. We are seeing a little bit of that money coming through with this document.

We have a real skill shortage in this state; we have it right around this country. It is very important for this government not only to provide money — that is just part of the story — but also to show some leadership in this and change community attitudes about trades. A good example of this occurs around January when the university places are offered. All we hear is bleating from the minister about all the thousands of Victorians who wanted to go to university but missed out on places because of the nasty federal government! It is a line we have heard during every single January over the last six years. I was talking to some journalists earlier in the week. They said, 'It is one of those things we expect every January. It is very regular', and a lot of the journalists just fall into it and run the same old stories.

What the minister and the rest of the government are saying is that you have nothing if you do not have a university place. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the government should be saying is: congratulations to those who got into university, and, equally, congratulations to those who got into the TAFE institute they wanted. They are going to be paid while they are training, and they are going to be trained in an occupation which will get them immediate employment, unlike a lot of students who come out of universities with a degree but cannot find employment. If you have a trade, you will get immediate employment in this state, and that is something that should be celebrated. Sometimes the government says, 'We think they are just as important', but I will be watching very carefully in January next year to see whether the minister comes out and complains about the thousands of young people who have missed out on university places, because all that does is denigrate those who get into our TAFE institutes.

And another thing has backfired. This government is complicit in the occupational health and safety advertisements. I have talked to a number of businesses over the last couple of weeks; instead of being here for the games, I have been meeting business people and training groups around country Victoria. What the employers and trainers said to me is that one of the things that puts young people and their parents off is seeing the occupational health and safety advertisements which make it look as if every single boss is a nasty person who is ripping off an apprentice and putting everything in their way so they will trip

over or get bastardised or burnt. They show all the horrible things that can happen with horrible bosses in horrible businesses.

Those sorts of advertisements fly in the face of any encouragement for young people to join the trades. Their parents see them and say, 'I do not want my child there. They should be going to uni. It is nice and safe at uni; there might be the occasional protest, but it is nice and safe within those bluestone walls'. That is symptomatic of why our society needs to change. Our teachers need to have a different attitude, as do the career counsellors in our schools. It is a very important job, and they should be awake to what is out there in industry: the occupations that are available and the great opportunities for young people in the trades throughout this state.

I return to my visit to the country. I was up in Shepparton the other day when I came across another disincentive to young people entering into the trades. A training accommodation allowance is given to young people if they have to move — obviously it applies mostly in country Victoria — to another country town to do their training or in some cases have to travel, which often involves quite long distances. The allowance in Victoria is \$8 a day — \$8 will not buy very much petrol, accommodation or food. When you compare that to the allowance across the border — and this is an important issue along the border regions in country Victoria — you find that New South Wales students receive \$28 a day and a travel allowance. I know that has been raised by the Honourable Wendy Lovell in the other place because her electorate is very much caught up in the issues along the Murray River. I do not think it would cost a lot. I know the government has said it is going to review it, which is good, but I would welcome some announcement on that, because young people need to be given all the incentives possible to encourage them to take up a trade.

I also want to talk about technical schools. The government, particularly the member for Oakleigh, has said that the emphasis of this government is on technical schools not being like the old technical schools. It is interesting that members of the government are now coming out and saying that, because they were accused by me and others of changing the course of history back in the Cain and Kirner days when our technical schools were closed down because they were seen as some sort of failed social experiment.

I used to live over the road from the Heidelberg Technical School. In fact my parents still live over the road from that site, which is now part of the Northern

Melbourne Institute of Technology. The old Heidelberg tech was closed down by the Cain and Kirner governments as a technical college and now they are getting a technical college back there. It is quite ironic. When the local paper rang me up for a comment about it and I told them about my connection to the old Heidelberg tech they thought it was quite amusing that it has come full circle. I am not sure where the new Heidelberg technical education centre (TEC) is going, but it is good to see the government following the lead of the opposition.

If you read the member for Warrandyte's 2002 policy, as the government obviously has, you will see it says that in government we will bring back technical schools. The federal government will be establishing 24 Australian technical colleges around the country, and they will also have an emphasis on senior students. I hope this government will work with the Australian government on the siting of these colleges and the possibility of their working together. I think the federal and state colleges should work together, complement each other and perhaps even look at specialisation so we do not have duplication between the two levels of government and the technical colleges they are offering.

I think technical education and specialised technical schools are also very important for the middle years. That is where we have our greatest problems with young people leaving formalised schooling. Victoria has the second or third-lowest rate of retention in those middle years. For all sorts of reason young people in the middle years are not being challenged enough or attracted to formal education. I think the government has missed an opportunity. It has been interesting to hear the debate today; I thought the government's technical schools were going to be year 7 to 12 schools but they seem to be concentrating on the senior years. I think years 7 to 10 are very important, and specialised technical schools are a model that should be looked at in some areas.

To expand further about technical schools, we have talked about the model, where they should go and the year levels they should perhaps be centred on, but I think it is very important that they not operate in isolation. They should have very close links — working links, not just paper links — with local industry and local training providers in the area and group training organisations. All of those groups should be working together. Perhaps they should be part of the school councils. I think the school councils and the governance of these technical schools should be looked at very carefully. We should take the opportunity to do something different in terms of governance and

establishing close relationships with the community. I think these schools should be in areas where there are employment issues for young people. They should be established in areas where there are businesses that need these young people.

That close link between our TEC schools and colleges and local industry is vital. The businesses and industries in an area know where the skill shortages are, and if they have very close relationships with the schools, the schools can react very quickly. Often there is lag time between a lack of skilled workers being recognised and the right people coming through training to take up that slack. We can lose two or three years of employment while the training catches up to industry needs. The way to cut down that lag is to have very close relationships between the TEC schools and their governance and local businesses and industry. When the government is looking at the governance of these TEC schools I hope it looks very closely at a model in which there is a very close relationship — not just on paper or through a once-a-year meeting but in the everyday governance and school councils of these TEC schools.

My time is up. I welcome this money for technical training in Victoria. It is money that is well and truly needed. We still lag well behind the other states in the amount of money that is put into our institutes and training, but any extra money is welcome.

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — It is my pleasure to speak on the matter of public importance brought forward by the member for Oakleigh. I thank the member for Oakleigh for bringing this matter before the house. Indeed, it has been a big week in this house for education and training and matters concerning this area. I listened very carefully to the contribution from the member for Nepean. He did not criticise the package at all. He sees the package we have brought forward for what it is — a good package. I would like to commend the member for praising the Minister for Education and Training and the package that has been brought forward.

I would like to talk about the introduction of the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package. It has four hallmarks, if you like. They are: ‘Starting earlier’, ‘Learning longer’, ‘Getting smarter’ and ‘Making it easier’. Those four hallmarks are clearly understood by people. Not only do we have those four hallmarks but this government has backed them up with dollars — that is, it has put the investment in. These are not hollow words, they are backed up by that investment. They are also backed up by consultation with key groups. As we all know, consultation is a

hallmark of the Bracks government, and we have consulted widely on this.

Under the ‘Starting earlier’ hallmark we want to increase the qualifications and skills of our young people to continue to improve Victoria’s competitive edge. We will invest \$93.4 million to help Victorians start vocational education and training earlier. We are committed to providing those employment opportunities for young people to achieve the highest level of education possible and remain at school for longer while they are training. That will enable our young, and older, people to meet the changing demands of business and industry for higher skills and qualifications. We all know that industry is changing rapidly. If any person in this house wants to see a great example of new manufacturing, I invite them to go out to the new Ford factory and see how it works.

If I have one criticism of the member for Nepean’s contribution, it concerns the advertising for WorkSafe. I think it is really important that when our young people go into any of the manufacturing industries — or indeed any industry — —

Mr Delahunty interjected.

Ms BEATTIE — The member for Lowan agrees with me. It is really important that people know about the WorkSafe initiatives and that they are safe at work. We all know that injured workers cost the economy money. Anything we can do to contribute to the health and safety of our workers is very important. I was a little bit disappointed with that churlishness around workplace safety.

I would now like to talk about ‘Learning longer’. Existing workers and adult learners will now have more opportunities to increase and update their skills to meet the challenges of an economy increasingly driven by innovation. When I say ‘adult learners’, I would like to give members of the house an example of a young woman who worked for me. Many members might recall Marcelle Bagu, who worked as my electorate officer for some years. She always wanted to take up an outdoor job. With my encouragement Marcelle Bagu got an apprenticeship in the construction industry. She has now worked on many of the big building sites in and around the city and has absolutely flourished in that career. Here is a young woman in her early 30s who has had a complete change and absolutely loves it. There are many people like that. There are many women who want to change places — —

Mr Baillieu interjected.

Ms BEATTIE — That is interesting coming from somebody who has never had his hands dirty in his life — except perhaps when the ink on his shares is a bit wet!

The third hallmark of the package is ‘Getting smarter’. The Victorian economy needs a skilled and innovative work force that can respond quickly to the changing demands of industry and the wider community.

The fourth hallmark of the package is ‘Making it easier’, and that is about encouraging all Victorians to update their existing skills or undertake new training through the provision of high-quality information about training options. It is certainly no good having all these things if we do not go out and advertise them and make people aware of what is available.

I will mention some of the funding that is available, because it is no good having all these things if we do not put the dollars where our mouths are, and certainly with the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package, we have put the dollars in. There is \$23 million for the introduction of new skills stores across Victoria, which will provide Victorians with the information they need about the range of education, training and employment options. There is \$28 million to guarantee that all Victorians up to the age of 20 can complete year 12 or the equivalent qualification. There is another \$33 million to provide pre-apprenticeships in areas of skill shortage. There is \$11 million to encourage older, existing workers who did not complete year 12 to go back to study and gain a qualification, and again I point to the example of the young woman who worked for me to show how one can change careers.

There is \$2 million to employ skills advisers for business — —

Mr Perton — We would like to change your career.

Ms BEATTIE — The member for Doncaster knows all about changing careers at this stage of his life. I commend the member for his change in career. He has obviously decided that politics is not for him and that he is not going to go any further, and I congratulate him on that. Perhaps one of these packages could apply to the member for Doncaster.

There is \$2 million to employ skills advisers for business, and there is \$42 million to help existing workers to upgrade their skills and keep pace with modern technology. There is a further \$3 million for an information campaign to encourage the taking up of careers in trades and manufacturing. We have all heard about the skill shortages in manufacturing. A further

\$11 million will help businesses plan for work-force and industry-skills needs, and there is \$4 million to employ more field officers to help apprentices, trainees and employers. As the member for Oakleigh said, the schools that are going to be built will be nothing like the old technical schools but will be senior schools for people who have some experience and who will not go, for example, from year 6 to year 7. Theirs will be a more thoughtful career path.

I would like to thank the Victorian Farmers Federation for their support for the package.

I mention the industry sector, because at the moment we are seeing a great campaign going on to defend the rights of workers. We must not bring in skilled workers from overseas as a substitute for training our own skilled work force. We must make our workplaces attractive for people to be in — and if you are threatened with the sack, they are certainly not attractive work places to be in. We have already seen the first onslaught of the Howard industrial relations laws, and I commend the Trades Hall Council on its ongoing campaign to beat these draconian laws.

I reflect on the Australian Fair Pay Commission and the Howard government’s appointment of Hugh Armstrong to the commission. Hugh Armstrong was with the old Federated Clerks Union. After being defeated by Lindsay Tanner, now the federal member for Melbourne, he was pushed upstairs to the Australian Services Union. I think it is quite a disgrace that he has accepted that appointment — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member to dwell briefly on that and return to the debate.

Ms BEATTIE — I will return to the debate. I commend the member for Oakleigh for bringing on this matter of public importance.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I am happy to speak on this matter of importance, which is about having a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative work force and the importance of education and training, because education and training is vital to the continuing development of a person, a community, a service, an industry, this state and this country.

We operate in a global environment, and we must always be looking at ways to improve our knowledge, our training, our skills and our opportunities to grow given the many challenges we face. I have heard a couple of speakers this morning. The members for Oakleigh and Yuroke seem to have a fascination with money, but it is outcomes that really drive industries,

and that is what we should be looking for. I will touch briefly on their comments about the changes to industrial relations. Industrial relations changes were talked about 10 years ago, when Labor and the unions said the sky was going to fall in. The reality is that real wages have improved, and we have to look at ways of improving our industrial relations so that we are competitive in a global economy. That is why it is important to have this type of initiative by the government in relation to education and training.

It is interesting to note that we are still debating education bills. The bill touches on improving the education of people under 20, but importantly for the sake of lifelong learning those over 20 must be given the opportunity. But under the Education and Training Reform Bill those people doing their Victorian certificates of education will now have a cost put on them by this Labor government — a cost put on them by those who, so they say, think about education and training. It is important that more money goes into technical and further education institutions, because at the end of the day, as highlighted by the member for Nepean, Victoria is the lowest per capita funder of TAFE in Australia. There is a lot of work to be done, and that is why I think some of this package is good.

But self-praise is no praise. Even though the government has put more into this issue through this program — and so it should — the total budget for Victoria has gone up 50 per cent in six years: from \$20 billion to about \$30 billion. Some of these things are well overdue. The government cannot blame anyone else for some of the things that have happened.

Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians says almost at the start:

... Victoria needs more skilled people to support its skilled-based economy.

I could not agree more. The document continues by saying that the government wants to:

... increase young Victorians' involvement in education and training ...

If given the time, I will touch on the need for VET (vocational education and training) buses to allow our country students to get to schools.

I think it was the member for Oakleigh who last night said her electorate does not have a secondary school. I have 51 schools in my electorate; 14 of them are non-government schools — —

Mr Kotsiras — Name them!

Mr DELAHUNTY — I could name them all, but it would take more than the 7 minutes I have left. There are 51 schools in my electorate, many of which are secondary schools. The government says it wants to increase young Victorians' involvement in education and training, but it has increased TAFE fees by 25 per cent since it has come to power. That really goes against some of the issues talked about in this document.

Education and training are vital to maintaining the leadership position of our community and providing opportunities for all. I am very disappointed when I hear the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Education Services talk down tradies, builders or people involved in machine operations or the agricultural industry. We should always encourage students of whatever age to make the most of their abilities, and we should not talk down the tradies all the time. If someone is getting an apprenticeship or traineeship or something along those lines, we should encourage them, because we need these people just as much as we need doctors, nurses, scientists and the like, because they are the backbone of many of our communities.

This document talks about starting earlier, but the disgraceful performance of this government in relation to preschools goes against this. It talks about learning longer — again, I highlight the higher fees. It talks about getting smarter, and that is very important. The document also talks about making it easier, and I want to congratulate organisations like the Wimmera Manufacturers Association for their career days. A lot of schools have career days towards the end of the year. Students have a chance to meet with representatives of various organisations, particularly tertiary education facilities but also manufacturers associations, which highlight career opportunities. There is not enough work done in promoting those sorts of opportunities in the trades.

There are some good things in this document — for example, the guaranteed places in TAFE institutions or other providers to students under 20 to complete year 12. That is good. We want to see action, though. The government talks about those things, but the reality is that that has not happened in the six and a half years the government has been in power.

The government says in this document that it wants to expand opportunities for young people through additional pre-apprenticeship programs, but the reality is that since the government has been in power it has taken away some of the support for apprenticeship and traineeship programs. It also talks about working with

industry to accelerate the completion of apprenticeships. Again I highlight the fact that the government has taken away some of the initiatives that really assisted apprentices.

The document also talks about enabling TAFE institutions to keep pace with new and emerging technological changes and to better align teaching equipment to industry standards. This is a big challenge for any training provider, because equipment changes rapidly on a daily basis, and innovation is important out there. That is why institutions have problems providing the necessary equipment: it becomes out of date just about on a daily basis, and certainly on a yearly basis. Students — for example, student diesel mechanics — need to work on the latest equipment to make sure they have up-to-date skills. So there are some good things in this document, but let us make sure that the government's actions back up the words we have heard today.

In rural and regional Victoria — in fact across most of Victoria and Australia — we still have skill shortages, which limits our growth and the opportunities we have, particularly in country Victoria. In the Lowan electorate we have a shortage of diesel mechanics and machine operators. A couple of weeks ago I met with a training organisation dealing with blue gums. It estimates that 450 skilled operators are necessary for the growth of the industry and feels it will not be able to provide them. Other agricultural industries have enormous shortages in skilled workers. We have shortages of shearers. The Wimmera Regional Manufacturers Network is dealing with plastics and furniture construction and other machinery jobs and is doing a lot of work to highlight not only the good jobs but also the benefits of working in those industries.

A report of the Economic Development Committee, which I am on, highlighted Victoria's skill shortages. I quote from page 53 of the report of the inquiry into export opportunities for Victorian rural industries:

While the state boasts high employment rates, many rural Victorian towns are faced with significant shortages of skilled and unskilled labour ... New and expanding industries in regional Victoria are also creating additional pressure on existing labour shortages.

John Millington, general manager of Luv-A-Duck Pty Ltd in Nhill, is quoted by the report as saying:

Labour shortages are probably one of the most serious problems we have in country Victoria, but that extends across regional and rural Australia and to a lesser extent in the urban areas. We have taken some initiatives such as bringing people in from overseas because we have been unsuccessful in getting them here.

That is not highlighted only by this report. Last week when Peter McGauran, the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, was in Warracknabeal, O'Connor's, a company in the Wimmera, said it had been in Indonesia interviewing 15 people in the hope of picking up five diesel mechanics. I hear that Brumbies, a food manufacturer that makes pastries, is importing people from overseas too.

Dr Naphthine — Not diesel mechanics?

Mr DELAHUNTY — Not diesel mechanics. It again highlights that there are many skill shortages in our community.

To reinforce the importance of this skill shortage I refer to a couple of documents I picked up from the library. I do not have time to go through both of them, but they are both good reports. One is *Educational Access for Australia's Young People — A Case of Social Exclusion* and the other is *What's Skilling Rural Australia?* This document was put out by Warne Cornish, the chairman of Rural Skills Australia. I quote from the document:

Over the past decade there has been a change in the way training and skills improvement has been developed and delivered, as competency-based training has come to the fore. Extensive changes have been made to the design and delivery of training and education throughout Australia. Skills development, workplace readiness and delivery of training have changed dramatically.

Changes have also occurred in demand for skilled workers in rural industries. There is no pool of potential employees available for the local regions' demands. Even those demands have changed dramatically.

This highlights the many problems we have. I have touched on the issue of VET places. If the government really wants to do something about education, vocational education and training is a great program for kids in secondary schools, but we need to fund the buses to get them to places like Longerenong Agricultural College. I criticise Melbourne University for the way it has handled Longerenong but congratulate WorkCo and others who are trying to develop that facility. Merna Curnow, the chair of the Victorian Farmers Federation education committee, raised concerns.

We need real action to combat the skill and labour shortages. We need to work together to improve the industries and provide an understanding of the skill shortage and the skill development issues. We also need to work together to identify available resources.

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

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — I am pleased to speak about this significant initiative brought forward by the Bracks Labor government called Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians. It is interesting that this morning, while we are supposedly having a debate across the house, we are in fact in fervent agreement. All of those who have spoken in the house today could have been from the government side of house. It has been very encouraging to see that they recognise that this initiative has brought forward some very sensible moves to keep Victoria at the cutting edge by ensuring that we support our young people going into areas where we see skill shortages around the state, as well as supporting older Victorians who may be finding that things in their employment areas are closing in by making sure they have the opportunity to up-skill so they have the skills that are needed to provide them with good, ongoing job opportunities in other areas.

The sum of \$241 million has been attached to the broad range of initiatives we have already heard about for this very significant program, and I am very pleased to see that provincial Victoria will gain substantially through the various ways in which this program will be rolled out. As I said, one key focus is to ensure that our young people are given encouragement to consider going into trade areas where we know there are significant shortages. We have heard that to meet the shortages in the short term we need to bring in employees from overseas — something that the state government is prepared to support as a short-term measure — but clearly we must aim to encourage our own young people who want to get into the work force to look at these opportunities.

We need to ensure that some of the negativities that have been out there in the community attached to working in some trade areas are seen to be false. The truth is that there are good opportunities in trades — good, clean workplaces requiring sound skills that people can enjoy getting their teeth into, skills with good prospects for work and future advancement. All those things are there, and we need to sell that message a little more strongly.

One of the key elements I want to speak on this morning is the technical education centres (TECs) announced by the government in this package. In the Melbourne metropolitan area they will be in Heidelberg and Berwick and in regional Victoria in Wangaratta and Ballarat, which from my point of view is very exciting. A total of \$32 million has been put aside to establish these TECs. The centres will focus on existing

strengths, unlike the federal government's grab bag of promises ahead of the last federal election when it came up with the idea of establishing technical schools — 'Let us get back to the old technical school system' — in an attempt, fairly unsuccessful to date, to establish entirely new entities: private schools that do not seem to take on board any of the things we have already developed.

This model recognises that within the existing TAFE system we have a great deal to offer and to build upon and that it needs to be linked across to our existing secondary school system and tied in with industry. We need to ensure that we can offer top-quality facilities for year 11 and 12 students who come to these centres to do courses that will see them going into trades that we have identified as being areas of potential skill shortages.

We are certainly not going back to the old technical school system, because it was never appropriate for children at year 7 level to have to make a decision between going into an academic stream of education or a practical trade stream of education. It was never appropriate to try to make that decision, so in moving forward it was appropriate that all secondary schools offer all alternatives. That is exactly what has happened in our secondary college system these days: technical trade subjects continue to be offered. We need to ensure that they continue to be offered and that we continue to encourage, as we do, that broad range of education so that at the later stage, when students come through year 10 and then determine they want to go even more strongly into a trade area, that opportunity will be there.

Since this package was announced I have had discussions with Terry Lloyd, the pro-vice-chancellor at Ballarat University, who is responsible for the TAFE areas. Once he had been briefed on this, Terry Lloyd and I discussed how he was going to go about establishing the program. We agreed that it was vitally important that the secondary schools be involved in discussions so that we do not cut across any of the great things that are happening with vocational education and training. We have a great cluster operating within the Ballarat region, and we offer a great range of Victorian certificate of applied learning subjects across our secondary school system, so it is vitally important that we do not cut across that.

It is important that we build into the TAFE system the opportunity for students to travel very smoothly from the secondary schools they have been attending into the new technical education centres and that both systems work collaboratively and cooperatively. The other arm is the need to work with industry and to be very closely

in touch with the needs of industry, so that the courses are designed to enable students to move on from the technical education centres into industry.

I am very excited about this opportunity and look forward to working closely with Terry Lloyd, the secondary principals and others across the Ballarat region to see that the system is a great success. I am very pleased that through an initiative I helped to build upon we have now established the Ballarat Learning Exchange — the BLX — a \$5 million Bracks government project which started this concept and is now established in Camp Street. It is a hive of activity.

One of the key concepts we identified in Ballarat was the need to ensure that young people could go to a one-stop shop to get information about education and training opportunities that were available to them. So right at the front of the Ballarat Learning Exchange we have what is called ‘that place’, where young people can come in, gain information about all the training opportunities available to them and be directed into those areas. We are also bringing career teachers into the centre, and the commonwealth employment agency-type people are coming in and using the centre too.

I am pleased about a further \$23 million initiative within the package which will see the establishment of 13 skill stores around the state, 9 of which will be established in regional centres, building on the concept established in Ballarat. Young people as well as older people will be able to go to a place where they can quickly get information about the myriad of training opportunities that are available across the community. They can find out which one is going to be right for them and where the job vacancies or the skill shortage areas are that will lead them into ongoing, sound employment opportunities. I am very pleased about the skill stores concept right across Victoria — with 9 of them, as I said, being established in provincial Victorian cities. Ballarat is on that list, as is Bendigo and other towns and cities right across regional Victoria.

This is a very sound package that will ensure we stay at the forefront of skilling up young and older people in parts of the state where we know there are skills needs. We are also looking at the high-tech area — others will talk about that too — to ensure we are at the cutting edge so we can maximise our opportunities to keep people in employment, keep the skill bases we need and provide a sound way forward for the whole Victorian community. I am glad that opposition members are also supporting this package.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I listened very closely to the member for Oakleigh, and I must say I disagree with most of the things she said. Her contribution to the debate was mainly an attack on the federal government. In fact she should have paid tribute to the federal government, and this matter of public importance should say that this house congratulates the Howard government for ensuring that our training system will meet Victoria’s future needs.

It has taken this government close to seven years to come up with something! It was not until the federal government put forward a plan through the federal Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, the Honourable Gary Hardgrave, who is a fantastic minister, that this government woke up and actually decided to do something. It is about time Victoria showed some willingness to move the training system forward, but as I said, this has only come about as a result of the actions of the federal government. Under the Skilling Australia’s Workforce agreement, the states will receive nearly \$5 billion over four years, including \$215 million in additional funding. That is new money from the federal government for the states for the four years from 2005 to 2008. It is needed, because we have a shortage of skilled workers.

That has been caused by a number of factors, which include the economic boom, a consequence of the Howard government’s strategies, an ageing population and lower fertility rates. The challenge for us and for business is to find skilled people to take up jobs. Indeed an article in the *Herald Sun* of 27 March that carried the headline ‘Flood of migrants tipped’ states:

Australia could be accepting up to 180 000 migrants within two years — the highest annual intake since the late 1960s.

The federal government is under strong pressure from big business to keep increasing the numbers to help plug the skill shortage.

...

The Australian Industry Group has lobbied the government to add 20 000 skilled places in 2006 and 2007, bringing the total to 160 000. The AIG is also calling for a further 20 000 places the following year, boosting the intake to 180 000.

The federal government, however, is doing something to alleviate this shortage. As a result the state government has decided to wake up and take some action. It has had an inquiry into vocational education and training and has come up with the paper that is before us.

The federal government has provided Victoria with over \$1.16 billion in funding for vocational and technical education (VTE) for 2005–08, and this

includes \$41.4 million in additional funding. This document is unclear about what proportion of funding is being provided by the Victorian government and how much is coming from the federal government. It is typical of this government that it has used smoke and mirrors to ensure that no-one knows how much new money it is putting into the program and how much money has come from the federal government.

This paper also seems to have misrepresented the federal government's contribution to VTE. The federal government's contribution to Victoria through recurrent funding for VTE increased by nearly 33 per cent between 1997 and 2003 — and of course we will now get an extra \$1.16 billion over the next four years. While the paper before us commits to examining resourcing levels and responsibilities for funding, the package appears to be directed only at the public TAFE network and not at private providers. We have to remember that the majority of TAFEs in this state are in a financial mess, and this government has done nothing in seven years to try and resolve that problem. The first thing the Minister for Education and Training did when she came into office was to increase fees by 25 per cent. Some students are unable to find that extra money and are therefore unable to attend TAFEs.

We had a fantastic Minister for Tertiary Education and Training under the Kennett government, and he is still a fantastic member. Unfortunately with the change of government the current minister has failed — she is asleep — and TAFEs have gone backwards. Victoria pays the least amount per hour to TAFEs of any other state. In 2004 Victoria paid \$12.15 per hour, compared with New South Wales, which paid \$14.03 per hour, and Queensland, which paid \$15.25 per hour. That is why most of our TAFEs are hurting, and this government has not done anything to resolve that issue.

But it is good to see that the Victorian government, a Labor government, supports the federal government's initiative in establishing technical colleges. It is great to see that the Victorian government is planning to mirror that initiative by establishing four technical education centres that will be feeders into new apprenticeships. It is also good to see that Labor members are saying the federal government is doing a wonderful job. They are saying, 'You are doing such a wonderful job that we are going to copy you. We are going to do the same thing you are doing'. That is fantastic.

It is not just this government that is saying these colleges are a great idea. Heather Ridout, chief executive officer of the Australian Industry Group, said:

The Australian Industry Group looks forward to taking an active role in supporting the new technical colleges

announced ... by the federal government. The ... colleges will be an important part of the longer term solution dealing with skill shortages in industry. We are excited by the benefits for industry which will flow from the government project, and particularly by the benefits it will bring to regions that are hard hit by skill shortages. We congratulate Minister Hardgrave —

here we go again: Minister Hardgrave is a great minister —

on successfully taking forward this important project.

This comes from someone outside politics who thinks that what the federal government is doing is fantastic because it is proactive rather than reactive, which is what the Howard government is all about. This state government did nothing for six or seven years until someone else said, 'You need to do something to move forward. You have to look to 2010 and to 2020'. Only then did it do something.

I will tell members opposite what they need to do from now on. For the next 10 to 20 years this government needs to assist in removing industrial relations impediments to the establishment of school-based new apprenticeships in a range of skill-needs trades. It also needs to support the removal of the time-based requirement for new apprenticeships in key trades in order to encourage more young and mature-aged people into those trades and to support user choice for employers and individuals to choose their training providers. That is very important.

The government also needs to support the creation of specialised qualifications in key industries such as the building and construction industry and support employer calls to introduce part-time work into awards for the traditional trade areas to facilitate the entry of job seekers or those wishing to re-enter the work force.

It should also support the introduction of part-time training wages into industrial awards to enable employers and employees to offer and gain part-time work, support flexible working arrangements for VTE teachers, particularly those employed in TAFEs, and support third-party access to public training facilities. Those are some of the initiatives that all states should be looking at and supporting to enable our training system to move forward from hereon in.

It is disappointing when an MPI is brought into this house by the government saying what a wonderful job it is doing. It amazes me that it has taken the government seven long, dark years to do something with our training system. Of course if it had not done something it would have been left behind by the other states. So it is good to see that the minister and her

ministerial advisers have finally woken up, taken on board what the federal government is saying and noticed what a wonderful job it is doing with training and with apprenticeships, which are up across Australia — all as a result of the federal government's good work.

It has nothing to do with the state government. It is the federal government's good work that is the reason why the economy is booming, apprenticeships are up and technical colleges will be operating again. It was this government, if I recall correctly, which did away with technical schools because it thought everyone should be equal and should have the same type of education.

We support giving people opportunities and believe that everyone should have the same opportunities, but people should have the opportunity to choose what they want to go into. Unfortunately this government took that away from them, and it was not until the federal government came up with the idea that this government finally woke up and said, 'Yes, we will go back to technical colleges'. It has taken the government seven long years. Despite the fact that the minister has had 10 or 12 ministerial advisers in her office, it has taken her seven long years to come up with this paper.

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — I rise to support this matter of public importance by congratulating the Bracks government on its commitment to education and training, and in particular on the recent release of the education and training package entitled *Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians*, which will invest \$240 million into skilling Victoria. Unlike the member for Bulleen, I want to speak about this fantastic package. The member for Bulleen may have been thinking that for some reason the matter of public importance is about congratulating the federal Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, Gary Hardgrave, because he spoke a lot about that.

Mr Perton — He said you should congratulate Minister Hardgrave!

Ms LOBATO — He talked about what the federal government had done to skill our communities, but I am still left thinking, given all the supposed money that is being injected into our states, 'Where are the doctors?'. Why on earth are our communities still struggling to find GPs? He has no idea, but obviously it is not working.

This package builds upon the Bracks government's contribution to education. I think we are somewhere up around \$6 billion now, so it has been a massive investment in education, and this package goes further.

Its main aims are to skill Victorians, and it has four main areas that set out to provide opportunities and address and respond to the current and future needs of industry. The 'Starting earlier' component of the package provides opportunities for students while still at school. 'Starting earlier' will also provide \$93.44 million towards guaranteeing a place in TAFE college or another public provider and will also support more young people completing year 12 or equivalent training.

Another focus in 'Starting earlier' is its expansion of pre-apprenticeship programs, which are very popular among our youth and so are very important. Pre-apprenticeship places will increase by 4500. Pre-apprenticeships have provided many young people with much success by encouraging them to remain at school longer and encouraging them into apprenticeships through the prospect of better remuneration, the lack of which at the moment is a real disincentive to people entering into apprenticeships. They also offer an attractive level of skilled apprentices to employers.

Also within the 'Starting earlier' component is the establishment of technical education centres (TECs), which has been talked about a lot in this morning's contributions by members on both sides of the house. Everyone has learnt that such centres play a vital role in our community in providing education and training to our youth. The initiative is one that I am most passionate about, probably because of the lack of choices presented to young people and students since the closure of our technical colleges by the previous government, which was opposed to offering choice to our communities.

I am pleased that the establishment of the technical centres includes a location in the south-east, where there is a high demand for both technical education and skilled trades people. I will speak further on that announcement shortly.

I also wanted to touch on some of the other progressive initiatives unveiled in this package. I am very pleased that there is a commitment to providing the opportunity for people to learn longer. I am a big believer in lifelong learning, and while I am speaking on this I will take the opportunity to congratulate the universities of the third age in our community, which are doing an outstanding job in providing lifelong learning.

An amount of \$10.8 million will fund 1800 places for 35 to 64-year-olds to access certificate III level training and above. That area will also ensure that trade qualifications will be modernised as well, which will

improve the system. Other actions that will result in many opportunities for students include increased funding to regional TAFE institutions. There were fairly ridiculous comments made previously about the lack of funding given to TAFE institutions throughout Victoria. This government has been committed to maintaining, upgrading and recognising the massive importance of TAFE colleges in our communities.

As a TAFE graduate, having completed a diploma of community development, and then having gone on to Victoria University, I can talk about the benefits of and praise the role that TAFE colleges in Victoria play. I congratulate the government for maintaining those fine institutions.

While there are many fantastic initiatives outlined in the package, I refer to the announcement made in relation to technical education centres. For some time now I have been lobbying for a technical education centre in the south-east. Many members would be aware that the south-east of Melbourne is a massive growth area, demanding more and more education facilities. While our secondary colleges are providing excellent vocational education and training (VET) and Victorian certificate of applied learning options with very successful outcomes in retention and skilled job seekers, one of the most common issues brought up with me by young people is their need for choices in further education — for alternative pathways.

Youth in the south-east, predominantly around the Pakenham area, have taken up the opportunities provided by the VET courses on offer, with 55 per cent of 15 to 19-year-olds enrolled — a demonstration of success. Another pathway taken up by south-east youth is apprenticeships, but according to the South East Local Learning and Employment Network many year 10 students are leaving school for unknown destinations. That is very concerning, and I am sure that with the implementation of an alternative pathway we will have fewer students leaving for unknown destinations. That there are no further-education facilities beyond Berwick may be a factor in the lower retention rate in the south-east, but certainly the new technical education centre will assist in that area.

The south-east TEC is proposed for the Berwick campus of Chisholm. I announced the good news to TAFE executives and students a couple of weeks ago, and the *Gazette* reported on the announcement with the headline 'TEC school welcomed'. It reported that the mayor and chief executive officer of Casey welcomed the announcement and spoke of the importance of providing local vocational skills to the high number of young people in the area.

Michael Hall, the very effective president of the Berwick Chamber of Commerce, responded that he applauded this outstanding decision which will provide opportunities for educational training courses needed in the region. He went on to say that commonsense has prevailed, that not all of our 40 000 young people will want to go off to university to become brain surgeons and that we need people who can lay bricks, build houses and fix cars. That is very true in the south-east, where an absolute housing boom is going on, so localised training feeding into localised employment will be very important. The new TEC will receive up to \$8 million and cater for 300 students.

In closing, I was very pleased to see that this announcement was made at Northland Secondary College, a fantastic model of technical education. Congratulations to the college and congratulations to the Parliamentary Secretary for Education, the minister, the Premier and the government.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — It gives me great pleasure to join this debate following my friend the member for Gembrook and the members for Bulleen, Warrandyte and Nepean. Listening to the contributions from the Labor Party one would wonder why there is a skill shortage. If this document provides all the answers, if all the projects the member for Gembrook has just referred to and if Ballarat University, mentioned by the member for Ballarat East, are working so well and operating in an optimal way, why is it that we have a skill shortage? Melbourne is adjudged the best city on earth to live in. That is not just our own judgment; the *Economist* magazine in its annual review of cities described Melbourne as the best place to live, and one can take from that that the region in which it is placed, Victoria, is itself a great place to live.

Would we have a skill shortage if young Australians were not travelling and working overseas? There are literally hundreds of thousands of young Victorians taking up the opportunities of the global economy. The member for Gembrook asked where are the doctors. We will find them in London, we will find them in New York and we will find them working for non-government organisations in Africa and Asia. The fact is that young Victorians are, like citizens of every other Western country, taking up the global opportunities that are available to them. The question arises then: if there are so many young Victorians with trade skills, teaching skills and skills in various areas travelling overseas, why is that not being balanced by an inflow of people with equivalent skills wanting to live and work in Melbourne?

The interesting thing is that the debate we are having in this Parliament today is the same debate that is taking place in the parliaments of the United States and Canada. We could be in the parliaments of London, Paris or Berlin, and the same discussion would be taking place: skill shortages in Western societies. To my mind the answers are probably beyond the scope of a 10-minute contribution to debate, but it occurs to me that there are deeply ingrained problems in Western societies that maybe we cannot solve. Maybe they are beyond the wit of government to solve and maybe beyond this package, no matter how noble it is. I could say it needs more funding in some areas and greater emphasis in others, but that would not be a fruitful exercise. Is it beyond the wit of government to actually drive the skills problems of a community like this?

I have just left the job of shadow minister for education, and in that area it is one's task to emphasise the negatives, but it still shocks me that one in five children leaves the Victorian state secondary system functionally illiterate — it may be higher, it may be lower, but from the Kennett government on we have had systems in place for reading recovery. We have numeracy blocks and all sorts of new methods for measuring the performance of children, teachers and the like. Reading the documents of the Labor Party today, one could be forgiven for sometimes thinking they were written by Don Hayward, and one suspects they have certainly been written by the same people who advised him.

When we have produced, as people said yesterday, a very good education system across Australia, what is going wrong when one in five kids cannot read? What is going wrong when one in four children leave school unable to do sufficient mathematics to do their job? I had an email the other day from someone who had handed a fairly simple amount of money to a shop assistant only to find the person needed to use a calculator to calculate 85 cents change. What is going wrong in our society that we have this problem?

I think it goes back to very early periods. We are not going to solve it with 16-year-olds. We are not going to solve it with adults. Mem Fox, the children's author who gave me great advice during the time I was shadow minister for education, says that the problem starts before children reach the age of three or four years. If parents are not reading to their children and if children are not familiar with the text in a book, what can a teacher do in prep or grade 1? The reality is, as Fred Ackerman from the Victorian Principals Association would say, that in the intervention programs we now have in prep, grade 1 and grade 2, the kid who is not a self-starter and reading at that point

is not going to become a self-starter after two years of intervention.

The current claim by the primary principals for extended funding and reading intervention recognises that after Reading Recovery children drop back to poor performances in literacy. So if, for instance, we could lift the level of literacy in this community from what appears to be 80 per cent to 90 per cent or 95 per cent I think the skill shortage would disappear. It would be so much easier to train existing workers who were literate and numerate to do the technical tasks that are needed. I recently visited a factory in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Its management cannot get young apprentices with the talents it needs in mathematics and English communication. Typically this company is now taking its 30 and 35-year-old workers, people who are already earning \$40 000 and \$45 000 a year or more, and putting them through apprenticeship training because they are reliable and because the literacy and numeracy problems that seem to be getting worse today are not so marked in workers of that age.

Firstly, in response to the motion I say to the Parliament that we have to deal with this problem at a much earlier phase. We have to deal with the problems of illiteracy and innumeracy and those problems are almost insoluble in most adults. We need to deal with the problem before the age of three or four years and we need to work with people like Frank Oberklaid, Mem Fox and others to find solutions.

Secondly, with respect to training, government does not have all the answers. I well remember American President Ronald Reagan making the controversial statement that government is not the solution, government is the problem, and maybe in this instance it is too. This community has got used to suckling from the nutrition of government and expecting government to take the lead in education and training and provide the support for apprenticeships and the like. Maybe we have forgotten how to do it ourselves.

If we talk about lifelong learning, what we have to do is inspire the community to make greater efforts to build its own skills. There are many people who do it. As members of Parliament each of us would know hundreds of people who are paying their own way through TAFE or university courses, private vocational education and training courses or correspondence courses and the like while employed in other areas or doing work at home. But my strong impression is that there are not enough people who are taking that on. I think back to one of the failures of both Liberal and Labor in this state — that is, to create a teaching community and to get teachers to become more

computer and information and communications technology (ICT) literate so they can work better in the classroom and lead their children who themselves are becoming quite ICT literate. I think one of the things that has stunned me — —

Mr Baillieu — Maybe one of the problems is that they are too computer literate!

Mr PERTON — I disagree with the member, but that is another debate. One of the things that has shocked me, and it probably shocks the Minister for Education and Training and her colleagues, is how many teachers have not been willing to take up the challenge of ICT and are not willing to do the work in their own time. Again, each of us could name scores or hundreds of people who have, but the overall impression from government reports and surveys in this area indicates that the teaching work force has not empowered itself using ICT in the ways that one would expect of people who are meant to lead lifelong learning and to inspire children to learn more.

These are a few of my thoughts. This is a long and complex debate, but most importantly as a community we have to inspire in the individual a love of learning and a need to inspire — —

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

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It is a pleasure to talk today on this matter of public importance. It is great to see that the government has tied the Victorian economy to increasing the skills of our work force. Unfortunately the announcement made recently in the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians initiative was in my eyes a little diminished in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games; it was very much overlooked. I say 'unfortunately' because Victoria has decided to take a high-growth, high-wages approach to the future investment in education and training — some \$241 million worth — to provide Victorians with a chance to upgrade their skills and help business match skills and training to their industry priorities. This, of course, excludes the \$5 billion-plus we have put back into the school-based education system over the years.

In my electorate of Narre Warren North I am fortunate that we have made a commitment to build a new technical education centre to train some 300 students to take up a trade, or through links with local TAFE institutes to provide years 11 and 12 students with a range of vocational opportunities.

Currently the Australian economy is riding high on the wave of a boom in mineral prices. That is great, but the problem is that our current account deficit worsens and the federal government has not addressed the issue of dealing with elaborately transformed manufactures — exports that are not reliant on world prices. We are relying on an old model of the sheep's back like they did in the Menzies era. The federal government's solution to this problem to do with the current account deficit is that it is waiting for the dollar to drop. This policy is more like a crystal ball than a serious attempt to deal with the structural problems underlying the deficit, which is that we are simply not exporting enough elaborately transformed manufactures.

Apart from the lack of growth in those elaborately transformed manufactures, productivity is coming to a standstill.

Between 1993 and 1998 labour growth productivity was set at a rate of 3.2 per cent. Since 1998 the labour growth productivity rate has dropped to 1.8 per cent, which is an indictment of the federal government and its lack of reform. It appears to me that if the Treasurer and the Premier had not pushed the issue at the last Council of Australian Governments meeting on reform, nothing would be happening in this serious area. In many ways the Howard government is very much living off the reforms of the Hawke-Keating government which restructured the whole economy. What is the federal government doing about reform at the moment? It has its new industrial relations system — WorkChoices — and all that will do is deliver lower wages to the unskilled work force.

What will the changes lead to? Supposedly some growth in employment, although I am not convinced of that, but worst of all it will lead to a drop in consumption, which is what the New Zealand economy is currently experiencing. Its economy is going nowhere: it has limited growth and no productivity. But somehow or another the federal government has ignored this basic message. The simple lesson in this new WorkChoices policy is that if you pay people less they are not going to work any harder and they are not going to deliver any more products per hour of work. You do not need to be an economist to work that out. We will have a future with low growth, low wages and low productivity, nothing to address the skill shortages and nothing to deal with the current account deficit.

The history books will mark us down quite severely. I really think the federal government has missed the boat and is focusing on industrial relations reform to drop the wages of the unskilled. I cannot find one conservative economist, including from the Australian

Mining Institute, the H. R. Nicholls Society and others, who will say this current WorkChoices reform is going to deliver anything.

What will the history books tell us about the Bracks government? Simply that we have recognised that the future lies in high wages, high growth and high productivity. Along with our broad-based economy, the agricultural sector, some mining and a focus on research and development and innovation this will lead us to a great future. We will have a skilled work force and a thriving manufacturing sector. But the problem is that the federal government is very much working in the opposite direction.

Currently we are training 130 000-plus apprentices and trainees, including 46 000 in the traditional trades. This is up from five years ago when the figures were 91 000 overall, with 35 000 undertaking the traditional trades. Every year since 1998 we have been improving this scorecard. Further, we are funding substantial research and development programs in biotech and agriculture and we have a department dealing specifically with the sector of manufacturing.

I want to focus on specific components of the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package. One part of that is careers in manufacturing. This program is here to convince young students that there is actually a great future for skilled workers in manufacturing. The program was piloted in 2004 in about 30 schools. It has now been extended to 100 schools across the state. It gives students in years 9 and 10 exposure to the manufacturing sector. The sector offers great, well-paid careers in everything from design engineering and project management to IT and finance. Victoria is dependent for its future growth on the advanced manufacturing sector. Most of these manufacturers compete in niche international markets and require a highly skilled work force. They compete on brains and skills, not on pricing. They are not reliant upon a low dollar or world prices in the same way as are our commodities.

Another part of this new program which we have introduced is Business Skills for the Future, which has two components. The first will look at the micro level of an enterprise and will look at skills development and training needs in that enterprise. It includes work force planning, retraining current skilled workers and options for upskilling the work force. The second part will provide practical financial assistance to upskill and reskill existing employees of firms for which skill development training plans have been prepared as above. Funding for this is approximately \$10 million over four years. This program will apply to small,

medium and large businesses with the focus on the manufacturing sector.

I am particularly happy about this initiative because this issue of finding skilled workers is raised time and time again when I and other backbenchers are out there as part of the ministerial task force for the Minister for Small Business, talking to small business operators. Small business is time poor and often does not have the capacity to establish a human resources section to ensure it keeps or retains staff or plan for future skills and growth. This includes the manufacturing sector, but it applies generally to small business operators. There will be assistance in strategies for attracting and retraining skilled workers, evaluating options for skilling, cost-effective training investments and referrals to independent third parties who will provide training skills. Training will be customised to that specific enterprise.

In the most recent Sensis business survey the second most important issue for small business was the finding of skilled workers. The first issue, of course, was cash flow, which the government has addressed by requiring all state government departments to pay small to medium-sized enterprises within 30 days.

Another part of this program is the business support organisation (BSO) which will engage facilitators to assess the training needs of their associated businesses and liaise with training providers to provide customised and relevant training. BSOs could be business industry associations, business enterprise centres or business and professional associations. Under this model training can address both management skills and employee skills, so realistically it will also provide small business enterprises with the capacity to train a small business operator as well as their staff, because, as we know, if you are running the business you do not have a lot of time to look at what skills you need to upgrade; you are probably focusing more on your employees. This BSO program arises largely from the relatively low take-up rate of management training by small business operators and the lack of flexibility within the vocational education and training system.

The initiative shifts from the supply-driven training model to a demand-driven training model at the enterprise level. I congratulate the government for its vision and desire to create a better future for this state. However, I think it is swimming against the tide because the Howard government is actually working against this in many ways by delivering a low-wage, low-growth, low-productivity future, which is what the figures currently suggest.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — In joining the debate in reviewing the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package, the subject of the matter of public importance introduced by the member for Oakleigh today, I make the following remarks. The key issue to understand is that skills follow investment and development rather than the reverse. There has to be a range of critical drivers in the Victorian economy and in the workplace that underpin economic growth. The example overseas of Ireland, which in the 1980s had a floundering work force but through policy settings at government level and in particular a decision by the then government to reduce the tax rate from some 47 per cent to 10 per cent, fixed for 20 years, provided a very important policy driver that saw enormous international investment flow through to Ireland, which led to the situation a few years ago where it had a skill shortage of 200 000 workers and an unemployment rate of 4.1 per cent.

In Australia today it is important to understand that governments across the nation and in Victoria need to have the appropriate background framework for investment to take place in Victoria. It reflects a number of areas such as the accident compensation scheme, various tax regimes such as land tax and property taxes, the degree of red tape and bureaucracy, and the degree of government regulation. There has been a large outflow of resources or enterprises from Victoria to the lower-cost labour market of China. While Australian know-how and technical expertise can guide the work that is undertaken in developing economies, it is important that as far as possible we retain investment and businesses in this state.

One of the leading businesses in Victoria was in my electorate — Gale Australia — a very successful enterprise which pioneered the development of a form of shade cloth and supplied it to the Australian and overseas market. Their product protected fruit crops, car yards and military installations in the Middle East. In recent years the management of the company, which has now been floated, saw fit to relocate a large proportion of its manufacturing operations overseas. There are complications in establishing operations in an overseas environment. For mass production it may work well, but for shorter term production levels it is better to be reliant upon a domestic work force that requires a higher level of skill.

In relation to the Irish experience — the development of the Celtic Tiger — I note that Ireland's Prime Minister Sean Lemass developed a visionary approach. The historical context was that Ireland had a population of 3 million people, which was down from 8 million 150 years or so ago, and in political circles it was felt

that the country would grind to a halt. However, Ireland developed a national consensus that certain policy settings would be required and a 25-year policy whereby successive Irish governments were to implement a long-term strategic approach to the country's industrial policies.

There was a policy focus on one question: in what industries could Ireland best maximise its international competitive advantage? The conclusion was that Ireland should focus on high value-added sectors. The availability, quality and cost of an educated work force was going to be the key driver of international competitive advantage. Ireland focused on three high value-added sectors: information technology, pharmaceuticals and internationally traded services. There were strong benefits from a self-reinforcing clustering effect, and the 'silicon isle' mirrored the development of Silicon Valley in California.

A critical mass of firms in three sectors was targeted. The new entrants chose Ireland partly due to the skill concentration, thus reinforcing those advantages. Thus, after Microsoft entered Ireland in 1984, Lotus came the following year, followed by Oracle and IBM. Part of the reason they came was that there was this critical massing of expertise. There was a strong demonstration effect by the early successful investors. Even though Ireland was exporting people, it was better for them to emigrate with rather than without an education. In Ireland 50 per cent of the population was under the age of 29, and government spending was 20 per cent on education, which was comparatively very high.

The successful Celtic Tiger is a model which can be observed in other areas. During the 1980s in Victoria we saw an increase in prices in the manufacturing sector and an increase in industrial disputes which was adverse to the operation of a number of Australian manufacturers. Whatever investment there is in technology and whatever investment there is in education, there has to be an underpinning level of investment in key industries if there are to be opportunities for Victorians in the work force later on. In 1992, when the then Liberal government came to office, unemployment was running at 11 per cent. Despite all the then government's rhetoric, all the key government reports that were produced and all the initiatives which were developed, without a certain level of investor confidence in the state, jobs were declining. At that stage in Victoria, numbers of people who were seeking employment in this state were unable to find jobs, and migrant families were going overseas to find employment opportunities for their children in particular.

It is interesting that in the present context I have not seen expansive commentary on contributions assisting recently arrived migrants. One thing the Labor government did when it came to office was to breach an election promise that it would continue the community business employment program. This was a sector specific, community specific program that helped to utilise skills within communities — within language and social groupings — to provide pathways into employment. But the Labor Party, contrary to a clear political promise, abandoned that program. It has rendered more vulnerable a sizeable section of the Victorian community as a consequence of its failure to implement a political promise. The Liberal Party recognises the importance of community self-sufficiency and independence, and it is critical that newly established communities have the tools to achieve this particular outcome. The Labor Party has failed in this particular area.

Another area of concern is recently arrived communities. Communities from the Horn of Africa are a case in point. Their particular skill levels are a consequence of their coming from war-torn countries where there have not been functional education systems. Many refugees arriving in Melbourne have not had the benefits of a continuous primary and secondary education. There are a number of people who have been seriously displaced, but the education system in this state has failed them and they do not have the requisite standards in literacy and numeracy to be able to re-enter the work force. I do not see the problems of Horn of African communities being addressed in this particular report before the Parliament.

In addition there are the indigenous communities. The Victorian government has accepted reduced performance indicators for indigenous Victorian students in this state compared with other Victorian students, and as we speak there are high levels of truancy among indigenous Victorians. Those communities are being deprived of the opportunity to contribute productively to the economic development of this state.

There is a lot of rhetoric about this. The government has spent \$80 million on an advertising campaign lauding the virtues of the education sector while at the same time there is a lack of engagement of indigenous Victorians in Victorian schools and a lack of opportunity for Horn of African Victorians and other refugees arriving in this state.

In concluding I would like to summarise by making these comments. The key drivers for employment opportunities in this state boil down to the provision of

appropriate incentives and appropriate levels of investment. You can have all the training schemes in the world, but unless there is that key investment, any program will fail. Investment is determined by the right signals coming from government in terms of WorkCover schemes, industrial relations schemes and employment schemes. We have seen the federal reforms being bagged by the Labor Party, but it is flexibility in the marketplace which will enable more Victorian workers to have jobs in an internationally competitive environment. The Labor Party has failed to recognise this, and it has also failed to look after vulnerable sections of the Victorian community.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I rise to add my voice of support to the matter of public importance raised by the member for Oakleigh and to give my congratulations to the Bracks Labor government on returning an agenda of skills development to Victoria. The Bracks government has restored people's faith in services that were for many years lacking in funding, and skills development and training are one such service.

All Victorians are now enthusiastically welcoming the government's \$241 million investment package, which will be provided over the next four years. It will drive our local industries and maintain Victoria's status as the industrial and skills capital of Australia. The Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package offers young Victorians a real future in skilled employment by providing opportunities for trade training and apprenticeships. It will help to restore value to trade qualifications, which have suffered under the regime of the federal government, which has abrogated its responsibility to prepare our work force in light of the so-called advantages that less developed countries in our region have due to very low wages and inferior regulations — for example, in occupational health and safety and workers compensation.

This government sees life very differently — and thank goodness for that! We see a Victoria of highly skilled young people going from secondary school into further education and then into highly sought-after jobs to tackle our skill shortages. We see a Victoria of older workers who can update their skills to help businesses match training to industry priorities and modern needs through innovation and research. Unlike the federal government and its supporters on the other side, we are putting into action an agenda which we can be truly proud of, knowing that all Victorians will benefit through a higher standard of living. I am especially pleased that the skills package establishes technical education centres. This comes on the heels of the establishment of the northern technical education

centre, which is located in Preston and has a very proud record of achievement.

My electorate of Mill Park has a very high concentration of people working in the manufacturing industry, and that is reflected throughout the outer northern suburbs around Mill Park. We have seen a steady decline in the manufacturing industry in Australia because of a lack of foresight by our federal government. The new technical education centres — one of which will be established in Heidelberg to augment the fine work of the northern centre — will provide a most welcome opportunity to augment opportunities for many young people in electorates such as Mill Park to enter into further education.

These technical education centres will provide an array of programs designed to produce highly skilled and motivated people at the end, and that is what the focus is on. We are focused on outcomes, and to achieve those outcomes we need assistance from the government. This government is certainly stepping forward to grasp the opportunity by creating this package. Programs such as the Victorian certificate of applied learning and pre-apprenticeships and traineeships will be offered, with a focus on school-aged students, to help local industry skill shortages.

In my electorate we take these matters very seriously. Local members of Parliament, both state and federal, have a very good working relationship with local businesses and their representative bodies. Bodies such as NORTH Link/ NIETL and the Northern Area Consultative Committee, for example, have an ongoing dialogue with us, and the issues confronting industry are debated and acted upon so common ground can be found. More often than not common ground is found, because we are interested in establishing and nurturing partnerships with all the community. The issues include the lack of sufficient office space in the outer north, the need to create greater synergies between further education opportunities and the needs of industry and of course secondary schools in the north. These are not just talk-fests.

As a sign of how the state government engages with stakeholders in the community out in the north to form real and productive partnerships we have now identified an opportunity for the establishment of a biosecurity centre in the region. I know discussions with and a lot of vigorous lobbying of the relevant department are occurring to see whether this opportunity can be turned into a reality. Time will tell, and a lot of issues in terms of economic viability will need to be looked at very carefully. But what is also important in considering

such options is the connections that can be made by all stakeholders with secondary schools, local industries, the new technical education centre in Heidelberg and local TAFEs, thanks to this government's commitment to establishing technical education centres and promoting firm partnerships with those stakeholders.

I wish to take the opportunity to remind the house of the state government's active support and promotion of Siemens VDO and its commitment to the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Some members will know that the Premier announced at the end of last year that Siemens VDO would be building a new state-of-the-art instrument manufacturing plant in the University Hill industrial precinct in my electorate. This plant, once fully operational, will create an additional 320 highly skilled jobs. What a boon this will be for my area! Why should our local young people not have the opportunity to fill these very highly skilled jobs?

We recognise the learning and job needs of our community, and I am very proud to be able to stand here and give due recognition to a government that has given a helping hand to business and has given new hope to schools in the local area and to other businesses — and let us not forget that Siemens VDO, as one example, is part of the chain of manufacturing in the broader automotive industry, being a car component manufacturer. As well as the direct benefits, we also need to look at what indirect benefits can come out of such partnerships. Backed up by real training, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities will also be there. The automotive industry is vital to our state's economy. The industry employs more than 27 000 people and generates about \$10 billion in economic activity each year, and the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne have a fair share of that.

Through the Maintaining the Advantage — Skilled Victorians package our young people will have the opportunities to achieve the best they can through an education system that values initiative, competence, lifelong learning, ongoing research and innovation. What better opportunities are there to provide to our young people? The outcomes, of course, will be a more cohesive community, a more economically secure state and a great place in which to live and raise a family.

This package builds on solid ground. This is not the first injection of funds for skills development and lifelong education this government has provided. Since 1999 we have increased apprentice/trainee funding from \$109 million to \$188 million in 2005. That is no mean feat. Right from the beginning this government was prepared to take solid action to build opportunities for our young people and to build a better Victoria in

terms of prosperity. Since 1999 we have allocated \$230 million for TAFE capital works, \$12.5 million for additional pre-apprenticeship places, \$65 million for an apprenticeship/traineeship completion bonus scheme and \$10 million in concessions on fees and charges — many first and second-year apprentices now qualify for this.

Our commitment and vision have resulted in massive increases in take-up rates. As at December 1999 there were approximately 76 000 apprentices in training. As at December 2005 this figure was a whopping 134 000, approximately. Think very carefully about how wide a gap that is and how much progress we have made in this area. In terms of apprenticeship commencements, from 1 January 1999 to 31 December 1999 there were approximately 57 000 apprentice and trainee commencements. From 1 January 2005 to the end of December 2005 there were approximately 81 500 people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships.

This is not the beginning; this is merely another step in our very strong march to building a very strong Victoria, to keeping Victoria an economically strong state and to building a future for our young people well into the future — a future of highly skilled jobs, of prosperity, of high living standards and of a community which is united, secure and cohesive. I congratulate the Bracks government on this next chapter in this funding.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

Education and Training Committee: promotion of mathematics and science education

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — It is with great pleasure that I speak on a report tabled by the Education and Training Committee on 2 March 2006 on the promotion of mathematics and science education. I must thank my fellow committee members — the member for Bulleen, who is the deputy chair of the committee, and other members of the committee — whose dedication and commitment throughout this inquiry has produced a report that is truly a tribute to an effective, all-party committee. It is a report I am proud of. I hope it makes a lasting contribution not only to government policy and strategy but to discussion, debate and practice among teachers and experts in the field. This report is extremely relevant to the matter of public importance on skills education the house has just finished debating.

Mathematics and science education are becoming increasingly important in today's society. The

economic prosperity of Victoria and Australia is highly dependent on our ability to develop scientists who can compete globally. Furthermore, Victorians need to be mathematically and scientifically literate to participate and compete in a world increasingly dominated by technological innovation. Fortunately Victorian schools perform well in maths and science education, by both national and international standards. The committee had the pleasure of seeing first hand some outstanding innovative schools and highly capable, dynamic and effective teachers.

However, in a world where technology changes by the second, we need to continually change and innovate. The committee identified 23 areas that would help boost mathematics and science education in Victoria. The 23 recommendations made by the committee were genuinely all-party recommendations — the Liberal and Labor parties and The Nationals were unanimous on the need for these recommendations and supported them wholeheartedly. People often see division and debate in this Parliament, but in areas such as this within the committee system we can often find that no matter what your party allegiance you can come together with recommendations and ideas for the genuine benefit of Victoria, and that is good for democracy in Australia as well as education.

The committee saw a need for a senior science subject that is multidisciplinary and has a strong focus on scientific literacy and new science and recommended that new contemporary senior science courses be considered. This is particularly the case in the area of engineering where the country faces a serious skill shortage. Additionally the committee recommended an equipment boost to both primary and secondary schools and that schools share more substantial contemporary equipment. Such a boost would assist the capacity of schools to embrace the expansion of new and innovative sciences in the introduction and consolidation of new Victorian essential learning standards. Let us face it, a lot of equipment in schools nowadays is expensive. Keeping abreast and making sure students are learning what is relevant to the society we have and the technology that is in place is an expensive proposition. There is no reason why primary and secondary schools cannot share those resources and buy things by region. I will sit down now and resume my contribution on this at another time.

Education and Training Committee: promotion of mathematics and science education

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I too wish to speak briefly on the inquiry into the promotion of mathematics and science education. I would like to pay

tribute to the committee staff: Karen Ellingford, Andrew Butler and Eva Tench. They did an outstanding job and this report is a tribute to their hard work. I would also like to put on the record my appreciation of the work done by my colleagues. The Nationals, the Labor Party and the Liberals worked very closely on this report. This shows what you can do if you work together as a team. I have to pay tribute to the chair of the committee, the member for Eltham, who I think also did a wonderful job.

We found a few interesting things during the inquiry. As a former maths and science teacher I was concerned about the lack of understanding among some teachers in primary schools when it comes to science. The majority of our maths and science teachers do a wonderful job and look out for the interests of all of their students. However, there are teachers in primary schools especially who find it very difficult to teach science in the school so they avoid teaching it. They might only do it for one period or half an hour a week, which is not enough for students once they go on to secondary school. Equally there are a number of teachers who take up science or mathematics in senior school but who are not qualified to do so; the schools ask them to teach those subjects because they have taught for many years. There is a concern from that point of view. If a teacher has no interest, shows no interest and does not have the expertise or knowledge, it is very hard for students to be motivated and excited when it comes to science and mathematics.

I wish to look at two recommendations.

Recommendation 7.4 states:

That the Victorian government fund a science 'equipment boost' for primary and secondary schools to encourage greater innovation, scientific practice and experimentation as part of the consolidation of the Victorian essential learning standards in Victorian schools.

We found that some schools did not have the science equipment necessary for students to participate in experiments. It is very hard for students to appreciate, understand and go on with science if they do not take part in experiments. If they do not have the equipment, if they do not have the facilities and if they do not have the labs, it is difficult for students to go on with science. I urge the government to put some money into ensuring that schools have the equipment and the science rooms to ensure that students find science interesting and enrol to do it in years 11 and 12.

Recommendation 8.1 states:

That the Victorian government consider offering additional incentives to attract postgraduate entrants into teaching in the mathematics and science disciplines.

We found that some teachers did not have the knowledge of mathematics or science and yet were offered science and mathematics classes. We need more maths and science teachers. Whether it is extra pay or they move one level up when they first go into the school or they are given other concessions, something has to be done to ensure that all students are taught by qualified maths and science teachers. It is unfair that some students are not. They might be taught by a teacher who is qualified in geography or history who is thrust into the classroom and asked to teach mathematics or science. It is a problem and I ask the department, the minister and the government to look at how to get more maths and science teachers into the schools, especially in regional Victoria where it is very hard to get qualified maths and science teachers.

I congratulate the committee and the staff once again. I look forward to the response from the government and the department, I hope they take the recommendations seriously and put up the money to ensure that we have a first-class education system in Victoria. Yes, there is a role there for the federal government, and we have called upon it to assist with the education of our children in maths and science, but it is up to this government to ensure that the money is put into our education system for our students, not just for today but for the future as well.

Family and Community Development Committee: development of body image among young people

Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) — It is with pleasure that I rise to talk about the Family and Community Development Committee's report on the development of body image amongst young people. This committee deserves strong applause for developing this report on body image amongst young people, and congratulations are also due to the government for its response to the report. Some members of the committee noted that this report and the response have received national acclaim.

Body image issues are vitally important because body image has an enormous and often very negative and adverse effect on many young people throughout Victoria. Some of the facts identified by the committee which I found particularly startling were that anorexia nervosa is the third most common chronic illness for adolescent girls in Australia, that 62 per cent of males are dissatisfied with their bodies and half wish to lose weight, and that some young people are encouraged to engage in particular exercise programs in order to look more toned or more attractive or to control their weight, and the young people are doing these things for those reasons rather than for enjoyment.

I think it is absolutely vital that teachers and health care workers in our schools and community health services have the information and the tools they need to support the young people they are working with. In Frankston several schools are already aware of this issue and have it at the top of their list of priorities. I note that Frankston High School focuses very heavily on body image issues, and both the Karingal and Karingal Heights primary schools have implemented some very strong and positive healthy eating and healthy living programs.

There needs to be a continuing and targeted focus on research as well as an evaluation of the various programs which are in place, particularly for primary school-age children. Certainly negative body image is linked to a wide range of conditions and risk-taking behaviours such as depression and eating disorders. It also leads to some particularly poor outcomes for young people at every level — their health, their wellbeing, their education, their employment and also their participation within the community.

I reiterate my congratulations to the committee for its report and the government for its response. I hope as a community and as a government we can continue to tackle some of these issues, particularly for the sake of our youngest community members.

**Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee:
strategies to reduce harmful alcohol
consumption**

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I want to comment on the recently presented report of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee on its inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption. I am not sure if I should claim credit for this, but I certainly did at one stage say to my fellow committee members that this is a report that is bigger than Ben Hur — it is certainly bigger than the Bible. It is a two-volume report, and I cannot remember the last time a two-volume report was presented in this Parliament. Nevertheless when one looks at the requirements placed on the committee one sees how extensive the ramifications of an inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption are.

In my initial remarks I want to pay tribute to the committee staff, led very ably by our excellent executive officer, Sandy Cook, and our principal researcher — clearly a man who loves to write — Pete Johnston. Both of those people were ably supported by quite a number of other people. I also want to pay due respects and tribute to the committee chairman, Mr Scheffer from another place, who did an excellent job. Chairing this committee was not an easy task,

because the extent of the committee's inquiry was so wide.

In delivering the report the committee put out a media release, from which I will quote because it is important to put these words on the record of this Parliament.

That media release says:

The committee recognises that most Victorians consume alcohol moderately and responsibly. Good public health policy that minimises alcohol-related harm relies on a partnership of government, health professionals, health service providers, community organisations and the alcohol industry.

It goes on to say that the final report contains 165 recommendations and recognises that alcohol is a legal product that is part and parcel of the fabric of Australian culture and that to change the negative aspects of this culture requires incremental interventions.

I particularly want to praise the alcohol industry for its involvement in this inquiry and the positive way it approached the inquiry. The industry was nervous about what the committee was going to do, and you could understand an industry being nervous about that, but the alcohol industry really did step up to the line and do all it could to assist the committee in its work.

A lot of other organisations did too. There was apprehension among a lot of these organisations, which felt they might be crucified in some way, and I single out in that regard the Australian Football League. Initially the AFL was not at all keen to talk to the committee, but when it did the committee was impressed and grateful for the contribution and the input of the AFL to this inquiry. I would like to particularly thank the chief executive of the AFL and his staff for the work they did; we were very impressed with them.

It is a matter of regret that the honourable member for Scoresby and I felt the necessity to put in a minority report on two matters. I will touch on them briefly and urge members of this Parliament and in particular members of the government to read our minority report. The two matters contained in our minority report were the question of the recommendation that public drunkenness be decriminalised and the question of the provision and operation of alcohol vending machines. The minority report speaks for itself, but the matter of the decriminalisation of public drunkenness has now been before this government for some four years or longer. An earlier report of the committee recommended that public drunkenness be decriminalised with three major provisos. The government has done absolutely nothing about that, and

that is the reason why the honourable member for Scoresby and I did not support those recommendations in the committee.

With regard to alcohol vending machines, we were implacably opposed to them when the government decided to legalise them and we still are. In no way will we put our hands up to support the installation and operation of alcohol vending machines. However, I commend the report to members of Parliament. It is a good read.

**Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee:
strategies to reduce harmful alcohol
consumption**

Mr LONEY (Lara) — I also want to make some comments on the report of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption. As the previous member said, it is a comprehensive and voluminous report. At this stage I cannot own up to having read it in its entirety, and I certainly have not got to the minority report yet!

I want to comment on some of the recommendations, in particular recommendations 42, 43, 44 and 45, which deal with local alcohol accords. I think these are of tremendous importance in local areas. At one stage Geelong was the leading municipality in alcohol accords, but unfortunately it has fallen off the wagon — if I can use that term. This is very disturbing to the local community. So I am very interested in the recommendations in this report and I hope they are taken notice of in my local community. Unfortunately we have got to a position where in the last fortnight the local paper ran a feature article headed something like 'Geelong has an alcohol problem'.

Certainly in relation to the operation of venues and the breakdown of the accord, rather than having a controlled environment we are now suffering from places wishing to push extended hours, free drink cards — the sorts of things mentioned in this report as not being the appropriate way to manage a responsible alcohol environment. For some reason the nightclub industry, particularly in Geelong, has developed an attitude that pays little regard to what the community in general wants. So I hope this particular document, as big as it is — and particularly recommendations 42 to 45 — is picked up within the Geelong community and well read.

Victoria Police has strived hard to get good accords in the Geelong community, similar to those in place in Ballarat. Voluntary lockouts in places like Ballarat,

Warrnambool and others have mitigated some of the violence around late-night drinking establishments. I hope it will be supported. Certainly the recommendations of this report regarding this issue go to support the work that Victoria Police is trying to do within my community. Based on the parts of the report I have read, I commend the work of this committee. It has presented to Parliament a comprehensive report which will be highly useful.

**Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee:
strategies to reduce harmful alcohol
consumption**

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — I wish to comment on the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's report on its inquiry into strategies to reduce harmful alcohol consumption. First of all I acknowledge the work of the staff: Sandy Cook, researcher Pete Johnston, Michelle Summerhill and Chantel Churchus. I particularly acknowledge the efforts of chair Johan Scheffer for keeping everyone on track and working well as a team.

As stated previously, for most Victorians alcohol consumption is a pleasurable and safe activity. However, misuse of alcohol is a significant cause of drug-related harm. Alcohol is second only to tobacco as a preventable cause of death and hospitalisation in Australia.

The report is massive — over 1400 pages — so I would like to concentrate on one or two specific areas. Firstly, I note that there is a proposal in the report that there be a coordinated approach to the management of alcohol issues via a new office of alcohol policy and coordination. Secondly, I would like to look at the issue of the continuing unacceptably high level of alcohol-related road injuries and deaths in young males aged 18 to 26. As a result of that, our committee has suggested that the government investigate extending the introduction of zero blood-alcohol tolerance for young drivers up to the age of 26. There seems to be quite broad community support for that, with some even suggesting that we go further and make it zero blood alcohol for all drivers, as there is already a zero blood-alcohol limit for bus drivers and drivers of heavy vehicles. There are other proposals to address the drink-driving issue, such as including alcohol-related training in driver training and further consideration of ignition-locking devices.

Rural issues are a particular concern in that alcohol can be a major problem in rural communities. Some of the issues we have made recommendations on include the recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, rural input into policy development

and particular focus on alcohol problems in young people.

Following on from the rural considerations are considerations in relation to sporting clubs, with sporting clubs, particularly football and netball clubs, being an extremely important component of rural communities. The committee acknowledged the wonderful efforts of the Australian Football League to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol — the warnings and training of players and the code of conduct that imposes an obligation to consume alcohol only in moderation and in a responsible manner. The committee encourages other peak sporting bodies to follow the example of the AFL. At a country football and netball club level, where there is a high dependence on alcohol sales for income generation, the committee supports the wider operation of good sports programs and other programs that encourage country football and netball clubs and other country clubs to be more family-oriented and generate money with less dependence on alcohol sales.

We should never walk away from the fundamental principle that people should take responsibility for their own actions. Whilst we have initiatives such as the responsible service of alcohol and programs such as Good Sports, people — whether they are adults or young people — must remember that they are responsible for their own actions.

If we look at the issues facing young people, we see that there are a number of factors that need to be considered in addressing the problems of under-age drinking: firstly, the role modelling of parents and siblings; secondly, peer group pressure; and thirdly, ensuring that advertising and promotions do not specifically target young people and do not encourage binge-type drinking. We are talking about happy hour promotions and those sorts of things, where the temptation is to consume an excessive amount in a short time.

We need to encourage young people to take responsibility for their own actions and to moderate their risk-taking behaviour, and we also need to try and address that bulletproof mentality, which most of us had when we were young. We also recommend that local liquor reports and lockouts be considered and broadened, because in various communities they are working.

In closing, the report is extensive and addresses a wide range of issues, and I recommend that all 1400 pages of it be read. I request that you, Speaker, ask for a test at

the next sitting of this Parliament to ensure that everyone has read the 1400 pages.

The SPEAKER — Order! I think that is outside my powers!

COMMONWEALTH GAMES: ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I move:

That this house congratulates all those involved in making the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games the most successful Commonwealth Games ever held and a credit to all the people of Victoria, and specifically congratulates:

- (1) the games volunteers, whose dedication ensured the smooth running of all events and who put a charming and helpful face on Victoria;
- (2) the hardworking staff from organisations including the organising committee, M2006, the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination within the Department for Victorian Communities, Victoria Police and transport operators, who were the backbone of the games;
- (3) the 4500 athletes from across the commonwealth, who brought so much entertainment and joy through their courageous and inspiring efforts;
- (4) all those involved in the Commonwealth Games cultural program, Festival Melbourne 2006, who provided another element to the games, making it a truly unique festival; and
- (5) all the people of Victoria, who through their unparalleled support and enthusiasm once again showed to the world that Melbourne is simply the best.

The Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games were more than a resounding success. Our games also defined Victoria and Victorians. They defined us as creative and cultural, as shown by the spectacular opening ceremony and the vibrant cultural festivals which were also part of the games themselves. They defined us as sports loving and tolerant, as demonstrated by the large, good-natured crowds at venues around the state. I know the Chief Commissioner of Police was stunned by the fact that while so many people gathered around regional Victoria, around our live sites and around the centre of the city, the number of arrests and the number of people who were unruly were almost infinitesimal by comparison. The atmosphere created was a great credit to the Victorian families and individuals who were involved.

More than anything, the games defined us as a diverse and multicultural community yet again. As international newspapers such as Canada's *Toronto Star* noted:

With some 15 000 smiling volunteers willing to help, Melbourne is living up to its reputation as a friendly, cultured, sports-mad city.

That international attention from Canada was also replicated by the British Broadcasting Corporation and other organisations right around the world as the international media wrote up the Friendly Games, or the Inclusive Games, saying how well they were being done.

Our creativity, diversity and tolerance existed before the Commonwealth Games, of course. We have always had a strong community spirit, as shown by the comprehensive response to the January bushfires, when some 10 000 volunteers risked their lives to protect our community. That is another, more recent example of how people have contributed to the effort across our state. This community-mindedness is one of the major reasons why Victoria is such a great place in which to live and to raise a family, and that is exemplified even further by the Commonwealth Games.

Why is Melbourne one of the world's most livable cities? Yet again, we have further evidence of that livability. We have been either the most livable or the second most livable city for a long period now, and this is a further testament to that. It is also why a recent wellbeing survey found that ours is one of the happiest states in Australia.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — It is! That was the result of a recent survey, and I suspect the Lord Mayor had something to do with that, with his very happy disposition. Whatever he is doing, it is absolutely working, I can tell you that.

Our diversity, our tolerance, our acceptance of people from many nations who have settled here and the wonderful way of life that has been created in our state have been broadcast to a global audience of up to 1.5 billion people, who have seen what we do well and effectively. That audience has seen our best and shared in the brightest international moments in our history — even bigger than the 1956 Olympic Games. They have seen us at a time when we are more outgoing and accepting than ever before, when Melbourne is growing faster than Brisbane and Sydney, when provincial Victoria is growing faster than Melbourne itself and when more and more migrants are finding that whatever their passion, whatever their ambition and

whatever their background, it is evident that they are welcome in our state of Victoria.

No wonder the president of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Mike Fennell, said at the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games, 'Melbourne, simply the best!' — and he was quite correct. Certainly that summed up the feeling of everyone in our state for the Commonwealth Games.

Our games were simply the best because they epitomised Victoria and our community of 5 million people. They displayed to the rest of the world what we in this state have known for some time. That is why our government has sought to move this motion today, to thank the people of Victoria for their support, their hard work and their unparalleled enthusiasm for the games and the lead-up to them.

We want to thank our ambassadors, the 15 000 games volunteers — the Aqua Army — many of whom took leave from their jobs to serve their community. There were many like our oldest volunteer, Albert Cymons, who turned 88 during the Commonwealth Games and who was still willing and keen to take part as a member of the games family. The volunteers showcased our capital city and our great regional cities. Their good humour and enthusiasm were infectious. You could not help but be infected by their great disposition as you walked up to any of our venues, and that was a lasting impression for all those people who came to see the games. The Commonwealth Games would not have been the same without them. The volunteers, more than anyone else, made our games the Friendly Games, building on the Friendly Games of 1956. Without their efforts the games would not have been possible, and they deserve our thanks. That is why every volunteer will receive a commemorative medal, which has been struck in conjunction with the federal and state governments, and up to two free tickets to an Australian Football League match, which has been organised through Toyota, the state government and the Australian Football League (AFL).

There was also the dedication and hard work of the many people in the organising committees who ensured that the games went smoothly. I refer to the enormous work force of men and women who worked for six and a half years, and much more intensively so over the last 12 months, to make sure ours were the best games ever. The staff of the organising committee, Melbourne 2006, and the staff of the Office of the Commonwealth Games Coordination within the Department for Victorian Communities showed how well we run events in Victoria, and the coordination between those organising committees was seamless.

They helped stage an even bigger event than the 1956 Olympic Games, an event so big it can be compared to holding the AFL Grand Final, the Spring Racing Carnival and the Australian Tennis Open at the same time every day for two weeks. That was the scale of the event we have just held in Victoria. They did it all with Olympian efficiency and professionalism. Sandy Holloway, who was a key organiser of the Sydney Olympics, provided advisory support to the Commonwealth Games — and he is also supporting Beijing and Delhi in their games.

He indicated while addressing a business breakfast as part of the games that what Victoria and Melbourne had achieved was effectively the equivalent of running the Commonwealth Games at an Olympic standard. That was the comment he made, and that was very evident when you saw what happened as part of the work we undertook. Every detail was looked after precisely. All the venues were prepared and ready well ahead of time. We had the significant inclusion of a large range of people around the river and around our provincial areas as part of the cultural festival, all making up one of the best games we have ever held.

The work of the Victoria Police was also world class, and I want to congratulate its members. Our police, with assistance from the Australian Defence Force and the many contract security firms, provided spectators and athletes with the safest environment possible. I indicated before the games that I thought the safest place to be during that period would be at a games event, and I think that was true. The security was second to none.

We must not forget the transport providers. Our public transport system carried over 1.8 million spectators during the games. That was a magnificent achievement, and congratulations go to our transport companies for a great job. An average of 75 per cent of spectators travelled by public transport, a record figure for a major event in Victoria. Our transport systems, thanks to the work of everyone from the drivers to the station attendants, coped admirably with the extra demand.

I must also pay tribute to the magnificent Commonwealth Games athletes, who inspired us. I pay tribute to those 4500 athletes, and of course to our own Australian Commonwealth Games team, who did such a superb job. I pay particular tribute to the Victorian members of the team. I can reveal for the first time that Victorian athletes won 30 of Australia's 84 gold medals. That is a much larger proportion than our population share; 30 out of 84 gold medals is a great achievement. Australia's total medal haul was 221, and

75 of those were won by Victorians. Almost one in three Australian medals was won by a Victorian.

Here is an interesting statistic: if Victoria had been counted separately — let us say as a Wales or a Scotland or somewhere else — it would have finished third in the medal tally, just behind England. A great achievement.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — First, the rest of Australia; second, England; third, Victoria.

Ms Asher — We've got the logic.

Mr BRACKS — Yes, you've got the logic. Obviously it is a great achievement by our state.

It is of course not just the medal winners who deserve recognition. Australia's entire team represented our nation brilliantly. Whether or not members of our team won gold, silver or bronze medals, whether or not they achieved their personal best, they were great sportsmen and women, and we congratulate them for that. Like Australia's 1956 Olympians, they all won a place in the hearts of Victorians.

There was another extremely successful element to the Commonwealth Games which I referred to earlier, and that is the cultural festival. More than 2 million people — more than the number of people who attended Commonwealth Games events — attended activities or live sites across Victoria. More than 1 million people lined the Yarra River to watch the sculptured fish and the river festival and the sound and light show that ran on the hour every night as part of the festival itself. Those spectators were entertained by 2500 artists from 120 different performing companies around our country, with some from other commonwealth nations as well. It was Australia's largest ever free cultural festival and made the Commonwealth Games an experience all Victorians could enjoy.

Our government said that the games would be accessible and affordable, and the cultural program delivered on that promise. As I said, our games epitomised the best of Victoria and Victorians. Not only did we stage the greatest ever Commonwealth Games, we also emulated the friendly legacy of the 1956 Olympics. In doing so we showed the world how people of different backgrounds and beliefs can form new communities successfully. That is what our state epitomises — new communities of diversity, of tolerance and of equal opportunity.

I believe the legacy of 2006 is in keeping with the legacy of 1956. It is a legacy that goes beyond physical monuments such as the magnificent and mighty redeveloped Melbourne Cricket Ground, for which we can all take credit. It is a legacy that directly relates to how our community of 5 million people defines itself, both in actions and in attitudes. The task before us will be to keep building on our diversity and tolerance, because those characteristics are the secret of Victoria's social and economic success and because, as our army of Commonwealth Games volunteers demonstrated so aptly, Victoria's most precious resource and its most important commodity is its people. They deserve our thanks because they made these games special, friendly and inclusive — the best Commonwealth Games ever in the history of the games!

Mr DOYLE (Leader of the Opposition) — I am very pleased to join the Premier in supporting this motion, and I want to say at the outset congratulations, of course, to our athletes, congratulations to our volunteers and congratulations to our officials of Melbourne 2006. Congratulations also go to the participants, the organisers and the planners of the cultural events, the Queen's baton relay and the opening and closing ceremonies. Congratulations to the remarkable Melbourne 2006 team. Congratulations to the professionals who went about their business, whether they were police or emergency service workers, the public servants who were behind so many of the events, the security teams that were in place or members of the Australian Defence Force as well as many others. Finally, congratulations also go to the people of Victoria and our visitors who helped to make the games such a great success. Thank you and well done to all of them.

It is very difficult to single out people in such a remarkable team effort, but I would like to do that in three instances. First of all I would like to pay tribute to the team of Jeff Kennett and Ron Walker, who had the original vision and pursued it with some aggression. Members may recall that when Jeff first proposed this there were other cities that were interested in bidding, but I believe the drive and aggression with which Ron pursued the games meant that at the last moment we were the only viable bid. Great credit goes to the former Premier and to Ron Walker for the work they did. I also pay tribute to John Harnden, the chief executive officer of Melbourne 2006, and his remarkable team. It was an incredible performance from John from the smallest detail to the very largest of conceptions. Finally I offer congratulations to Justin Madden, the Minister for Commonwealth Games in the other place, and to Senator Rod Kemp, the federal Minister for the Arts and Sport. In terms of cooperation between state and

federal governments and performance by ministers, they did an outstanding job, and I want to put that on the record.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DOYLE — I will come to John So eventually, I promise — or maybe I will not. We can be justly proud of our city, we can be proud of our state and we can be proud of our people.

It may well be that people do not realise that the commonwealth as an institution is not very well known. I had the honour of being a Commonwealth Foundation fellow a number of years ago, and I met with many people, many members of parliaments from around the commonwealth, and there is a great warmth of feeling towards Australia, particularly from many of the smaller countries that are in our region. One of the things we did by creating such a successful games event was to cement the idea of the fellowship, the warmth, the cooperation and the diversity and tolerance that exist between the disparate 71 nations of the commonwealth. It is a remarkable institution, one that is certainly worth promoting and encouraging, and the games went a long way in helping us do that.

Many stories will come out of these games, such as the integration of the elite athletes with a disability — that is a remarkable, untold story — and the individual athletics stories: Craig Mottram's fall in the 1500 metres; Jana Pittman's amazing 400 metres hurdle win; seeing the diminutive Melissa Wu at the top of that 10-metre platform; Leisel Jones's power in the swimming pool; Jane Saville putting those Olympic demons to rest; and the amazing run and finish by Kerryn McCann.

I know we won 221 medals, and we should celebrate that, and that is great, but I also pay tribute to the athletes who did not win a medal. They too were an important part of the games. And there is another group that we sometimes forget: how heartbreaking it would be to do exactly the same amount of hard work, all that preparation and training, and not quite make it into the Commonwealth Games team. But for all of the other athletes out there who helped to push our athletes to those great performances — thank you and well done.

There are plenty of stories around concerning our 15 000 volunteers — the amazing hours they worked, the courtesy they displayed and the friendly face, as the Premier said, of Victoria that they showed to the world; and that comes down even to individual stories like the three volunteers who carried Leisel Jones's wheelchair-bound grandmother down onto the pool

deck on each of those three nights so she could watch Leisel win her gold medals.

There will be many stories that come out of Festival Melbourne 2006. I know the Premier visited the live site at Ballarat, as I did, and it was remarkable to see people encouraged to be a part of the games through a broader cultural festival. I thought the river looked great. For so long we Melburnians turned our backs on the river, but over succeeding governments on both sides of politics we have embraced the river as our front door, and to see the Yarra on display like that was remarkable for Melbourne. In the end that is what it was all about — we really did showcase Melbourne.

I must say I still do not get the duck. I was very pleased to see the duck make a reappearance at the closing ceremony, and to see that it had survived the first week of duck season, but I still do not get the duck.

I want to make a proposal in the few minutes I have left. I offer it in very good faith to the government: it would be a pity if we closed this chapter in our history by just moving on and making this gesture in Parliament. I want to propose that the government consider commissioning a commemorative book, a definitive record of the Commonwealth Games. Certainly we would have the competitors and the results in that book; certainly we would detail the volunteers, the officials, the participants in the opening and closing ceremonies, the baton relay and Festival Melbourne 2006; and certainly we would highlight the Melbourne 2006 team — the people behind John Harnden — in a permanent record of the contribution they made to the games.

But if such a proposal were to meet with approval from the government, could I also suggest that we throw open to the people of Victoria and Australia, and the media for that matter, the ability to submit their photographs to such a project. Those photographs would capture the essence or spirit or moment or highlight that was important to those individuals. I am not just talking about all the finishing lines and the winning athletes, I am talking about all those special moments that go to make up a remarkable event like the Commonwealth Games.

I would suggest that as well as a document of record of all those people who have taken part, there could be a public photographic essay which captures many of those moments and preserves them for all time. If we had such a document of record, it could be on display — perhaps here in Parliament House, as we do sometimes have those displays. It could travel to regional galleries or regional cities in Victoria and be

on display there, and it could be housed at the State Library or the Museum or the National Gallery of Victoria. But what it would provide for succeeding generations is how we saw our games at the time. It would be a contemporaneous document of record.

I do not see it as being a particularly expensive exercise. I would like to see that photographic contribution by wider members of the public, and it could be of great interest to succeeding generations. We will never see the like of this sort of event again in our lifetimes. Why not commemorate it in such a way? Of course we could also make it available online. I think it would be good to have a permanent record of such a momentous event, and I offer that in good faith to the government as a project that could be investigated for commission.

Finally, I say good luck to Delhi. It will be a hard act to follow, and I am sure the people of Delhi will do their best and produce another wonderful Commonwealth Games. But in the end, when we tally up the gold medals, the real gold medal was won by Melbourne.

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — It is my pleasure to join this debate on behalf of The Nationals and to support the motion which has been moved by the Premier and supported by the Leader of the Opposition.

I start by saying that I endorse the expressions of congratulations from both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in so far as they have expressed them today to the various individuals and groups who have contributed to the games and made them the great success that they were. For my part, and given the limited time that we have all agreed will be devoted to today's contributions, I want to outline a few specifics that I think bear consideration in terms of one's reflections on the games.

First, it was a wonderful thing to have Her Majesty here to be part of the games opening ceremony. I had the honour of being at the lunch at the Exhibition Buildings when the royal anthem was played, together with *Advance Australia Fair*. It was a wonderful occasion, and I was delighted to see so many Labor members there, standing to respect the presence of Her Majesty.

Secondly, on the issue of John So, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, I say with the greatest respect to him that he has become an absolute cult figure. Again with the greatest respect, I say to the house that I would love to have him as a candidate at the next election, but the problem is that he cannot stand for The Nationals because he is not a country resident, and it is important

in this place that all members of Parliament actually reside in the areas they represent in Parliament.

I pay regard to both Ron Walker and Jeff Kennett, and I recognise the presence in the chamber as I speak of the Attorney-General, who I am sure joins with the rest of us in these warm and sincere congratulations to both Ron Walker and Jeff Kennett for the work both of them did in bringing the games to Victoria in the first instance. I also support the words of congratulations to the Minister for Commonwealth Games, the Honourable Justin Madden.

One of the events at which we met was the festival in the Alexandra Gardens. We were both there when a group called Golden Pride, comprising about 30 children from Tanzania, came together to sing and entertain the magnificent crowd that was present during the course of the festival. That, for me, was one of the outstanding moments — coming along and listening to the choir — and I am pleased to say that it was where I met the minister, although I met him at other venues too during the course of the games. I offer my congratulations to him for the work that was undertaken.

For the many volunteers, it was an extraordinary effort on their part. Much has been said about them and will continue to be said, I am sure, as debate on this motion proceeds today, but wherever you went they were there, faithfully doing the task which they did on this volunteer basis, always greeting you with a warm smile, as they discharged their tasks superbly. Having our Governor, John Landy, put the baton finally in its place of residence during the course of the Commonwealth Games was, if I may say so, an inspired decision and a true reflection of a man who represents so much of what Victoria stands for.

For the athletes themselves of course, there were so many achievements from so many nations. All 4500 of them were contributing their efforts on behalf of their respective countries, and what they all did jointly was wonderful.

As a moment of sheer inspiration in the performance of an athlete, on the Saturday night I saw Matthew Cowdrey swim in the 50 metres final for elite athletes with a disability, and if my notes serve me correctly, he swam the 50 metres in a world record time of 26.06 seconds. He subsequently swam 100 metres in 56.73 seconds, and the Attorney-General was there to see that. For sheer inspirational effort on the part of a man who contends with the physical disability he has — and that is not patronising him at all — I thought both those instances were remarkable efforts. Certainly

for me and, I am sure, for many it added so much to the games.

One of the great successes of the games was the \$10 tickets for country Victorians using V/Line. It was a wonderful idea, and I am delighted that the Premier and the government saw fit to take it up. As the Minister for Transport said yesterday, 100 000 trips were undertaken. We now find out that that converts to 46 000 tickets having been purchased — that is, coming to Melbourne and then going home. But let us not worry about the fineries; the fact is that it was a great success. It meant that a lot of country Victorians were able to come to the games and participate in that great celebration when otherwise they would not have been able to do so. I thought the public transport system at large functioned very well. Country Victorians embraced the games, and as I travelled throughout other parts of the state during the course of the games there was general commentary in strong support of the event itself.

I cannot resist the opportunity to say in conclusion that the government's advertising campaign during the course of the games was of gold medal-winning proportions. I can only think of Norman May's 'Gold! Gold! Gold!'. In the sense of awarding a medal for advertising excellence — or more particularly should I say 'regularity' — during the course of the games, there was not even room for anybody else on the podium when the government stood up to receive its gold medal. The extent of the advertising that was undertaken was absolutely staggering, and as I travelled around the country areas of the state the many comments made to me showed it was something that people reflected on. I must say I do not think it was necessary to the extent it was undertaken, and I thought it unfortunate that it occurred with the regularity it did and no doubt huge the expense it entailed.

But let us not be churlish about this. The games were a huge success, and Victoria can quite properly celebrate the memory of what will be of one of its most wonderful legacies. The greatest legacy of all is that it demonstrates once more how sport can cross all divisions of nations and people and how it has an ability to unite people in a manner that is seldom seen in so many other aspects of life — and that is the thing that Victoria can take greatest pride in.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre: building report

Mr SMITH (Bass) — My question is to the Minister for Environment. I refer to the Seal Rocks building reports commissioned by the government, which show that the Seal Rocks complex is dangerous and a disaster waiting to happen, and I ask: why has the minister put the public and his staff in danger for two years despite knowing of these grave safety risks?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment) — I am very pleased to get a question from the member for Bass. The building to which he refers is a building that was built by the Kennett government under a flawed contract — —

Mr Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Scoresby!

Mr THWAITES — This government announced last year in the budget the allocation of some \$7 million for the restoration of the building that the previous government was responsible for. The problems of Seal Rocks, which the state of Victoria inherited from the Kennett government — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is not appropriate that the minister should have to yell to be heard. The opposition has asked the question, and I suggest it stop that high level of interjection and allow the minister to answer it. The minister, to continue.

Mr THWAITES — We announced in the budget — —

Mr Cooper — Look us in the eye!

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mornington!

Mr THWAITES — We announced that we are restoring that building with some \$7 million of funds, and I am pleased to say not only that we have announced it but that we have gone on and done it. The works have been undertaken at Seal Rocks to make it safe, to fix the problems that the previous government left us with — —

Mr Plowman interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Benambra!

Mr THWAITES — Beyond that, we are now proceeding to improve the building to make it more accessible and better for tourists. There is a tender process out now: we have the tenders, and they are being considered. We have completed works to make that building safe. We are now undertaking a tender process to improve it and make it accessible and a better tourist location.

Commonwealth Games: benefits

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — My question is to the Premier. I ask the Premier to detail how the government is ensuring that the long-term benefits of the Commonwealth Games will help Victoria into the future?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Narre Warren North for his question and his support for what has been one of the biggest and best events ever held in Victoria. Before I address the total legacy, one of the key legacies of these games will be the reputation of our state and the reputation of our city. That reputation is enhanced when we receive figures such as those we have received today. The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) has released figures which show that Melbourne hotels as a group recorded an average occupancy rate over the period of 93.93 per cent, with many hotels having 100 per cent occupancy. This is the highest occupancy rate for this period ever in Victoria's and Melbourne's history. Those figures released today by the AHA are from a survey of 60 major Melbourne accommodation hotels with 5-star, 4-star and 3-star ratings which are members of the AHA. They are further evidence that this is a legacy which is going to stand the state in good stead for some time to come.

As well, I have mentioned in the past the legacy of the redeveloped Melbourne Cricket Ground. That puts us in a good position to attract major international events. The first of those will be held this year when Australia plays Greece, the European champions in soccer, which will be just before the World Cup soccer finals, and we will see the 100 000-seat capacity MCG come alive again in that great lead-up to the World Cup itself. Of course we will see it with the Australian Football League and with the Boxing Day test when we try to defeat England and win the Ashes back. That will be a great event as well.

We have the legacy of the new aquatic centre, which will again be trialled in 2007 during the world swimming championships. We also have the new walkway into our precinct.

Finally, on top of the announcement yesterday of \$2 million worth of sporting equipment which will go to Victorian sporting clubs as a result of the Commonwealth Games, today I was able to announce — with the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — Good. It works even here! Along with the Lord Mayor John So and the Minister for Commonwealth Games, I was able to announce that the 72 sculptured fish will now be offered to councils around Victoria through expressions of interest. Sixty of the 72 sculptured fish will be offered to municipalities around Victoria on the basis of their submission, particularly in covering the relocation costs and the upkeep of the fish. A further eight fish will be retained for special events and river festivals in the future so that they can be utilised for that purpose. One particular fish will go to the City of Melbourne, one will go to the Couta Boat Club and two will go to the Melbourne Museum as part of its ongoing Spirit of the Games exhibition. I had the pleasure of being involved in the launch of that exhibition during the Commonwealth Games; it is worth seeing the memorabilia from the games which is now housed at the museum.

The best legacy is our reputation, and that is exemplified by the enormous number of people who were here and the highest bed occupancy rate we have ever had in our hotels for this period in Victoria. It is also our built infrastructure, which is now in a state which we can now further capitalise on with major events in the future. Also the equipment and the resources will now be distributed to a wide range of communities around Victoria so they can enjoy an ongoing legacy from the games as well.

Snowy Hydro Ltd: sale

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Education Services. Given the invaluable contribution which even this government acknowledges is made by the Catholic and independent school system, how can the minister possibly justify discriminating against the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask members of the government to be quiet to allow the Leader of The Nationals to ask his question.

Mr RYAN — Given the invaluable contribution which even this government acknowledges is made by

the Catholic and independent school system, how can the minister possibly justify discriminating against the 300 000 students in those schools by refusing to allow them to share in any of the proceeds from the \$600 million-plus windfall gain to the education sector arising from the sale of Snowy Hydro?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Education Services) — The Nationals certainly knew about punishing students when it punished them during its seven dark years in government. Perhaps when we talk about education funding we might need an education lesson for the Leader of The Nationals because, as he should be aware, it is a question best directed to his mates in Canberra. The federal government has the primary responsibility for funding non-government schools. I will repeat that for the Leader of The Nationals: the federal government has the primary responsibility for funding non-government schools. However, recognising that and recognising that there are considerable inequities in the way the federal government allocates its funding, in last year's budget the Minister for Education and Training provided an extra \$150 million — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of interjection is far too high. I ask members on my left to be quiet.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, while the minister is getting advice — —

The SPEAKER — Order! What is the point of order?

Mr Ryan — On the question of relevance, Speaker, I asked a question regarding the \$600 million-plus windfall gain that the government is getting and I asked that the minister — —

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

Ms ALLAN — It is just a shame that the Leader of The Nationals was not this vocal between 1992 and 1999 in supporting government schools. As I was saying, the federal government has the primary responsibility for funding non-government schools. However, in last year's budget the Minister for Education and Training, in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, released an historic package including an additional \$150 million funding for students in those schools. That was an historic announcement that has been welcomed by those

schools who recognise the state's role in funding non-government schools.

The funding of government capital works through the sale of Snowy Hydro is a record amount that is going to go into the government schools capital works program, and comes on top of the \$1.2 billion that we have already allocated during our six years in office. That is a record we are proud of, and it is just a shame the Leader of The Nationals lost his voice for seven years.

Commonwealth Games: cultural events

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — My question is to the Minister for the Arts. Can the minister advise the house on what the enduring legacy of the Commonwealth Games cultural festival will be for all of Victoria?

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for the Arts) — I thank the member for Gembrook for her question. It is often argued that the most successful cities in the 21st century will be cities that combine the three Ts — tolerance, technology and talent.

Ms Asher — Who said that?

Ms DELAHUNTY — Actually it was Richard Florida, in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, which is a fairly strong piece of academic evidence about the most modern cities of the world. Most cities in the world are having a look at that thesis. The Commonwealth Games festival showed that Melbourne and Victoria have all three in abundance. As we know, Festival Melbourne 2006 was the largest free cultural festival anywhere in Australia. It was 12 days of music, dance, circus arts, street theatre and visual arts from all over the commonwealth and all around Australia. If you look at the figures, it is clear that residents and visitors absolutely loved it.

As the Premier said yesterday, around 2 million people came to the arts precinct along the Yarra River and to the live sites in our regional centres, which were totally embraced, and about 80 000 people came to the regional areas of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Moe. I was down in the Latrobe Valley this morning with the member for Narracan hearing about the numbers. We came back to talk about how successful the live sites — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to contain its enthusiasm for the member for Narracan and allow the minister to continue.

Ms DELAHUNTY — He is a Renaissance man! We heard about just how popular the live sites were when we were down in Morwell. So what is the legacy? The *Herald Sun* said they were '12 enchanted days'. The *Age* said it was 'a raging success' and went on to say that the Commonwealth Games festival was a lesson in culture. It said all the buzz words — 'heritage', 'diversity', 'cultural identity' and 'creativity' — that permeate public policy language were manifest.

The professor of architecture and urban design at the University of Melbourne, Kim Dovey, wrote about the benefits to the public realm of this festival:

... as a 100 000-strong crowd lined both sides of the river down to the G the river became alive. The festival on both sides of the river was great.

The green spaces of Birrarung Marr and the southern bank of the Yarra have been fully embraced.

Many will forever see the Yarra River and its surrounds differently.

The festival — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

Ms DELAHUNTY — I could get to Northcote, actually, because we had a very successful bowls competition in Northcote.

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

Ms DELAHUNTY — It was extremely successful. The Premier was there and the minister was there. But the highlights culturally were at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, where night after night we had capacity crowds. The Deputy Premier was there regularly, and John So was there a couple of times. Hooray! There was percussion and Bollywood, and there was the Lord Mayor. There was also Legs on the Wall flying across the exterior of the National Gallery. There was the Urban Dream capsule in the Myer window. A lot of people went down to Bourke Street because they thought it was the opposition in the Urban Dream capsule, but it was a team of artists. Doing street theatre were the Five Angry Men — they were the supporters of the member for Hawthorn.

An honourable member — The anger hasn't started yet, Mary!

Ms DELAHUNTY — Not yet, but it is about to! We have the fish, and the Premier talked about where they will go. Also, one of the big surprises was the

beach at the arts centre. That has been a big success for families and young children.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Ms DELAHUNTY — There is not much noise from the departure lounge up there, Robin! They are very quiet up there.

Mr Doyle interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting, and the minister will address her comments through the Chair.

Ms DELAHUNTY — I am pleased to advise the house that the beach will resurface in the summer after the end of the Spiegel Tent, around Christmas. That will be a great addition to the city through the arts centre. The question was about the legacy and celebrating the diversity and harmony of Victoria and the commonwealth. I think the gift of this festival will be a lasting legacy. I would like to thank Sue Natrass and Andrew Bleby and the 2500 artists — —

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Speaker, under the rules of proceedings of this chamber introduced by the government it was suggested that answers to questions be limited to 4 minutes. The Minister for the Arts has now been speaking for well over 5 minutes, and I ask you to direct her to conclude her answer.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members are entitled to raise points of order without offensive comments across or around the chamber. I ask members to be quiet and allow the member for Sandringham to complete his point of order.

Mr Thompson — This is consistent with the rules of debate agreed upon by both sides of the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has been speaking for some time and I ask her to draw her speech to a conclusion.

Ms DELAHUNTY — To conclude, I was thanking Sue Natrass, the patron of this festival, and Andrew Bleby and his team, who could not imagine a world without the arts. We have shown that in Victoria this festival has certainly demonstrated a tremendous appreciation of arts and culture. It is a shame that the Opposition does imagine a world without a culture festival. In conclusion, I think the *Herald Sun* summed it up well:

The XVIII Commonwealth Games will go down not so much as a great festival of sport but more as a superb celebration of human fellowship and the arts.

...

You didn't have to love sport to enjoy it.

Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre: building report

Mr SMITH (Bass) — My question is to the Minister for Environment. Given that the Seal Rocks building reports detail the dangerous condition of the derelict complex and that this warning has been ignored by the government, I ask: will the minister confirm that this is the real reason why he has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on lawyers fighting my application for documents at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and that his departmental head, Professor Lyndsay Neilson, has personally intervened to block the release of the report and to hide the continued bungling and mismanagement of the Seal Rocks fiasco?

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment) — Clearly the member for Bass is hard of hearing. I made it very clear in my previous answer that the government has invested more than \$1 million this financial year in making the buildings — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Once again the opposition has asked a question and is yelling at such a level that it is not possible to hear the Minister for Environment. I must insist that members of the opposition cease interjecting in that manner and allow the minister to answer the question.

Mr THWAITES — The government has had to make the buildings safe because of the activities of the previous government. We have done that this financial year. We have invested more than \$1 million in completing safety works on the building.

Commonwealth Games: youth

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — Will the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs detail for the house how the government's efforts to involve Victoria's youth in the Commonwealth Games will benefit them in the future?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs) — I thank the member for Narracan for his question. As he and probably the Leader of The Nationals would agree, the Commonwealth Games were great for young people, great to watch, great to participate in and great in ensuring a lasting legacy for young people and for all Victorians. Certainly

involving young people in their communities has been a key focus of the Bracks government. No event has provided a greater opportunity for young people to get involved in their local communities than our wonderful Commonwealth Games. We know that many young people participated as athletes and we have all celebrated over the past two weeks their wonderful endeavours, their successes and, of course, their great spirit of sportsmanship that was shown throughout the games.

Many more young people joined in the games by attending events such as the cultural events the Minister for the Arts has just outlined to the house and the sporting events. I am also very pleased to report to the house that over 1000 of the Commonwealth Games volunteers were young people who gave up their time and made a great contribution as volunteers to the games. The Bracks government worked very hard to make sure, as we have heard, that all Victorians got to celebrate through the cultural program and had this chance to share in the spirit of the Commonwealth Games.

As part of this the government supported additional events for young people across Victoria. The very popular government programs, FReeZA and FReeZA Central, ran special youth music events in our four regional centres in conjunction with live sites across Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and Moe. I am very pleased to report that young people worked at these events behind the scenes. They worked as assistant stage managers, publicity and marketing assistants, artist liaison assistants and photographers. All these young people gained terrific and valuable skills, and they also gained great confidence, which will benefit them well into the future. Also the popular chart-toppers from Violet Town, Killing Heidi — which the member for Benalla would probably know about — headlined these shows. Killing Heidi was supported by young local bands and young musicians.

I am very pleased to report to the house that over 10 000 people attended these Killing Heidi shows across the four live sites. The feedback from these events has just been fantastic. In the Ballarat *Courier* we had a young person reporting that it was ‘an impressive show’ and that Killing Heidi sounded ‘great’. WIN Television in Gippsland reported that ‘5000 people packed Moe racecourse for one of the biggest live site performances’ and that ‘Killing Heidi headlined a huge night of talent’.

I will also share with the house a quote in the *Moe and Narracan News* by a local resident, Kelly Mether, who attended the concert and said the atmosphere was

fantastic — and I think the members for Narracan and Morwell were also at this concert. Kelly Mether said:

The thing I liked most was that it was a really good family environment — there were grandparents, families and teenagers all together. It was very good to have a band like that for free in Moe ...

I can also personally report to the house that the Bendigo concert also rocked. They were terrific concerts. The young volunteers who got involved — who organised, delivered and participated in all of these events — are to be congratulated. They will take away a great experience which, as I said, will boost their confidence and skills into the future. The concerts have left a great legacy for those people, and in turn the games have been a great legacy for our state, ensuring that Victoria remains a great place to be young.

Snowy Hydro Ltd: sale

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — My question without notice is to the Premier. Snowy Hydro chief executive officer and managing director, Terry Charlton, has stated that the compensation bill for the government’s commitment to a Snowy River environmental flow increase from 21 to 28 per cent will be hundreds of millions of dollars, and I ask: has the state government made any independent financial assessment of this liability to Snowy Hydro, and in what year will the government be required to pay Snowy Hydro this compensation bill?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Gippsland East for his question. The provisions for the increased flow in the Snowy from 21 to 28 per cent are identical, in the arrangements that have been struck for the sale of Snowy Hydro, to those which were there previously under corporatisation. They are exactly the same arrangements. We have also improved our position considerably by contributing money towards that very effort. That is, \$60 million will be put towards the 21 to 28 per cent increase, with some of the early works to be done now — involving I think \$10 million of the \$60 million, both in New South Wales and Victoria — and the remaining \$50 million to be spent at a later date.

We are confident that this can be done at a price which is achievable, and it is our ambition to achieve the 28 per cent. In relation to other costings, obviously we are not up to that stage, because the requirement is not yet in position. But of course we will do that work as we get closer to those arrangements, once we have the 21 per cent and once we are leading up to the 28 per cent. We will have funds to do more, and we also have the

capacity to make sure that it is done at an economic rate.

Commonwealth Games: volunteers

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. I refer the minister to the outstanding contributions made by the volunteers to the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, and I ask the minister to outline the role played by the Victorian education and training system in ensuring that the volunteers were fully prepared to perform their complex and varied roles.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Education and Training) — I thank the member for Eltham for his question. Many people right around Victoria know the value of the volunteers to the Commonwealth Games, including the contributions they made and the fact that there were 15 000 volunteers right across Victoria who gave of their time. Probably what is not so well known is that around 13 500 volunteers were trained for their role in the games. Some \$1.3 million was provided for the training, and Holmesglen Institute of TAFE provided that training. It was the official training provider for the volunteers in cooperation with M2006.

The corporation delivered over 23 000 training sessions to games volunteers. It was a very large effort. They included 23 event leadership programs, 63 venue-specific programs and 171 role-specific training programs, including 15 sports-specific sessions. There were a lot of different programs of training that went on for the range of different roles of the volunteers. Some of those roles obviously were related to the area of sport, but they also included the medical, driver, protocol assistant, spectator services, print distribution and technology roles. For each of these different roles — and there were approximately 500 — there was a different training program, and the volunteers had to undertake those training programs.

A key component of the program was the training of 1500 disadvantaged Victorians, around 400 of whom went on to become games volunteers. The majority of those disadvantaged Victorians are now playing an active role in their local communities. That is a fantastic outcome of the volunteer training. Not only did they volunteer for the games, but now they are also well trained to continue to volunteer within their communities. That focus on disadvantaged Victorians is very important.

I congratulate and thank the Holmesglen Institute of TAFE. It put in an enormous effort. It is a very good TAFE, and it did a fantastic job in the training of the

volunteers. It took it very seriously. It provided training on a very large scale, and that has now been internationally recognised. I am pleased to announce that Holmesglen Institute of TAFE has now entered into a partnership to provide training for the Asian games in Doha, Qatar. It has put in a fantastic effort.

I spoke with the Indian delegation, and they were amazed that not only did we have so many volunteers but also that we officially trained those volunteers. I extend my congratulations to all of the volunteers on their efforts. I know they will continue to contribute to their communities in other volunteering roles.

Casey Hospital: emergency alarm system

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Bracks government's political advertising campaign claiming that Victoria has a world-class health system, and I ask: what is world class about not replacing an emergency alarm system at Casey Hospital and making medical staff use whistles instead?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask members on both sides of the house, particularly the Attorney-General, to be quiet to allow the Minister for Health to answer the question.

Ms PIKE — The claim that Victoria's hospitals are performing very well has been made in an independent assessment. The commonwealth annually reviews the performance of hospitals right around the country, and on every key indicator — emergency departments, waiting times for elective surgery and a whole range of others — Victoria's hospitals perform at or above the national average, and in many cases we are the best in the country.

Mr Cooper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mornington will not address the minister in that manner.

Ms PIKE — With regard to the Casey Hospital, let us go back a little bit and recall some of the history. The previous government was quite incapable of providing appropriate health services to the people in the Casey area — —

Mrs Shardey — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now debating the issue. I ask you to draw her back to the actual question that I asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is entitled to give the history of the issue on which she is answering, but she is not entitled to attack the opposition.

Ms PIKE — What this government has delivered with the Casey Hospital is the first new public hospital in this state for 20 years, on time and on budget. People in that community now have access to a modern hospital, with an emergency department, paediatrics, elective surgery, maternity services and mental health services. All of these services, which the previous government failed to deliver, are now available for people in the Casey area.

The member referred to the buzzer system that was put into the hospital. The buzzer system was embedded into the hospital at the beginning of the works and was operational, but it is true that the buzzer could not be heard in a couple of areas within the theatre complex. Contractors have now commenced the installation of a more elaborate, more comprehensive system, and additional buzzers are being put in place, as well as a visual communication system. I am assured by the people who run Casey Hospital that there will be no need for whistles in the future.

Mr Cooper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Mornington.

Ms PIKE — I am also advised that we do have whistles left over, which we could hand over to the new Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because they might improve communication in the Liberal Party!

Australian Formula One Grand Prix: public transport

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — My question is to the Minister for Transport. Can the minister advise the house of the public transport arrangements for Melbourne's next major event, the Australian Formula One Grand Prix?

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — Due to the cooperation of Victoria's travelling public the public transport system in Melbourne, and indeed across Victoria, put in a world-class performance for the Commonwealth Games. Four million extra trips were taken on our public transport system. Because of that, commuters had to adjust their travel arrangements

and their expectations. They were given advice and they followed that advice, and it proved to be the right advice in the circumstances with those 4 million extra trips on our public transport system.

Today I joined staff from Connex, V/Line, Yarra Trams, Metlink and the Southern Cross Station Authority to express our thanks to commuters as they arrived at the new Southern Cross station. We provided them with a voucher for a free cup of coffee, which was particularly appreciated first thing in the morning.

While we rightfully celebrate the success of the travelling public, we should acknowledge that the post-games period will bring its own challenges. The most immediate challenge is to cater for the Australian Formula One Grand Prix and the commencement of the Australian Football League season. I would like to take this opportunity to remind people that there will be no parking at Albert Park for the grand prix. The easiest way, the best way, to get to and from the grand prix is by tram. For grand prix ticket-holders there will be a free shuttle tram service operating between the city and the grand prix circuit. Those who are going to gates 1 and 2 should catch the shuttle service from the corner of Spencer and Collins streets and travel via the St Kilda light rail. Those going to gates 3 and 4 can catch a shuttle from the same location — the corner of Spencer and Collins streets — but take the tram via Clarendon Street. Those who are going to gates 5, 8, 9 and 10 should catch the shuttle tram from Flinders Street and travel along St Kilda Road.

We would like to remind all people going to the Commonwealth Games — —

Mr Doyle interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — All those people going to the grand prix — I am glad the Leader of the Opposition is listening because he needs to listen. We ask all those people going to the grand prix to continue the spirit of the Commonwealth Games and get along and support Mark Webber.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES: ACHIEVEMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment) — It is my pleasure to speak in support of the motion congratulating all of those associated with the Commonwealth Games. There were so many great things about the games that it is hard to know where to start. However, I believe it is appropriate to start with

the athletes. The athletes provided enormous inspiration to so many people. I am sure all of those who had a chance to attend the venues or see the events on television would have been inspired and at times would have shared the tragedy of those who did not do as well as they would have liked. I think they would have inspired many to go out and get more involved in sport themselves.

A few particular events stand out in my mind. The first is Kerryn McCann in the marathon. As she came into the stadium I, like I am sure about 80 000 other people there, had a tear in my eye. She managed to fight back from behind and finally took the lead and won that amazing race. Also, Craig Mottram in the 5000 metres, and the Australian women's 4 x 100 metres medley relay swimming team which was just extraordinary in setting a world record. Finally I would like to pay tribute to the Australian men's and women's hockey teams. I have played a little bit of hockey and I was sitting next to the Minister for Manufacturing and Export who has played a little but they were playing a very different game on Saturday and Sunday — quite outstanding.

I would also like to mention the arts festival. The opportunity to see Miriam Makeba from South Africa — one of the greatest singers of all time — was a great personal thrill for me. Listening to the choir of some 600, with Paul Kelly, as part of Sing for Water which was raising funds for East Timor was another great experience. To top it all off on Saturday night the minister and I were at Bollywood at the Bowl, which was absolutely sensational. I learnt a bit of Bollywood dancing from the Indian delegation on the Thursday night; that was something most people probably would not have wanted to see.

I referred yesterday to the volunteers. I will emphasise again how much they meant to the games.

I want to mention the environmental works as part of the games. I thank Rob Jell who was the environmental ambassador for the games. The games were carbon neutral, water wise and waste wise. We will be doing an audit to ensure that all of the environmental activities are properly undertaken.

I want to pay tribute to the councils around Victoria which played their part in the games. There was that great idea of linking up local councils with the teams from the 71 nations which took part. My local council, the City of Port Phillip, linked up with Papua New Guinea and had a lot of activities both before and during the games. I also want to pay tribute to those councils which directly took part in the games.

Obviously there was the Melbourne City Council, with Lord Mayor John So leading the way. I would like to mention my local council, Port Phillip, which played a key role in the staging of the triathlon. It was an outstanding event. David Spokes and his team at the City of Port Phillip, and Janet Bolitho, the mayor, deserve our congratulations.

Finally, I would like to personally pay tribute to the Minister for Commonwealth Games in another place. He did an outstanding job. His staff — Phil Martin, Nataly Kucan and the others — did an outstanding job over a long period of time. All the staff of Melbourne 2006 and the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination worked way beyond the call of duty — many, many hours a day. I know that during the games themselves, as we were hosting delegations from around the world and business, people like Ria Charles, Jen Fischer and others did an outstanding job of making our guests feel at home to get the very best out of what were friendly and inspiring games.

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — In short, the games were great. I support the motion, I congratulate everybody involved and I support the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. It was a great party, a great celebration. I think we have all very much enjoyed it — certainly the people of Victoria have enjoyed it. Melbourne's reputation as the sporting capital of Australia has been reinforced, and I am one who believes that reputation ought to be nurtured, nourished and never underestimated or taken for granted.

There were many great moments in the games. We all have our own favourites. As someone who played rugby, watching Scott Fava take a head hit in the rugby 7s against Fiji was extraordinary; Craig Mottram's efforts and the fall; Melissa Wu's 10-point dive; and that extraordinary bronze medal that Peter Robertson fought for and won in the triathlon was an amazing effort.

There were many other memorable individual performances from gold medallists: Emma Snowsill; John Steffensen, who made such a huge impact; Leisel Jones; Libby Lenton; Ryan Bayley; the extraordinary Matthew Cowdrey in EAD (elite athletes with a disability) swimming; Brad Kahlefeldt's triathlon gold was just amazing television and even better on the streets; Kerryn McCann, as the minister just mentioned; Jana Pittman, of course, who has overcome a lot of obstacles; the ever-dancing Scott Martin; and many others. There were many memorable team performances and they are to be commended as well. In swimming particularly our relay teams were fantastic.

The legacy here is what I want to focus on for sport in this state. This was an Australian event, but it was very much a Victorian event as well, and as this is the Victorian Parliament I want to focus on what this means for Victoria as a sporting capital. Obviously we have got a lot of goodwill out of this exercise. We have got the stadiums reinforced and rehabilitated, and looking sharp. The Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre is looking wonderful, although for the life of me I cannot understand why we built a competition pool which will not be used next year in the world championships. I have been to the bowls centre and it looks great. The hockey centre has been upgraded again; and, of course, we have the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Our reputation in the sporting field for production and TV quality is probably already at the forefront in the world.

What does the Victorian sporting legacy actually mean for athletes in Victoria? I am prompted to look at this because as one who attended the opening ceremony and loved it, I came away thinking it was a fantastic ceremony but it was very much a baby boomers event. We had the legends receiving the baton and presenting the baton; they did so in great style and we all loved it. But for those under 45 they might have wondered, 'Where do these people fit in with me?'. It prompted me to ask, 'Who are our Victorian sporting heroes of tomorrow and where do we look to see them?'.

It was interesting when I did some numbers on our Victorian competitors and found Victoria was overrepresented in a number of sports. In fact in shooting — some would say that is not a surprise — table tennis, synchronised swimming, badminton and women's basketball more than half the competitors were from Victoria. Victoria was underrepresented in a number of sports: boxing, hockey, lawn bowls, netball, rugby 7s, squash, triathlon and men's basketball where we had fewer than 10 per cent of the athletes. In most of the other sports we were on average and, as the Premier suggested earlier, of the 84 gold medals won, some 30 were shared by Victorians. What the Premier did not mention — this is no disrespect at all because I think all those efforts were fantastic — was that there were only 10 Victorians who won individual gold medals. However, many Victorians participated in team events and did brilliantly.

In focusing on the Victorian performance we should ask: who were our best performers, how are we celebrating them and what are we doing for them to ensure that they will be a part of tomorrow, that they will be the legends of tomorrow? In reality many of them are lesser known lights at the moment. We had two dual gold medallists in the individual sports. I have

asked a lot of colleagues and a lot of people involved in sport and they have struggled to remember who those two dual gold medallists are and I suspect that some in the chamber will know and others may not. Nathan Deakes, a good Geelong boy, won two gold medals in the walk. That is perhaps not a mainstream sport, but he is very much an athlete of international stature. Our other dual gold medallist was Lalita Yauhleuskaya in the shooting — a lesser known light, but nevertheless one of only two Victorian dual gold medallists.

Of the other gold medallists, Jana Pittman is a world-class international athlete, a former world champion, and she has to contend with the publicity and the status that goes with it. Craig Mottram did not win a gold medal, but is right up there in international class. I refer to the likes of Scott Martin whose performance in my view was an absolute sensation, and particularly the way he handled the media. He is a potential superstar and we need to be playing on it and using him as an inspiration. He was probably not a well-known individual beforehand, but he certainly is now.

Katie Mactier was another memorable performer in winning the individual pursuit. Danni Miatke is our only individual swimming gold medallist in Victoria, and that in my view is enormously significant. We have to lift her profile and make her a hero and a legend of the future. Steve Hooker in the pole vault — again a lesser known light. Brad Pitt is known for other things internationally, but this Brad Pitt was the winner of the heavyweight boxing gold medal — a fantastic effort. My conclusion from all that is that we have an enormous number of individuals who are making a contribution.

But many of the Victorians who have made a contribution have been around for a while and they might be described as veterans; many of them, I hope, will continue on to the Beijing Olympics. They are the likes of Nathan Deakes, Michael Klim and Matt Welsh. Maybe Kyle Vander Kuyp will saddle up again, but he has been to four games already. Lauren Hewitt has been to multiple games, as has Matt Welsh, who is a Hawthorn boy. Brooke Hanson, at the age of 27, has been to three games already and has done it all in style. There is also Shane Kelly. Russell Mark has been to four games. Brett Hawke, the 50 metres freestyler who only just fell short, is 30 years old. We have the Newberrys, Chantelle and Robert. Loudy Tourky took a brilliant gold in the 10-metre platform. Tamsyn Lewis has been to three games, Kathy Watt has been to four games and Sharelle McMahon has been to three games.

I want to particularly mention Gian Rooney, who missed a gold medal by only one hundredth of a second, which was a great disappointment. However, I want to focus on the fact that she was captain of the swimming team and the performance of the swimming team, particularly the women, was extraordinary. It is no small credit to her and she is a fantastic individual. She has been a great representative of Victoria and Victorian sport. Gian has been to three Commonwealth Games.

It is tomorrow's champions that we have got to look to. Luke Doerner hit the winning goal in the hockey. We also have Scott Martin and Steve Hooker. We do have to look to the future. We have got the stadiums right in this state in terms of sport, but have we got our stars right for tomorrow? We want our reputation as a sporting capital to continue. We have great spectators and great spectacles, and we want to make sure we have great sportspeople as well for the future. It is time to look again, to use this opportunity to assess where we are with Victorian sport, to look at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) and look at the legacy for sport. Last night I heard athletics officials lamenting that out of these games there will not be a particular legacy for athletes in terms of stadiums or facilities. I have heard since that there is a desperate desire for the VIS to expand its funding of other sports in Victoria, particularly sports like water polo.

An awful lot of money was spent on the games, but not much of it actually trickles down to athletes. Think of Bradley Pitt, who won a gold medal and inspired us all in the heavyweight boxing. He is basically living on the poverty line. We might have chucked \$1.5 billion at the games, but the athletes are the ones who make the games. If athletes in the future are going to be legends and we are going to keep our sporting capital status, not just in terms of spectacles and spectators but in terms of sportspeople, then we need to do more. The athletes of tomorrow need that. I hope in future we will not just be about our stadiums but will also continue to be about our stars on the sports field.

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Women's Affairs) — I too would like to join the debate on this motion and give it my support. I will speak very briefly about the arts, because I have commented about that in question time. I take issue with the member for Hawthorn's assertion that there is nothing much in this games legacy for athletes. I find that an astonishing comment. In terms of support for athletes, you can just go to the wonderful netball centre, where our champion netball team — —

Mr Baillieu — Athletics.

Ms DELAHUNTY — You talked about our sportsmen and sportswomen.

Mr Baillieu — It was a comment from an athletics official.

Ms DELAHUNTY — You have had your go.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn has had his turn.

Ms DELAHUNTY — Look at our fantastic women's netball team. I want to speak about the outstanding performances of women at these games. At the netball centre, which is a great asset to our state and a wonderful gift to our netballers and hockey players, among others, we saw the courage of the Australian netball team, led by Sharelle McMahon, against a fiery and very powerful New Zealand team. I watched several games, and I could not be more proud of their courage and skill. Silver is a huge achievement.

It has been winning women at these games. We have probably not seen such a gold rush by our women athletes since the golden girls of the 1950s. Women in the Australian team won 49 gold medals at the Commonwealth Games. In all 16 sports, female teams and individuals absolutely starred — in fact you could probably say dominated.

The Deputy Premier mentioned that exhilarating moment when Kerryn McCann ran into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, but it was so exciting when she struggled up William Barak Bridge after running something like 41 kilometres. Here was this neck-and-neck duel with the other runner on her shoulder. Kerryn was buoyed by the roars of the crowd — a great way to, if you like, reopen the G and reintroduce it to the public as an athletics forum.

I also want to talk about Magic Monday at the pool. Night after night we saw our women swimmers absolutely cleaning up. I had the pleasure of presenting bouquets on that night to the women's relay record-holders and winners for the 4 x 100. These are young, fit, fabulous women — very poised, composed and gracious about their achievements. They were sensational. We also had the cycling sisters; we saw quite a few sisters win gold at these games, which was a thrill for everybody.

I want to mention a woman who is an inspiration to us all — Roma Dunn. She is 63 years of age. This was her third consecutive Commonwealth Games. She was the oldest competitor at the games, and she brought home a silver medal in the triples lawn bowls, which was held at the new bowls centre in my own electorate. She is a

great role model for the 90 per cent of Australians who at this stage do not do enough physical activity. We could almost run a campaign around Roma Dunn — she was sensational.

I also want to pay tribute to the thousands of women who were part of the volunteer army. They were so helpful they even anticipated your requirements before you asked. They were absolutely fantastic!

I mentioned the arts in question time, but I want to say that I think this was a changing moment for Melbourne, given that we saw just how arts and culture could link in an exquisite way with sport and with the other events that go into the calendar of major events here in Melbourne. The important point about it was that there was something for everybody. Young or old, it did not matter whether you were in Bendigo, whether you were at one of the live sites, whether you were along the Yarra River watching, with hundreds of thousands of others, those magic, water-spouting, music-making fish, or whether you were at the beach at the arts centre or the Alexandra Gardens: you could be part of this great festival of celebration and you did not need a ticket.

There has been criticism in the past of other states and of big name events where the cost of tickets day after day might have been prohibitive for some families. You did not need a ticket in Melbourne. You could enjoy the games and enjoy the events on the live screens all around Federation Square and up and down the Yarra, and you could be part of a fabulous world-class festival — and of course people responded to that in droves.

I want to mention the importance of these games to my own electorate of Northcote. We built the Darebin International Sports Centre for the games, and it has shown itself to be a world-class venue. I was out there quite a few times watching the bowls and talking to the visiting bowls officials, and a Canadian said to me, 'It is so good we would love to pick up this centre and take it across to Canada'. He was not alone in giving us compliments about the quality of that centre.

I also heard that the security people at the games, both the police and others, had dubbed the Darebin International Sports Centre as the friendliest venue, which I think is a compliment both to the organisers and to the volunteers. The centre was packed every day by spectators, many of whom had never watched bowls before. I must say I have watched a little bit out there at the centre, but I was pretty enchanted by the youth of some of these bowlers. I saw a silver medal playoff between a 23-year-old and a 28-year-old, and that was immensely entertaining, so we can see that the future of

lawn bowls is in very good hands. A lot of people have promised to take up the sport — and that is the other feature of the games. There is a warm and fuzzy glow among Victorians at the moment, and people are talking about seeing more of the arts and perhaps taking up sport as well. I think that would be a great legacy.

In conclusion I would like to congratulate Sue Nattrass and Andrew Bleby in particular for the magnificent arts festival and the Melbourne 2006 staff for their exemplary work and their cooperation with the three levels of government, including the federal government and local government. I particularly congratulate the Premier and the minister, who were indefatigable for months and months — indeed years — before the games. They were absolutely ubiquitous in terms of their presence at sporting venues and cultural venues throughout the games period.

Lastly, I think the artists were absolutely superb. Our visiting artists and our local artists have done the arts proud, and I am delighted to say that this will be a lasting legacy for Melbourne.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — There are positives and negatives to come out of the games but the positives are overwhelming, and I would like to go through a few of them. First of all, Brad Pitt, a constituent of mine from Blairgowrie, is a wonderful person who has done an extraordinary amount of good for heavyweight boxing. I congratulate him on the efforts he put in to get as far as he did. He also impressed the most powerful woman in the United States, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was there watching him. He is a great person, and all the people of the Mornington Peninsula are very proud of him.

We go right back to the Kennett government's vision in having applied for the games, and once Melbourne got in all the other cities that were interested just fell by the wayside, because we are very good at doing these things. This government delivered on the vision of the Kennett government in a very positive way.

I congratulate the volunteers on their happy smiling faces and their helpful hints when you arrived at a venue and they told you where to go. They were brilliant. Whenever they were seen in their T-shirts around Melbourne people said hello and 'Good on you!'. So congratulations to the volunteers, many of whom gave up their holidays and quite a few hours of their time to work for the Commonwealth Games.

All the officials, the Melbourne 2006 staff and the security people, whether they were members of private security firms, the police force or the defence forces,

were there in great numbers. The games were very secure and everyone felt safe at all times. It was a bit scary during the weekend before the games, when the night sky in the Mornington Peninsula was full of fighter jets rehearsing and firing rockets. It was a bit of a reminder that things could go wrong. I am very pleased that nothing did go wrong.

Another positive was the way Melbourne embraced all the aspects of the games. Whether it was for the arts or just to get out into the street, they turned up in unbelievable numbers — and it did not matter whether it was free or they had to pay, they turned up to all sorts of sports. I do not think there would be another city in the world that has those sorts of attendance at such a wide range of sports.

The closing ceremony was wonderful. Seeing the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) as a stage and a concert venue rather than as a sporting venue is a sight to behold. The fireworks and the use of lights and technology in the actual performance were absolutely wonderful, and it was a great way to close the games. Many of the athletes' performances have been talked about today. I will not go through them, but they included not only those who won medals but those who qualified for the games. I take my hat off to them all, because it is a feat in itself to qualify and get to the games. I know they all gave their very best at the games.

We have a lot of infrastructure as a legacy as well, whether it is the games village, the William Barak Bridge, the expanded facilities of the MCG, the State Netball Hockey Centre or the extensions at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. We have some wonderful sporting facilities, and again I do not think there would be a city in the world that has so many first-class facilities not only so close to the centre of the city but also connected by public transport and within easy walking access as well. We have only enhanced what we already had in Melbourne.

Some people have been a bit derisive, saying that there was not a field of world-class athletes competing. One of the great positives was the feats of the Australian athletes, regardless of what sport they performed in, who were under the pressure of being in their home town and who carried the weight of great expectations as they performed in venues that were world-class and absolutely full of people. It does not matter what the quality of the other athletes in a particular sport might have been, even if they were not all world class, because to have actually performed in those venues under those circumstances would have been a great experience for them. No matter where they go,

whichever world championships they attend or whatever they might do in sport from now on, they will have experienced and learnt a lot from competing in the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

I have just a couple of negatives to finish up with. I did not understand the duck. And when I found out it had something to do with Michael Leunig, who I think is certifiable, I just thought, 'No wonder!'. It explained everything. No-one has ever mentioned this, but I think the boy with the duck — I do not know his name — looked a lot like the Premier. I know he was not the Premier's child, but he certainly had a Bracks look about him.

Mr Kotsiras — What are you trying to say?

Mr DIXON — I will just leave it at that. I said the boy looked like him, not the duck, all right? I should clear that bit up!

Unfortunately it looks like the games went over budget, but we are used to that. Spencer Street station was not quite finished. I know the shopping complex was not meant to be finished for the games, and that is fine, but it was disappointing that with all those visitors around there were still makeshift facilities such as the kiosks selling tickets, lollies and chocolates, and newspapers. The station was not quite finished, and it is a pity that over such a long time when it could have been finished for the big occasion, it was not.

Finally, I pay tribute to the Parliamentary Secretary for the Commonwealth Games, the member for Tarneit. I do not think anyone has mentioned her, but she did a lot of background work with a lot of groups. I know she was also very involved with the games village and working with the locals there. Unfortunately her rewards within the party have not been great, but I pay tribute to her for the work she has done.

Congratulations to all those who were involved. It gives me great pleasure to support the motion.

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I would like to speak on behalf of, I think, all Victorians and take the opportunity this afternoon to support the motion moved by the Premier in respect of the Commonwealth Games. I want to thank and congratulate all of the personnel who provided protection and security during the games themselves or in many different ways supported our emergency service organisations in the important job they did to make sure that Victorians enjoyed a safe and secure Commonwealth Games.

I will start with police personnel. This was obviously a huge operation by Victoria Police, with planning extending over many years and an intense period in the months leading up to the games themselves, followed by the involvement of thousands of police personnel over the 12 days of the games. I offer my congratulations to Commander Brendan Bannon, who commanded the police presence. He worked very hard for several years and is to be congratulated on the exemplary leadership he showed. His deputy, Bob Graham, also provided a huge amount of support. The Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon, who led the entire organisation, also did a huge amount of work in supporting all the police personnel who offered their services.

I also had several meetings during the games themselves and in the lead-up to them with Inspector Matthew Ryan, who was responsible for the games village. He led a very dedicated group of police personnel at the police station in the games village. Inspector Dennis Godfrey from the Commonwealth Games planning office also did a lot of work on behalf of Victoria Police to make sure the games were well organised, well planned and well executed from a security perspective. We also acknowledge all the thousands of police personnel who had their leave postponed or training deferred and were part of making sure we were able to expand by about 20 per cent the availability of police resources to support the Commonwealth Games security effort.

We recognise our interstate police colleagues who were sworn in as special constables. They assisted with bomb disposal activities and provided tactical and forensic support. We also recognise the 2500 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel from Operation Acolyte. Under the command of Brigadier Andrew Smith they did a fantastic job. During the games I had the opportunity of visiting HMAS *Norman*, which is a Huon class mine destroyer that was undertaking activities and operations in the Docklands precinct and along the Yarra, making sure that area was secure. Lieutenant Commander Tim Watson provided the opportunity for me to visit and was my host. I thank all of those personnel and the many thousands of other ADF officers who supported the Operation Acolyte efforts in respect of the games in so many different ways.

I would also like to again acknowledge the Metropolitan Fire Brigade personnel who provided support, not only at the Commonwealth Games village fire station but also to stations close to the various venues. Many of those personnel were based at different times in the venues to provide the close

protection that was required. We recognise that and thank them for it. We also thank Country Fire Authority personnel, both career staff and volunteers, who not only provided support to our regional venues but acted in lots of other ways to enhance the emergency services protection that supplemented the games activities. Thanks also go to the 500 State Emergency Service volunteers who were available to provide, if it had been necessary, urban search-and-rescue support and other support to enhance our emergency service capabilities during the games. We thank all of them; we recognise them, and we thank as well the private security companies and their contracted employees who also provided security at many of the games venues.

I also thank Melbourne Girls Grammar, under the leadership of principal, Christine Briggs, which during the holiday period allowed its school to provide a command centre for Victoria Police. It is not the first time this school has been used for a security operation; it was used for the air department during the Second World War, when its facilities were commandeered. I had the opportunity of visiting that facility during the Commonwealth Games, and everyone complimented the school on the great resources it made available.

Thanks also go to John Harnden and Ron Walker of Melbourne 2006, Meredith Sussex from the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination and all the team involved in delivering the games. It has been an enormously successful event. We recognise the close role that security played in an unobtrusive way to make sure these games were the best Commonwealth Games ever and that Victorians, all Australians and our friends and visitors from interstate and overseas were able to enjoy a safe and secure event.

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I am pleased to speak in support of this motion and to congratulate everyone who was involved in making the 18th Commonwealth Games so successful and, as was said on the closing day, simply the best.

I did not attend the Commonwealth Games, but I did watch them on television. Great coverage was provided by Channel 9 and on other channels. I attended the Prime Minister's lunch for Her Majesty the Queen. A number of other members of Parliament also attended, and it was a great occasion at the Royal Exhibition Building, where I saw some of the former and current athletes and some of the games administration personnel as well. I also attended the Queen's baton relay when it passed through Shepparton. It was a fantastic event that provided locals in regional Victoria with the opportunity to be part of the Commonwealth Games.

I pay tribute to the 15 000 volunteers. They did a fantastic job. Many of them were from rural and regional Victoria, and in fact Don Kilgour, the former member for Shepparton, and his wife, Cheryl, were volunteers. I spoke to Cheryl today and asked her about her experience. In her words, it was one of the best experiences she had ever had and she would not have missed it for the world. She also said the training was exceptional, so congratulations to those training organisations. She said that the professionalism of the organisation was of a very high standard and that the eye for detail was of a high standard also, so the running of the games was exceptional.

I congratulate chairman Ron Walker on his 10-year involvement, and I also congratulate his administrative staff and all the other staff involved. Also, as others have said, former Premier Jeff Kennett lobbied very strongly for the games. I also add my praise for Victoria Police and the security staff. A number of Shepparton and district police were there, and the games would have been well covered by having them there.

I congratulate the 4500 elite athletes from across the commonwealth nations who gave us some great sporting moments — people like Jana Pittman, John Steffensen, Leisel Jones, Kerryn McCann, Scott Martin and many others, as well as the inspiring contribution of the athletes with disabilities.

As has been said, Australia won more than 200 medals, which was absolutely fantastic, but I also congratulate those who competed but who did not win medals, because the world's best athletes were there, and sometimes it is a great honour just to be actually chosen for the games. I am very proud of one of the medal winners, Shepparton's Bruce Quick, who represented Australia in pistol shooting. He won silver in the pairs event, with Queensland's David Moore, and bronze in the individual competition. Bruce has competed in four Commonwealth Games and has won 1 gold medal, 7 silver and 5 bronze.

My electorate officer, Greg Barr, who is president of the Katandra Bowls Club, attended the lawn bowling competition, and the Minister for Women's Affairs talked about bowling earlier on in her contribution. He was there when Australia won gold in the women's pairs. Australia also won gold in the men's triples, and gold in the men's singles.

A lot of people also took advantage of the free entertainment. There was dance, music and art — and not just in the central business district but at a number of different venues around regional Victoria. I congratulate Lord Mayor John So and the Melbourne

City Council for the great way Melbourne looked. A number of people who came to Melbourne and visited the games talked about how wonderful the city looked and how it put in an extra effort, so I congratulate Lord Mayor John So for the appearance of our capital city.

I also would like to say that the Commonwealth Games flags provided to the schools were a great success. I was able to present 30 flags to government schools and 10 to non-government schools, and there was great excitement as the children, parents and teachers felt they were part of the Commonwealth Games.

Also there has been discussion about the fish sculptures on the Yarra. They have been very popular, and I have been advised that the City of Greater Shepparton has put in an expression of interest for one of the fish. Shepparton hosted a number of athletes from Gambia, so we hope that puts us at the forefront of receiving one of the fish. I congratulate all those involved in what has been known as the friendly Commonwealth Games.

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Community Services) — I strongly support the motion and sincerely congratulate the athletes, the wonderful friendly volunteers, all the hardworking staff from a number of organisations, including the organising committee and the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination, Victoria Police, the transport operators and those who organised the cultural program as well.

I will highlight one aspect of the games, and that was its inclusiveness — in particular, the focus on including people with disabilities. Many people commented to me over the time of the games that they really enjoyed having the events for elite athletes with disabilities included as a routine part of the various sports. The crowds obviously appreciated that too. I can still remember the enthusiastic applause for Matthew Cowdrey, who won two gold medals in the swimming pool. It demonstrated that people enjoy seeing the achievements of these great athletes and having them integrated into the regular events.

I also had many comments about the accessibility of the events for people with disabilities, and of course the games village itself was very accessible, and this was also commented on. There were volunteers with disabilities as well, and we all cheered for the elite athletes with disabilities as they came in with their teams on opening night. I must say that those features were an outstanding characteristic of the games.

I also want to comment on the Melbourne Cricket Ground and how magnificent it looks now, and people with disabilities have commented to me that it is very

accessible. You come straight from the park into the MCG and out into the seating areas, and you have a great view. There are no steps and no barriers at all to accessibility, and that was also a feature of the games. It demonstrates very clearly the importance of accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities, which has been a strong part of the government's approach.

We have said continually that this needs to have a whole-of-government and whole-of-community focus. It is not about segregated facilities or separate games but about including people with disabilities in what the community participates in. We demonstrated that on a world stage, and that was a great success.

There were other features that demonstrated that inclusiveness. You did not need a ticket to enjoy the games. You could have gone to the events held on the streets, whether it was the triathlon, the cycling or the marathon. I enjoyed seeing the marathon down in Carlton. I saw the women's and then the men's, and it was all free.

You could also have attended any of the wonderful events in the cultural festival, as I did, for free, and that was an outstanding feature. That brought out the crowds and brought the city to life. Melbourne looked stunning, and all of us who live in Melbourne felt very proud; but we also included the regional areas in the events and the cultural festival.

The Queen's baton relay built up the tension and excitement as it visited every one of our local government areas, and many people have commented on how they appreciated each local government area being linked up with a team of athletes from a commonwealth country. People learnt about other commonwealth countries, their teams and their particular events, and they supported them while they were there during the games. That was a great feature.

The schools also got really involved. Many members, myself included, presented flags to the schools, and the children were very well informed about the games. They knew about the country they were linked up with, and they learnt a lot about the commonwealth and about the games through that process. So it was an extraordinary fortnight.

This was a great demonstration of inclusiveness, and I particularly highlight the aspects of inclusion and of making these games accessible for people with disabilities. I congratulate again all those involved, particularly the Premier, the Minister for

Commonwealth Games and all those who have been thanked absolutely conclusively in this motion.

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I stand to support the motion before the house. I pay tribute and thank the 15 000 volunteers who made the games successful. I also thank the large number of volunteers from my electorate of Bulleen who participated and helped in the games. I seek the patience of the house, as I would like to name some of them because it is important that they are acknowledged for the hard work they put in and the time they spent to ensure we had one of the best games ever.

They are as follows: Phil Allen, Templestowe; Stacey Allport, Doncaster East; Annette Angelovski, Bulleen; Pat Armstrong, Templestowe; Navin Arunasalam, East Doncaster; Don Bartlett, Lower Templestowe; Judy Baxter, Templestowe; Aaron Beaton, Doncaster East; Peter Bennett, Doncaster East; Jeanette Bernet, Templestowe; Pat Bond, Templestowe; Sarah Breare, Lower Templestowe; Caitlin Breare, Lower Templestowe; Marg Breare, Lower Templestowe; John and Patricia Bruce, Bulleen; David Buerckner, Bulleen; Annie Bugeja, Templestowe; Lawry Bugeja, Templestowe; Ellen Byrne, Lower Templestowe; Liz Carlin-Smith, Lower Templestowe; Joe Cassino, Bulleen; Fave Chalmers, Templestowe; Sone Chen, Lower Templestowe; Stanley Chu, Bulleen; Lynsey Cook, Templestowe; Lorraine Cooper, Lower Templestowe; Ray Cooper, Lower Templestowe; Fay Crews, Doncaster East; Kirsten Cunningham, Lower Templestowe; Ken Davis, Lower Templestowe; Bruce Dite, Lower Templestowe; Daniel Falcone, Doncaster East; Julie Fithie, Templestowe; Harold Fletcher, Lower Templestowe; Lee Flynn, Doncaster East; Mylene Funke Kupper, Templestowe; Colin Gamble, Lower Templestowe; Christine Ganas, Templestowe; Lisa Gandolfo, Lower Templestowe; George Gauci, Lower Templestowe; Shirley Gee, Doncaster East; George Georgiadis, Doncaster East; Amy German, Lower Templestowe; Deidre Gilham, Lower Templestowe; Deborah Goldfinch, Doncaster East; Satish Gosai, Doncaster East; Herman Harberts, Bulleen; Faye Harvey, Lower Templestowe; Brad Hellman, Doncaster East; Mary Heslop, Doncaster East; Paul Hill, Templestowe; Beryl Hunter, Doncaster East; Alec Huze, Doncaster East; Mary Ionnidis, Doncaster East; Sophia Ionnidis, Doncaster East; Rajan Johan, Templestowe; Sheryl Kamal, Doncaster East; Shaun Kelly, Lower Templestowe; Stephanie Kounelis, Templestowe; Marcus Lai, Templestowe; Presulla Lai, Templestowe; Louise Lamont, Templestowe; Victor Le, Doncaster East; Samantha Lee, Doncaster East; Arthur Leoncelli, Bulleen; Margaret Liddiard, Lower Templestowe; Mei Lim, Templestowe; Sophia Liow,

Bulleen; Sandra Martin, Lower Templestowe; Deborah Martinov, Doncaster East; Marg McCrohan, Lower Templestowe; Anne McDermott, Doncaster East; Arch McDougall, Bulleen; Erika McKeon, Templestowe; Glen McCleod, Lower Templestowe; Nic Michaelides, Templestowe; July Middenway, Doncaster East; Trivesi Moore, Doncaster East; Jenny Morcom, Bulleen; Jeff Moy, Doncaster East; Jackie Nathaniel, Doncaster East; Betteke Norman, Templestowe; Rhys O'Shannassy, Templestowe; Rebecca Payne, Templestowe; Harvey Pearce, Templestowe; Michael Pennefather, Doncaster East; Anne Phillips, Templestowe; Daniel Pozzebon, Bulleen; Mandy Ratcliffe, Doncaster East; Alma Ross, Lower Templestowe; Sam Ryan, Lower Templestowe; John Ryan, Bulleen; Martin Rule, Templestowe; Viorica Schwarz, Templestowe; John Senior, Templestowe; Callum Storey, Doncaster East; Barbara Sutherland, Lower Templestowe; Daniel Tan and Rosy Tan, Templestowe; Rohan Taylor, Templestowe; Grace Tham, Templestowe; Marcus Teo, Lower Templestowe; Bree Teh, Doncaster East; Chrissy Velissaris, Templestowe; Ken Wensor, Lower Templestowe; Mike Westbrook, Lower Templestowe; Rohan Wheeler, Templestowe; Marlene Wiltshire, Lower Templestowe; Braddon Wong, Lower Templestowe; and Alex Wragg and Ken Wragg, Lower Templestowe. I thank all those volunteers for their fantastic work. They gave up their valuable time to ensure that we had one of the best games in many years.

Can I also pay tribute to the former Premier of this state, the Honourable Jeff Kennett. If not for Jeff this mob on the other side would never have secured the games, because they are incompetent. I need to thank Jeff for the work that he did in securing the Commonwealth Games, and I have to say that, having secured the games, the work of this government and the volunteers ensured that the games were successful. They were a tribute to everyone. But we must not forget that the former Premier was responsible for securing the games and we should pay tribute to him for doing so. We have learnt a lot and, as I said, the success is a tribute to the volunteers, the organisers and the athletes.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — Along with my colleagues I rise to pay tribute to the Commonwealth Games organising committee and the state government departmental officers who did a sensational amount of work in putting on what by any measure has been an extraordinarily successful Commonwealth Games. The work of the volunteers has already been widely commended both in the house and the broader community.

In my own experience of representing the state government on the occasions I attended the Commonwealth Games at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where I was rostered to provide support, the work of the volunteers was simply sensational. They were incredibly enthusiastic, very well informed and really captured the essence of Melbourne and the spirit of the Commonwealth Games, our love for this great city of Melbourne, our love of sport and our love of these great occasions. Obviously the work of the 15 000 volunteers was an integral part of that. I had the opportunity to talk to some of the athletes, and certainly our athletes and indeed those from all over the world who came to participate in the games thought that the facilities provided by the state government at the Commonwealth Games village in Parkville and all competition venues were absolutely first class. It is a great credit to the government that we produced facilities of such high quality, but that will be merely one of a range of enduring legacies of the Commonwealth Games.

As we have the Minister for the Arts here, it is incumbent upon me to indicate that I, along with my family, enjoyed some wonderful afternoons down on the river. The first Sunday was a particularly beautiful mellow afternoon, and the community came out in absolute droves to all the activities on the river. There were the beautiful sculptured fish on the Yarra, we had the opportunity to visit the beach installation at the arts centre, and the display in the Myer windows was absolutely wonderful. Many people were crowding around to enjoy the extraordinary range of pursuits that were available during the games were highlights of the 12 days.

Finally, and on a personal note, I want to acknowledge the brother of Paul Erickson, a member of my staff. Chris is Paul's brother, and in the 50-kilometre walk he did us proud. Young Chris Erickson received a bronze medal, and of course, the family was very proud of his efforts. We commend him on that; it was a fantastic effort. He is a young athlete on his way, and no doubt he will be competing in further national and international events. We acknowledge Chris Erickson today.

This was a fantastic event for Melbourne, and we will build further on what has been a wonderful international event for our city.

Mr SMITH (Bass) — It is a pleasure to get up and speak about the Commonwealth Games in support of the Premier's motion. I do not think any of us could say that these games were anything other than a huge success. They were great for Melbourne, they were

great for Victoria and they were great for Australia. You could not help but feel extremely proud of all our athletes of all ages who competed for this great country of ours. We saw them in every form of competition, and they shone. They were magnificent. Some of their struggles to achieve for their country brought tears to the eyes of a lot of us as we either sat and watched them on the television or listened to them on the radio. You could not but help think about the marathon —

Mr Cooper — The weight-lifters brought tears to my eyes!

Mr SMITH — Yes, I am sure the weight-lifters brought tears to my eyes too! The 5000 metres race, the pole vault, the discus, the hammer throw and the swimming were great. Even some of the synchronised swimming was good. I never thought I would be taken in by it, until I saw how good it was. Every sport that our people competed in was terrific. They should all be congratulated for the great way in which they competed.

Mr Cooper — What about the synchronised swimming?

Mr SMITH — I mentioned the synchronised swimming and said it was very good. All our athletes, whether or not they won — that does not matter — achieved the pinnacle of their sporting careers by competing here in Melbourne in the last couple of weeks and representing their country. I could not think of anything better than to be an athlete and to reach a standard where you are chosen to represent your country. The Commonwealth Games came at a time when most of the athletes had been training for years and had timed themselves to reach a peak in order to compete and be very successful.

The other very successful group were our volunteers, the thousands of people who voluntarily gave up their time to help visitors to our city and to help locals who were unaware of a lot of the changes that had been made and a lot of the events that were happening in the streets of Melbourne. Our volunteers gave directions to help people who were cut off by traffic barriers and who could not get around the events.

Last Friday night my wife and I had the great pleasure of going to the banks of the Yarra River, along with hundreds of thousands of other people, to enjoy the spectacle of the Commonwealth Games fish and their light and water display. I thought it was fantastic. We walked along the river to see the fish lined up — and from where we were standing you could only see about 30 of the fish, but I think there were 72. It was just

magnificent. The music, the lights and the water that was coming from them, as well as the shrieks of delight from the kids and some of the other people along the river banks when it was happening, were absolutely fantastic. The people who conceived the idea are to be congratulated on their endeavours and the way they put the event across.

I understand the fish are going to be offered to local councils, as the Premier said today, to be displayed in their communities. I would like to put in a claim for the bass fish, which I would like to go to the Cardinia shire to be displayed as a constant reminder to the people of Cardinia of the great Commonwealth Games that were held in Melbourne. I think that would be marvellous. We have a lake on the outskirts of Pakenham, and there is a big development in that area. I am sure the council would be able to find a very prominent position, and by the lake would be an ideal spot.

Mr Cooper — Have a chat to the mayor about it.

Mr SMITH — I will probably talk to my friend the mayor, Bill Ronald, about it. I think he will probably want to throw me in the lake! The trout that was on display representing one of the countries could go to north-east Victoria, because that is where the very best trout fishing in Australia is. It could be set up as a display at the entrance to one of the towns. It would let people know that Australian trout fishing is at its very best up in north-eastern Victoria. You could look to this to remind the greenies in the department that trout are as good to catch and eat as any of the native fish, if not better.

We could also have the eel, which I understand was the symbol for Australia, although I cannot quite figure that out.

Mr Cooper — It went with the duck!

Mr SMITH — Yes, it went with the duck. It could go up to Lake Modewarre or even to Lake Colac, where tens of thousands of eels have been dying. It could be a symbol for the Environment Protection Authority and for the minister, because after nearly two years they still do not know what has been killing the eels. We would like them to find out.

I have a couple of other small issues that I would like to raise. The Commonwealth Games flags that we distributed to our state schools were terrific, but I later found out that we were supposed to distribute flags to our independent schools as well, and I did not receive any. Even when I rang up to find out where they were they were not forthcoming, and I was very disappointed about that. I apologised to my independent schools for

that reason. There was also the rejection of the Leader of the Opposition, who was to have had an opportunity to speak at the volunteers day on Monday. The government rejected him in what was a purely political exercise. I also want to congratulate former Premier Jeffrey Kennett for having got the games here, and I also congratulate that other great trouper who represented all of Melbourne, Cr John So, who was absolutely fabulous. I think it was a disgrace the way the government gave him short shrift when he should have been presenting the flag to the mayor of New Delhi.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Education Services) — I am delighted to join the debate on the motion and to say a few words about the Commonwealth Games. We have already heard in many different ways about how fantastic the games were and what a showcase they were for sport, culture and volunteering, our business community and, of course, our regions. I want to limit my remarks to the Bendigo region today.

As the member for Bendigo East I am very proud of the way in which Bendigo took centre stage throughout the Commonwealth Games. It all started a little while ago when Bendigo was fortunate enough to adopt Scotland as its second team. We certainly took the Scots to heart. They visited our region, and we were fortunate that the team chose to train in Bendigo. They chose it as a training venue, which is an outstanding reflection on the high-quality sporting infrastructure we have in our city. The team trained in Bendigo in the weeks leading up to the games. I know the Scottish swimming team and more broadly the teams from Great Britain had a change of coach in recent times, but I think some of the credit should go to the Bendigo Aquatic Centre for the Scottish team winning six gold medals in the pool.

Bendigo also hosted visits from the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport in the Scottish Parliament, Patricia Ferguson, along with the Lord Provost of the City of Glasgow, Liz Cameron, whose city is bidding for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Scotland made a terrific impression on the city and we certainly appreciate their choosing Bendigo as their home in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games.

Athletes also called Bendigo home during the Commonwealth Games, as Bendigo hosted the only athletes village to be sited outside Melbourne. We also had the only gold medal event outside Melbourne, which was the full-bore rifle shooting held at the picturesque Wellsford Rifle Range in my electorate. Pictures of this range were beamed around the world as they saw Australians Bruce Scott and James Corbett from Benalla win gold and bronze in this event. The

Premier was very fortunate to be on hand to witness their achievement and congratulate them last Thursday.

Bendigo also hosted more basketball events than any regional city in the state. We had 10 games over five nights featuring two Australian men's games and one Australian women's game. They were absolutely fantastic events. The Bracks government put in \$2 million a few years ago for the expansion of the West Bendigo Basketball Stadium which not only hosted this games but was the live broadcast venue for the regional basketball events. It was great to see the Australian teams in Bendigo and local girl Emily McInerney perform as one of the Opals team members.

I congratulate all the volunteers from my electorate and throughout the central Victoria region at venues in both Bendigo and Melbourne. They were dedicated, helpful and, most pleasingly, very happy volunteers. Also to be congratulated were the workers at the various venues who performed a fantastic job, obviously supported very well by the volunteers. I also briefly mention the Bendigo Live Site at the Civic Gardens for which the Bracks government provided the funding. As I mentioned in the house today, Killing Heidi performed a concert there. We had parts of the cultural program there and many thousands of Bendigonians turned up throughout the games to be part of those activities in the garden as well as other events.

Bendigo also hosted two business events as part of the Bendigo Business@The Games program and I thank the government for also providing funding for these two very successful functions, one held at Perseverance Corporation's mine and the other, a dinner, at the All Seasons Bendigo restaurant, showcasing the best of Bendigo's local business and the best of our region.

I would also like to comment briefly on public transport during the games. Public transport between Bendigo and Melbourne on our new fast trains and improved services was fantastic. Also important is the fact that we provided trains late at night so that Bendigo people could get back from Melbourne. It was a terrific late-night service.

I am proud of Bendigo. I am proud of the way the city shone throughout the games. I am proud of the way we made our visitors feel welcome. I particularly congratulate the City of Greater Bendigo for the way it worked very hard to make sure that Bendigonians enjoyed the games. Certainly the Bracks government worked very hard to make sure that all Victorians, and particularly Bendigonians, shared in the great spirit of the Commonwealth Games.

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I rise to make some points about the Commonwealth Games. There were some magnificent outcomes in terms of Australia's medal tally. There was some great sporting competition there, and a local girl from my area, Deserie Baynes, won gold in one of the shooting events.

You would have to recognise the thousands of volunteers who willingly, in that great Australian tradition, helped out to make sure that this event was a success. Also, there was the multitude of security forces — Victoria Police and others who make Melbourne safe — that made it possible for people to get access to events in a very competent way.

One would also have to recognise the contribution made by Justin Madden as the Minister for Sport and Recreation in this state to the success of the Commonwealth Games. I do not think anyone in this place would not share that view. However, having said that, we need to have a bit of balance in this motion.

Mr Thompson interjected.

Mr SAVAGE — The baton was a great event, and that is one of the good and positive outcomes of the games. It is a community thing and ordinary people carried the baton. It was a very successful route from interstate through Mildura. We hosted the Tongan team, so I am thankful that the member for Sandringham has reminded me of my failure to recognise that component.

As I said, we have to also balance what we get out of the Commonwealth Games. I think we can do these things in a way that provides first-class sporting facilities and safety, but we do not have to have the extravagance. Let us bear in mind that some of these competitors come from countries that are exceedingly poor and would have had difficulty with the extravagance that we indulged in, especially spending \$55 million on the opening and closing ceremonies. Some people said that the person who drafted the script must have been on drugs because there was a lack of cohesive direction as to where it was going and where it was going to end up.

Every Commonwealth Games tries to beat the previous host, in this case Manchester, but I do not think that is the purpose of it. It is a gathering of Commonwealth nations to see who the best sporting achievers are. It is not about putting more fireworks into the air or about squandering money on things that are not essential to society. If you are suffering from the requirement to have a hip operation and you are waiting in agony for 12 months, it does not cut much ice to see that amount

of money spent in that way. Let us keep some perspective on the reality here. I am not saying we should not hold the Commonwealth Games, although there was \$50 million in hidden licence fees that were not up front — —

Mr Thompson — You want a fast train to Mildura!

Mr SAVAGE — I am not going to put that sort of component that the member for Sandringham is suggesting in his interjection.

One of the most disappointing things is the loss of 26 hectares of Royal Park, now owned by a company which is basically owned by the Singapore government — Citta and Australand. There were eucalypt trees in Royal Park that predated white settlement and we lost control of the heritage buildings there.

I am going to say that we had a great games, but I do not want to see this or any other state or a federal government go down a path where it has no measure of financial responsibility, because when you subsidise tickets that cost between \$500 and \$800 per ticket, that is too much money. You do not have to do that.

I could bring this back via an analogy to the fact that we are going to sell Snowy Hydro — the share for Victoria is \$600 million or \$500 million — on the basis that if we do not do that we cannot fix up a large number of schools. I am sorry, but why are we spending \$1.5 billion on the Commonwealth Games if we cannot afford to fix schools? That is the point I want to make.

With that I will let other members make a contribution. We have had a good games, but I also want us to have some measure of responsibility in the way that we administer public moneys. I do not believe that has been the case in this event; I think we have gone over the top. We should concentrate on the sporting event and not on trying to have some major entertainment factor in the opening and closing ceremonies.

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — I am pleased to rise in support of the motion on the Commonwealth Games. Firstly, I would like to say that the games were also terrific for children. I spent a fair bit of the time at the games. I went to both the games events and the cultural program events, with my children and children from other families around my area, and it was a terrific time for them. I saw the impact the experience had on them in terms of their interest in sport, in terms of their interest in the arts and also just in terms of the fun they had over those days. What the games have meant for children has not been referred to in this debate so far, but just going by my own children and their friends, it

was a fantastic and memorable experience. I can imagine that they will carry the memory of the Commonwealth Games through their entire lives.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to transport workers. The great transport event that these Commonwealth Games were was not a fluke, not something that was rushed into, but something that was planned, and planned over a number of years. It was planned through government and through the various providers of public transport in this state: Connex, V/Line, Yarra Trams, the bus association and the taxi industry. They planned it; they worked on it. VicRoads and local government were also involved, because the work involved markings on roads and street closures.

It was a tremendous effort, but the real effort was actually during those 12 days. One person in the transport area told me it was like planning and managing 34 grand final crowds in a row: over 12 days there were 34 grand final crowds that had to be taken care of. There were actually more than 34 grand final crowds, because transport operators also had to carry the usual number of people that were travelling on the transport system. It was the usual number on the transport system plus the equivalent of 34 grand final crowds. It was just an amazing effort. It involved 1.8 million extra passengers on the system over those 12 days and 30 000 more tram, train and bus trips. It was just a fantastic effort.

I also want to make a few comments about the cultural program, particularly since the Minister for the Arts is in the house. I went to quite a lot of the program events, and there were some amazing highlights. I think Miriam Makeba was an extraordinary highlight. A 74-year-old woman who has spent virtually half her life in political exile, she was an immense presence on stage, with a terrific band. Her politics over these years have not mellowed. One of the things she wanted to do was to come to Australia and thank those Australians who stood up for the struggle of the South Africans against apartheid, and I think that for all those who were there it was a very memorable night.

I was also very keen to hear La Bottine Souriante from Québec, who performed a mixture of French and Irish folk music with a bit of jazz and a bit of Latin salsa. They are a terrific band. I also saw Bollywood at the Bowl. The gates had closed more than an hour before the event, it was so popular. It made you want to go to Delhi for the Commonwealth Games in four years time! It was an amazing show, and the Indian community of Melbourne came out in force on that night.

In terms of the local legacy in Brunswick, although the games village is just outside the seat of Brunswick, the village has a big impact on West Brunswick in my electorate. I want to thank local residents for their patience, given the number of road closures that occurred. There were also clubs — the Reggio Calabria Club and the Essendon Royals football club — that had to give up their facilities and rent them out: the facilities became integrated into the games village. They did that in a very amicable, friendly way and were very much part of and involved in that whole process. I think that has left a very strong legacy of support in that community. Even though the relationship with the local community may have started out a bit rocky, it turned out to be a very successful relationship.

In terms of the games village itself, 20 per cent of it is going to be used for social housing, particularly for aged people, and that is a really big area of need in my community. I am very pleased that that has been an outcome. I must say that the village is a terrific development. The ancient eucalypts were preserved, and it is a really fine addition to the western side of my electorate and the Parkville area.

I want to commend everyone that was involved in this fantastic event. I think it will be an incredible memory and legacy for the city of Melbourne and for Victoria.

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — I have great pleasure in joining this discussion. I would like to add my congratulations to those given to people and organisations previously congratulated. I congratulate particularly the previous government, for its efforts in winning the games in the first instance; Ron Walker and his committee, for a fantastic job in making it all come together; the current government for its efforts, and in particular the Minister for Commonwealth Games; and the public transport system and its staff, who are very friendly and very efficient — I take my hat off to them for that service being provided in the central business district.

Congratulations also go to all of the athletes and all of those who competed, particularly to those who did personal bests and of course to those who won gold. There were also many support staff who deserve congratulations and thanks. Particular congratulations and thanks — as have been given by other members — go to the 15 000 volunteers who truly added to the atmosphere of Melbourne, a friendly and great place to visit and live.

Interestingly this morning as I was going for a jog at the ungodly hour of 6.15 and was passing between the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the Rod Laver Arena,

there was still one volunteer making her way to work. I said, 'You must be lost', and she said, 'No, I'm still working. I'm still a volunteer. I'm about to return a car to Toyota', which was a job to complete her fortnight of 40 to 60-hour weeks — an amazing contribution. That is the sort of contribution that many volunteers made.

From the perspective of my electorate, a large number of people from Benalla came down to be volunteers. They had a great time and added to the atmosphere. We were fortunate to have James Corbett win a couple of bronze medals. The gold medal still continues to elude him, but James is a great marksman who will no doubt be continuing to strive for gold. We were also very fortunate to host a number of visiting countries. Benalla hosted Fiji, the Shire of Strathbogie hosted Cameroon and a number of other shires hosted countries from the Caribbean area.

In a previous members statement I made some criticism of those fish that are slowly swimming upstream along the Yarra River. I also got my count wrong — I said there were 37, but I acknowledge there are 72. I am prepared to soften my criticism of those fish if the minister goes ahead with the proposal to make them available to parts of Victoria. In particular Benalla has put in a bid for —

An honourable member interjected.

Dr SYKES — I am prepared to be persuaded by the right amount of fish! Benalla has put in a bid to have the clown fish — which may be relevant to some members opposite! — go to Lake Benalla to complement the magnificent regional art gallery that we have in our area. It is the most frequently visited art gallery in regional Victoria, and it is deserving of more visits by more important people.

I refer to some issues of concern that have been raised in my electorate. I note the member for Bendigo spoke about the rail system working very well. The \$10 fare arrangements — thanks to the efforts of Nationals colleagues — was very handy, but we had a little problem with extra trains not being put on our line beyond Seymour. In a large number of instances people living up the line from there were unfortunately not able to take advantage of the cheap fare because there was an insufficient number of trains to meet their needs.

The government threw a great party, but the people of my electorate have some nagging doubts about accountability. They have drawn to my attention Aesop's fable about the grasshopper and the ant. I guess the issue is that, like the grasshopper, the good times have been had and there needs to be some effort

put into planning for the future and ensuring that we are able to continue to generate wealth for our great state. That requires significant infrastructure investment to support agriculture in communities in country Victoria, because while we no longer live off the sheep's back, the reality is that the dairy industry is Victoria's biggest export income earner. We need to continue to support the development of infrastructure — and I am talking about simple things like roads and bridges. We also need to support the delivery of services in our areas through things like neighbourhood centres and rural ambulances.

My highlight — and there were many, as I had the opportunity through the ballot system of going to a number of events — was John Landy's being given the honour to take the baton up to the royal area, because he is my hero. During my jogs along the river I often stop and read the inscription below the statue of John Landy and Ron Clarke, and I always go away inspired. I get sufficient inspiration to endure a week or two in this place each time after going there! It was a great games, but we need to ensure that we continue to have an economically sound and viable state, which means looking after country Victoria.

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to talk about the wonderful Commonwealth Games we have experienced, particularly in Gippsland, where we were certainly very actively involved. We know that one of the hallmarks of the Bracks government is its involvement in making sure that regional and rural Victoria is at the heart of this state. Certainly we are no longer the toenails.

What we saw in Gippsland was quite exciting. Not only did we have the basketball in Traralgon, but we also had that magnificent — and comments were made about this earlier — live site in Moe, where we had a whole range of cultural activities over the course of the Commonwealth Games. The Killing Heidi concert was one of those fantastic events that was very well loved. I can assure you that my 14-year-old daughter and her friends particularly loved that concert and were certainly excited about the chance to view the band at that venue.

I want to talk a little bit about some of our local achievements. Jarrod Fletcher won a gold medal in boxing. Jarrod is from Moe — as, of course, you would expect, because we have a great sporting tradition in Moe. Although Jarrod now resides in Queensland, he knows where he came from, and all of us in the area wish him a wonderful career. We were so glad as a community to be able to cheer him on during his boxing at the Commonwealth Games. Then, of course,

there was Kathy Watt. Although she has previously won an Olympic gold medal and Commonwealth Games medals, at 41 years of age it was a remarkable achievement to win a silver medal. We want to congratulate Kathy on her achievements. I understand she is about to head overseas to do some more cycling, so she is certainly not someone who is looking at retirement. Kathy is one of our great sporting heroes from Warragul, and we are very pleased about her achievements.

In terms of what was achieved with the live site, I want to thank a small number of the people involved in the process, who were very helpful. It took a huge amount of work to put together the program for the live site, and I want to particularly thank those involved in supporting it, as well as the Minister for Commonwealth Games in the other place, the Honourable Justin Madden, the rest of the government and also the minister's office. I must also thank the Latrobe City Council for its tremendous amount of hard work.

A number of council staff put in an enormous number of hours and worked very hard to make the cultural side of the Commonwealth Games a great success. They include the live site coordinators, Meaghan Jewson and Josh Graham, who certainly worked very hard and did an outstanding job — the live site was really appreciated by the local community — and the Latrobe City Council marketing and communications team, Grantley Switzer, Chris Repetowski, Wendy Hrynyszyn and Jessica Kennedy. I also want to thank the Moe Racing Club, where we held the live site event, and the combined service clubs of the Latrobe Valley, the Apex, Lions and Rotary clubs, as well as the 500 local artists who volunteered to perform on stage and be part of a successful event.

This was a wonderful experience. I am sure the member for Morwell will talk more about the other events that took place in the Latrobe Valley during the Commonwealth Games. It was a really exciting time. A lot of people worked very hard. I have never seen such wonderful community involvement. We watched the opening ceremony on a big screen and when the fireworks went off at 10 o'clock at night it was quite an exciting time for all who were there. That set the scene for the whole 11 days. Well done to all those who were involved in bringing about such a great outcome for our community.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I support the motion. In doing so I want to praise the work of the volunteers, not only the 15 000 who volunteered directly but also all the other volunteers throughout

Victoria who had a part to play. I note that the government took up the Liberal Party's idea of giving volunteer firefighters free tickets to the games. I think that was an admirable decision. Those are the sorts of volunteers we should be praising all the time, but in this particular instance we had the volunteers who put their hands up. I note that many of them came from interstate and some of them came from overseas — some New Zealanders even came over and volunteered. It was not just a Victorian effort, it was an Australian effort, although the volunteers were predominantly Victorians. That was fantastic.

Anybody who had any part to play in these games should feel proud of what was achieved right from the time of Victoria seeking the games. As has been mentioned by previous speakers, the Kennett government, together with Ron Walker, set out to get the games. I happened to be a cabinet minister in the Kennett government during that time and I was part of the group which talked on many occasions to Commonwealth Games delegates in order to persuade them that this was the best place to hold the games. We were successful and that showed in the results.

I was very interested in a television interview the Premier did last Monday night. He was clearly being interviewed in the Treasury Gardens and he was asked the question, 'How do you justify the amount of money that was spent?'. This question was raised by the member for Mildura in his contribution on this motion. The Premier said that there was no option, that Melbourne had been awarded the Commonwealth Games and it was a responsibility of the government to do the very best possible job in the interests of Melbourne, in the interests of Victoria and ultimately in the interests of Australia. I agree completely with what the Premier said. The government had no option. In fact it had an obligation to go ahead and do the very best possible job it could, and it did do an excellent job. The government deserves to be praised for the job it did, along with all of the other bodies. Victoria Police, the Australian Army and the federal government were all involved and they all deserve to be praised for what occurred.

People were quoted before the games and towards the end of the games as saying, 'Look at the massive amount of money that was spent on security'. If the money had not been spent and something serious had happened, the finger would have been pointed at the army, the police and both governments and the question asked would have been, 'Why did you not have a proper level of security?'. It is a matter of being damned if you do and damned if you do not. Both governments made the right decisions. They cranked up

the level of security to a very high level and as a result we had a safe and peaceful Commonwealth Games — something everybody wanted to see occur. It occurred and therefore the right decisions were made.

I was very disappointed to see a poll in the *Herald Sun* the other day asking a fairly simplistic question about whether the money spent on the Commonwealth Games was justified. A majority of people voted no. I stand to be corrected, but something like 60 per cent voted that it was not justified and 40 per cent voted that it was. That is a disappointing result. In fact I think it is a skewed result. The people of Melbourne showed by their turnout and the support they gave to the games that there was wide support and that they appreciated the efforts made by everybody, the athletes included.

I have no time for the doomsayers and the negative people who come along now and say it was just a minor sporting event. This was a major event for Melbourne, it was a major event for Victoria, it was a major event for Australia. It certainly did not do us any harm; in fact it did us an enormous amount of good both nationally and internationally. Events like this, including the Australian Formula One Grand Prix, do a great deal for this state and that is why they should be supported. I am very pleased that this government is now a strong supporter of the formula one grand prix, because it was not when the Kennett government obtained it for Victoria.

Finally, I want to speak in particular about the volunteers from my electorate, and there were many hundreds of them. I congratulate them all. I think they did a wonderful task for the games and this state. They deserve every bit of congratulations they can be given. They will be contacted by me and given my personal congratulations.

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — I am very pleased to rise in support of this motion. Having a sporting background I can talk first hand about some of the experiences I had — —

Mr Mulder — Can you?

Ms MARSHALL — Yes, I can; unfortunately you cannot. I have been able to participate in world cup competitions, national competitions, world championship competitions and the Olympic Games. The Melbourne 2006 competition was the best I have ever seen. Maybe that is partially because I was privileged to have the perspective of an athlete and the enjoyment level of one of the hundreds of spectators who attended the events. I was lucky enough to go to some of the events — I went to the rugby 7s, I saw

some of the gymnastics and I went to the shooting. However, I also participated in many of the free events. With my children and husband I walked down and saw the marathon and the cycling events. The highlight for us was watching the fish display at night. We walked down and had a barbecue on the Yarra, listened to the music and watched the fabulous display. I was one of thousands of people on each of the two occasions I went down there.

Watching it on television, the coverage was absolutely brilliant. I congratulate Channel 9 for its superb coverage. It was quite tricky to look at all the different events and make sure people understood who was competing. They showed the Australians in great detail and I think that was one of the reasons the support grew as the days progressed. I am sure the ratings for the television coverage would show that.

The highlight for me was Scott Martin and the magical moment when he embraced his coach, Gus Puopolo, displaying the sheer excitement and almost disbelief that he had succeeded. He was known as our ballet dancing representative in the discus. I know him quite well and he pointed out that he never did have a ballet lesson, but looking at the way he performed during the Commonwealth Games he was spurred on by the support from the spectators and by the mere notion of a home crowd. Having competed I know the difference a home crowd cheer can make and it was fantastic to be a part of it.

The final moment was the closing ceremony. We watched the fireworks display from our balcony and we were able to see not only the Melbourne Cricket Ground but also the fireworks on top of all of the buildings. It was an absolutely beautiful display. I went to Sydney for the 2000 Olympics and saw what they produced and this well and truly capped their efforts. I was very proud to be a Melburnian and a Victorian. I congratulate everybody involved for one of the most fantastic events I have seen in my lifetime.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I also rise, as my colleagues have done, to support the motion moved by the Premier in relation to the Commonwealth Games — and what a fantastic Commonwealth Games it was! I open my contribution to the debate with a reference to an interjection I directed to the member for Forest Hill, which I am not sure she heard. When I said, ‘You were a champion’ I was recognising the work and effort and the amount of time highly trained athletes actually put in for the sake of those one or two occasions a year when their efforts are recognised. It is an extraordinary feat of personal discipline, and I admire the work they put in.

What really struck me as my wife and I moved around the city, down through Federation Square, along the Yarra River and up through the streets, was the attitude of the people — the families and the younger people. If you did not know better, you would have sworn on a lot of occasions that you were in a big country town. I have never seen Melbourne quite like that before. I have never seen that spirit of goodwill before and that degree of hospitality being extended by Victorians to international visitors. In a couple of restaurants during the week I heard international visitors talk about Melbourne, Melburnians and Victorians and the friendship that had been extended to them, and it made me proud indeed to be part and parcel of the Commonwealth Games.

I pay my respects and thanks to the former Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Jeffrey Kennett, and Ron Walker and his committee. One thing this government did well was to retain the services of Ron Walker, who has done a splendid job for the government of the day, particularly when you think of his background, the work that he carried on behind the scenes and his association with the Liberal Party over the years — the fact is that Ron Walker has always put Victoria first. The games were an enormously successful event, and it is only the experience and commitment of people like him who are prepared to give of their own time and their own selves in such an unselfish manner that make such a great occasion possible.

My wife, Sue, and I were fortunate enough to go to the games on Thursday night, and it was quite obvious to me from when they met us at the gate of the Melbourne Cricket Ground right through until we reached the escalators that there were a lot of country people amongst the volunteers. The country people stand out. I felt quite proud, and I spoke to a lot of them. On my way around I ran into John Renyard from Timboon, one of the older volunteers. A lot of our volunteers were older people, and it must be remembered that a lot of the people from country Victoria had to find their own accommodation and in the early stages were paying full rail fares and paying for their own petrol to get to and from country Victoria. I do not want to downplay the efforts of the people who live in the city, but it must be remembered that in their contribution to the Commonwealth Games those from the country and interstate bore an enormous cost burden. It was fantastic to see them there working the way they did and doing their bit.

On the night I was there I saw Jana Pittman win the hurdle race, and being a trainer of hurdlers many years ago — not the human type, but the old horses — I would say that Jana Pittman was one who dashed in

and had a go. We used to have those racehorses that would prop and those that would try to run off, but I thought her effort was spectacular. The crowd was extremely gracious, given what had taken place prior to the evening, and I was thankful for her that she was accepted and greeted in such a way. I would say that in the future when he is attending such events with the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So, the Premier may need to insist that he is introduced with John So — in other words, ‘The Premier of Victoria and John So, Lord Mayor of Melbourne’. That would be safe, given the popularity of Lord Mayor John So. He is a goer, as someone said to me yesterday.

A great role was played by the City of Melbourne in these tremendous games, and I would have to direct some praise towards the transport planners whom the government brought in to get the planning right for transport for the Commonwealth Games. I was fortunate enough to meet them. I am not sure whether it is possible to retain the services of some of those people, but no doubt they did a good job to move that many people. What I would be hoping and expecting to see is that our transport system does not go backwards. If that type of service can be delivered over the period of 12 days, there is no reason why, when we revert back to normal patterns, we cannot provide an equally good transport system for the people of Melbourne and for the regions.

The 15 000 volunteers made a tremendous effort. There is no doubt that as the Commonwealth Games move to other countries they will be trying to emulate the performances of Melbourne and Australia. However, I think we are special, especially when you look at the number of medals that were gained by Australian athletes. I have always said that for a small country, we punch above our weight. We are a young gene pool of risk-takers and very brave people. Our grandfathers and our great-grandfathers brought with them a spirit of adventure, a spirit of being extremely game and brave, and I think that shows through in a lot of our performances on the field with a lot of our athletes and sporting people. On that note I conclude my contribution — a great job, and well done to all concerned!

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — It is a pleasure to speak today on this Commonwealth Games motion. It is fair to say that the people in my electorate of Eltham, in Melbourne, in Australia and in fact in the whole world, have just witnessed the greatest Commonwealth Games ever staged. I say that in every sense. There simply was not an aspect of these games that did not set the bar to an all-time high. In every sense the people of Eltham helped to make it the great success it was. They were a

major part of the army of dedicated volunteers, they were part of the gold medallist athletes and they were certainly part of the passionate spectators. In fact the people of Eltham love sport quite dearly. Eltham has some fantastic sporting clubs, but in regard to the Commonwealth Games it had the fourth highest take-up of Commonwealth Games tickets in Victoria — quite a remarkable feat for a fairly small part of Melbourne.

I comment in particular on a couple of aspects of the Commonwealth Games because many speakers here today have commented on the fantastic way Melbourne looked. Anyone who walked along the Yarra River, around Federation Square, was absolutely astounded at what a fantastic city this was during the games. I comment on the amazing quality of the opening and closing ceremonies, which I observed. It is perhaps the first time that a ceremony has incorporated an entire city, and underpinning this was a level of organisation and professionalism I believe has never before been seen on such a scale in Melbourne. There could not have been a single Melburnian who was not proud of their city or who was not reminded that Melbourne is truly the sports and major events capital of Australia.

After the opening ceremony came the gold rush, as our athletes piled on outstanding performances in the pool, on the track and on the court. Once again Eltham was there, with gold medal performances. I congratulate Hollie Grima, who helped steer the Australian women's basketball team to a crushing victory, and Danni Miatke, who gave a powerhouse performance in the women's 50 metres butterfly. Danni also managed to smash the games record in the process. These are two shining examples of the talented and driven sports stars that the clubs and schools of Eltham are working on all the time.

All up, some 221 gold medals were won for Australia — a fantastic effort — but that only tells half the story. It does not adequately summarise the stories of personal triumph, inspiring highs and heartbreaking lows that came with the games. I am sure that both Hollie and Danni, like the other 4500 athletes who came here to compete from all parts of the world, were happy enough simply to share in the experience and proud of being games athletes.

I congratulate all the volunteers, the members of the police and emergency services and the public servants who worked exceptionally hard to make these games such a success. In particular I would like to thank and congratulate Minister Madden and his ministerial and departmental staff on the outstanding job they did to ensure that this event truly showcased the city to the

world in such a stunning manner. The colour, festivity and creative edge of these games are things this government can be proud of.

Finally, I would like to say that although the games are over the flow-on benefits of the games through tourism, investment and future events will be enjoyed by Melburnians for a long time to come. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — What a marvellous event the Commonwealth Games 2006 were for Mighty Melbourne! Firstly, I acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by volunteers across Victoria, and in particular those volunteers from my electorate, including the suburbs of Hampton, Highett, Sandringham, Black Rock, Cheltenham, Beaumaris and Mentone. I pay tribute to their sense of community spirit, enthusiasm and selflessness and the skills they brought to the various contributions they made.

The Commonwealth Games was marked by the contributions not only from the volunteers but from the athletes. From my own point of view, the 400 metres win by John Steffensen was a great highlight, as were performances across the whole gamut of events.

I had the privilege of attending a number of athletics events, the gymnastics, the cycling, and the closing ceremony. I also acknowledge the contribution made by the former coalition government under the leadership of Jeff Kennett, as well as the direction of Ron Walker and Campbell Rose and their great work in bringing the games to Melbourne sine qua non, without which none of it would have taken place.

Another perspective of the games I would like to focus on concerns the role of sports coaches. I pay tribute to the outstanding career of Mr Roy Boyd, supported by his wife, Bev, who over a 40-year period has contributed to the successful participation and contribution of a number of Australian athletes. Roy resides in Cheltenham and has been an active coach through the Sandringham Athletics Club. The highlights of his career have been Debbie Flintoff-King's 1988 Olympic gold medal and Kyle Vander Kuyp's run in the final of the World Cup in 1995, which set an Australian record that will not be beaten for a long time.

Roy had a number of remarks to make in relation to the future of athletics in Australia. He said that athletics has to capitalise on the success of the Commonwealth Games. A lot of children will want to take up the sport, and coaching needs to be organised on two levels — one at the elite level for athletes to go on and represent

the country, and another at the club level. Only a small number of athletes go on to become elite athletes. The competition needs to be coordinated so that all athletes have a chance to compete in the future. The standard of coaching in Australia at the elite level is very good, but not enough coaching is undertaken at the club level to satisfy those who wish to compete. A lot of part-time coaches work extremely hard with very little reward, but there is great satisfaction in sharing in the success of athletes.

The highlight of the career of Debbie Flintoff-King — one of Roy's protégées — was winning a Commonwealth Games medal in Brisbane in 1982. She won two gold medals — one in the 400 metres flat and one in the 400 metres hurdles — at the games in 1986. At Seoul she had that marvellous win over Tatyana Ledovskaya, where she won by one-hundredth of a second in a new Commonwealth Games record time.

I also acknowledge the outstanding athletic career of Kyle Vander Kuyp, a role model for young and indigenous Australians. I also acknowledge that over the last three years he and Roy Boyd worked closely together to prepare for the games. While Kyle did not make the hurdles final in Melbourne 2006, in the spirit of Cavafy it is not necessarily the destination that is important but the journey along the way. Kyle has spent a very successful time as an outstanding role model. An article on the web quotes Kyle as saying:

I do my sport for myself. I do it to feel proud about who I am and what I am but also for my family and the people that are around me to say he's out there having a go! Doing hurdles is a sideline thing. It's about getting up and doing something and showing people what you can do. That was a great moment! I got the Charles Perkins Award and the Deadly Award ...

These are indigenous awards in Australia. He went on to add that he liked:

... telling my story, getting everyone that's been close to me and getting their side of it ... I suppose just showing the journey and getting kids to realise that you can do anything, that you don't have to be from a certain background. I didn't have wealthy parents. It wasn't about being wealthy, it's about having a drive, a motivation, being passionate about something, having a lot of love around you!

In closing this brief contribution I again pay tribute to the outstanding work done by Roy and Bev Boyd in the development of amateur athletics in this nation and for the welfare of the young Australian athletes who have had the benefit of their support.

Finally, I note for the record a request from George Greig, a teacher at the Beaumaris campus of Sandringham Secondary College. He seeks access to

some of the flags from the games. That request has been made to the sports minister and the Melbourne 2006 committee. I trust that we hear back from them in time so that the school may benefit in the wake of a very successful Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Ms McTAGGART (Evelyn) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to contribute to this motion, to pay tribute to and thank everyone involved in the Commonwealth Games. The 18th Commonwealth Games in Melbourne have been an overwhelming success. It was the greatest event the state has ever hosted, and there are many people to be congratulated: the Bracks government; chairman Ron Walker; Lord Mayor John So; Melbourne 2006; the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination and the 15 000 volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the games — all are to be commended on their remarkable efforts, which were certainly evident at the events I attended; the volunteers did a lot of work. I also want to mention local identity Geoff Brown, a County Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer in my electorate, who came into my office to proudly show me his uniform and to let me know that he was working down at Birrarung Marr during the games. I commend Geoff on his role as a volunteer for the games and also as a voluntary local CFA member.

Last year many members would have had the pleasure of presenting Commonwealth Games flags to their schools. During those presentations I spoke to the children about the representatives of the 71 countries who would come to Victoria and the 4500 athletes who would be participating in this sporting and cultural event. The students were very enthusiastic. During a recent visit to Manchester Primary School in Mooroolbark, the Minister for Commonwealth Games and I were shown projects, artworks and sports demonstrations by the students, but the main highlight of the day was Karak, the wonderful mascot of the games.

This enthusiasm spread throughout my electorate and beyond with events organised by the shire as a result of the \$70 000 funding it received through the Getting Involved program. I have commended the shire on many occasions on the success of its programs. There were many successful events, but one that will stay with me always was the twilight festival at Lilydale Lake for the opening ceremony of the games, when 6000 residents attended. They enjoyed food, wine and local craft, and there was a wonderful atmosphere as we sat on the grass and watched the opening ceremony on the large screen. We were entertained in the lead-up to the opening ceremony by local youth musicians and

indigenous performers. It made me proud to see so many families getting involved in our local community.

I have spoken many times in this place about the Melbourne Gun Club and the clay target shooting. The club and its surrounds looked absolutely amazing during the games, and I was very fortunate to play a part in the medal presentations to Russell Mark and Craig Trembath — congratulations to them and to Lauren Mark, who also won medals. Being the current parliamentary shooting champion, it was with great delight that I attended those events. Also, Danni Miatke broke the games record in her swimming event. Members should understand that she left her family in Darwin at the age of 14 to come and live in Melbourne. To achieve such wonderful results was outstanding.

I think we have all been inspired by the athletics, cycling, weight-lifting, and the elite athletes with disabilities have truly inspired us. I commend the minister, his staff, the parliamentary secretary and everyone involved in the games. We were all truly united by the moment.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I want to say from the outset that I am a great sports-loving person and it is well known in my electorate that I am a great supporter of sporting activities within the area. A large proportion of people living in my electorate participate in sport in north-eastern Victoria and utilise the great facilities available in Wangaratta. I would say we are a mecca for sports people in north-eastern Victoria and indeed at the Barr Reserve, which has seen an enormous development of facilities within the rural city.

Families in my electorate strongly supported the 18th Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. As has been highlighted by many members, the games were very successful and were acclaimed generously by everybody. We need to recognise the role of the organising committee, the various government organisations, the volunteer organisations, competitors from the various commonwealth countries, the huge number of volunteers from all over Victoria who came in and assisted with the successful conduct of the games, and of course the friendly people who were part of the audiences along with the crowds that participated and attended many of the functions that were held.

Melbourne is a great city; it is one of the great cities of the world, and I say that to people wherever I go. The games have demonstrated Melbourne's capacity to host major events. I represent a country electorate, and I recognise the importance of Melbourne as being the nucleus of the state of Victoria, but at the same time I

remember that those who live in country areas need strong support.

Like many members of Parliament and others, I took the opportunity of being in the ballot for tickets to a number of events and was successful in receiving tickets for some of them. The highlights of the events in the Melbourne Cricket Ground last Sunday week were the two marathon events, particularly the win by Karen McCann. There is no doubt that the massive crowd there helped support her, leading to her success in winning that event.

The public transport system worked extremely well during the games, and I congratulate the government and particularly the Minister for Transport for that. My family and I were at the aquatic centre one morning and had to come back into central Melbourne. We were among hundreds of people who lined up to catch the tram back into the city. The crowds moved quietly and extremely well, and there is no doubt that the highly successful organisation of transport played a great part in the conduct of the games.

Country members were originally concerned about the offer of a \$10 ticket to country people, to have them use the passenger rail services into Melbourne. We expressed concern because of the difficulty of utilising that \$10 ticket on the same day. Again I support the actions taken by the Minister for Sport and Recreation in the other place and others in making sure that that ticketing was extended beyond just a single day so that people could come down one day and travel home on the following day.

I personally made representations to the minister on that matter, having had a number of complaints made to me by constituents. Later I heard from some who had successfully got those tickets, when in the first place they were unable to get them, to travel to Melbourne. While I am a great supporter of passenger rail services in country Victoria, I remind the house again that rail services up to the north-east are not up to standard; that is another issue on which I will be talking to the Minister for Transport and raising in further contributions to debate on other occasions in the house.

We also attended the gymnastics conducted at the Rod Laver Arena. Those events were absolutely fantastic. I remind the house that in the 1980s the then National Party, through the strong leadership of Peter Ross-Edwards, supported the then Labor government to ensure the tennis centre, as it was called then, was built. It is worthwhile members of the government recognising that the support of the National Party in the

upper house made sure that that legislation went through Parliament.

The government took over that area and built the tennis centre; what great facilities we now have at what was the tennis centre, then Flinders Park and now Melbourne Park. The sporting facilities around the Melbourne Cricket Ground are absolutely second to none. Melbourne Park is a great example of Melbourne's sporting facilities.

I again remind members that the then National Party, with the balance of power in the Legislative Council, supported the Labor government's legislation which led to the construction of those facilities; we made sure they were built. I pay tribute to a former Leader of The Nationals, the Honourable Peter Ross-Edwards, for the work he did. He was a trustee of the MCG and a founding trustee for the centre.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr JASPER — Excuse me, what was the comment?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! Interjections are disorderly. I ask the honourable member for Murray Valley to continue and ignore the interjections.

Mr JASPER — We are always getting stupid comments from across the house — and that one was absolutely stupid! I will not respond now but will on another occasion, because the interjection deserves comment. Those sorts of comments are disgraceful.

I trust that with the distribution of excess equipment and the floating fish on the Yarra River that some of that equipment will come to country areas. Melbourne has demonstrated its place as the sporting capital of the world, and the events at the MCG and the other surrounding areas were electric as far as sports venues are concerned. There is no doubt that with the support of the crowds, the events were made even better.

Surely this showcased to the world that we are a peace-loving country. We live in harmony, in total contrast to what is happening in trouble spots in the Middle East and Africa. I hope people who viewed the events that took place during the Commonwealth Games will recognise that they, too, can live in harmony and see it as a way they can live in the future. We trust we can transfer that experience to other parts of the world where there are huge problems.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Tourism) — I too support the Premier's motion and

congratulate and thank all the organisers of the Commonwealth Games. I certainly congratulate Ron Walker and John Harnden and their massive team along the river at the old World Trade Centre site. I congratulate the president of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Mike Fennell, and thank him for the support from the federation. Thanks also go to Sam Coffa and Perry Crosswhite of the Commonwealth Games Association. I also congratulate all the Australian athletes and all visiting athletes.

As Minister for Tourism, I particularly congratulate some of those who may be less known to us. There is Clive Dwyer, who was group manager for tourism and destination marketing for the Commonwealth Games in the Melbourne 2006 office. He leveraged maximum opportunities from a tourism point of view. We heard from the Premier today that the Australian Hotels Association said that a record amount of accommodation was provided in Melbourne with a 93.9 per cent occupancy rate, the highest level we have ever seen in Melbourne's history, with some hotels reporting 100 per cent occupancy.

My thanks go to the Australian Hotels Association and Clive Dwyer, who set up a room-banking service so we could make sure that, if people wanted to come to Melbourne or to regional Victoria to visit any games venues, they were not going to see signs saying that all our hotels were full. This room-banking service ensured that anyone who wanted to come to Melbourne could do so, resulting in such a phenomenal games attendance record.

About one-third of the people who visited, about 30 000 visitors, were people who lodged with families and friends out in the suburbs of Melbourne and regional Victoria where some of the games sites were located. It was certainly a record in respect of the number of tourists we have had at any one point in time in the history of Melbourne and Victoria. I want to thank Clive and also Tourism Victoria staff who have worked for a long period of time in our interstate office in Sydney and our overseas offices in commonwealth countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and Singapore to gain leverage in some of the commonwealth countries.

Not only did we get great visitation from those countries, but we also got exceptional coverage. In some of the markets where we wanted to make more of an impression and where it has been very hard to work in the past, such as South Africa, Malaysia, Canada and India, the Commonwealth Games gave us a huge opportunity to have Melbourne noticed. When I saw last Friday the photos on the front pages of the main

Indian media I knew the Melbourne Commonwealth Games were going to be a resounding success because of the way we portrayed ourselves to the rest of the world. The success of the games will make it easier for us to chase up business and encourage people to travel to Victoria, to live in Victoria and to invest in Victoria. We will continue to work hard to do that because we have worked hard during the games to be noticed.

I was on the cabinet committee and was responsible for working with Tourism Victoria and Clive Dwyer on our tourism marketing programs. And when we were not in government I was the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, having supported, as did the Treasurer, who was the Leader of the Opposition at the time, our bid for the Commonwealth Games. When you actually look at the bid document — and I know that some of the other members have reminded us that it was the previous government that bid for the games — one of the uncanny quirks of the bidding process that the former Premier, Jeff Kennett, found a bit awkward was that the bidding document stipulated that he had to have a letter of support from and a photo of the Leader of the Opposition. We were there supporting the bid for nine years, as we should have been. There is no doubt that whilst the previous government did the bidding, we are the government that actually delivered the best event Victoria has ever hosted. Personnel from the office of Justin Madden, Minister for Commonwealth Games in the other place, and the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination also did an exceptional job.

There are a couple of other unsung people I would like to recognise. We have heard a huge amount about the volunteers, and they were really great. One of the greatest volunteers I have known lives in my area of Endeavour Hills. He is Juan Carlos Loyola, who runs a Special Olympics soccer program for disabled people. Carlos was one of the people at the Melbourne Cricket Ground who escorted dignitaries during medal presentations. I had the great honour of offering bouquets to the women's 4 x 100 metres relay, and Carlos was there doing a great job. There was probably no better way to recognise Carlos, and not just as a volunteer for the Commonwealth Games, than by giving him this exceptional role of meeting dignitaries such as our Prime Minister, Prince Edward and visiting officials from overseas and assisting them in the medal presentation ceremonies. I thank and commend Carlos.

Other volunteers we have not heard about are people such as the attachés. There is Gerald Hendricks from my electorate, who was the attaché for Uganda. Gerry Hendricks is a mad, passionate sports fan who is involved with his own family and his kids' sporting activities. He was born in South Africa and he was

asked to support the South African attaché. A few weeks before the games — where else would you see this but in a place like Australia — he was asked to be attaché for the Ugandan team. He was just a retired guy from the suburb of Dandenong North who was out there supporting a team from a visiting country. It was a country from his own region of Africa and not the country he was born in, but he massively supported that team. All the teams that had local attachés supporting them have left this country thinking what a great hospitable, welcoming, friendly and diverse place this is, and I want to thank all of those attaches.

There were other attachés like Louis Appleby, chief executive officer (CEO) of Tourism Victoria, who was the attaché for the Canadian team. Peter Abraam, CEO of the Victorian Major Events Company, was the attaché for the Cypriot team. I want to commend both of them because they gave us huge and significant exposure. I was fortunate enough to attend a Cypriot function that sent off the team the other night. I also had the opportunity of meeting the English team when they were in the city of Casey and the team from Mozambique when they visited the city of Greater Dandenong last weekend. We had great feedback. Peter Abraam got all the Greek media behind the Cypriot team — as well as Australia, of course. It was great to see the ethnic media supporting our Commonwealth Games, and it was people like Peter Abraam who did that.

I would also like to say that I was a volunteer for a volunteer. Mr Lenders, the Minister for Finance in the other place, is renowned for being a volunteer, and I had to volunteer for one of his ministerial portfolios, so I am claiming that I was a volunteer as well, as was Minister Kosky, who took on another of the minister's portfolios. We all did our bit, but I was really pleased with the way we showcased Melbourne and how the people of Melbourne and Victoria and visitors from other states just wanted to make sure that anyone who was visiting Melbourne had the best of best experiences. That is exactly what we saw, and it is reflected in the comments that members are making in this house.

Certainly they were the Friendly Games, not only in the way that everyone was supporting Australia but in the way they were supporting the underdog teams as well. The most memorable moments for me in these games were at the Rugby events, when the crowd was cheering on the Ugandan team, the Samoan team and the Tongan team. Even though they were never going to win a medal, still the crowd was out there supporting them.

Another highlight was being at the MCG, watching one of the Papua New Guinean runners. He was miles behind anyone else, but he was cheered on by the crowd and encouraged to finish the race. That was the great thing we showed about fair-go Australia — we are welcoming to people, we are respectful of people and we are supportive of the underdog.

I am very proud and honoured to have been involved in it, and I know that all members of this house are very pleased with the efforts of Ron Walker, John Hamden, the Minister for Commonwealth Games, Meredith Sussex and the Commonwealth Games Association, and the Commonwealth Games Federation internationally.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I would like to add my congratulations and thanks to the many thousands of people who helped make the Commonwealth Games such an enjoyable and memorable occasion for so many Victorians and visitors to Victoria. It has been remarked that these have been friendly games, as were the Olympic Games of 1956, and it is marvellous to see that Melbourne, Victoria and Australia's reputation for friendliness and being a welcoming place to be has continued for so many years and looks set to continue for so many years into the future.

It is noticeable that this friendliness and openness and welcoming came without being mandated by any law and without being urged on by any advertising campaign. It is something that is intrinsic to our nature and way of life as Victorians and Australians. It is something that is, in a way, best recognised and acknowledged and then taken for granted as something that is expected to continue without being too focused on. It was certainly noticeable over the games just past and something marvellous to have seen.

There are many aspects of the games which can be remarked on. I want to express a few thoughts on various aspects related to the local area in the Box Hill electorate and surrounds, and in no particular order I reflect at the outset on the Queen's baton relay, which came to Walker Park in Nunawading in the city of Whitehorse and was received with great acclaim, as it was in many other centres around Victoria and other parts of Australia. Then the following morning it proceeded through Box Hill along Nelson and Elgar roads, and departed the city of Whitehorse. That was a great opportunity for many local people to get involved with the excitement.

Another memorable aspect was the opportunity and privilege that I had as a local member, along with other members of this house, to present Commonwealth

Games flags to both government and non-government schools in the electorate. The coming of the Commonwealth Games was a great opportunity for schools to teach and show students a bit more about the commonwealth and its history — the great tradition of friendliness and unity among nations of the former British Empire and commonwealth — and it was noticeable how students' knowledge of the commonwealth developed as the games drew closer. It was a privilege to be able to take part as a local member in helping to raise that enthusiasm through presenting flags to the various schools.

The City of Whitehorse was notable in sponsoring the Sierra Leonean team and raising funds for it, and again that is a demonstration of the enormous spontaneous willingness of the community to pitch in and to raise funds, either through corporate donors or as individual citizens. I was privileged to meet a number of the athletes at a civic reception, and I noted their enthusiasm. We certainly all hope for the best possible outcome for the future for those athletes, who now face some difficult issues.

Another notable involvement in the local area was that of the Box Hill Rugby Union football club, which made its ground at the corner of Middleborough Road and Canterbury Road available for some of the training of the Rugby 7s teams that took part in the games, particularly the teams from Kenya, Samoa, Niue and Sri Lanka. Again there was enormous involvement by the local rugby community in supporting and assisting those teams.

Looking to the future, I mentioned to the house last night the hope that the Box Hill athletic club may be able to receive a share of the surplus equipment that is now going to become available upon the conclusion of the games, and I certainly hope the government is able to finalise and make clear and public very quickly what those arrangements will be so that Box Hill and many other clubs that could make good use of that equipment have every opportunity to submit their applications and receive fair and proper consideration of their case.

In conclusion, the Commonwealth Games just past have been yet another demonstration of the enormous strengths and good qualities of Melbourne and Victoria as a community, and let us all hope that those strengths and good qualities continue for many years to come.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — The Melbourne Commonwealth Games were not just simply the best, they were fabulous. The spirit of goodwill, happiness and enthusiasm was everywhere to be seen and experienced. Like many other families and many other

Melburnians my family and I went out as many times as possible to experience the occasion, and it was most rewarding. I advised all the schools in my electorate that I visited to present the Commonwealth Games flags that this would be an historic occasion and something that all the school kids should get out there and enjoy because it may not come back again.

It is 50 years since the Olympic Games, and in another 50 years time perhaps Melbourne could hold such an event again. I know there has been some criticism of the opening ceremony because people did not understand it. I thought it was fabulous. I have been a regular visitor to the Melbourne Cricket Ground to watch football games over the years, and there have been many passages of play that my and many other football teams have played that I did not understand either, but I certainly experienced them and enjoyed the occasion. The opening ceremony was brilliant.

I was present on the banks of the Yarra River for the opening ceremony. I do not know who came up with the concept of the fish along the Yarra River, but that was breathtaking — it really was — and the crowds thoroughly enjoyed it. There was a cast of hundreds of thousands there, and the fireworks and the music and the lighting from the fish were magnificent. I, like many Melburnians, went back on more than one occasion to experience it.

I went to many events, like many Melburnians, and all those running the public transport and the volunteers should be congratulated. They were brilliant at their job. The enthusiasm and friendliness was coming through, smiles were everywhere and people were just having an excellent time, so I take off my hat to all the volunteers, staff and people who contributed to the Commonwealth Games. It was an outstanding event.

Aspects of the arts festival along the Yarra River and in the Alexandra Gardens were everywhere to be seen. I did not get to see everything, and I know there were long queues, and my kids, like all other kids, would rather not have queues, but when thousands of people go out to see these events, clearly they want to enjoy the experience. The closing ceremony, which I was present at, was moving. I thought the Indians put on a brilliant show, and I look forward to the Delhi games, but Melbourne should be proud of the experience we had. I commend everyone involved.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I would also, on behalf of the Lowan electorate which I represent, congratulate all involved with the Commonwealth Games, from the athletes to the volunteers — and I agree the volunteers did a fantastic job. Many of them

come from rural and regional Victoria and some from the Lowan electorate. I would like to congratulate the organising committee, the games staff and the officials because they played a very important role in officiating at many of these events. I know there were some controversies, but overall the games went extremely well.

I paid for and attended three events; the opening ceremony and the track and field events at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) last Thursday and Saturday, which were inspiring. When time permitted I watched some of the events on television at home. I talked to my youngest son, who was at the MCG when Craig Mottram ran the 5000 metres race. He said he had been to three grand finals and the atmosphere at the MCG when the race was being run was greater than at any of the grand finals he has been to. It shows again that we have a magic city and a magic state for hosting major events, and the MCG is the type of venue that can do it very well.

It was great to see the support given not only to our Australian athletes but to athletes from the other 71 countries that participated in the games. As I said, I watched some of the events on television, and I would like to highlight two that particularly inspired me. One was Matt Cowdrey, who won the 50 metres freestyle in the EAD (elite athletes with a disability) event.

Dr Sykes interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — As the member for Benalla says, he also swam in the 100 metres event. It was inspiring. His efforts with one arm show that people of all abilities can be involved in the Commonwealth Games. But the one that really stood out for me was Kerry McCann in the women's marathon. I have often wanted to see a marathon that was closely fought, and I think the lead changed five times in the last half kilometre. It was inspiring to see the crowd lift her, and her ability to win the women's marathon.

In rural and regional Victoria, the flags going to schools was a great opportunity for schools to be involved. The baton relay went through my electorate for one day. It started in Branxholme and then went to Hamilton, Coleraine, Casterton, Edenhope, Nhill, Dimboola and Horsham. Many people attended, particularly in the smaller towns of Coleraine and Edenhope, and those places put on a fantastic show when the baton went through. Basketball events were held in Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon, and some other events were held in rural and regional Victoria.

I want to make sure we get some lasting benefits from the Commonwealth Games in rural and regional Victoria. One way of doing that would be to obtain one of the fish from the Yarra River — and I saw the fish on the river. There have been applications from Lake Bolac and from Horsham and other areas in my electorate that would like to get one of the fish. We must realise that the people of Melbourne not only had great access to the games events but also to the free events on the river and other events. We want to make sure that some of our country people see the long-term benefits, not only with the fish but also with some of the other equipment that could be used.

I want to compliment a couple of athletes who come from my electorate. One is Lauren Hewitt, who comes from Warracknabeal. She competed in the 4 x 100 metres relay and won a bronze medal. Katherine Mitchell is a young lady from Casterton who came sixth in the javelin event. They are a couple of athletes from the electorate of Lowan who did very well.

In finishing, there are some concerns about the expense of the games, and it will be interesting to see what comes out about that. But overall it was a fantastic event. It shows that Victoria and Melbourne can put on events comparable to any around the world. The weather was kind and Ron Walker has been congratulated on his efforts. I heard someone on the ABC saying that they congratulated him on his efforts in making sure that the weather was good for the games. That really capped off — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — Sir Ron! The reality is that it was a good event. There are some concerns, but with those few words I congratulate all those involved.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

DISABILITY BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 1 March; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Community Services).

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! A question has been raised about the time the member for Caulfield has to speak on this bill as the opposition's lead speaker. As the minister's second-reading speech went 32 minutes over the half hour for reading a

speech, the member for Caulfield will have 62 minutes to respond.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — Thank you, Acting Speaker. I rise to speak on the Disability Bill. I wish to move a reasoned amendment. Therefore I move:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until full and proper consultation has taken place with the disability sector over the impact of the bill on the disabled'.

The Liberal Party initiated a call for this bill to be withdrawn to allow the disability sector, including families and the disabled, a respectable time to examine and consider this large, final bill. This call has been strongly supported by the sector, but unfortunately it has fallen on very deaf ears. The minister's retort in this place when I made the suggestion was that she had heard it all before, and her response in this place has been to try to throw a few insults in my direction.

Ms Garbutt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I want to make it very clear that I have never made such remarks.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! There is no point of order, and the minister has a right to refute the remark when she replies.

Mrs SHARDEY — Perhaps with some graciousness I will clarify what I intended to say, which was that the minister's retort to those who have raised this issue with her has been that she has heard it all before, and her response — —

Ms Garbutt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I request that be withdrawn. It is a blatant untruth!

Dr Napthine — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, it is not a case of the member having to withdraw. The minister is deliberately wasting the time of the lead speaker for the opposition because she is afraid of what is to be said. It is time for the minister to sit down and let the member for Caulfield get on with her speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! There is no point of order. No unparliamentary language was used and there was no reflection on the minister, but rather argument in debate. I will be listening very intently to the member for Caulfield from now on.

Mrs SHARDEY — Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I add that the minister's response to me when I moved for extra time was to try to throw a few insults

in my direction. I say to the minister that I can cop insults, but the disabled and their families, carers and those bodies that seek to represent them will not, and they have written to me to voice their disgust. In addition I have a news flash for the Minister for Community Services. Interested disability groups are not across all the detail of this final bill, as was so arrogantly claimed in this place.

There are very deep concerns that the bill in its current form has many flaws and will make it harder for the disabled to access services. The minister was criticised for not allowing enough time for the exposure draft to be read and responded to with the deadline being just before Christmas. Indeed, only some 71 written submissions got in to represent the views of some 940 000 Victorians with a disability. Now the minister is cutting short the debate again. This is after Minister Garbutt was dragged kicking and screaming to agree to provide an exposure draft of the bill in the first place, something she desperately tried to avoid. It took months to get her to agree to that.

One really has to ask what the government is afraid of. Disabled people having a voice that can actually be heard? Let me give the minister a few quotes from those who really understand the issues and who really represent people with disabilities. Firstly, a letter from Sue Jackson of the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) who wrote to me saying:

I write to congratulate you on your attempt in the Parliament on 1 March 2006 to have debate on the Disability Bill adjourned for two months rather than for the two weeks proposed by Minister Garbutt. CIDA supports your call for a longer adjournment of debate on the bill in order to allow time for proper public consideration and discussion of what is an extremely large (242 pages) complex and important piece of legislation.

Others voiced their concerns. A letter from Carers Victoria said:

If such delay means that the government's legislative program has to be revised in light of such strong views in the disability sector, then surely this is a small price to pay.

The Equal Opportunity Commission said:

The time frame allowed for public comment about this bill is inadequate.

High Point Industries said:

Not enough prior notice to stakeholders to provide considered comment to this bill and implications of it.

South Gippsland Carers Group said:

The response time to this document highlights the disregard to family carers.

CIDA made another comment:

We would suggest that even the most favourable reading of the submissions received in response to the exposure draft does not support the contention that the disability community wants the bill to go through as quickly as possible. Rather, the dominant concern is to get right legislation that will affect people's lives now and for many years in the future.

I think those comments really reflect the community sector's views.

The final point that should be made in this regard is that the minister's claim that the exposure draft had all the detail is simply untrue. There are hundreds of changes with whole sections having been added. I must admit I was appreciative of the disability services division executive director, Arthur Rogers, taking me through the changes in a very competent manner.

In particular, the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) has noted some changes and also wrote to me about its concerns. The letter, subheaded 'Request for adjournment of debate on Disability Bill' starts:

We strongly urge you to delay the debate on the Disability Bill by two months.

This is what they wrote to Minister Garbutt.

This adjournment of the debate on the bill would allow time for full consideration and discussion of this very complex and significant piece of legislation by those who it will most affect — people with disabilities, their families and carers, and providers of disability services.

This Disability Bill is an important, far-reaching and complex piece of legislation which has enormous implications for people with disabilities, their families and service providers in Victoria. In our letter dated 8 December 2005 we expressed concern about the extremely short time line for analysis of, and response to, the exposure draft of the bill. Many received information about the exposure draft from the Department of Human Services at the end of November.

It is very clear that the deep concerns expressed on this issue go right across the board. The Liberal Party agrees that the disability legislation needs to be rewritten. We took that policy to the last election. However, if the Bracks government and Minister Garbutt refuse to withdraw this legislation to allow a respectable period of time for consultation on the details of the final bill, the Liberal Party will not give this bill its support.

I will now turn to debate the bill itself. The purpose of this bill, as has been made clear, is the repeal of two acts of Parliament — the Intellectual Disability Persons' Services Act 1986 and the Disability Services Act 1991, and creates a new regime to administer disability services. These two acts have been in place for many years and were the result of a bipartisan

process of the entire Parliament. The member for Rodney explained very carefully the process that took place in this Parliament before I became a member. He described a process which was indeed bipartisan and something for the Parliament to be very proud of.

To understand the importance of this legislation one needs to understand the proportion of the population that is going to be affected by it. There are around 940 000 Victorians with some kind of disability. That is one in five people. Of these, around 273 000 have a severe or profound disability. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, two-thirds of Australians with a disability are under 65 years of age and a large number are children. The 700 000 Victorian carers who live in households supporting disabled Victorians are a unique and very amazing group of people who should receive key recognition as part of this debate.

In my time as shadow minister I have had the pleasure of meeting very many of these carers and have had the opportunity to understand what they are trying to do. As I have mentioned in the past, I too lived in a family with a disabled person and understand the challenges to families to stay together and support their loved one who has a disability. There are 389 government and non-government disability service organisations which operate at least one service outlet, and many of those would operate more than one.

Disability affects different people in different ways. It varies from intellectual, psychiatric and sensory disability, including acquired brain injury, to physical disability. Disability also affects people in varying degrees. For some it is life altering, while for others it provides challenges that are more easily overcome.

The responsibility of government is not only to give recognition to the needs of the disabled and their families but to minimise the spin and the rhetoric and streamline the ways in which the service system can be navigated and services are planned, funded and delivered. This should be what government is about. Forget the spin and the rhetoric about how much money we are spending or what we have done to make things better!

The point is that we are here to make the system better. That is what is being looked for. If that is not achieved, and if a lack of resources leaves thousands of disabled people out in the cold, then plans, reviews, legislation and systems count for nothing. Many would know the extent of the disability needs register and appreciate that there are thousands of people in the state without services. There are some 3000 looking for supported

accommodation, with at least 1000 of those on the urgent list. We do not get information about that too often, but I think people know that they are more or less the figures.

In the context of this legislation it should be noted that 43 organisations funded for information and/or advocacy in Victoria did not make submissions at any stage of the review process, which by and large means it is most unlikely that those organisations actually engaged their constituencies in the process.

The response of the peak bodies representing the intellectually disabled, who make up the bulk of people with disabilities in Victoria, is that they are concerned that the intellectually disabled will be disadvantaged by this legislation because they will lose the specific status which meets their special needs. I would like to quote from the Council of Intellectual Agencies, which wrote:

It is our very strong view that amalgamation of the two current acts into one piece of legislation is inappropriate and not in the interests of people with intellectual disabilities. The strengths of the IDPSA —

that is, the previous act —

must not be lost in efforts to further progress the rights of people with disabilities.

...

Much of the enthusiasm for amalgamation of the acts appears to derive from a view that disability supports should 'no longer be based on the type of disability that a person has'. This view has been reflected in a continuing shift away from a specific focus on people with intellectual disabilities in favour of a 'non-diagnosis-specific' approach. CIDA has serious concerns about this approach, especially since it appears to be based on unargued assumptions and could result in a loss of hard-won gains for people with intellectual disabilities and a reduction in emphasis on the specific supports, programs, safeguards and approaches needed to facilitate their participation as equal citizens.

Jewish Care also expressed concern about the watering down of the eligibility criteria for people with an intellectual disability. One quote from it was that:

... broadening the accepted criteria means we may lose touch with people who need the most support.

CIDA even questioned the timing of the legislative review, as it is most concerned that while the process of giving effect to the state disability plan is being undertaken there has been little time to identify, trial and evaluate different approaches of service delivery such as individualised funding frameworks and planning, and quality frameworks and standards.

I would now like to turn to some of the main provisions of this legislation. Part 1 establishes the bill's

commencement as 1 July 2007. Given this time frame, I again question what the rush is. Another couple of months to allow the sector to discuss the detail of the bill would go a long way towards ensuring that it has the proper capacity to have an input. When the actual implementation is not until the middle of next year, two more months would be quite reasonable.

As I said, I think two months of community consultation should be undertaken. The one reason for the minister's rush which stands out is that the Bracks government merely wants this bill out of the way. This is part of its re-election agenda, and it is trying to bed down its legislation prior to the campaign fully opening up. Obviously it does not want this agenda to be complicated by debates about the needs of the disabled. It is a great pity that the government has gone down this track. It should be able to put politics aside and work in favour of delivering a proper piece of legislation.

In relation to the definitions, controversy also arose as to whether to include psychiatric disability and mental illness in the definition of disability. The final bill does not include these illnesses, and it is therefore somewhat at odds with the definitions in the commonwealth antidiscrimination legislation and the state disability plan. This is complicated by the clause which defines a disability action plan as one which complies with the commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. To be really consistent with the federal legislation the definition would have to include mental illness, but it does not.

Part 2 sets out the objectives and principles upon which disability services are to be based. The one deletion in the objects of the bill, which was in the response to the exposure draft, is clause 4(2), the clause which was designed to give the government an out if it could not provide adequate resources for the provision of services. The disability sector, in particular those bodies representing the intellectually disabled, was in strong support of the retention of the explicit principles in the original legislation, which provide a broad philosophical framework within which the legislation should be read.

I note principles have been included in the response to the exposure draft to recognise the needs of children with disabilities and their families, although there is enormous concern that the role of parents is not properly recognised in the remainder of the bill. I will quote from Margaret Ryan's letter, which describes her concern about this very issue. She said:

The most telling omission from the Disability Bill 2006 is the word 'parent'. The Disability Bill 2006 totally neglects the role and legal authority of parents of babies, children and

young persons under the age of 18. Under the new act, for all intents and purposes, babies, children and young people with disabilities in Victoria are orphans; their parents do not exist.

The Disability Bill barely recognises children. You would think that Victoria's 75 600 children aged 0 to 15 years with disabilities also do not exist. There are five mentions about children which have been written into the Disability Bill after the chorus of protests at the original omission. These sections are either machinery or pay lip-service to the key issues.

... the legal authority of parents for those under 18 years means that there is an absolute need to differentiate between adults and non-adults. As well, the service system for children and young people — in child care, health and education to name but three key areas — is very different.

While the government denies the existence of babies, children and young people with disabilities and their parents, it can conveniently ignore its responsibilities towards these vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens of Victoria.

That is a very heartfelt letter, which to my mind carries great weight.

The need to be able to access services close to your home is recognised in the new bill, and I congratulate the government on that. I note that the Intellectual Disability Review Panel queries why the bill needs to include reference to people with disabilities having the same responsibilities as other members of the community when the objectives of the bill and its various provisions are concerned with the protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities. The concern is that the disabled may well be viewed as not complying with their responsibilities even if they do not have the capacity to understand or exercise them.

In response to the objectives and principles of this legislation, the concerns are borne out by the strong feeling in the sector that they reflect the tension, if you like, between the rights and needs of the disabled — that is, the rights on one hand and the needs on the other hand — and many people feel that people with disabilities have no right to services in Victoria even if they have an obvious need. In fact the request to change the principles to reflect a right to services has not been acceded to, and that is a very glaring omission.

Part 3 of this bill establishes the structure for the administration of services for the disabled. Firstly, it grants the Secretary of the Department of Human Services the powers to allocate funding and enter into contracts with service providers. Concern has been raised that the rights and functions of the secretary are weaker than the role of the department under the existing legislation and the onus and responsibility on government is reduced in significant areas, making the role of the department narrower and more administratively focused. In fact many of the

commitments and responsibilities set out in section 6 of the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act do not appear to be reflected in the role and functions of the secretary — for example, the role of ensuring access to a range of services was omitted.

Concern has also been raised in relation to the power of the secretary to provide funds to a person as well as to councils and non-government organisations. The query is whether a person can become a service provider and have their details not recorded on the register of disability service providers. The additional question is whether this allows for direct payments to people with disabilities and/or families and what quality provisions would be made under these circumstances. I would like to receive some sort of clarification on this. I am pleased to see that the parliamentary secretary is present; perhaps he will explore that definition. The issue of concern is that people with a mental illness are also not covered in this bill. Will this mean that there will be a failure to provide services to those people with dual or multiple disabilities — for example, a mental illness and an intellectual disability?

Secondly, it will establish the Victorian Disability Advisory Council to advise the minister. There seems to be general support for giving the advisory council legislative basis, so I will not go into the detail of that further.

Thirdly, the bill will create a disability services commissioner to handle complaints about services for the disabled. This position, which is to be appointed by the Governor in Council, is for a maximum of five years, but after five years the person in the position is eligible for re-appointment. He or she is not subject to the Public Administration Act but must provide an annual report. It is unclear whether this annual report of the commissioner will be tabled in Parliament. I would have thought that would be mandatory, so this is another area where I would like some clarification — perhaps from the parliamentary secretary — as to whether the annual report of the commissioner is to be tabled in his house. The independence of the disability services commissioner will be completely lost if that is not the case.

The concern expressed in relation to this position is that the commissioner should have the power to initiate their own investigations on behalf of individuals and groups and not just respond to complaints made to them. That is a very sensible suggestion. It would mean that the commissioner would be able to embark upon some investigations at their own instigation.

Individuals in particular may be unwilling or unable to lodge a complaint about their service provider, especially when they are reliant on the service provider for their day-to-day needs. I think we should give the commissioner that flexibility. The sector would also like the commissioner to have the power to review departmental decisions; for example, in relation to a person's plan. This idea was put forward by the intellectual disability review panel.

The bill establishes a Disability Services Board to advise both the minister and the disability services commissioner with respect to complaints. This body of 11 members will be appointed by the minister to be representative of service providers, service users and children with disabilities but not parents. Three other members are to have certain expertise and there will be further single representatives of the secretary of the department and the health services commissioner.

The bill also provides for a senior practitioner to regulate restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment. I will refer to that later. This is a sensitive area in relation to the use of restrictive interventions such as restraint and seclusion as determined by the secretary of the department as a result of an application. Such restraint must be part of a behaviour management plan developed with the assistance of an authorised program officer. The senior practitioner will be responsible for guidelines and standards and the provision of rights for the disabled. While I do not propose to detail all of the functions and powers of this office I wish to raise a major concern detailed by the intellectual disability review panel in relation to:

... the need for an independent body to regulate the systemic use of such practices and report these issues to Parliament.

That was on page 15 of its report.

Finally, the Disability Advisory Council of Victoria has expressed strong concern about the continued use of physical restraint and seclusion. It is of the view that the bill allows such practices to be extended to all people with a disability if they are attending a disability service provider. Perhaps the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services could seek some clarification on this very important issue.

The bill provides community visitors with the responsibility of reviewing the performance of residential service providers. These provisions appear to replicate those contained in the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act, although it is noted that with the closure of Kew Residential Services the issue of whether we will need many more community visitors to attend to the people who have been shifted

out of Kew and into individual homes has been raised. Of course, this would need to be resourced.

Part 4 of the bill deals with the provision of disability services. It requires the minister to ensure that a state disability plan is prepared, as well as requiring public sector bodies to prepare similar plans and to report annually on their implementation. It provides a framework for the registration of service providers, including both the application process and the process of review. It establishes a right of review where a request for support is refused by a provider.

This portion of the bill gives effect to that state disability plan and provides that the new state disability plan will be prepared by 1 January 2013 and that the plan will be reviewed every four years. It is not clear whether the requirement for a review every four years applies to the current plan. If so, it would require a review this year. Clause 37(2) would indicate that this is the case. I would therefore ask how this review is progressing if it is progressing at all.

Some concerns have been raised in relation to the state disability plan, and I would like to quote from some of the letters and submissions I have received expressing those concerns. I quote again from Margaret Ryan:

In the 10-year 2002–12 state disability plan the government gives commitments to ensuring progress by, inter alia, undertaking a yearly review of the priority strategies, evaluating the outcomes and ensuring the views of people with a disability, their parents, families and carers, service providers and members of the broader community are listened to and taken into account.

This commitment is not worth the paper it is written on. The first implementation plan on finished 30 June 2005, nine months ago.

The minister's advice is that work has commenced on the development of the second implementation plan and as part of this work a review of initiatives is being undertaken ... There has been no public call for views on the state plan.

I think that speak volumes about the way this government implements its responsibilities under the disability plan.

In its submission the Victorian Council of Social Service said the following:

One of the key goals of the state disability plan is to build more inclusive communities — to 'strengthen the Victorian community so that it is more welcoming and accessible, so that people with a disability can fully and equally participate in the life of the Victorian community'. This is reflected in the purpose of the exposure draft of the Disability Bill, which states that strengthening the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities 'requires support across the government sector and within the community'.

It should be noted at the outset that the scope of the bill is not nearly broad enough to realise these objectives. Despite being called a 'disability bill' the bill applies predominantly to the operation of the Department of Human Services and to disability services funded by the Victorian government, and to some extent, to other Victorian government departments. Its provisions do not apply specifically to public infrastructure or other amenities in the broader Victorian community, and do not apply at all to business or industry. It is disappointing that the new disability legislation in its current form will thus not contribute significantly to furthering some of the key objectives of *A Fairer Victoria* and the state disability plan as outlined above.

There is also a requirement in this part of the legislation for public sector bodies — that is, departments, statutory authorities and statutory corporations — to prepare disability action plans. This includes a provision for local government which is aimed at achieving a whole-of-government approach to the provision of disability actions. However, as you can see, organisations such as VCOSS do not believe this is possible. The intellectual disability review panel is of the view that such plans should have to be monitored and reviewed in consultation with people with disabilities if they are to have proper effect; that is its slant on it.

In its response the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies also raised some issues of concern in relation to state plans. I turn to page 19 of its submission where it states:

We are particularly concerned that the particular needs of people with intellectual disabilities should not become submerged or lost within broader, less specific data and plans. The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) in its December 2004 *Report on the Review of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report — Services for People with an Intellectual Disability* noted that:

The Auditor-General pointed to an inconsistency between the legislative requirements to produce a state plan for services for people with an intellectual disability and the department's wider responsibility to provide quality and appropriate services for all people with any disability ... the Auditor-General found there is a risk that the legislative emphasis on provision of services to people with an intellectual disability will be muted in a combined plan.

There is also a new clause requiring information systems to be maintained to enable planning, monitoring and evaluation. Hopefully this will mean the department keeps data and will be able to answer many of the questions I have put on notice seeking information the department has not been able to provide.

Clause 40 provides a framework for the registration of service providers. This provision is broader than that in the current legislation in that it potentially allows more

people to apply for registration. Clause 43 contains provision for the revocation of registration by the secretary, which is reviewable by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. A lot of concern has been expressed about the power the department holds over organisations and its capacity to control almost every aspect of the running of organisations, including the fact it can remove their registration.

Part 4, division 2, of the bill relates to the provision for access and eligibility. Clauses 49 and 50 appear to shift the assessment of eligibility to the service provider, and this is an area of grave concern throughout the sector. Currently the secretary has the responsibility to declare a person's eligibility, and these clauses provide that an individual wanting a disability service should apply to a service provider, who can refuse the application. The applicant then has to apply to the secretary to have the decision reviewed or changed. In its submission the Intellectual Disability Review Panel (IDRP) had some concerns about this very issue. At page 21 of its submission it states:

The provisions of accessing disability services and determination of eligibility for services appear unclear and to shift the assessment of eligibility to the service provider in the first instance, compared to the current responsibilities held by the secretary to determine and declare eligibility under the IDPS act. Section 50 of the proposed bill provides for the secretary to determine whether or not a person has a disability only in circumstances where a person's request for services has been refused on the basis of an assessment and that the person does not have a disability.

That makes very clear the deep concerns of the sector in relation to this issue. There appears to be a lack of clarity, therefore, in these provisions, and there is no provision for the resourcing of service providers to conduct the assessments. It is possible that one person could apply to several providers. That would hardly be a way to provide planned and coordinated care for people with disabilities, and it causes me alarm. The IDRP also suggests a need to amend this provision to provide a clearer process and responsibilities for decisions as to whether a person has a disability as an entitlement to services.

Part 4, division 3, covers planning for the disabled. This part provides for individual plans to be drawn up when a service provider is requested by a disabled person to assist with planning. However, the drawing-up of such plans can only be provided to those disabled people currently in receipt of a disability service. I will later discuss in greater detail my concerns with these provisions.

On page 21 of its submission the Council for Intellectual Disabilities Agencies finds the whole of

division 2 in part 4 totally unacceptable and believes it should be reworked. It states:

CIDA states in the strongest possible terms that division 2 part 4 is fundamentally inadequate and unacceptable in its current form and requires substantial reworking and redrafting before the bill is considered by Parliament.

That has not occurred. The Intellectual Disability Review Panel is also greatly concerned that the bill does not address substantive issues in relation to people's entitlements to plans, whole-of-life planning, statutory responsibility for planning and the right for independent reviews of plans.

Part 5 of the bill deals with residential services for the disabled. It requires disability service providers who provide residential services to produce a residential statement outlining the essential terms and conditions of their service provision. It outlines the important duties of both service providers and residents. The bill also provides frameworks for the operation of both community residential units and residential institutions.

Concern in this area relates to clause 76, which provides for a notice to vacate when no reason is specified. Calls have been made for its deletion as the panel believes it obviates the protection of rights intended by this division. Concern has also been raised as to the potential conflicts with provisions relating to the right of the senior practitioner, community visitors and the secretary to inspect premises. It believes there are conflicts with all those people having those rights.

Part 6 of the bill places further requirements on service providers and provides accountability mechanisms for performance in service provision. The bill requires service providers to provide written information for those receiving services. It also regulates the management of moneys with the consent of the resident and provides for accountability and security. I note that sections of the IDPS legislation relating to residents' trust funds found its way back into the legislation between the exposure draft and the final draft. I suppose that is something to be grateful for. These provisions give the minister and the secretary responsibility for setting standards and for the review of performance against those standards.

It may well be commendable to make the minister responsible for setting standards in the provision of disability services and provide for monitoring to ensure compliance. It is not unreasonable to question whether the government will actually provide appropriate levels of funding to organisations for them to comply with standards. Given the productivity cuts applied to the

community sector by the Bracks government, one really has to wonder if this will be the case.

I refer to a letter I received in relation to this whole issue of indexation and the productivity cuts applied by this government. It is from the chief executive officer of Disability Opportunities Victoria, Greg Merrett. He wrote:

We have requested details of the impact of inadequate funding provided by the state government under the DHS NGO Price Index since its implementation in 2003.

A copy of that advice is attached to this letter and it clearly demonstrates funding cutbacks over the years 2003–04, 2004–05 and 2005–06.

Further, the inadequacy of funding for commuter vehicles and the offer of indexed funding of 2.42 per cent for 2006–07 accentuates the funding shortfall.

The letter goes into the details but basically says that even with the changes the government has applied through its productivity cuts, the shortfall is still around \$12.5 million. This government should be held accountable for the way in which it has cut funding to front-line services in the disabilities area. If service providers are to be punished for not meeting standards, it should not just be for the reason that the government has failed to provide adequate funding. In other words you cannot take an organisation to task for not meeting standards if you have not provided enough resources to actually comply with those standards.

CIDA raised issues in relation to this part of the legislation when it referred to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report for 2004, which states:

... the committee has some concerns about the resourcing requirements of these proposed approaches. The committee believes that if service providers need additional resources to comply with new requirements, this should be recognised in funding arrangements.

In giving the secretary the power to give directions to service providers for non-compliance the section fails to recognise that the secretary is a disability service provider himself. Therefore, under these provisions the secretary could be in the very strange position of imposing a penalty on himself. The question must be asked: will the secretary be held accountable for government-run providers who breach or fail to meet performance measures? Perhaps the parliamentary secretary will be able to answer that question as well. There is enormous concern in relation to the sovereignty of non-government organisations that provide services to the disabled.

Part 7 of the bill relates to restrictive interventions. This is a whole new section. I have discussed some of the

issues in relation to the use of restrictive interventions, and in particular to the role of the senior practitioner. Further concerns have been raised which reiterate a call for the provision of an automatic, external review of decisions on the use of restrictive interventions, similar to the protections provided under the Mental Health Act. Similarly there are calls for a process of reporting and monitoring the use of chemical restraints and a more objective definition of their use. These issues have been raised, even though there has been a recognition of the provisions which protect and strengthen the rights of the disabled in this area and the consequent penalties for breaches of the legislation.

One of the other issues that has been raised is the desire to see that those people appointed as authorised program officers for the actual running of this section, who will have the responsibility of ensuring that interventions are administered in accordance with legislation, have a clear level of expertise, and that is not obvious in the legislation. A point of clarification has been raised as to whether a behaviour management plan drawn up by one service provider as the basis of restraint and seclusion can be relied upon by another service provider or whether another plan is required. That is a question I also pose.

In relation to the provision for independent persons to make sure that disabled persons understand the use of the restraint or seclusion, concern has been raised about the need for a specific program to ensure the availability of such people to service providers, similar to that which operates under the Office of the Public Advocate. Finally, concern was expressed that, if there is to be a capacity to apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of the inclusion of restraint and seclusion, there is a need for specialist knowledge of and expertise in intellectual disability for that review process to be effective. This concern about the need for specialist knowledge and expertise in relation to reviews conducted by VCAT applies to other areas of the bill and has also been expressed by the sector.

Part 8 of the bill relates to compulsory treatment. The bill provides for residential treatment facilities to be part of the intense residential treatment program of the statewide forensic service and to be run by an authorised program officer. This program will only be for those with an intellectual disability who represent a risk of violence to another person. The senior practitioner must be advised of such a person's admission to a facility. There has been support for the provision of a legal framework for compulsory treatment, with judicial review and decision making. However, the intellectual disability review panel

believes that compulsory treatment and the significant restrictions on the rights of a person with an intellectual disability are somewhat problematic. The panel also claims that the bill represents significant changes in relation to compulsory treatment. These are to be tested and include variations and departures from the recommendations set out in the Law Reform Commission's report on compulsory care, which I believe was published in 2003.

In summary, what are some of the concerns that we have which support a reasoned amendment? Firstly, there is the haste with which the final part of the process of reviewing disability legislation has taken place. As I said earlier, when the exposure draft was released those in the community sector were only given six weeks to respond. For many, particularly families and their carers, that would have been a difficult thing to achieve. The disability sector is furious at the speed with which this legislation will be finally enacted. We have called for a delay of two months, which many in the community sector have called for.

There is also an ongoing debate in the sector about whether two existing acts should be consolidated into one. Those organisations concerned about intellectual disabilities are quite anxious to retain two separate acts. Another area which we raised concerns about is the access to services. At present the intellectually disabled access all services through the Department of Human Services. DHS assesses their eligibility and then plans, refers and coordinates their support. Under this bill the intellectually disabled will need to identify and approach individual service providers to request services. Service providers will either agree to or refuse these requests or ask for further information or assessment of eligibility. If a person has been refused access to services, they can ask the secretary to review the matter. However, service providers will not have the power or authority to grant access to some services such as supported accommodation which is where many disabled people find themselves living. It is unclear what the process is to access these services.

The coordination of access to disability service is a crucial support that must be maintained. The bill shifts responsibility for assessment from DHS to individual service providers at significant expense, but makes absolutely no provision for the resources for this extra work and in fact has made productivity cuts. It is unclear in many cases how many of these individual service providers will be carrying out the task they have been allocated under this piece of legislation. As the government is ultimately responsible for the provision of these services, it is more appropriate for the task of determining eligibility to be retained by the department.

In relation to planning, under the current act the intellectually disabled may request that the DHS prepare a general service plan regardless of whether they are currently receiving ongoing disability services. This plan outlines the major areas in which support is required and the strategies to be implemented to provide that support. In addition, individual service providers must annually prepare and review an individual program plan for their clients. This plan specifies ways to achieve goals identified in the general service plan. In this way individual service plans developed by service providers are certain to be consistent with the broader general plan.

Under the new bill, when someone with an intellectual disability requests a service from a provider, that provider must offer assistance with planning, but it will only be required to prepare a plan if the person is currently receiving services. Part of the planning process should be identifying which, if any, services are needed. When individuals receive services from more than one provider, the lack of coordination, as it is presently provided, may mean that either individuals will have multiple plans that are not integrated and may therefore miss out on the benefits that flow from complementary plans or, at worst, they may have plans that conflict and negate each other. As in the case of access, DHS bears ultimate responsibility for planning and should retain its coordinating role. Again, individual providers are being given no money to carry out these new roles.

Despite the extensive resources devoted to coordinating planning by DHS, the Auditor-General found that it failed to meet its existing requirements. An unfunded shift of responsibility is likely to make the situation worse. Concern has also been raised about the effectiveness and expense of the administrative structure proposed under the bill as well as potential conflicts of interest associated with questions of independence. That the senior practitioner is to be subject to the direction and control of the secretary is questionable given that DHS is a service provider and the senior practitioner is responsible for ensuring the rights of those using DHS services.

The bill allows the government to exempt itself from compliance with the residential rights provisions of the bill — another concern. It also allows the secretary to set different standards and performance measures for different categories of service providers that could be used to set less onerous standards for the Department of Human Services as a provider.

The fact that the penalties for non-compliance with standards are imposed by the secretary fails to

recognise that DHS is itself a provider. Similarly, the disability services commissioner's powers to initiate inquiries into complaints is subject to approval by the minister. The sector is highly concerned at the prospect of DHS continuing as a service provider whilst taking on a new role as umpire.

In relation to compliance, key stakeholders argue that the degree of control given to the government over the operation of service providers will circumscribe the capacity of their management to meet their legal and fiduciary obligations. They worry that the government will set not only their funding levels but also their fee levels with respect to certain charges. In addition the government will control their expenditure through its ability to mandate staffing levels and structures. This also has the potential to undermine the capacity of service providers to innovate in their operations to best meet their performance obligations.

Another concern is that the liability of service providers for acts or omissions at the direction of the relevant authority is unclear under the bill. The current Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act provides an indemnity for service providers for any liability incurred where the service provider has acted in good faith and with reasonable care. This bill contains no such provision. The degree of government control over their operations may also potentially jeopardise service providers' taxation status, something I would like some clarification on.

Finally, the sector is unanimous in its fury at the speed with which this bill has been introduced. It is aware of and grateful for our support in seeking to have it withdrawn. Yet the government has been adamant that the bill proceed in its current form and be debated in the shortest possible time. Given this behaviour, one cannot help but be of the view that this is a bill which has been drafted by and for the Department of Human Services, not the disabled. We on this side of the chamber in the Liberal Party will give a commitment to rewrite the legislation in keeping with our election promise and in a way that is more reflective of the needs of the sector.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I am very pleased to speak on this very important disability bill, firstly because of my personal interest in disabilities and secondly because of the number of people in our community who suffer from disabilities. There are in excess of 900 000 people in the Victorian community who have a disability of one sort or another. About 315 000 people of all ages have a severe or profound disability, and they are identified as a potential population for disability services. I could go on with those statistics. There are a very large number of people

with disabilities in our community, and it is a very important issue.

I want to start by complimenting the minister's parliamentary secretary, the member for Derrimut, on the efforts he has made to consult with the community. I note that the government has done a good job in some respects, and I will come to the rest of it in a minute. We have the state disability plan, which is a good document, and all of these other documents — the review of disability legislation, May 2003; the report of recommendations, October 2004; and the Disability Bill overview, 2005, and all the paperwork that goes with it. All of that is good stuff, and I know that the parliamentary secretary has spent a great deal of time and effort, with a great deal of sincerity, in consulting with a wide group of people in the community.

But I put it to the house that it is a pity that this has not gone on just a little bit longer. A lot of good work has been done, a lot of talking has been done, but those in the disability community are not happy with the outcome, and they want more time. I urge the government to give that additional time. This is important legislation. It contains, as the minister says, the most important amendments for many years. It is going to determine the shape of disability services for at least the next generation and we need to get it right rather than just get it through. I urge the government to take more time.

I note that the member for Caulfield has moved a reasoned amendment. I also had a reasoned amendment prepared earlier today. It was a little bit more specific than that of the member for Caulfield. I intend moving an amendment to the member for Caulfield's reasoned amendment to be a little bit more specific. It gives a specific time. Therefore I move:

That all the words after 'a second time' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'for a period of three months to give disability service providers, non-government agencies, carers and clients the opportunity to seriously consider the detail of the bill and its implications and make their views known to the government'.

I appreciate the sentiments put forward by the member for Caulfield. We are not far apart on it; we want to be a little more specific and prescriptive. We want to have a time limit on it, and we want all of those people and others, but certainly all of those who I have listed in the amendment, to be included in those discussions with the government. I urge the government — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Smith) — Order! I remind members that they will now be speaking on the bill itself, the amendment by the member for Caulfield and the member for Rodney's separate amendment.

Mr MAUGHAN — It is an important piece of legislation. The government has done a good job so far in talking to a wide range of people, so why rush it? Why not take a little more time to bring the community with it? Let us get it right and make sure we have really good legislation.

I have gone through all the various documents and said it is important legislation because of the number of people involved. There are very sound objectives and principles in the document and I will go through them in a little more detail as we go through.

I want to pay tribute to a range of people who have written to us on this legislation. We have had lots of correspondence from people who are very concerned about the legislation. In particular I want to acknowledge the efforts of Sue Jackson from the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA), Margaret Ryan, the president of Disability Network, and Jean Topps from the Gippsland Carers Association, all of whom are or have been in the gallery during this evening's debate. Certainly they have been following the progress of the bill with a great deal of interest and have been providing members with a great deal of very good information.

The member for Caulfield in her presentation went through a lot of the arguments that are being put forward by the disability community. I do not intend to canvass all those except to just briefly go through issues that were raised by CIDA with Minister Garbutt as recently as 16 March. I will just go through the headings of those because I think they are important and we will go through some of the detail as we go through. They involve access to services, individual planning issues, problems and concerns with that individual planning process, and shifting of responsibilities to non-government service providers. This government is not bad at doing that. It is pretty hypocritical in terms of blaming others.

At question time today the Minister for Education Services was very good at shifting the blame when taking about using some of the money from the sale of the Snowy Hydro Ltd for non-government schools. She said it was all the responsibility of the commonwealth; she shifted the blame elsewhere and said it was not her responsibility. We hear it so many times in health, aged care and roads — it is all that wicked federal government that does not give the state government all the money it is entitled to. The state government is also very good at shifting its responsibility. There are concerns in the disability sector that this legislation is the thin end of the wedge in shifting some of that

responsibility. I am sure that during the debate some of those issues will come out. There is genuine concern.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — The member for Melton can object if he wants. The fact is that if you talk to the people out there in the disability community, that is what they are saying. If he hangs around for a little while I will read him a whole host of letters that say exactly that, so he should not rubbish it. The fact is that the disability community is concerned that the government is looking at cost shifting. Given its record in a whole range of areas — local government is a very good example and there are lots of others — that is not a surprise and it is a valid concern.

There is also concern about infringements of the sovereignty of non-government organisations, and I intend dealing with that in a little more detail; conflicts of interest for the Department of Human Services, the secretary and the minister; and finally the time line for the passage of the bill and the process for amendments. On behalf of a very broad range of disability organisations the Council for Intellectual Disabilities Agencies pleaded with the minister for an extension of time. So both the opposition and The Nationals will certainly be arguing for that extension of time so we can get this legislation right rather than simply see it rushed through.

Having said all that, let me make a few general comments before getting back to some of the specifics. I agree with the minister, who said in her second-reading speech that people with a disability have the right to enjoy the same range of civil, economic, social and cultural rights that are available to all Victorians. That is a principle that I think every member of this house would agree to. I also applaud the significant progress that has been made over recent decades — and I say 'decades', because it goes right back to Cunningham Dax, who started it all. I have not looked up the research, but it is probably 40 years ago that Cunningham Dax really started to change the mental health system as it then was.

We have made enormous changes over recent decades, and we have certainly made enormous changes in our attitude to people with a disability. We still have a long way to go, I acknowledge that, but we also need to look back and say that we have made some progress — albeit all too slow — with respect to community attitudes towards disability. Much, much more remains to be done, and this legislation gives us a chance to take a further step forward. Therefore I again appeal for a little bit more time so we can get it right and so the

disability community, members on both sides of the house and the broader community can move forward together. There is no urgency for it, and there is no rush to get it through. Let us get it right and make sure that we make another quantum leap forward, as we did with the two pieces of legislation we are currently looking at amending. They were for their time significant steps forward, and we need to make sure this is also a significant step forward.

I also agree with the minister when she says that legislation is important. It provides a framework for a just and civil society, and incorporates the values that are important to us. Changes of legislation over time are equally important, because they recognise and reflect social change, and that is reflected in this legislation in terms of its aims, objects and principles. They are all very high sounding — there are three or four pages of them — and none of us has any argument with them. The question is about the follow up and about the funding that is provided. It is fine to have high-sounding, praiseworthy principles, but we have to ensure that the funding flows through to implement them.

We have had changes in community attitudes and expectations and we have had changes in the delivery of support services, and although they have been slow, they have certainly been for the better. We have had a growth in the commitment of governments of all political persuasions to ensuring that people with a disability and their carers can exercise their rights and responsibilities. I would argue, as have members of groups such as the Gippsland carers and others, that carers have not been adequately considered in this whole equation. They are the unpaid, unsung heroes of the disability industry. They are dealing with disabilities day after day. As a community we are not paying sufficient respect to the unpaid work those carers do, year in, year out.

I have met many of those people, now in their 70s and their 80s, who have a severely disabled son or daughter for whom they have been caring with very little assistance from government for the last 50 years. They are now very keen to get that son or daughter into permanent residential accommodation before their health fails. I have worked darned hard to try to assist some of those people. The reality is that we simply do not have enough accommodation for all those people.

Today we have been congratulating ourselves on the Commonwealth Games — and that is great; they have been a great success and we all feel good about them — but the question is: where are our priorities? There are plenty of quotes along the lines of: you judge a society

by the way it looks after its most disadvantaged people. We have been on a bit of a trip with the Commonwealth Games. For those of us who are in good health and have funds to buy tickets and are free to do what we want with our time, it has been a wonderful time. Yes, the state has benefited from the games and we have heard all about that today. Let's get our priorities right and make sure that we give a little more funding — that is all we will do, practically — to this area, particularly to those unsung heroes who are the carers in our society.

As I said, all the principles expressed in the bill are hollow rhetoric without a genuine commitment by the government and the community to providing resources. I appreciate that governments can move only so far ahead of the community but governments can give a lead and in this case governments have not given the strong lead they should be giving in this area by providing additional funding for disability services — particularly, as I said, for carers.

At best, we have shown a half-hearted commitment to providing the resources needed. Yet we can point to progress — in disabled access and the like and the move away from institutions. We need to be careful that our ideology does not run too far ahead of us so that we move people out of institutions only to find that they are then a darned sight worse off than they were. That certainly applies to some. I am a great believer in having those who are able living in community residential units. The majority of people benefit from that move, but there is a group who do not.

We need to be careful that our ideological views that everybody is entitled to have freedoms in the community do not encourage us to push people out into the community and that we do not fail to provide the necessary resources and then find, as I did this morning, that homeless people with disabilities of various sorts are wandering the streets and now are dependent on charity to be able to live. This morning my colleague the member for Benambra and I were helping some of those people in Fitzroy. There are many of them not far north of where we are right now in Parliament House. So yes, we need to get people out of institutions, but not all of them, and we need to make sure that our ideology does not take us too far ahead of the practicalities.

What about the rights of carers? We have some 60 000 carers in Victoria and, as I have already indicated, they are the unsung heroes of our community.

It is time for a change in the current legislation. The Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 has

been in place for 20 years; it is time we had another look at it, and likewise the Disability Services Act 1991. Both those acts have served the community well but they do need changing and amending. We have different approaches in those two pieces of legislation and to some degree that leads to some conflict and confusion. Hence the need for new legislation and greater flexibility — if we can get it right. There is some concern out there in the disability community that we have not yet got it right, that there is still the possibility for misunderstanding, confusion and so on. We need to make sure that we have it right before we rush the bill through simply to meet a mythical deadline that really is not driven by anything of any great consequence.

I ask: why then are so many people in the disability community not happy with what is being proposed? Why are they claiming that they have not been listened to? Why are they saying that they need more time to properly consider all the implications of the bill? Why are they asking that consideration of the bill be deferred, to give them more time?

Why have I received virtually no letters encouraging me to support this bill? I think I have received one letter that says I should vote for the bill. I have a heap of letters telling me that I should at least vote to have it deferred and lots of others saying that I should vote against it. If there has been so much good consultation — and there has — that it has got to go to the next stage, why then are people in the disability community saying, ‘Hang on a minute, we want a bit more time to make sure we get it right’?

A lot of people with goodwill out in the disability community will work with the government if they are given the time and if they are listened to. This is part of the problem. I am sure that as we go through the debate members of the government will say they have spoken to this group, another group and that group — ‘We have spoken to 276 individuals and 354 organisations’, or whatever. But they have not listened much, according to many who have put in submissions and found that their hard work, time and effort have been ignored.

Why is the government so hell-bent on rushing this bill through, unless it wants to go to the election saying it has changed the legislation. I suspect that is what it is. Victoria will go to an election on 25 November, and I suspect the government wants to hold its hand over its heart and say, ‘We promised we would do something about this legislation. We will tick it off, and then we have done it’. The fact that it is not right does not seem to concern the government at this stage.

I stress again that this is important legislation. It is important that we get it right, and I hope the member for Melton is going to assist in giving us a bit more time to get it right, rather than just getting it through prior to the time allowed. It is important that we consult all those in the community who are affected by the legislation. That is what the amendment is about: going out and consulting with and listening to all those groups. That is what our amendment amounts to, so I encourage — —

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — We will come to that in a minute. It is therefore important that we defer consideration of this legislation for another day. We will move that consideration of the bill be deferred for three months, to give us time to do that.

The minister says that many of these matters or concerns are better dealt with through policies, guidelines and regulations. I understand that you cannot have those without first getting the legislation through, but that does not stop the government giving us some idea of what is going to be in those policies, guidelines and regulations before the community, through the Parliament, gives it a blank cheque to write what it wants in those policies, guidelines and regulations.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — The member for Melton again is very good — —

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — I understand the process, but there is nothing at all that stops the government from saying that when this legislation — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — None at all, as the member for South-West Coast points out. There is no reason at all why the government cannot at least articulate what it has in mind for those regulations, policies and guidelines. As the member for Melton will understand, the devil is in the detail and what is in those guidelines, what is in those regulations and what is in those policies is going to affect services for the disabled out in the community.

What input will the disabled community have into those regulations, policies and guidelines? I would suggest, on the government’s present record, that they are going to have precious little, if any. It will be done by the government, it will be done by the bureaucrats and we

will read about it when those regulations and guidelines are ultimately published. As I said, the devil is in the detail and the government alone will fill in that detail, as it proposes to do with the Education and Training Reform Bill we dealt with earlier in the week. Again, the devil is in the detail and it will be in those regulations, guidelines and so on.

I ask again: why will this honest, accountable and open government not give us details of what it plans to have in those regulations? Why is it not prepared to give us those. They are to complement the bill; they are an important part of the legislative process, and what commitment is there by the government to adequately fund these initiatives? That is the big bit missing — what commitment is there?

I know that members of the government will stand up and say, 'Since we have been in power we have increased funding by' this or that amount, and they will give percentage and dollar figures. But in real terms what does that mean? I acknowledge that there has been some increase in real terms, but I would argue that there has been nowhere near enough. That is what this should be about. It should not be about the increase in percentage or dollar terms, but in real terms in comparison to all the other things that we do in government.

Are we paying greater respect to those with disabilities by increasing funding as opposed to what is happening in a whole range of other areas of government that one could enumerate? I would argue that we are not. I would argue that there are many other areas of government in which we build infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals and schools. Those sorts of things take priority and they are important — I acknowledge that — but they take priority over funding for this area.

As I said, the principles — and there are fine principles in this bill — are absolutely useless without the resources that follow on. After three years of consultation why do we have only a little more than four weeks to consider the actual legislation? We have had this great lead-up and build-up, and then the bill comes into the house in one of the busiest periods of the year. The disability community has — —

Mr Nardella — We had the exposure draft.

Mr MAUGHAN — The government did have an exposure draft, but it was a bit tardy in getting it out. It was only because of pressure from the community, which wanted to see what was in the bill, that it actually was released. The government did have an exposure draft, but there is a difference between the bill — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — Precisely. The government should tell the disability service providers that it had an exposure draft.

Mr Nardella — We did.

Mr MAUGHAN — You did; I know you did, but there were changes between that and the bill.

The government has not given the providers very much time to get their minds around whatever it is. How many pages are in this bill? There are 241 pages. If you have a severely disabled child and you are trying to run an organisation — and you may have a disabled child who may be up to 40 or 50 years of age — to try to get your mind around that and talk with other interested people and then try to get all of that together and form a reasonable response in the time given is not possible. The time allowed is nowhere near adequate. To be here tonight debating 241 pages of detailed legislation — from memory I think it amends 19 acts — and to have a look at what effect it will have — —

Mr Nardella — The consultation was for three years.

Mr MAUGHAN — Come on!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Smith) — Order! I note that the name of the member for Melton is not on the speakers list. If he wants to join the list, he can do so at dinner time.

Mr MAUGHAN — I think I could at least get through the purposes before dinner; they are pretty simple and straightforward. Page 1 of the bill sums it up very nicely. It states that this is:

... a bill to enact a new legislative scheme for persons with a disability, to repeal the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 and the Disability Services Act 1991, to amend certain other Acts and for other purposes.

That is a good and broad definition of the legislation.

There is a definition of disability on page 4, and I note that in the community there is some divergence of opinion about whether this definition of disability is, as the government says it is, the one that is widely accepted by other states and the commonwealth. It describes disability in relation to a person as meaning:

a sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof ...

It also includes intellectual disability and developmental delay, but it does not include autism,

and I think that is a gross deficiency in the bill. I will not go into the detail now, I will wait until the debate resumes after dinner, but I have correspondence from Patsy Pepper, who lives at Genoa in East Gippsland. I will read her correspondence later. I also have correspondence from Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4), which says:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare cites autism as the disability category most likely to cause severe disability.

Yet it is not included in the definition of disability.

Parents of children with autism are worried by the Victorian government's exposure draft of the Disability Bill ...

For the benefit of the member for Melton, it has not changed in this bill. It still does not include autism, because, as A4 says, it does not recognise autism as a disability. The letter goes on to say:

People with autism and their carers depend on you —

the members of this Parliament —

to change the Disability Bill to ensure it provides the help they need and does not impose additional disadvantage.

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

Mr MAUGHAN — Before dinner I was talking about the definition of 'disability' and pointing out to the house that autism, which is a very important aspect of disability, is not included in the definition. I quoted one letter prior to dinner, and I have another letter here from a Patsy Pepper from Genoa in East Gippsland. The legislation indicates that if a person with autism has an intellectual disability they can come under the act. In her letter Patsy Pepper said:

Autism and its disabling effects have absolutely nothing to do with one's IQ levels. The World Health Organisation ... states quite clearly that autism spectrum disorder is a disability in its own right, irrespective of intellectual disability.

That is what the World Health Organisation says. She went on to say that that is:

... contrary to accepted knowledge and practice in every other state and territory in Australia, where autism is acknowledged to be a disability in its own right ...

She said we are going against current practice in the other states, where autism is a disability in its own right. She also said:

... there are no qualifying restrictions as to level of IQ, and all recognise autism as a disability in its own right —

and anybody who has had anything to do with autism would know that it is a severe disability in its own right.

To say they are not disabled because of IQ in certain fields is akin to saying Stephen Hawking, the physicist astronomer —

who is absolutely brilliant —

was not disabled ...

Of course he is disabled. He has, I think, motor neurone disease and is severely disabled — but he has an enormous IQ and has made an enormous contribution to the world. I conclude with the letter from Patsy Pepper:

Further, the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* states:

Autism disorder is consistently associated with severe disabilities of an emotional, social, psychiatric, sensory and behavioural nature.

Yet this government has excluded autism from the definition of 'disability'.

Mr Jenkins — You know that is not right.

Mr MAUGHAN — That is what the definition says.

Mr Jenkins interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Delahunty) — Order! The member for Morwell will have his call later on. The member for Rodney has the call.

Mr MAUGHAN — The member will have the opportunity to explain that later. That is the way it is read. If the minister wants to get up and indicate that autism is included, I would be absolutely delighted. The member for Morwell knows, as I know, what a debilitating condition autism is. Autism is only included, as I read it, if there is also an intellectual disability.

Mr Jenkins interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — As I read — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Delahunty) — Order! The member for Rodney will disregard interjections and get on with his speech.

Mr MAUGHAN — If the member for Morwell cares to read his own party's bill, he will note that people who have autism but do not have an intellectual disability are excluded from this legislation. That is the point I am making.

We could go through all the definitions, go through the bill — the member for Caulfield has already done that.

As I said earlier, there are some great objectives and principles in the bill — three pages of them — but they mean absolutely nothing if they are not backed up with funding. I hope the minister will give us some indication as to what resources will be provided to implement these very high-sounding principles.

There are obviously some good things about the bill. The Victorian disability advisory council has been upgraded, which is certainly a step in the right direction. It will provide advice direct to the minister in respect of a whole range of things to do with disability services. The establishment of a disability services commissioner is a good innovation, and it will be a very important appointment. The commissioner's function will essentially be to investigate complaints relating to disability services and review and identify the causes of complaints.

Then there is the role of the senior practitioner — again a very important role — which will be essentially to develop guidelines and standards with respect to restrictive interventions and compulsory treatment. One of the functions, which I think is most important, is to develop links and access to professionals, professional bodies and academic institutions for the purpose of facilitating knowledge and training in clinical practice for persons working with people with a disability.

We could go right through the bill and look at all the definitions about disability service providers and residential services, and I will touch on those. Page 64 of the bill explains what residential services are and what is meant to happen there. I quote from a letter from Tony and Heather Tregale:

The main focus of our small family support group is the residents of DHS group homes, with our vast experience right at the service point.

They are speaking on behalf of the group. The letter continues:

For years we have seen residents afforded no rights by the DHS and HACSU juggernauts!

Government finally got severely disadvantaged people out of the institutions and into group homes in the community. But the same care system followed and turned these group homes into mini-institutions.

The residents pay rent for the home the government intended should be their home. Yet the residents can be moved easily, and the staff can't! The service provider staff have all the rights, the residents none!

DHS and HACSU are making more and more staff permanent. Permanent means permanent in the residents home.

They go on to further discuss their concerns about that situation, which certainly is not a very satisfactory one.

Part 6 of the bill deals with rights and accountability. Residents' rights are outlined on page 31 of the minister's second-reading speech. Then you get onto the topic of the residents' trust fund which is dealt with on page 96 of the bill. Let us look at what that says, because there is a bit of concern about that too.

Clause 90 of the bill headed 'Management of money' states:

- (1) Except in accordance with this Division, a disability service provider, or a person employed by a disability service provider, must not act as a financial administrator for a person with a disability provided with disability services by that disability service provider.

Some providers have taken exception to that, and I quote from a letter from Ric Walsh, the chief executive officer of Woodbine, which is up in Horsham or Warracknabeal:

Woodbine has a number of concerns about the bill and the government's desire to rush the bill through Parliament. Our concerns relate to the following proposals —

and he goes through those, but I will not deal with them now. It then states:

We also have concerns about the managing of clients' money. Woodbine maintains a residents trust which manages investments on behalf of 38 clients. My understanding is that Woodbine will be forced to dissolve the residents trust, and that all clients' funds will be placed in the hands of the state trustees or an independent administrator. This is an insult to Woodbine as it implies that the organisation cannot be trusted to manage clients' moneys effectively. Further, Woodbine will have to seek permission from the independent administrator every time a client needs to spend money on clothing, holidays, furniture —

and the like. That is a concern on behalf of a number of those service providers. I have a letter from Vernon Knight, executive director of Mallee Family Care. He draws my attention to the fact that this same clause dealing with the management of money concerns his organisation. The letter states:

... the clause which concerned my organisation in connection with the Children's Bill is replicated in the Disability Bill, and you might care to question the minister on the provisions of clause 102.

You will recall that I raised with you the difficulties of the counterpart clause in the Children's Bill and the government's ability to impose administration on community service organisations.

It is exactly the same provision in this bill. The government can appoint an administrator to a

completely independent organisation that might receive funding from a range of different sources, not just from the government. I think it is fair enough that the government, if it is not happy with the way that organisation is dealing with the funds provided by government, can stop the funding. But I do not think government has any right to appoint an administrator to go into a completely independent organisation and have all those powers to look at the books, and so on. I just do not think that it is reasonable to do that, and a number of service providers feel exactly the same way.

I am concerned about places in residential accommodation, and I want to commend the role of the community visitors. I have the annual report on community visitors from the Office of the Public Advocate. The executive summary states that there were 289 disability services community visitors in 2005 who made more than 3000 visits to people living in over 1000 different places of residences. I will go through briefly the summary of issues of concern. I am not going to deal with them at great length:

Community visitors continue to express concern about outdated institutions and congregate care accommodation.

This report of the Office of the Public Advocate expresses concern about congregate care and states:

The delay in announcing plans for the redevelopment of the Kew Residential Services site is in turn leading to a likely delay in the closure of all residential units, which is unacceptable for the residents affected.

There are many people who are still waiting for a suitable place to live.

Any local member who has had anything to do with this area at all would know that there is a huge unmet need in terms of suitable places for those requiring residential care. The public advocate goes on to say:

Risk management practices and occupational health and safety requirements are turning homes into workplaces.

...

Restrictive practices combined with a lack of appropriately trained and experienced staff impact on the quality of life and wellbeing of residents.

The sharing of bedrooms when not by resident choice, most frequently reported in respite facilities, is totally unacceptable.

So there are a number of real areas of concern. I will touch on the issue of restrictive interventions before I read to the house some of the myriad letters I have received. Restrictive interventions are where a person has to be either put in isolation or restrained, and that certainly happens from time to time for the safety of the

person, the safety of other persons and for the safety of people in the community.

I note that the department has responded to the report of a review panel, which I have here, chaired by Justice Frank Vincent. The report is headed 'Report of the review panel appointed to consider the operation of the disability services'. It indicates that people were receiving those treatments without a proper framework. This legislation now provides that framework and proper mechanisms for supervising, reporting on and looking after the interests of those people.

There are two ways it can be accessed: either by a residential treatment order in the civil system or, as in most cases, through the criminal system; and it is usually — but not always — people who have been convicted of a sexual offence and who need ongoing treatment who in most cases should be held beyond the two years it is possible to keep a person in that facility. That important part of this legislation has been addressed.

Prior to the dinner break I quoted some statistics, and I just want to clarify them. They were approximately right, but I will now quote from the Victorian state disability plan, which says that in Victoria there are 834 800 people with a disability; of those, 269 200 have a profound to severe disability — that is 5.8 per cent and a very significant part of the population.

In the time that I have available I will go through some of the many letters we have received. One was sent on behalf of Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA). It is dated 7 March and states:

We acknowledge that the review of Victoria's disability legislation has been under way since 2003 and that there have been opportunities for input and consultation during this period. However, at critical stages the time allowed for comment and input has been inappropriately brief. This was certainly the case in relation to the time lines for feedback on the 2004 Report of Recommendations. A period of just six weeks — with a deadline of one week before Christmas — was allowed for comment and feedback on that report.

Further those opportunities for input focused on potential options and broad proposals for change rather than on the detailed actual provisions contained in the bill. CIDA appreciated and welcomed the minister's decision to release an exposure draft of the bill. However, the six weeks time frame allowed for responses to the draft was clearly inadequate to enable 'everyone who is interested in disability issues in the state' ... to be 'across' a 220-page complex document.

CIDA's letter goes on to say:

The timing of the period for responses to the exposure draft — with responses due by the last working day before Christmas — exacerbated this problem ...

It then talks about the responses that were submitted to the draft, a substantial number of which did not go onto the web site and which expressed concern about the time lines for and the timing of the feedback period. There is some very good information in CIDA's letter.

A later letter from CIDA, dated 21 March — a very recent one — said:

The Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) is extremely concerned about apparent plans by the state government to rush through Parliament new disability legislation ...

It continued:

Whilst CIDA welcomes a number of aspects of the bill we are deeply concerned that this time line does not allow adequate time for significant flaws, deficiencies, anomalies and shortcomings in the bill to be rectified.

I hear this message all the time from a range of disability providers. I point out that CIDA is an umbrella organisation that speaks on behalf of a large number of these organisations. The letter goes on to say why CIDA believes there is no reason for the bill being rushed through Parliament.

In its letter to me Carers Victoria said, in part:

Carers Victoria have prepared the attached summary outlining our position, which can be broadly described as 'disappointed' but not completely disheartened. This further highlights the fact that we still have a long way to go in getting family carers recognised as the important force that they are, in providing care in the community.

In its submission Carers Victoria said:

On behalf of carers we strongly objected to the bill's very limited acknowledgment of the historic and ongoing role and function of carers in the lives of many people with disabilities and of the contribution made by family carers to the wider disability sector.

I spoke about that before dinner; it is a very important point. The submission goes on:

We believe there is a need to enshrine in legislation the pivotal role of family carers of many people with disabilities for their role in providing, through their own means, most of the care, accommodation and support to children and adults with disabilities living in the community.

As I said earlier, carers are one of those groups of forgotten heroes out there in the community, and in Victoria we have about 60 000 of them doing a marvellous job looking after their disabled family members, in many cases from 30 to 50 years old with very little help from the government.

An article in Carers Victoria's newsletter said:

Carers Victoria, in its previous response to stage 2 of the consultations, made the comment to government that the legislation should not be rushed. This legislation has a long 'shelf life' so we need to spend however long it takes to get the provisions of the legislation substantially right for everyone whose lives will be impacted by it.

Carers Victoria and CIDA are both saying exactly the same sort of thing — as are individual agencies. I have a letter from Len Hubbard, a board member of Northern Support Services in Northcote. He said:

Our agency believes that the DHS is unwilling or unable to meet their current legislative requirements and will transfer the obligations onto non-government agencies without any additional funding. We also have a concern about the tight time lines ...

Margaret Ryan from the One Voice Disability Network, whom I have quoted before and who has done a marvellous job in putting together a lot of very useful information, talks about the lack of open, transparent and informed conduct. She said:

The conduct of the review has not been open, transparent or informative:

...

the phase one submissions were not made publicly accessible because advice was not provided about any intention to publish submissions ... Submissions were selectively quoted in the phase one report.

She has made other very pertinent comments, but I will not go into that detail because there are lots of others for me to refer to.

The executive officer of Murray Human Services in Echuca, Karen Witney, said:

I have been to two consultative sessions — most with large numbers of DHS present, and mainly service providers. It would have been better if families and carers had been at the same meetings to hear their points of view.

She talked about the fact that Murray Human Services has been affected by productivity cuts. It comes back to what I was alluding to earlier, when I said that the government will talk about how many additional dollars and what a percentage increase it has put into this area but the reality is that with these productivity cuts, and cuts in other areas, there are fewer resources available because over time the cost for service providers doing their jobs has gone up.

Karen Witney went on to say:

A concern is that the department is abrogating some of its responsibilities to the non-government sector, while wanting to remain in control through regulations.

In a letter to the Minister for Community Services, the Australian Disability Support Alliance said:

The members of the Australian Disability Support Alliance Inc (ADSA) hold considerable concerns in relation to the Victorian state government's proposal for major legislative reform affecting the plight of people with disabilities within the state.

In case someone on the other side says, 'Okay, what the heck are you going to do about it?' I do not think it is our role in opposition to come up with all of that detail. There are numerous submissions. I have at least three here that give a very detailed view, each of which has been given to the government by people who are out in the industry and who really know what it is all about, and who really should be listened to. I do not think it is up to the opposition parties to provide all of that detail to the government. It is there; the government has it available and could use it.

In another letter John Jago from Sale also expresses concern about what the government intends to do to support family carers. There is a letter from a good friend of mine, David Goldsworthy, who happens to be the chairman of Onemda, a non-government organisation in East Doncaster, that is strongly in support of delaying the introduction of the bill to allow for further scrutiny by the public. There are many of these letters. There is one from Karkana Support Services in Horsham expressing three concerns. It says:

It appears to me that there has been inadequate time for consultation. The problem appears to be that the minister is not prepared to budge on several key issues.

We also have advice from Jean Tops from the Gippsland Carers Association saying that this bill should be opposed in its entirety. She goes on in a detailed submission to explain why.

I think I have quoted enough to indicate that there is considerable concern out there in the disability community about the rush to get this legislation through. Yes, we all want good disability legislation. We all want better legislation, but as many of those who have written in have said, we need to take a little more time and get it right rather than get it through. It is for that reason that this morning The Nationals prepared an amendment that sets a specific time frame about what should be done in having this consultation. We chose to amend the reasoned amendment put forward by the member for Caulfield as follows:

That all the words after 'a second time' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'for a period of three months — —

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

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — It is with great pleasure and pride that I rise today in support of the disability legislation. Can I say that, having had a direct role in the process of constructing this legislation, I have — like all legislators — given very careful consideration to the reforms proposed by this government. When I first moved into that role I knew one thing: we were in the business of ensuring that we delivered to people with disabilities in Victoria the best possible deal. I knew that to this government, and indeed to myself, this was fundamentally a matter of human rights, one which I definitely would — as would all of my colleagues — fight for strenuously.

When I took the position of chair of the legislative review committee I had to give very careful consideration to the type of legislation that this Parliament and this government would end up with. I was doing so very responsibly on behalf of the government and on behalf of the minister. The choices open to us, and to me personally as a legislator, were either to consider legislation which was fundamentally based on diagnosis — diagnosis-based legislation — or alternatively to give consideration to whether we would end up with legislation that was needs based. Another option was rights-based legislation. We came to the conclusion collectively — and it was very much on balance — that this Parliament and the state of Victoria would end up with legislation which was fundamentally needs based and rights based.

This legislation is about stronger rights for people with disabilities. This government would do nothing else but deliver those. We are very proud of our track record. I can assure the sector — and I am very cognisant of concerns that have been expressed to us and to the opposition — that no government legislator would do anything but deliver legislation which created better and more rights for people with disabilities.

This legislation is about improved the accountability of government and other agencies. I repeat that it is about accountability of government agencies. We make no apologies about that. People are entitled to be sure that government agencies involved in the provision of services are doing the best they can. This legislation is also about providing more choice, not fewer choices. It is about more flexibility. This legislation is about what people with intellectual disabilities told us in the course of consultations and in the context of the state disability plan. This legislation is about what people told me, as the chair of the committee.

Members of this chamber know that I took the time to meet with each and every organisation and indeed with many people with disabilities — I would say, dozens — and attended most of the workshops. People with disabilities told me and the rest of the committee that they wanted more flexible services and more choices. This legislation is about the whole of government and the whole of the community. It is about moving away from a system which effectively sees the Department of Human Services as the sole government department responsible for the provision of services to people with disabilities. This government and this Parliament will today or tomorrow pass legislation which will tell every government department, the community sector and local government that everyone has the responsibility to take up the challenge.

This is not about doing away with the existing services, this is about providing more flexible choices. This is not about cutbacks; this is not about taking away the services and entitlements that people with disabilities currently have — and I qualify this particularly for people with intellectual disabilities. They will retain them but in a more flexible manner because they will have more choices.

It will increasingly meet the expectation put to us in the course of developing the state disability plan that it should be about self-determination, integration and inclusion. This is not about taking away the services that people with disabilities have today; I am very confident of that. I can give an assurance on behalf of my colleagues in the government that we will see eye to eye with the sector and with the many individuals with whom we worked and whose contributions we appreciated, even though we might have had differences. Twelve months or two years down the track we will be able to confirm that this is good legislation and that it has improved the rights of people with disabilities, and the services and supports that are provided to them.

This is about needs and rights. This legislation will deliver residential tenancy rights, which people with disabilities have not had until now. It will deliver the disability commissioner. If there is one thing that has been put to us since I came to Parliament, or indeed since I came into the position of parliamentary secretary and chair of the committee, it is that there is a need to provide a disability commissioner.

Tonight we can confirm that there will be a disability commissioner. Let me advance the following proposition: if, as the opposition has somehow suggested — and I think wrongly; time will

demonstrate that it is wrong, and I say that absolutely respectfully, particularly in relation to the contribution made by the member representing The Nationals — this is not about improving the rights and services provided to people with disabilities, why on earth would this government or any other government provide a disability commissioner?

Let us be absolutely clear: the disability commissioner will be independent. The disability commissioner will be able to report to Parliament. The disability commissioner will take on complaints in relation to a whole range of matters associated with people with disabilities, relating to services or otherwise, and will be able to produce and table a report to this Parliament.

This government is absolutely fair dinkum about its intentions, about its philosophy and about the fundamentals that it wants to bring about, because it is confident that this will improve the lives of people with disabilities. For the first time we can begin to be confident that people with disabilities will be treated as citizens. It is a matter of providing equal opportunities. It is about saying to everyone that they will increasingly be able to become part of the communities they want to be part of.

As other members have referred to, this legislation will deliver increased powers to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal in relation to that jurisdiction. I have only 10 minutes to make my contribution, so unfortunately members need to understand that I will not be able to cover the many questions that other members have raised and the many concerns that the sector has put to us.

Unfortunately I will conclude. I want to especially thank a number of people. I want to thank the contributions made to me personally in our endless communications which helped me in my capacity as committee chair. I want to thank Julian Gardner, John Morkham, Licia Kokocinski, Sue Jackson, Penny Gallagher, Lloyd Williams, Kevin Stone, Arthur Rogers, Carmel Benhan, Christine Reynolds, Henry Pinski, Margaret Ryan and, if I may, my wife, Constantina Dertimanis, who was the chief of staff of the Minister for Community Services in New South Wales and helped me enormously in this task.

I wish to extend a special appreciation to the role of the Minister for Community Services who has been absolutely committed to ensuring that this legislation is about the things that I have just said. On my behalf I want to thank Minister Garbutt for her commitment and the energy — intellectual and otherwise — put into this. If I may I will add thanks to Ian Parsons, who is a

good friend and a great adviser and without whom we could not have gone through the very difficult task of putting this legislation together.

I seek leave — and I have requested this — to incorporate the list of members who were members of the legislative reform committee because there would not be enough time to read the list, but I want to thank them all.

Leave granted; see table page 721.

Mr LANGUILLER — In conclusion, we give assurances to the sector that this is good legislation and we are very confident that we will be able to work through this and the many challenges ahead of us.

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

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — I admire the passion of the previous speaker, the member for Derrimut, but it is a pity that his minister and he are so out of touch with the sector that he purports to represent. The reality is that the sector is telling members of Parliament in droves that this legislation has fundamental problems. The sector in droves is telling members of Parliament to delay consideration of this bill, not to rush it through the Parliament but to allow further time for consideration, amendment and improvement of it.

Instead of the arrogance of pushing ahead — and I understand the personal commitment of the member for Derrimut — he and his minister should be taking a deep breath, listening to the sector, responding to its concerns, making this legislation better and getting it right for the people of Victoria, particularly those people with disabilities.

I will speak in two parts on this legislation. I will highlight some comments from organisations involved in the provision of services for people with disabilities. I will refer to information from the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) because it is the peak body that is involved with the delivery of a lot of these services — and with the time limit it is very difficult to go to all the submissions that I have received. Then I will refer to some examples from my own electorate, where there is a huge and increasing gap between the rhetoric that comes from the member for Derrimut and his minister and what is espoused in this bill and the reality on the ground for people with disabilities and their families.

Let me refer to the letter from CIDA that I, and I presume other members, received on 21 March 2006. I quote:

The Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) is extremely concerned about apparent plans by the state government to rush through Parliament new disability legislation ...

Further it says:

There is no reason for the bill to be rushed through — the act is not scheduled to come into force until July 2007.

That letter was from Ms Sue Jackson, executive officer of CIDA. She went into detail on some of the issues raised, and they are raised not just by CIDA but by many other agencies in this field. I believe it would be right and proper for the minister and the parliamentary secretary, instead of standing here congratulating themselves on this legislation, to step down from that high horse, to get out and listen to the people who are administering this bill and who have to deliver the services.

Let us look at what CIDA has to say about access to services. One of the points it makes is:

Under the bill, as it currently reads, the process for accessing services will be more complex and confusing and less streamlined for people with intellectual disabilities.

What an indictment. Under this legislation, as CIDA sees it, it will be harder for people with intellectual disabilities to access services so as to improve their quality of life. It will be harder for families with a family member with an intellectual disability to get access to services. It is already hard enough. If any legislation makes it harder for people to access services, then that legislation is wrong and needs to be changed.

That is all we are saying to the government: listen to the people who are telling you. It is not the member for South-West Coast; it is not Denis Napthine saying this. This is CIDA that is saying this.

CIDA also makes a number of points in relation to individual planning:

The provisions in the bill regarding individual planning are a recipe for poor practice and will lead to fragmentation of planning and support provision.

The bill's provisions involve a loss of statutory entitlements for people with intellectual disabilities.

The bill allows government/the department to abrogate its responsibility for planning with people with intellectual disabilities.

It shifts responsibility from government onto non-government service providers.

This is a fairly damning indictment of supposedly reforming legislation. What they are saying is that this legislation will make it worse for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. It will make it worse for agencies on the front line delivering services. It is about shifting responsibility from the department and the government onto those non-government agencies.

That is unfair and it is wrong, and that is why this legislation is wrong and should be held over. There should be further discussion, and the parliamentary secretary should put a halt to the passage of the bill. If he has the interests of people with intellectual disabilities and their families at heart, he should call a halt and listen to the people who are delivering the services. It is not the Liberal Party saying this; it is not The Nationals saying this. This is the people who are on the front line delivering the services. Through CIDA they say:

In a number of significant areas the bill shifts responsibility from government/the department onto non-government service providers.

Its letter further says:

This allows government to abrogate responsibility in areas where responsibility should as a matter of principle and practice remain with government.

CIDA has made some fairly damning criticisms of this legislation, and its members should be listened to.

Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia says to members of Parliament:

I write to tell you that Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4) strongly opposes the Disability Bill.

They go on in their letter to outline some of their concerns:

The Disability Bill prescribes choice and inclusion but does not address a possible conflict between inclusion and choice. The bill should also address conflict between inclusion and best practice early intervention, education and treatment.

The Disability Bill needs to recognise the status and needs of children with disability. The bill needs definitions of early intervention and treatment. The bill needs to recognise that inclusion is not early intervention or treatment.

Jean Tops has been a long-term advocate for carers and for people who support families with disabilities. She writes:

We are so alarmed at the implications of this bad legislation and its impact on the future of unpaid family caring that we believe this bill should be opposed in its entirety.

...

Vote with your heart and vote against this bill.

These people are eminent leaders out in the field, and that is what they are saying about the bill.

Let me talk in the couple of minutes I have left about the huge gap between the rhetoric and the realities of what the bill promises. Let me refer particularly to the situation in my electorate, where in South-West Coast there has not been one new bed opened for people with disabilities since the election of the Bracks Labor government — that is, not one new bed providing permanent accommodation has been opened in that time. So while we can talk in theory about needs and rights, the reality is there is a lack of services on the ground, and the government is simply failing to deliver.

Let us look at what it said. On 22 March 2002 Tim Harrop, manager community services, said:

The Department of Human Services is about to expand the shared supported accommodation options within the Warrnambool area. The new facilities will accommodate up to five people, with three being located in the purpose-built home, and the other two persons being located in self-contained units being built adjacent to the home.

... It is anticipated that this residential service will commence by May 2002.

Here we are in March 2006 and they are not yet built. In January 2004 the acting minister, Gavin Jennings, said:

... I have authorised the allocation of funding for a five-bed purpose-built facility to be located in the Warrnambool area. I have been advised that the earliest anticipated completion date will be within the vicinity of 18 months ...

It still has not even commenced building the facility, so there is a huge gap between what this government promises and what it actually delivers. In Portland it has expanded its service by turning respite beds into permanent beds, and it has done that by using \$80 000 of money donated to it by south-west residential services association, not government money. How do I know that? Because I am president of that association and I gave that cheque for \$80 000 to the department two years ago and it still has not delivered those beds. It is an absolute disgrace. This government's rhetoric and its lack of ability to deliver services is unbelievable. There have been no new beds in South-West Coast since Labor was elected in 1999.

What it is doing to provide permanent accommodation in Portland is actually taking away respite beds. It is an absolute disgrace. This government needs to remember it is not words that will make a difference to people with disabilities. It is actions on the ground, it is services on the ground, it is permanent accommodation

places, it is respite places and it is day programs. Yet this government has scrapped the Futures for Young Adults program.

When we were in government we were proud of the Futures for Young Adults program, we were proud of the Making a Difference program and we were proud of the Early Choices program. We were proud of closing a number of institutions because every time we closed institutions we opened beds for those people in the community. We were proud of the fact that when we left office we were spending more dollars per head on disability services than any other state or territory. This government talks big, but fails to deliver.

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — I am very pleased to be speaking tonight in support of the Disability Bill. I was not going to start on this, but I would just like to review and compare some records in responding to several points raised by the member for South-West Coast. It is my memory that one of the first things the Kennett government did after it was elected was to cut \$28.4 million from disability services. My memory is that disability advocacy groups were basically completely cut off at the knees.

This is the record that I am proud of: a government that has invested or increased funding by 73 per cent since coming to office. It is a government that has put in place the first state disability plan, a government that is modernising homes for people with a disability, and certainly I have seen some of that housing in my electorate. I have been visiting and met with the new residents of that accommodation and I can tell you it is years ahead. This is what they are entitled to. This is contemporary housing. We have introduced the companion card. We have introduced a \$10 million disability housing trust. We have increased funding to disability advocacy groups by 100 per cent. That is the record I am proud of.

What I know and what I would like to acknowledge certainly is that there are people with concerns about the bill, and those people have contacted us. There are also people who support the bill and part of the process for government is that at times somebody needs to make a decision about what is the best way forward and we need to do that by extensive consultation. What we have heard tonight is an incredible debate in which we have one party suggesting an amendment of two months extra consultation, another suggesting three months, so I am not sure what is the ideal level of consultation.

I will go through the level of consultation that has occurred on this bill over three years. There has been

three years of consultation. We have had a comprehensive review of the disability legislation, the release of discussion papers, an issues paper and an exposure draft. During the first phase of this consultation 1200 individuals and organisations were involved in public consultation. That is not just about people who write submissions but is about those who actually go out to communities and meet a diverse range of members of the disability community and talk to them about what is important to them and what needs to be included in this legislation.

We moved further on from that after the report and recommendations in 2004. There was further consultation, and at that stage more than 500 people participated in focus groups across Victoria and 80 organisations made submissions. There was then the exposure draft, and around 77 submissions were made as part of that process. So we have had extensive consultation over three years, all along the way.

That is what governments do, and that is what governments should do. But at some point decisions need to be made. At some point it is about balancing the different views that exist, and it is exactly the same with any community. There will be different views in the disability community — and rightly so. We all have different views, different needs and different expectations, and at some point governments need to play the role that they are elected to play — that is, to make decisions. Extending this consultation is not going to resolve the differences that exist. I think this legislation has attempted to balance the different views that exist amongst people within the disability community, and I think it has done that very well.

Over the last six years there is no question that the Bracks government has taken seriously the need to ensure that we continue to move forward as community expectations and the needs of people with a disability change. We must make sure that we get better at ensuring there is active participation in all aspects of Victorian life. We are better than we were, but there is still a way to go. That will be a continuing challenge for all of us — all members of the community and all members of government — now and into the future. How do we continue to improve the ability of people to participate actively and fully in our community life while ensuring that we have the services and the supports that are necessary to meet what is obviously a continuing and growing issue in our community?

I also want to touch on a couple of other issues that were raised earlier by the member for Caulfield. She said that the legislation fails to talk about parents or children. If you look at the principles that underpin the

legislation, which seem to me to be almost the most important part of it, a number of the provisions in those principles make it clear that we are acknowledging families. They certainly do not mention the word 'parent', but they talk about 'families', which I think is appropriate because people have different forms of parenting and families. Within those principles it is clear that we must all consider and respect the role of families and other persons who are significant in the lives of persons with a disability. Believe me, there are tensions for people with a disability as well.

With older people with a disability — I am obviously not talking about young children here — there are tensions between them and their families and their rights and their responsibilities to participate as they choose in our community. This legislation is about balancing that. Yes, we need to acknowledge and support those families that play a significant role in the lives of people with a disability, but as they get older we must enable people with a disability to make choices that suit them as active citizens in our community.

The principles of this legislation talk about the needs of children. Clause 5(3)(i) says we must:

have regard for the needs of children with a disability and preserve and promote relationships between the child, their family and other persons who are significant in the life of a child with a disability.

Again it is about acknowledging the importance of those relationships and how we must continue to foster and assist families to support children with disabilities. The principles of the bill underpin what we are trying to do. I think it is very clear that we must acknowledge the important roles of families and the distinct needs of children with a disability.

I want to also focus on one of the changes in this legislation — partly through having some experience of this — and I refer to the improvements that the government is making in providing for the stronger protection of residential tenancy rights in community residential units (CRUs).

I spent time as a community visitor in the Geelong region. I acknowledge there are some fantastic CRUs, but I can tell members there were also some pretty terrible ones. It was a very challenging role. At the end of those visits and in some cases I found it very difficult to think I could continue in my role, but the reason I continued was because people were continuing to live in some of those CRUs. It is about us continuing to improve the rights of people living in CRUs and

ensuring that they are entitled to the same rights we would have if we were tenants in the community.

Overall the process of this bill has been about: being in the community; talking to people with a disability; talking to people who work with people with a disability; trying to get the balance right, and trying to balance the differing views that exist out there about how we proceed. That is going to happen next year or in 10 years, and so it should. Governments need to continue to review, update and improve the way we respond to, deal with and support people with disabilities in our community.

I am very pleased with and proud of the bill. The people involved have done a fantastic job. I commend those members of the community who work with people who have disabilities. At the end of the day, we will all look back and say that we have taken a step forward in improving the ability of people with disabilities to be active citizens in our community.

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — This is a large and important bill. In my opening remarks on it I want to say, firstly, that I do not doubt the sincerity of every member in this place with regard to issues relating to people with disabilities and legislation that impacts upon people who have disabilities.

I am sure there is great sincerity on all sides of the Parliament; I would be staggered if that was not so, and I do not believe it is not so. I am sure everyone has a considerable amount of sympathy and desire to do the very best possible job they can. But what I find staggering is the fact that the peak body for people with disabilities — the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) — has said quite clearly on behalf of all of the organisations it represents that the government needs to stop, give further consideration to and have a further look at the provisions in the bill.

The council has not said this lightly — it has been looking at this legislation for some time. The member for South-West Coast read into the record CIDA's letter of 21 March, which I am sure was sent to every MP. I think it is important that some of its words of concern need to be repeated. The letter states, in part:

While CIDA welcomes a number of aspects of the bill we are deeply concerned that this time line does not allow adequate time for significant flaws, deficiencies, anomalies and shortcomings in the bill to be rectified. There is a real danger that people with intellectual disabilities could be left worse off in some important respects under the new legislation in its current form. It is our very strong view that substantial redrafting and further development is required.

We are especially concerned by what we consider to be major deficiencies in the sections of the bill which deal with accessing services and individual planning. We are also concerned by what appears to be an inappropriate shifting of responsibility from government onto non-government disability services in those and other sections of the bill.

The introduction of the new legislation involves repeal of the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act which has been one of the most significant, progressive and farsighted pieces of legislation enacted in this date. It has been crucial in enhancing the lives and rights of people with intellectual disabilities. It would be unforgivable to repeal that act with anything less than absolute certainty that what replaces it will be a more effective instrument for improving the lives, rights and entitlements of people with intellectual disabilities. In our view the bill before Parliament does not yet satisfy that test.

You cannot have anything much stronger than that. Those words are very strong, are very direct, and a government should listen to them. They are not words that have been put there lightly and that have been jumbled together in the heat of the moment; they are words that have come from an organisation that represents the best interests of people with an intellectual disability in this state — and the government should be listening to those words, but it appears that it is not.

In my electorate is an organisation — it is also in the electorate of the member for Nepean; in fact, its headquarters are in that seat — which used to be called Wongabeena but which recently changed its name to Disability Opportunities Victoria. On 13 March this year the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies wrote to Disability Opportunities Victoria and talked about:

... the decline in state government funding for disability services as a result of inadequate indexation over the past three years.

It finishes off its letter of just over two pages by saying:

... concerns about funding inadequacies are shared by all CIDA members and CIDA will also be further seeking to raise awareness of these during the course of this year.

Then on 14 March this year Disability Opportunities Victoria wrote to the shadow Minister for Community Services, the honourable member for Caulfield. In its letter it talks about the:

... inadequate funding provided by the state government under the DHS NGO price index since its implementation in 2003.

Further on it says:

... we appreciate that there are many competing interests for the state purse however we also advocate that funding for disability services should not be in decline at a period when

demand is increasing due to our ageing population and the apparent state budget surplus is at such a significant level.

We heard the member for Bellarine and other members on the government side talk about — allegedly — huge increases in government funding for disabled services. Yet the bodies that are out there at the coalface, including the peak body, CIDA, are saying that this is not true, that this is false. That should be setting off alarm bells among those on the government benches who are being fed information to the contrary. These organisations are saying one thing, and the government is saying the other.

The Liberal Party opposition is saying, 'Let us stop for a moment. This legislation is not due to be implemented until July 2007; there is time to stop and consider the things now being written by organisations like CIDA and by Disability Opportunities Victoria'. I repeat: these organisations do not have a political agenda; their agenda is all about what is best for people with a disability. That is what their agenda is about wholly and solely. They do not care whether it is from the Liberals, Labor, The Nationals, Callithumpians or whatever. In the case of CIDA, it just wants to see that people with an intellectual disability get the very best possible deal out of government. It also wants to be assured that what is being said by the government is correct — and it doubts that very clearly and unequivocally judging from the letters it has written to every member in this place.

I again emphasise the fact that this legislation is not due for implementation until July 2007, so there is an opportunity for the government to stand back and look at this again and say, 'We are right and you are wrong', and to be able to prove it, or whatever, but to the satisfaction of the bodies that are out there at the coalface dealing with people with disabilities.

In 2003 on a couple of occasions in this place I raised the question of the state disability plan. I note that part 4 of the bill, in clause 37, has a requirement that:

The Minister must ensure that a State Disability Plan is prepared —

as well as a requirement, in clause 38, that public sector bodies prepare similar plans and report annually on their implementation. Fine words, but there is a state disability plan already out there. It is a state disability plan that was prepared for the years 2002–12. It articulates its vision for people with disabilities over that 10-year period. Consistent with that plan is the call for people with disabilities to be treated the same as people who do not have a disability.

Wongabeena, which is now called Disability Opportunities Victoria, in employing a lot of people with a disability implemented a flexible 50-week service model for its clients rather than the school-based term employment program which was being funded by the government. It asked the government for additional funding to be able to employ people in the same way as people who are fully able bodied can be employed. It required the government to provide additional funding of \$90 000. What Wongabeena wanted to put in place was in fact in accordance with the state disability plan. What was the reaction it got from the government in 2003? It would not fund it — —

Mr Nardella — That is rubbish!

Mr COOPER — That is not rubbish.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Delahunty) — Order! The member for Melton will have the call later.

Mr COOPER — It had to go back to the school-based program. It had to drop its 50-week program, and it is now back to a program based on school terms which it was trying to get out of to try to implement something that was in accord with the state disability plan. The government has the plan, but it will not fund its plan. The government has to get fair dinkum; rhetoric is one thing, but action is another.

Mr JENKINS (Morwell) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in support of the Disability Bill, the most significant change and improvement in disability services legislation in this state for 20 years. The minister and staff who have worked so hard and consulted for so long on this bill and the other parts of the government's platform on disability services in this state deserve to be congratulated. I have heard of some members of the opposition who have over the last couple of years been willing to work with the government to try to make sure that as far as possible we get it right at this juncture and that we continue to make improvements. It is very disappointing that people try to score political points when that is much more important.

This is the first major legislative reform in 20 years. It mandates disability action plans in government departments. We are saying to government departments that it is part of their primary function to make sure they take into account people with disabilities. Government departments, as we are often reminded by the opposition, deliver and are responsible for many of the services in this state. They employ many people in this state and have an enormous impact.

It is important for those government departments to make sure they have mandated disability action plans which include considerations for employing people with disabilities, for providing services for people with disabilities and for ensuring that the services they currently provide are accessible and that their buildings and physical structures cater for people with disabilities. Those people have worked on the *Victorian State Disability Plan 2002–2012*, which informs this legislation.

It is disappointing that people on the opposition side have taken the opportunity to try to score a few political points instead of noting what this government has done. It has put out for consultation and discussion a state disability action plan that very clearly spells out where the government feels we should be headed. The plan has been out there for people to look at and consider since 2000. The consultation for this legislation has been taking place since 2003. Over time we will continue to make the budgetary decisions that we need to make as a government, and we need those people on the opposition benches to support us to make sure the federal government makes commitments to disability services that are similar to our commitments.

But it provides the framework and requires and obliges government departments and others to make sure that we treat people with a disability like citizens and not as names, not as numbers and certainly not by describing them by the medical nature of a disability.

I know a number of families who are coping with autism within their families, and they do not want to be defined by autism. The full extent of autism disabilities ranges from the relatively minor to the very severe. We need to be able to help those people by giving them every opportunity to function in the best possible way they can. That is what this framework does: it makes sure that people are treated as individuals and that their disabilities do not define them, so that when we talk about them we do not talk about people with cerebral palsy, we talk about their individual abilities and disabilities.

Let us not concentrate always on their disabilities. You will not see in the legislation a raft of definitions of 'cerebral palsy', 'spina bifida', 'Parkinson's disease' and 'Down syndrome', because that would take away from our talking about individuals and about people who need to be treated as individuals. That is what this legislation does: it makes sure we as a government start thinking about people with disabilities as individuals.

The care plans that have to be put in place by 2007 under this new way of working will require us to talk to

those people and ask them and their families and carers what is best for them and how they will make the best contribution they can to our society and our common wealth. They will invariably continue to make the sort of contribution that a good friend of mine, Karlene Plunket, is making at the moment to the Disability Advisory Council. I grew up with Karlene — she is one of the most intelligent, courageous and strong people I know. She does not want to be defined as someone with cerebral palsy and spina bifida and a range of other things. She wants to be defined as a courageous woman and an intelligent woman who has a great deal to offer. What this legislation does is make sure it is not just about us. Let us get away from talking about ‘the responsible minister and ‘the responsible department’. We are all responsible. The Department of Sustainability and Environment and all those other departments — I will not go through the raft of them, because they keep changing their names — are responsible for treating people who have disabilities as individuals and for making sure they get an opportunity.

No more should we have a minister responsible for people with a disability, and no more should we have a department responsible for people with a disability. We are all responsible — all the departments are responsible — and this legislation requires us to make sure that they will be responsible. It will oblige every department to make sure that it gives every Victorian every opportunity. This legislation does not weaken in any way the protections that are already provided for people with an intellectual disability or any of the other broad range of disabilities. It provides further protection and further opportunities for those people to be treated as individuals and to get access to services.

What it does not do is come up with the budget allocations that we need to continue to make. We should not rest on our laurels: we should not be satisfied with increases of more than 70 per cent since coming to government. I would hate to leave this place in 10 years time saying only that we were better than the Kennett government. It would be a sad indictment of us, because that is a pretty low bar to be measured by. We need to make sure that we deliver services for people in Victoria regardless of whether they have a disability, recognising that people with a disability need the extra protection that will be provided by this legislation.

I have the greatest respect for carers and families, and in particular for people with a disability. They deserve a government that is prepared to state their aims, as members of this government have in the state disability plan. They deserve a government that is prepared to

legislate and recognise their needs as individuals, and members of this government are prepared to do that. They require and deserve a government whose members are prepared to move forward when we can — so when we can move forward, let us move forward. Should we wait until we can run the 100 yards? No, we should not. Let us make the move forward we can make now, and continue to move forward.

Those people deserve and need not just a government but a Parliament whose members are prepared to debate the issues and not make snide political points, because this issue is much, much more important than that. What they need is a Parliament whose members are prepared to accept their shortcomings and accept that they can all do better. We can all do better when we work together, as members of the government and officers of the department have worked in preparing this legislation.

Victorian people with a disability deserve the sort of government that the Bracks government is. They deserve even the partial step that the member for Rodney took when he said, ‘Okay, let’s think about it for three months’. He recognises that this is good legislation, that it has great aims and is a great move forward — as most of the people I have met do. I have met and discussed the bill with a lot of people who are impacted by the issue of disability. They recognise that this is a great move forward. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to commend the bill to the house.

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — I am pleased to speak on the Disability Bill and also to support the reasoned amendment put forward by the member for Rodney on behalf of The Nationals. In his presentation the member for Mornington said that he was sure that a number of the members of this house who have spoken in this debate really do care about people with disabilities. That is coming through in the passionate speeches being made in this place. I am sure that members do care about people with disabilities. We wonder why, then, the legislation is being rushed through when the peak bodies and the organisations that support people with disabilities are saying, ‘Take a breather. Let’s look at the legislation and let’s get it right’. It is very important that we listen to those organisations and take heed of what they say.

The member for Rodney’s amendment in effect asks the government not to consider the bill:

... for a period of three months to give disability service providers, non-government agencies, carers and clients the opportunity to seriously consider the detail of the bill and its implications and make their views known to the government.

That is a sensible reasoned amendment and I hope the government will support it.

When the bill was second read on 28 February in this place, The Nationals asked for an extension of time but we were not listened to. Again we seriously ask the government to take heed of what the organisations that support people with disabilities are asking and allow them a bit more time to look at the detail of the bill.

We are told that the bill addresses barriers for people with disabilities and ensures that disability services are of a high quality. The government can do that now; it does not need to have the bill passed. It can look at the services it provides now and it can provide extra funding, which it is not doing. Later I will cite a number of cases of that. The bill does not have to be passed; the government can provide quality services right now.

The government also said that it consulted. The draft bill was released during the Christmas period. This government seems to do that a lot: it puts out draft bills during the Christmas period, when people are very, very busy. Their minds are not on consulting with the community and considering how they can provide a service. What they are thinking about is how they are going to get together with their families and how they will celebrate the Christmas season. The bill was released in November last year and the closing date for submissions was 23 December — two days before Christmas Day! That is appalling! People were asked to digest, consult, understand how the legislation will affect their clients, carers and parents and write a submission to be in two days before Christmas. That is just appalling!

Disability organisations across Victoria were calling for the draft bill to be made available as early as July or August. That did not happen; we got it a few days before Christmas. The government cannot expect genuine, detailed, quality feedback in such a short time. This is a complex bill of 240 pages. This is a very important issue. The Minister for Community Services says that it is the first major review of the state's disability laws in almost 20 years. Then let us get it right! Let us not wait another 20 years; let us do it right now. For the sake of a few more weeks or a few more months, let us get it right this time. For the sake of the parents, the carers and the people with disabilities let us make sure we get it right.

Many service providers, parents and carers in my electorate came to see me with concerns when the bill was brought out. It was not that they thought it was a particularly bad bill, it was just that they were not sure

how it affected them. They did not feel they had enough time to see and be sure about what was in the bill and to respond. They were not saying it was a bad bill, they were just saying, 'Let us just see how it affects us'. A number of parents were worried about whether it would affect them disadvantageously.

An honourable member — That is a good word.

Mrs POWELL — That is a good word. They said that they were not sure they wanted to oppose the bill, but they wanted to know what was actually in it.

In fact there is no reason to rush the bill through; it does not come into force until July 2007. This legislation is going to be rushed through this house and rushed through this Parliament but then lie on the table, because it will not be coming into force until 2007. So we have to ask, 'Why the rush?'. A number of members have read out a letter from the Council of Intellectual — —

Mr Maxfield interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Delahunty) — Order! The member for Narracan is next on the list. He should hold his breath until then please.

Mrs POWELL — That is okay, Acting Speaker, I can ignore the member for Narracan.

A number of members have read out a letter from the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA), but it is such a relevant and important letter that it bears reading again. I will just read part of it. It is from Ms Sue Jackson, the executive officer of CIDA. She said:

Whilst CIDA welcomes a number of aspects of the bill we are deeply concerned that this time line does not allow adequate time for significant flaws, deficiencies, anomalies and shortcomings in the bill to be rectified. There is a real danger that people with intellectual disabilities could be left worse off, in some important respects, under the new legislation in its current form. It is our very strong view that substantial redrafting and further development is required.

She goes on to say:

We are especially concerned by what we consider to be major deficiencies in the sections of the bill which deal with accessing services and individual planning. We are also concerned by what appears to be an inappropriate shifting of responsibility from government onto non-government disability services in those and other sections of the bill.

The introduction of the new legislation involves repeal of the Intellectually Disabled Persons Services Act which has been one of the most significant, progressive and far-sighted pieces of legislation enacted in this state. It has been crucial in enhancing the lives and rights of people with intellectual

disabilities. It would be unforgivable to repeal that act with anything less than absolute certainty that what replaces it will be a more effective instrument for improving the lives, rights and entitlements of people with intellectual disabilities. In our view the bill before Parliament does not ... satisfy that test.

Again, those comments have not come from members of the opposition and The Nationals. They have come from a peak body that deals with and supports people with a disability. There are a number of disability services in my electorate and they have a very important role to play. I would like to talk a little about two that I have been working with that the government could actually support right now without the enactment of this bill. One of them is in the residential services area. This bill is supposed to provide greater protection for the rights of people in residential services. It talks about privacy issues, security issues and the responsibilities of residents. It also talks about a number of other issues.

Last year I received a complaint from a mother whose 22-year-old special needs daughter in residential care kept absconding from the residence. Staff from the residence phoned the mother and asked her to go out and find her own daughter, and I subsequently raised the matter in Parliament. Management at the residence said that they could not go out and search because they had limited staff. They could not leave the other tenants in the residence. They had to ask the mother, who was not caring for the daughter, to go out and find her.

This happened quite a number of times, and the mother was getting really concerned. She said she found her daughter in the main street of Mooroopna, which is in the Shepparton district, near the public toilets with, as she said, an unsavoury male hovering near. Her concern was the safety of her daughter who had some special needs, and I raised this matter with the government.

We need more residential accommodation, particularly in country Victoria. Parents of children and adults with disabilities are ageing and some of their children are now maybe 40 or 50 years of age. Before they die, these parents need to make sure that their children are going to be looked after in an appropriate manner. We have people with acquired brain injuries who are living in some inappropriate facilities, such as aged care hostels, and we need to be able to look after those people.

I have been seeking extra funding for a regional service organisation in my electorate for over 12 months. We have been asking for funding to continue a much-needed service with residents in a residential care home. This facility provides a wonderful service, but to be able to provide that service appropriately it has had

to cut down on staff or be underfunded. I have been asking the government to fund this service, and we have been waiting 12 months for an answer. The government does not need to have this bill passed to be able to do that. If it wants to listen to its own rhetoric, it can appropriately fund organisations that are now caring for people with disabilities, and I think that is really important.

The organisation I have mentioned also deals with men who have certain strong behavioural care needs that they are able to work through to make their lives better. The Department of Human Services provides funding to a number of agencies in my electorate, and I am sure the local DHS cares about those agencies. However, what we need to do is make sure that the funding is additional.

I ask the government to take into account the amendment proposed by The Nationals, which allows three months for all areas of disability services — providers, parents and carers — to have a look at the bill and put some good thoughts to it so that we do get a good Disability Bill.

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — I rise to support the Disability Bill. At the outset I want to thank not only the minister, the parliamentary secretary and their staff, but also staff in the Department of Human Services and other government agencies right across the state. These people have worked very hard and very solidly for a number of years on this wide-ranging and sweeping bill — a bill that will be able to drive us forward for many years to come in supporting this sector.

I have been listening to some of the debate and I have been disturbed by some of the things I have heard from members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. I have been sitting here thinking that they would go through the bill and point out their concerns and their problems, but effectively all we have heard is a request for more time without their articulating what those concerns really are.

A good example is the Liberal Party. In terms of this process, did its members make a submission? No. Did they attend the workshops? No. Did they ask for a briefing on this issue? No. Have they asked the minister a single question in this house on the issue in the last three and a half years? No. What did they do? When in power they cut \$28 million from the disability sector. That is the sort of action they take. While we have been going through this process, what have they done other than champion their cuts to services? Have they really engaged in this process over the last couple of years?

Of course they have not! They have been absolutely and utterly missing in action.

And what has the government done? During phase 1, in May 2003, the government started the process by issuing a discussion paper, and in the subsequent three-month period it conducted public consultations involving 1200 individuals and organisations. Phase 2 was the release of the *Review of Disability Legislation — Report of Recommendations* in October 2004. After that came a period of further consultation during which organisations and individuals had an opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations. More than 500 people participated in focus groups across Victoria, and 80 organisations made submissions. The government then released an exposure draft of the Disability Bill on 16 November last year. Following recommendations from the review conducted in 2004, 13 forums were held across the state to provide further comment on the bill to support people with disabilities.

The draft bill was out in November, and here we are now at the end of March, effectively five months since the draft came out. This whole thing about extra time really puzzles me and has me feeling quite concerned that in some way we have whipped out this bill and rushed it through in an absolute hurry, but quite clearly it is hard to imagine a bill that has had more discussion and public comment than this bill has.

And on top of working through the bill in this sector, this is a government that has increased funding by 73 per cent since coming to power. That means a whole raft of services right across the disability sector have been introduced, expanded, helped and built on by a government that is committed to disability services. In my own area beds have been opened and additional support has been provided. Only recently we had the wonderfully exciting opening of the \$3 million brand-new Warragul Special Development School. It is a fantastic testament not only to the government that supported them but also to the members of the local community, who raised a lot of funds and contributed \$800 000 of their own money to an outstanding school. I had tears in my eyes when we opened it, because it is such a magnificent facility, and I urge anybody who gets the chance to come to Warragul to see it. We are so proud of all those who have worked to get these things together. The wonderful thing about this government is that it is working in partnership with these communities.

The first thing the bill does is to put disability on the agenda right across government. It mandates disability action plans across all state government departments

and statutory bodies and effectively mandates them in local government as well, because this government knows we do need to change the way we think about disabilities. We need to stop thinking of specialist services. Of course disability involves services, but it involves a lot more. People with disabilities are entitled to expect Victorian communities, with all their infrastructure — buildings, jobs, schools, transport, venues and events, goods and services — to be accessible and relevant.

In the short time we have it is difficult to speak about the bill in detail, but one of the strongest reforms is the introduction of the disability services commissioner. This is a great step forward that has been met with enormous enthusiasm by people with disabilities and their advocates. The commissioner will be able to investigate and conciliate complaints about disability services as well as initiate his or her own investigations. The commissioner will report to Parliament. This is something we should not underestimate. If government were in the future not to act in the right way, not to really respond to the needs of the community, here is somebody independent of government who can step in and act. This can only be described as a great step forward in terms of protection for the future.

If there is another Liberal-National Party government that once again starts to rip out funding and rip the sector apart — and they will do it again if they get the chance, just like they did last time — then we will have an independent person who can act. I suspect that is probably one of the reasons why they are objecting to the bill, because they know it will strengthen the sector and give it an extra arm to stand up for its rights. Of course that will make it harder for members of a Liberal Party government to steamroll over a sector as they go in with their latest slash and burn effort. As we know, they have their own agenda and plans. For example, they want to cut tolls on the EastLink. They want to halve the tolls, and now they have to work out what services they will cut, if they get into power at the next election, in order to do that.

What they do not want is to have these independent bodies who can provide an effective voice against some of the things they do, but the reality is that this is an innovative bill. I understand there are people in the sector who have concerns. Of course many in the sector have come out with strong support for the bill, but some do have concerns, and as a government we recognise that and will listen to their concerns. Some of these concerns are due to misunderstandings and confusion. I am confident we have the framework in place to deliver a really impressive outcome for our community.

I mentioned a special school in my local area before, but I also want to mention organisations like the E. W. Tipping Foundation, which provides a wonderful facility locally, not to mention some of the great staff at the Department of Human Services houses. They put so much work in — week in, week out. In the short time available I want to comment on how grateful I am, as an MP, to have organisations and groups in my area that work so tirelessly for those with disabilities.

For example, there is a lobby group in Warragul that grills me regularly, but it is made up of wonderful people who are genuinely committed and have their hearts in the right place. They do a great job in lobbying for people with disabilities. They put me under pressure, and rightly so. They make sure I squirm at times as the government responds to issues and needs.

That is one of the reasons I am proud to be an MP. We are here to represent the community; we are here to listen to those in the disability sector. We will not put this bill away and forget about it; this bill is part of our ongoing support for those with disabilities, and we will continue to work to assist those in the disability sector right across the board. With great pleasure I recommend this bill to the house.

Mr SMITH (Bass) — I am pleased to rise tonight to speak on the Disability Bill. I have a genuine interest in people with disabilities. I went down to Wonthaggi township about eight years ago where there is a wonderful organisation called Moonya. I was asked to join its board, which I did, and that organisation has given me a far greater insight into people with intellectual disabilities and to the services that are provided by the community and by the great staff in Wonthaggi.

I also have an interest in an organisation called Outlook in Pakenham. It too is an organisation for intellectually disabled people. It tries to help them integrate into the community, provides jobs for them and assists them in any way possible so they can get on with their lives.

From that point of view, when this bill came forward I thought, 'This will be good. It will look at assisting some of these people who I personally know and have been able to help from time to time'. However, all members of Parliament — certainly members on this side of the house — have been inundated with concerns that have been raised by different groups, organisations and individuals. They have looked at the Disability Bill and have raised concerns with us.

We have heard tonight of the three phases to the consultation that has taken place throughout Victoria.

Jean Tops, who is from my area, is from the Gippsland Carers Association, which does not get any mention at all in the bill as far as I can see. Jean has raised some concerns with me about the lack of concern the government has shown about carers. We talked about these three phases.

She said that the phase 1 submissions were never made publicly accessible. That is a concern — why were they hidden away? Phase 1 submissions were selectively quoted in the phase 1 report. Why? Why not make them available on the web, so that people could have a look? Certainly some people would have privacy concerns, but their submissions could be selectively omitted. A lot of people would have liked to have their concerns made public.

The group says that extensive lobbying was required to convince the Department of Human Services to release and make public the exposure draft of the bill and subsequently to get further submissions. There are no reports on the sessions, forums, workshops or focus groups, and it was a very well-chosen consultative panel that was put in place. There were no public hearings with transcripts taken, and there was no final report on the review. This cannot be seen as being a good thing.

We have heard tonight from members on the other side that since 2003 they have met with and talked to thousands of people and have all this information. However, the fact is the government has not been sharing it, and one has to think this piece of legislation was introduced for the government and not for the members of the community who have intellectual disabilities or for the people who care for them.

A lot of people in our community are carers. I understand about 93 per cent of supported accommodation is provided by people from caring families looking after people with intellectual disabilities. There are 990 000 Victorian citizens who have a disability — that is, 20 per cent of our total population or one in every five people suffers from an intellectual disability, and somebody has to look after them. Approximately 315 000 people of all ages have a severe or profound disability. They are people who really need to be looked after and looked after carefully. These are the people who are being bulldozed and are not having enough input into this piece of legislation.

There is a potential population of approximately 165 000 for disability services. That is a lot of people who have to be cared for within our community, and I do not believe that this bill addresses offering that care to these people. Why is there a rush? July next year not

July this year is when this bill will be proclaimed. Why rush it now? Why not listen to what people are saying? Why not listen to what the carers are saying?

Mr Mildenhall interjected.

Mr SMITH — No, you have not, I am sorry — and you are out of your place.

It is not right that we have to rush this bill through the Parliament. We have had a couple of weeks to consult. That is just not enough time. I think it was said before that this bill has 270 pages. People only got a copy of an exposure draft to look at just before Christmas. That is a lot of legislation for people to look at to see how they are going to be affected and whether the government has addressed the problems they may have raised when they have gone along to some of the consultations that have been held.

We know what Labor Party consultations are about. It is usually a matter of sending out to a meeting a few bureaucrats who have already got a preordained position that they are going to take. They sit down, do not listen to what people are saying and then they go back and print up what they already had printed out before the consultation. We know it happens everywhere under the Labor Party, and they have done this to the disabled people within our community. It is just not right that they should allow this to happen.

Let us think a little bit about the carers. What do we have in the bill for carers? Can anyone on that side of the house tell me what is in there for carers, the people who look after those with an intellectual disability? There is nothing in this bill that does anything to address the problems of carers. The government should be ashamed. It says it has had all this consultation. Do not tell me that carers did not speak to the committee. I hear nothing from the other side on that. They should hang their heads in shame, because they should have some thought for the people out there, the hundreds of thousands of people with intellectual disabilities, who have to be looked after. They should have some thought about what they are going to do. Have they got jobs they can go to? Are they able to get to their doctors? Are they able to walk down the street? Where are they going to sleep tonight? Who is going to look after them?

What has the government done? Nothing. It has not cared at all about carers.

Ms Beard — We have increased funding by 73 per cent.

Mr SMITH — No you haven't. Have a read through the 270 pages of the bill — there is nothing. We have also had reports from the peak body, the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies. They are people who care, who know and understand. They said that the problem as far as this bill is concerned is that real things have not been addressed. The government has not addressed access to services. It has not addressed proper planning. It has abrogated its key responsibilities through inappropriate shifting of responsibilities from government to non-government sector organisations. It is handballing the responsibilities to others who have to try to raise money to look after people with intellectual disabilities, to go out in their communities and beg, borrow and steal to get the funds because the government has walked away from its responsibilities.

What is put forward in the bill conflicts with the interests of the Department of Human Services, and that is wrong. The secretary of the department and the Minister for Community Services have all the things they wanted in this bill, but they are not the things that people with an intellectual disability want. I say to the government that the member for Caulfield has put forward a reasoned amendment that asks for the bill to be deferred for two months. On behalf of The Nationals the member for Rodney has put forward an amendment asking for a three-month delay. Either would still give the government over 12 months to bring this legislation in and combine all the acts of Parliament that will be affected as a result.

The government has 12 months to start looking at what it might be able to do for the carers as well. Government members should give a damn about them, because they really do matter. They are members of our community. They could be members of your family, or they could be future members of your family. There are old people and young people, and there are parents who are getting older who really do not know what their kids are going to do when they pass away. Care about them!

Ms McTAGGART (Evelyn) — I am delighted to stand here tonight and contribute to the debate on the Disability Bill, which will revolutionise the way we support people with disabilities. I come from a background in disability services, working firstly as a volunteer and then in an early intervention setting for a kindergarten with special needs children. I also worked in that sector in 1992. Opposition members should come and talk to me about how families felt when cuts of 10 per cent were ripped from the system and about how they struggled to survive. Some did not cope. They were absolutely appalled by the Liberal Party and its

behaviour. We have been working for years to rebuild the system since the opposition when in government ripped the heart out of that system.

These are the first real reforms in 20 years. There is possibly more to be done: it is a work in progress, and it cannot all be done at this time. But people are no longer locked up in institutions and excluded from society. Many people with a disability are living in community residential units in my electorate, where I visit them often. There are some great stories to tell about the independence of people with disabilities who are living full and happy lives and getting out into their communities. You need to see the difference that some of this has made; it is just outstanding. We talk about all the criticism, but the 10 per cent cuts were something that I do not think I will ever recover from, and I know those families will not recover either. This bill shows that we are committed to giving people with disabilities a real chance of living a normal life in Victoria, which is something they could not have done under a Liberal government.

The member for Morwell talked about the legislation making Victoria more accessible by mandating the implementation of the state disability plan in all government departments. This is a great reform. All departments support and are conscious of the needs of the people in our communities with disabilities. We have put funding increases of 73 per cent into disability services! When I sit here and listen to what is coming from the other side I think of the hypocrisy involved. I am so proud that we have given the same commitment to this that we have given to education, to the police and to everything else that was ripped apart under former governments. As I said before, the community residential units have been successful. I see many of our local residents down at Chirnside Park shopping centre loving their independent lives. It certainly means a lot to them.

Another thing I can talk about is the companion card. I have contact with many families who have children with autism and special needs who want to get out into the community. Their carers now have access to free travel to support these young people — in particular, teenagers — through organisations such as Interchange so they can get out and participate and have access to all the services that mainstream people have and do everything that mainstream people do. That is so important, not only to the person with the disability but to their families and their carers. As a volunteer you think you are going to give someone with a disability something special and they are going to benefit as a result, but I can tell you that the person who benefits the

most is you — the carer — through what you get out of that relationship and the friendships that are forged.

I spoke earlier in this house today about the Commonwealth Games. Last week at the shooting event in Lilydale I was so pleased to see many people from Melba Support Services in Mount Evelyn attending the games. There was easy access and facilities for them so they could all partake in the celebrations of the games. It absolutely warmed my heart to see them enjoying the sports. They have access to all of these venues. We are more conscious of that now, as we should be.

I have talked about some of the groups in my electorate, and in Mount Evelyn in particular. We are known as a centre for excellence in disability services. We have the Mount Evelyn Special Developmental School, where I used to do a bit of volunteer work in early intervention with young people up to 18 years of age. We also have two campuses of Melba Support Services. One, which is in the main street of Mount Evelyn, is a day centre where there are young people as well as seniors. I recently hosted seniors from Melba Support Services for morning tea in my office. They were keen to understand what I do as a local member of Parliament, and when I see them in the street they are really happy to come up and tell me about community events they are attending. They attended all the pre-Commonwealth Games celebrations. We also have Yarra View Nursery, which gives people with disabilities the opportunity to work in the nursery and provide services to our local communities. They can follow the process right through from propagating to selling the plants, and some of them have received certificates. They are loving it, and it is just fantastic to see.

Recently I attended a concert put on down in Mooroolbark by the Melba people —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms McTAGGART — Yes, the 10 by 10. They actually presented me with a DVD, so you can see that I am very proud that this bill is about recognising everybody's individuality as well as their place in the overall community. I know that we hear about a lack of consultation, but I can tell the house that as a member of Parliament I have held open forums in my local special developmental school calling on parents to say what I can do for them, whether it be help with respite or access to services.

Ms Buchanan interjected.

Ms McTAGGART — No, there was no consultation when the 10 per cent was cut off the top.

This Bracks government does listen, and I know that this bill will go to providing a much better future for and a framework that will support people with disabilities. It will support the principles and objectives of the state disability plan and the development of a strong and stable disability sector that will be sustainable into the future. As I said, it is a movable feast, and there is certainly a lot more work to be done, but it provides a more integrated approach to disability and a fairer and more equitable system that supports people with a disability. I am proud to contribute to this bill. I congratulate the minister, the parliamentary secretary and the government on the work they have undertaken, and I wish this bill a speedy passage.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — It is a pleasure to join the debate on this bill. As I have listened in my office to the debate on this bill today there seems to have been two general themes to it. One is that members on this side have been talking to the government about what the sector has been saying to them, and I presume to the government too. By ‘the sector’ I mean people who are carers, peak organisations, workers in the field and clients of the many services that are provided throughout this state. The consistent message they are giving us is that they are not happy with some of the very basic themes in this bill and want more time to consider it. They do not want the bill to go back to the drawing board. They are fair, and they recognise there are positive points in this bill, but they certainly want more time to talk to the government about the many things that concern them.

It is not us playing politics. I know some members on the other side have said that we have been in here playing politics. We have not been. This is what has been told to us and what, I presume, has been told to the other side, too. If government members are not going to recognise what they have been told by people in the sector, it is the job of opposition members in this place to tell the government what people are saying to them. As I think the member for Mornington said, the people who are saying it to us are not being political. If we were in government they would be talking to us in the same sort of way. They are thinking about the system, the place they work in and the person that they care for, and they want that message to get across to the government. As I said, they are not being political.

The theme from the other side has been the defence of the legislation. Government members have talked about the positive aspects of the bill as they see it. That is fine; that is the government’s job to do that. But not one government member has really mentioned, tackled in a detailed way or refuted the arguments that have been given to us — and to government members, I

presume — by the many people in the sector and in the peak organisations that have spoken to us.

As the member for Bass said, why the rush? If this legislation is not going to be proclaimed until July next year, why do we need this rush? There is plenty of time. The government could quite legitimately delay this bill and come back and say, ‘We had extra time. We spoke to the people who were concerned’, and there would be no argument there. Again, I have not heard the actual argument as to why this bill has to be taken through this place this week and through the upper house, I presume, next week, and then — that is it! — put away neatly until July next year. I have not heard the argument as to why that has to happen.

Within my electorate I wish to pay special regard to what was the Wongabeena Association — now called Disability Opportunities Victoria (DOV) — and also to the Kindilan Society at Red Hill. These are unbelievable organisations, and organisations that I think have been at the forefront of a large part of the government’s disability plan that has been before the sector for a couple of years now.

The people in these organisations really do believe in individuals — their clients are individuals — and they have wonderful interactions with the community and with various community groups. For example, DOV has a relationship with a cabinet-making factory in Rosebud. It has a team that works in the hospitality industry and has worked at RSLs and other organisations that do their own catering. DOV has another team that has a factory that does recycling and specialises in that. It has another team that goes out and does commercial garden maintenance and lawnmowing.

A real problem for DOV is that the funding model does not fit in with the reality in the business world and in the communities they are operating in. Hospitality does not run on the school term; cabinet-makers do not run on the school term; and lawnmowing rosters and garden maintenance do not run on the school term. This organisation has had to beg, borrow, scrounge and fundraise, and it has had to do all those sorts of things because these wonderful programs that treat the organisation’s clients as individuals with talents and opportunities have not been able, under the current funding model, to pursue that path. I am disappointed that that has not been tackled in this bill.

Another issue which has been raised with me by both organisations is transportation. Obviously as you get further out from Melbourne there is less public transport, and you are drawing clients from a wide

region to these various training facilities and the opportunities these places offer. Over the years it has been a state government responsibility to pay not for the running of the minibuses that are used but to pay for the buses themselves. The government has now withdrawn from that. Organisations such as DOV and the Kindilan Society rely very heavily on their buses, not just to take their clients out to the various programs and into the community — and sometimes to bring the community to the organisation — but to bring their clients in. That is a huge cost, and huge distances are travelled. Once again, that money has to be found within the ordinary funding model of these organisations.

If the government recognised this and did not treat all organisations — especially those some way out of Melbourne — the same way, and if it gave them flexibility of funding and a special allowance in their funding for these sorts of circumstances — —

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! It is time for me under sessional orders to interrupt the business of the house. The member for Nepean will have the call when the bill is next before the house.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Infrastructure: freedom of information requests

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — The issue I have is for the Minister for Major Projects in the other place. The action I request of him is to release documents that I requested under freedom of information legislation in July 2005. The documents are quarterly performance reports for the years 2004 and 2005 of the cabinet subcommittee of the Department of Infrastructure (DOI).

The minutes of this committee show that this group deals with major projects and a range of other issues, but obviously I am interested in the reporting by the department to the government on its performance in major projects. The minutes clearly show that these reports were submitted to the Department of Treasury and Finance — that is, the department, not the cabinet.

The department's original reply to me came on 14 September 2005 wherein I was told that there were four quarterly reports, which is interesting given that two years are involved. Further, the departmental officer indicated to me that:

The reports have been prepared with the specific purpose of informing the whole-of-government report furnished to the expenditure review committee of cabinet (ERC) by the Department of Treasury and Finance. The reports contain information that has been considered by cabinet.

Of course after this refusal I applied for an internal review, and a response came to me on 6 October 2005. Lo and behold, two additional quarterly reports have now been found by the department! If they were expenditure review committee reports to cabinet, I find it interesting how two such important reports could suddenly get lost. Nevertheless my application was still denied, but the reasons have been changed. The reasons are now as follows:

... a document is exempt if it is a copy or draft of, or contains extracts from, a document referred to in section 28(1)(a), (b) or (ba), which includes a document that has been prepared by a minister or on his or her behalf or by an agency for the purpose of submission for consideration by cabinet.

The letter then goes on to tell me:

The documents requested were prepared by DOI for the purpose of preparation of reports for consideration by the expenditure review committee of cabinet.

After having been told initially that the reports had been considered by cabinet, the reason was then adjusted with the claim that they were prepared for the purpose of consideration.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal case is scheduled for June, but I point out to the house that the DOI has previously been caught out trying to classify documents the government does not want released as cabinet documents. I refer the house to the decision in the VCAT case, G435/2004, *Louise Asher v. Department of Infrastructure*, which involved exactly the same case — put simply, the title 'cabinet document' was falsely whacked on. I call on the minister to release this documentation.

Boating: Clifton Springs harbour

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for State and Regional Development. The action I seek is for the minister to provide funding for stage 2 of the Clifton Springs boat harbour recreation area. I am sure the minister would recall that during the 2002 election we gave a commitment to contribute \$200 000 towards the

development of a recreational area at the Clifton Springs boat harbour. That project included the construction of a breakwater and a 80-metre-long beach and recreational area, including walking tracks and an improved stormwater management facility. The state government in September 2004 announced a grant of \$200 000 to the City of Greater Geelong from the Living Regions, Living Suburbs program, and the Greater Geelong council provided \$296 000 towards the project.

This is a project that the local community has for many years been asking for. The Clifton Springs foreshore advisory committee had listed this as one of its major priorities. This foreshore area is one of the most beautiful areas. It has a north-facing aspect with views across the You Yangs, but it is an area that has been underutilised. This had been exacerbated by the closure of the Dell area due to major erosion and cliff slippage.

The money has now been expended on the first stage of the recreational area. Those funds were in addition to the Marine Safety Victoria money that built additional large and small boat ramps and a car park area. It is important that the house know that recreational boating continues to increase by about 10 per cent per year, and the North Bellarine area is one of the most well-utilised areas in the state. Certainly Clifton Springs is ideal for accessing the outer Corio Bay and Port Phillip Heads area.

The project that the \$200 000 contribution funded is now complete, and it is a fantastic facility. However, a number of outstanding issues need to be resolved, including the provision of barbecues and seating areas, and the sealing of the access road. This area attracts a lot of use by residents and people with boats. The issue of the road being unsealed has caused major dust issues particularly for those who live nearby.

As a result of these concerns I organised a meeting with the City of Greater Geelong and Regional Development Victoria to discuss funding options and possible assistance from the government to improve the area. As a result the City of Greater Geelong has put in a request to Regional Development Victoria. This is a very important project for the Clifton Springs and Drysdale community. I again ask the minister to support the request from the City of Greater Geelong for stage 2 funding of this important project.

Water: fluoridation

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health and, in her absence, the Minister for Gaming who is at the table. I

refer to the unsatisfactory announcement by the minister late last year of the proposal to introduce fluoride to the water supplies at Wangaratta and Wodonga. The difficulty for the minister was that the announcement was made without any contact with anyone at the local level. As a local member I knew nothing about it, the Rural City of Wangaratta had no idea and of course the general public had no idea of the announcement made by the minister.

Because of those concerns I wrote to the minister early in December and again late in January. I raised the matters again in February with the minister's office and spoke to the ministerial adviser on 2 March when Parliament was sitting. I said I had not had a response to my representations about the minister's announcement, which was made without any local consultation.

The pros and cons of the introduction of fluoride are not the issue as far as I am concerned. I am concerned about the methods being used by the government in making this announcement without appropriate consultation with the local people. I had no response from the minister and in taking it up with the ministerial adviser I received no real response until a letter earlier this week. That roused the people of Wangaratta. There is a major group that has been set up to look at this. The name of the group is the Wangaratta Anti-Fluoride Action Group. They are really going to market on this particular issue.

I presented a petition to Parliament with about 700 signatures, and a number of other petitions were collected which were not received, so about 1700 people — —

Ms Campbell interjected.

Mr JASPER — You will get your turn in a minute.

In other words, a total of 1700 people signed a petition. They are most upset about the way the issue has been handled. The government has to come to Wangaratta and arrange to meet with the people. Let us have a public meeting and tell people what the issues are and what the advantages are, and let them put their case. I suggest to the minister that Dr Robert Hall, the chief health officer, should be directed to come to Wangaratta. We can very quickly organise a meeting where the government's representatives can address the people and say why fluoride needs to be introduced.

The minister's letter is quite detailed, saying that information has been sent out and that people know about fluoride and should be able to accept it — but that is not the issue. The issue is about the government

talking to the people. The minister has encouraged people to look at the web site and contact various people if anyone wants additional information. Yes, there may be people who support and can put a strong case for fluoridation. Many towns and cities have had fluoride added to their water supplies for many years. In this case the action I request is for the minister to either come to Wangaratta herself or send Dr Hall to a public meeting so the people can discuss the issue and clarify the position.

AGL: privacy breach

Mr LIM (Clayton) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General and, in his absence, the Minister for Gaming, who is at the table. It concerns a letter that has been sent by the energy company AGL to concession customers in my electorate. I request the Attorney-General to ask his department to investigate whether AGL may be in breach of the Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000.

I have received a number of complaints from constituents who have received identically worded letters from AGL requesting their permission to release personal information held by AGL on behalf of the Victorian government to either Centrelink or the Department of Veterans Affairs. The purpose of this release of personal information is stated in the letter as being to ratify the customer's entitlement to state government energy concessions.

What has alarmed my constituents is that rather than seeking the customer's permission to release the personal information AGL states that it will provide the information to Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs unless instructed by the customer that they object to this release of private information — in other words, if the AGL customer does not act, the information will be released. The customer has to take positive action in order to prevent release of confidential information. This means that if a customer has not received his or her letter or misunderstood what the letter means, the private information will be released by default.

I note that under the Information Privacy Act an organisation must not normally use or disclose personal information about an individual for a purpose — a secondary purpose — other than the primary purpose of collection unless the individual has consented to the use or disclosure. AGL's letters would seem to me to be in breach of this provision. I have copies of letters sent by AGL to constituents that I would be only too happy to pass on to the Attorney-General's office, and I ask the Attorney-General to investigate the matter accordingly.

Port of Portland: finger berths

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Transport, who is the minister responsible for ports. The action I seek from the minister is to not waste taxpayers money building unwanted finger berths off the trawler wharf at the port of Portland.

I urge the minister to listen to the local community, especially the local crayfishing fraternity, and to reallocate those funds to the development of the north-west corner proposal to provide proper facilities for the commercial fishing fleet at Portland. The Portland community and I welcome the allocation of funding to upgrade and extend the trawler wharf. This project should proceed as quickly as possible to provide staff with adequate facilities for the Portland-based trawler fleet.

However, the proposal to build finger berths off the extended and upgraded trawler wharf for cray boats is stupid, short sighted and absolutely contrary to the interests of the fishermen and the Portland community. It will crowd Portland Bay, it will be unsafe and it will provide worse facilities than the crayfishers have in their current situation. The proposal for finger berths is opposed by all stakeholders — the Glenelg Shire Council, the fishing industry, tourism bodies and the local community. These finger berths would crowd the beautiful vista of Portland Bay.

I am urging the minister not to build those finger berths and to use the money that is saved from not building the finger berths to work with the federal government, the local community and the fishing industry to develop the north-west corner proposal. This north-west corner proposal has the opportunity to provide first-class facilities for the fishing fleet, particularly the crayfishing fleet. It will provide better access for the growing number of recreational anglers in the Portland harbour, particularly building a second boat-loading facility or boat ramp. It will allow the fishing industry to become a real tourist attraction, because it will be alongside the Portland Maritime Discovery Centre and will provide the opportunity for tourists and visitors to get close and see personally how the fishing industry operates with the unloading of crayfish, giant crabs, squid and the other parts of the important fishing catch in the commercial port of Portland.

The north-west corner proposal would improve the vista of Portland Bay. From the shoreline you will be able to see a commercial port, a trawler wharf, a wonderful beachfront with a yacht club, an angling club, a marina and then a fishing precinct nearby to the

Portland Maritime Discovery Centre. I urge the minister not to waste money on the finger berth proposal off the trawler wharf. It is a short-sighted proposal that is not in the interests of the industry. I urge the minister to listen to the community and the fishing industry, not to build the finger berths and to use that money to develop the north-west corner proposal.

Aged care: Land Bank

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Aged Care in the other place. I ask that Land Bank be launched in my electorate of Pascoe Vale to enable a not-for-profit provider to build and run a nursing home and that the majority of the beds in the nursing home be for high-care needs.

The Victorian government is committed to providing decent aged care services in this state. I recognise that residential aged care is primarily regulated and funded by the commonwealth government, but the most recent 2005 figures show that in Moreland there is a shortage of around 270 operational residential aged care beds. There should be around 1497 beds, but there are only 1226. That is a shortfall of nearly 20 per cent on the Howard government's own planning rations. It is a disgrace and very mean spirited, and people in Moreland have to endure spending months on waiting lists waiting for a residential aged care bed or move to other areas.

I was pleased to see that last year in our government's statement, *A Fairer Victoria*, at page 28 the Minister for Aged Care flagged the implementation of a Land Bank policy to help facilitate the development of aged care facilities in the not-for-profit sector. This is a policy I have advocated for some time, and in our Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) report on the 2004–05 estimates, which was released in November 2004, we provide at page 293 a case for such a Land Bank operation. Recommendation 68 on the following page outlines it in greater detail. You can see that our government has listened to the PAEC when you look at the *A Fairer Victoria* initiative.

This is creative public policy. When you look at the data presented in the PAEC report you can see that we looked at assessments of the cost of high-care-need aged care people in the state nursing home system. The cost is running at \$140 million per annum, simply because those people cannot get into the appropriate accommodation, which is nursing home beds. The fact is that that is something that should not be a cost to the state. Secondly, it is inappropriate, especially for those people who require nursing home beds and whose families would be more assured if they were getting the

most appropriate care in such a nursing home as opposed to their being left in acute care beds in public hospitals.

The financial details of this Land Bank policy are yet to be released, but I believe Moreland has a special case and should be the launching pad for such a great proposal.

Rural Ambulance Victoria: sexual harassment case

Mr SAVAGE (Mildura) — I wish to raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Health, and in her absence the Minister for Gaming, who is the minister at the table. It concerns a substantiated sexual harassment case against Rural Ambulance Victoria region 4 manager Geoff Thomson. The victim, Natalie Barrett, was forced from her employment in the Rural Ambulance Victoria Mildura office by the sexual harassment of Geoff Thomson. Ms Barrett has since been awarded financial settlements by RAV, yet Geoff Thomson remains in his position as a regional manager. I have a copy of the Stopline report compiled by Vicki Fraser on these allegations, and it is quite comprehensive. The behaviour of Geoff Thomson is disgraceful and renders him unfit for managerial position.

In October 2005 I wrote to the Minister for Health asking for advice on these sexual harassment investigations. I received a response dated 9 November 2005 indicating that the investigation was still pending. This was puzzling, because the completed Stopline harassment report is dated January 2005, some 11 months prior. Doug Kimberley, the chief executive officer of RAV, stated in the *Age* of 23 March 2006:

Let me say, where there has been bullying and harassment, we have taken decisive action, both in terms of discipline and remedial action for employees.

It is now 14 months. Rural Ambulance Victoria management has actually protected Geoff Thomson over a long period of time. The action I seek is for the Minister for Health to direct the chief executive officer, Doug Kimberley, to publicly explain why Geoff Thomson is still the region 4 manager after the sexual harassment allegations have been substantiated.

This is not the first time that Geoff Thomson has been investigated. Another mobile intensive care ambulance paramedic was sexually harassed by Thomson and was forced to relocate to Shepparton. In 2001 Thomson, without authority, disposed of a trailer load of surplus RAV equipment to a business associate of his, Jamie Harwood. When quizzed by RAV employees as to the

whereabouts of the missing equipment, he lied and said that it was sold to Turkish second-hand dealers. When this information was conveyed to RAV management, they allowed Geoff Thomson some days grace to cover his tracks and produce a cheque for \$500 from Harwood. When RAV finally interviewed Geoff Thomson, Alan Pegg did so without interviewing witnesses and obtaining statements.

There was a police investigation into this which was killed off by RAV management. It was done by Senior Detective McHugh. The ombudsman's inquiry was completely inadequate and was based on the RAV investigation. Thomson lied and was dishonest in his removal of this equipment, and he was only counselled. A donation cheque for \$250 sent to Thomson in 2000 went missing. It was later found in the station social club. Doug Kimberley, Stephen Gough and human resources manager Desiree Harker have protected and condoned Geoff Thomson's behaviour over a long period of time.

Sewerage: Mernda

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water. The action I seek is for a date to be set for the connection of sewerage to Mernda township. I have spoken before in this place about what a great town Mernda is and my concerns that it has not always received its fair share of infrastructure and service spending. I raised with the minister in November 2004 the need for sewerage to be connected to the town. Septic tanks are smelly and present a seepage danger to the nearby waterways like the Plenty River. They also have the potential to overflow into stormwater drain systems. Maintenance of septic tanks is costly and, in areas with a wet soil, they need regular pumping out, at costs of up to \$500 each time.

I, along with Mernda residents, was delighted in August last year when the minister announced a \$300 million upgrade to the sewer system in Melbourne's north. Mernda residents have finally felt that their infrastructure needs are being addressed. I was in Mernda on the weekend and was pleased to see the pipeline for reticulated gas being laid. However, today David Peterson of Mernda contacted my office to seek my help, as he has been waiting 10 years for sewerage connection. He feels that Yarra Valley Water has repeatedly deferred the work, with inadequate excuse.

I seek the minister's support in giving Yarra Valley Water the hurry-up. Dave Peterson and his family, and all Mernda families, have waited too long. Gas is almost connected, but what these families want and

deserve now is a firm date for sewerage connection. I will continue to work with members of this great community and get them the infrastructure they deserve. I look forward to the minister acting soon.

Tanti Creek: management

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I have a matter for the attention of Minister for Water. It relates to an issue involving Tanti Creek in Mornington. Tanti Creek is a waterway that predominantly runs between the Nepean Highway and the beach. For a great many years — I think ever since government existed — Tanti Creek was looked after and controlled by the local Mornington Shire Council, until amalgamations took place. Since then it has been controlled by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.

In November last year the government instructed Melbourne Water to take control of the stream and banks of Tanti Creek, and Melbourne Water obliged. Since that time there has been a significant problem in regard to maintenance. Melbourne Water has advertised saying that people who have a problem should contact it and it will take action. Officers of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, along with local residents, have been contacting Melbourne Water in regard of the dumping of shopping trolleys and other rubbish in Tanti Creek. It has been creating a significant problem and is banking up water. The water is then eroding the banks of the creek, so it is a significant problem. It is unsightly as well, because people can walk along fair sections of the Tanti Creek banks, and they look down on this junk heap.

When these people, including those from the local council, have contacted Melbourne Water, it has acknowledged that it had responsibility and said that it had a complaints line; but when other people have contacted it Melbourne Water has said, 'We do not have any money to do this work'. I find that absolutely extraordinary. The government has instructed Melbourne Water to take control of the streams and banks — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! Can the member ask for action?

Mr COOPER — Yes, I am asking the minister to provide the funds and ensure Melbourne Water does the job it has responsibility for. It is absolutely ridiculous for people to be complaining to this body and to be told there are no funds to do the work. It is not as if it can be easily done, as the banks are steep and in many instances the work requires cranes and other equipment to get the stuff out of the creek. The

government has demanded Melbourne Water take it over but has not provided it with the funds to do the work.

Environment: Mount Waverley wetland

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — I also raise a matter for the Minister for Environment. I ask the minister to take action to ensure that the work on the Mount Waverley wetland is completed by Melbourne Water. The Mount Waverley wetland is adjacent to Blackburn Road and covers 3.3 hectares. Over the past two years the area has undergone significant work to transform it from a retarding basin into a wetland.

The project has been undertaken with a lot of cooperation from the Monash City Council, Melbourne Water, local community and environment groups and residents in the local area. This is a significant investment in our environment: there is funding of \$1.8 million available to construct the Mount Waverley wetland. The minister will probably recall visiting the wetland when its construction first started in October 2004 and meeting with various environment groups at that time.

Following damage from a storm last year the restoration work has been undertaken and the final stage of the project — the planting of native plants — has yet to be done and is due to be undertaken. When complete this wetland project will provide significant benefits to the local environment as well as contributing to the overall water quality of Port Phillip Bay. It is going to treat the stormwater from Scotchmans Creek and provide flood protection as well as creating a much more diverse ecosystem there. It naturally treats the stormwater, and the flow of pollution into local creeks and eventually Port Phillip Bay is thereby reduced. It is estimated that the wetland will contribute to reducing nitrogen loads in the bay by about 1 tonne per year.

Finally and most importantly, it will also provide a great local community recreational area. It will increase the native bird population. I think you, Acting Speaker, are well aware of an example further down Scotchmans Creek where the wetland work was completed a number of years ago. It really provides a lovely recreational area which is well used by the local community.

The wetland is adjacent to the beautiful Valley Reserve in Scotchmans Creek. Valley Reserve is an area which is well supported by a local environment group called the Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve. I think you, Acting Speaker, are also very well aware of that group as it does work further down Scotchmans

Creek. I had the pleasure of joining those members on the site on Clean Up Australia Day. We all joined together to clean up that site. Waverley residents generally have a real interest in the environment. Several environment groups look after different parts of the electorate.

The commitment of my community to sustainability and the environment was recently demonstrated by the uptake by Waverley residents of green power. More Mount Waverley residents are signed up for green power than any other suburb or town in Victoria. Green power reduces greenhouse gases. In conclusion, the wetland project will provide tangible benefits locally and broadly to Port Phillip Bay.

Responses

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The minister at the table — the Minister for Gaming — is to respond to matters raised by the members for Brighton, Bellarine, Murray Valley, Clayton, South-West Coast, Pascoe Vale, Mildura, Yan Yean, Mornington and Mount Waverley.

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, 10 matters have been raised for the attention of government ministers tonight. There is only one minister in the chamber. This represents a dereliction of duty on the part of the government and contempt of the parliamentary process.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I am still waiting for replies from Kennett government ministers on issues I raised when I used to sit on the other side of the house!

Nonetheless, the member for Brighton raised a matter for the Minister for Major Projects in the other place about freedom of information requests made in July 2005 regarding performance reports. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the Minister for State and Regional Development about stage 2 of the Clifton Springs boat harbour recreation area. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Murray Valley raised a matter for the Minister for Health about the process involved in the fluoridation of water at Wangaratta and Wodonga. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Clayton raised for the attention of the Attorney-General what he argues are potential breaches of the Privacy Act by AGL in relation to its concession customers. I will pass that on to the Attorney-General.

The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Transport, who is responsible for ports, in relation to the proposed finger berth development at the trawler wharf at the port of Portland. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the Minister for Aged Care in the other place in relation to Land Bank being launched in her electorate and associated issues.

The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to a sexual harassment case in the Rural Ambulance Service. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Water in relation to sewerage at the Mernda township and the importance of that project. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Mornington also raised a matter for the Minister for Water in relation to Tanti Creek, Mornington, and the need for funding for Melbourne Water. I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Mount Waverley raised a matter for the Minister for Environment in relation to the completion of the Mount Waverley wetland project, an important project in her electorate. I will pass that on to the minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 10.31 p.m.

Disability Bill — Acknowledgements

| Organisations: | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Mr John Morkham | Executive Officer | ACROD Victoria |
| Ms Licia Kokocinski | Executive Director | Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC) |
| Ms Sue Jackson | Executive Officer | Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) |
| Ms Penny Gallagher | | Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies (CIDA) |
| Ms Keran Howe | | Disability Advisory Council of Victoria |
| Mr Bill Lawler | Rural Access Project Officer | Gippsland Disability Resources Council |
| Mr Lloyd Williams | Secretary | Health and Community Services Union |
| Ms Allesa Lancaster | | Health Services Union of Australia |
| Ms Sue Tait | President | Intellectual Disability Review Panel |
| Mr Julian Gardner | Public Advocate | Office of the Public Advocate |
| Ms Margaret Labb | | People First |
| Mr Doug Pentland | | People First |
| Ms Dianne Heggie | General Manager | SCOPE Victoria |
| Ms Linda Bamblett | Manager | Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd |
| Mr Kevin Stone | Executive Director | Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with a Disability |
| Mr Michael Bladen | | Victorian Coalition of ABI Service Providers |
| Mr Chris Glennan | Chief Executive Officer | VICRAID |
| Mr Grant Roberts | Manager | Victorian Council of Deaf People |
| Ms Marcia Neave | | Victorian Law Reform Commission |
| Ms Deidre Griffiths | Principal Solicitor | Villamanta Legal Service |
| Ms Marsha Sheridan | General Manager | Yooralla |
| Mr Lou Iaquinto | Assistant General Manager | Department of Education |
| Ms Ruth Vine | Director | Department of Human Services — Mental Health Branch |
| Ms Ruvani Wickremasinghe | Assistant Director | Department of Justice |
| Ms Estelle O'Callaghan | Acting Senior Policy Advisor | Department of Premier and Cabinet |
| Mr Tim Barta | | Department of Treasury and Finance |
| Dr Lee Ann Basser | | La Trobe University |
| Dr Christine Bigby | | La Trobe University |

