

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 8 June 2006

(Extract from book 7)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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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.

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Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Deputy Speaker: Mr P. J. LONEY

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Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

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Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

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

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Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

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Thursday, 8 June 2006

The SPEAKER (Hon. Judy Maddigan) took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 152 to 154, 277 to 280 and 341 to 345 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires a notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

PETITION

Following petition presented to house:

Police: Wallan station

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Friends of Wallan Creek Inc. and the undersigned residents of Mitchell Shire and the state of Victoria, draws to the attention of the house that:

the proposed site for the police station in Wallan (i.e. corner Watson and Windham streets) is inappropriate due to the loss of 2440 square metres of precious public open space from Hadfield Park, that is currently available for community use and enjoyment.

the undersigned support the construction of a new police station in Wallan, but not on public parkland.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

acknowledges both the passive and active recreational values of Hadfield Park, Wallan, and that the state government takes immediate action to purchase private land for the construction of a new police station in Wallan. This land purchase should be planned so that the police station is the first stage of a co-located emergency services precinct in Wallan to house police, CFA, ambulance and SES; that the state government regards this land purchase as an investment in strategic long-term urban planning for Wallan's future.

actively supports Mitchell Shire's strategic vision for Hadfield Park, as set out in its Recreation and Open Space Strategy (2005), which identified a priority action for Wallan as the need to 'improve Hadfield Park as a key township park ... [and] prevent further development of non-recreational facilities on the park in order to maximise green space'.

By Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) (625 signatures)

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Seymour be considered next day on motion of Mr HARDMAN (Seymour).

INSPECTOR OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Greater Geelong City Council

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment), by leave, presented report.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENT

Tabled by Clerk:

Surveillance Devices Act 1999 — Report for the year 2005 under section 37 from the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Nuclear energy: government policy

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I rise to respond to the Prime Minister's recent announcement of an inquiry into nuclear power. I join with the Premier and Minister for Environment in declaring our clear opposition to nuclear power in Victoria, as we in the Labor Party have done for decades. The Cain government passed the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act in 1983, banning nuclear activities, and with good reason.

In 1986 the world witnessed the Chernobyl disaster. That catastrophe demonstrated the absolute menace of nuclear technology; one accident at a nuclear facility became an international tragedy, with devastating effects on human life and the environment. Children living in the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia are still suffering dramatically high rates of cancer.

Even when these nuclear plants function correctly, the waste remains an outright threat to human life for thousands of years. There is still no safe way to dispose of it. There are ongoing incidents of radioactive leaks at storage depots, even in Western nuclear power industries.

Just over a week ago, the French nuclear authority admitted to a dangerous leak of radioactive material into the ground water in the Champagne region. If the enormous safety risk of nuclear power were not reason enough to avoid it completely, the financial costs are prohibitive.

Since World War II the United States government has pumped almost \$300 billion in subsidies just to keep the industry afloat. In Britain the Blair government has calculated it will cost tens of billions of dollars to clean up its 20 nuclear sites. Nuclear power presents enormous problems that Victorians do not need, and we certainly do not want it.

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

Caulfield Junior College: funding

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I have raised the plight of Caulfield Junior College in this place on numerous occasions and will continue to do so until this primary school receives the funding it deserves to provide an appropriate learning environment for the children and hardworking staff.

Before the budget the school council president felt compelled to publicly speak out on behalf of the school community to bring attention to the needs of the school and implored the Minister for Education and Training to provide funding to properly upgrade the school rather than get the small amounts of maintenance money which are only a bandaid solution.

Blaise Vinot said, 'It's a good school. The teachers and programs are all brilliant, but it needs major work to bring it up to modern standards'. The disappointment of not seeing their school on the budget list of those to be redeveloped must have been palpable for the parents and staff. My inquiries this morning indicate that Caulfield Junior College has not received any notification even in relation to funds for maintenance as part of this week's announced \$50 million that the minister detailed to the house.

The minister was able to name some schools, and I can only hope that Caulfield is on her list, not just for minor maintenance but for a major upgrade. Snowy money or no Snowy money, this school should be a priority for any government which cares about standards. If the minister is in any doubt, I refer her to the *Caulfield Glen Eira Leader* of 30 May, which describes conditions at the school as:

Dirty carpet stuck down with duct tape covers floors, surrounded by paint-stripped walls — Caulfield Junior College has seen better days.

Children: Oakleigh electorate

Ms BARKER (Oakleigh) — I had the great pleasure recently of sharing in some very good news with a large number of child-care centres, kindergartens and outside-school-hours care services in my electorate following the announcement by the Minister for Children of the capital grants program. Some \$60 049 is being shared amongst the large number of those facilities in my electorate.

They include Carnegie Childcare Centre, Murrumbeena Children's Centre, Murrumbeena Kindergarten, Ormond Community Kindergarten, St Patrick's Primary School out-of-school-hours care program, Carnegie Primary School out-of-school-hours care program, Glen Huntly Primary School before and after-school care program, Oakleigh occasional care in Cabena Crescent plus all the other sites it runs in the city of Monash, Oakleigh Primary School kindergarten, Emmanuel Anglican Kindergarten, Dover Street preschool, Hughesdale Primary School after-school care, Sacred Heart Primary School after-school care, Christ Our Holy Redeemer Primary School out-of-school-hours care, Sussex Heights Primary School out-of-school-hours care, Oakleigh Primary School out-of-school-hours care and Amsleigh Park Primary School out-of-school-hours care.

All of those facilities received what they asked for; some received the full \$5000. They were very sensible in the way in which they put in their applications, some applying only for a fridge or a microwave to upgrade and continue the great work they do in assisting families in the Oakleigh electorate in regard to their children.

The Bracks government is making Victoria a great place to live and raise a family by investing heavily in children's services and helping working parents balance the competing demands of work, especially in the Oakleigh electorate.

Aged care: medication administration

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I call upon the Minister for Aged Care in the other place to provide a transitional period to allow aged care facilities the time to implement the code of guidance in the management of the administration of medication to their high-care residents.

Along with my colleagues in The Nationals I have been contacted by many in the aged care sector who are concerned for the 24 000 high-care residents in the 819 services across Victoria. The problem is that the new code was released by the Nurses Board of Victoria on 30 May, the day the regulations or code took affect. This allowed no time to plan for the transition and implement the changes in a practical and manageable way.

The new code requires that if a personal care worker administers schedule 4, 8 or 9 medications to high-care residents, a division 1, 2, 3 or 4 nurse will be required on the premises to supervise the administration of that medication. Currently there are not enough registered nurses in the country to allow for the implementation of this new code.

Together with the members for Shepparton and Rodney, I met with the Minister for Aged Care and stressed that there must be a transitional period to allow for the training of nurses and staff to comply with the code. If not, there will be enormous disruptions to services and stress to the elderly residents and their families.

With an increasing number of elderly people in our communities, particularly in rural and regional Victoria, we in The Nationals agree that the aged care sector requires special attention, but it must be provided in a practical and achievable way. The state government must provide a transitional period to implement the new code for the administration of medication to high-care residents in aged care services.

Hosken Reserve, Merlynston: redevelopment

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation in the other place, Minister Madden, for the \$17 000 funding for Merlynston's Hosken Reserve redevelopment feasibility study. The reserve is used by Haig Amateur Cricket Club, King Khalid Islamic College, North Coburg Football Club, Pascoe Vale Soccer Club and Merlynston Tennis Club. There are also plans for a proposed bocce club. Hundreds of people in Merlynston and beyond will benefit from this redevelopment.

Congratulations and thank you to Hosken Reserve redevelopment group president, Mr Paul Bruno. I also thank members and associates of North Coburg Saints Football Club: Ron O'Donnell, senior vice-president; Patrick McLaughlin, senior secretary; Dan Kennedy, senior vice-president; Geoff English, senior treasurer; Peter Lohner, senior coach; Russell Dowling, coach

coordinator juniors; Marie O'Donnell, junior coordinator; Rosie Crooks; Bill Doherty; Alan Davis; James Crooks; and Ashley Mills, senior assistant coach.

Also congratulations and thanks go to Haig Amateur Cricket Club, particularly their president, John Gioupas, and secretary, Taneale Gioupas; Pascoe Vale Soccer Club president and secretary, Lou and Jim Tona respectively; Merlynston Tennis Club secretary, Ron Morton, and assistant secretary, Les Brane; and from King Khalid College, sports master Ohran Ozdamar — all from the Hosken Reserve redevelopment group.

The study will look into turning the centre into a bigger one and establishing a multi-use facility which will allow it to meet the growing recreational needs of the community. Congratulations also go to Moreland City Council for putting this great project together with this wonderful redevelopment group at Hosken Reserve.

Economy: performance

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Our Treasurer is continuing to refuse even to acknowledge the problems Victoria faces with ongoing weakness in the state economy. Contrary to the impression the Treasurer sought to give to the house yesterday, the latest national accounts data shows that Victoria again underperformed against the national average growth rate in final demand. In seasonally adjusted terms Victoria grew by only 4 per cent over the past year, compared with 5 per cent growth nationally. Over the March quarter Victorian final demand grew by a mere 0.1 per cent compared with 0.8 per cent nationally.

Particularly worrying were the figures for investment. Private gross fixed capital formation in Victoria actually fell by 1 per cent in the March quarter. The situation with public investment is far worse. In the last quarter public gross fixed capital formation fell by a massive 12.8 per cent in Victoria, compared with a 5.9 per cent rise nationally. Over the year Victorian public investment is down 8.4 per cent, compared with a 7.6 per cent rise nationally. This follows on from very weak figures for Victorian general government gross fixed capital formation shown in the latest government financial statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics which show that in 2004–05 state government gross fixed capital formation was actually lower than it was in 1998–99, despite the Treasurer boasting about the alleged level of capital spending under the Bracks government.

Victoria now faces additional challenges from the resources boom and the changing international economy, making it even more important for the

Bracks government to lift its game; but with its high taxes, poor services, tolerance of industrial thuggery, lagging infrastructure and slow decision making, the Bracks government is not making Victoria a welcoming place to be for most investors.

Belmont: Brian Taylor awards

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — On Monday night I had the pleasure of attending the Belmont Rotary dinner for the Brian ‘Tarz’ Taylor recognition awards. The night was a joint initiative of Belmont Rotary and the Belmont Business Association. Tarz was a Belmont local and the unofficial mayor of Belmont. He had spent his working life in High Street, Belmont, and if ever there was a High Street icon, it was Tarz. The awards, generously sponsored by the *Geelong Independent*, are a fitting and enduring reminder of Tarz and his ability to make people feel very much alive.

I was pleased to present Neville Preston of pharmacy fame with the Brian Taylor personality award, and Cr Bruce Harwood presented the Belmont Business Association customer service award to Tony and Anna Jiminez of Belmont Hardware. Recognition certificates were presented to the following businesses: Doug Hille of Patsy’s Place, Vince Albanese and Leanne Zinn of the Joker Shoppe, Shirley Taylor of Belmont Drapery, Lyn Isaacs of the Belmont Coffee Shop, Sue Cooke of the Belmont TAB, and Carol Sormaz of Belmont Pharmacy.

Congratulations to Belmont Rotary president Neil Webb and vocational director Jenny Oscar, Laurie Hill, as chair for the evening, and helpers Ken Daniels and Ross McConaghy. Well done also to Belmont Business Association president Vince Albanese and secretary Claire Barnes, and thanks again for the promotion by the *Geelong Independent*. Finally, thank you to Ross and Wendy Taylor for representing the Taylor family at this important event. We will all remember Brian ‘Tarz’ Taylor.

Building industry: organised crime

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — Recent press articles regarding criminal activity at the old Spencer Street power station site just confirmed that Victoria is the place to be a criminal. The Bracks Labor government has turned a blind eye to a culture of criminal behaviour and industrial lawlessness on all Victorian building sites. Amidst allegations of bribes, standover tactics, assault and links with notorious organised crime figures, in May last year the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner wrote to the government

demanding that it simply enforce the criminal law, in particular with respect to allegations of criminal trespass by John Setka of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. To date this request has not only been ignored; it has not even been acknowledged.

The Bracks Labor government has admitted inappropriate contact at Saizeriya; however, no charges have yet been laid, notwithstanding demonstrable fraudulent behaviour involving a phantom plumber, overseen by government officials. Following the Victorian government’s guilty plea to criminal behaviour at Latrobe Valley hospital, Justice Merkel said that the Victorian government wanted to say that it had breached the act, but it did not want to tell anybody why or how or what. On top of this the Bracks Labor government turned a blind eye to criminal damage at the National Gallery of Victoria and refused to enforce a Supreme Court injunction against the *Age* newspaper.

Everybody knows that a \$1 million donation will buy immunity from prosecution from this mob, and it just goes to show the biggest protection racket in the town is the Australian Labor Party — just ask George!

Schools: Bellarine electorate

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) — Yesterday I was pleased to be able to contact my local schools and announce additional money for maintenance. All up 15 schools from my electorate will benefit from the government’s \$50 million commitment to school maintenance. This is in addition to the \$34 million annually committed to schools. All the schools receive a share of this money.

Some of the schools to benefit include Moolap Primary School, over \$39 000 on top of its new stage 1 development and new portables; Portarlington Primary School, \$67 500; Ocean Grove Primary School, \$53 001; Whittington Primary School, \$101 401; Clifton Springs Primary School, \$99 702; Drysdale Primary School, \$133 613; Surfside Primary School, \$23 561; and Newcomb Secondary College, \$26 610, which is on top of the commitment to the \$8 million redevelopment of that school. These are just some of the schools that will receive funding.

All up, schools in my electorate have received over \$620 000 in maintenance money. This will go towards a variety of maintenance issues, including roof repairs, painting, improved paving areas, new carpets and communication systems, and will be provided to schools by the end of the month. This is another example of the Bracks government’s commitment to

education, ensuring all children have access to the best-quality education and facilities.

Murray River: health

Mr WALSH (Swan Hill) — From the United Nations Water Development Report of March 2003 comes the gem:

Emotion and ideology do not measure well against research and facts.

The current water debate has been characterised by such emotion and ideology. The urban public loves rural horror stories and predictions of environmental catastrophes. Leftist media outlets like the *Age* and the ABC are convinced that the Murray River is dying, and their mantra is repeated endlessly by the chattering classes of metropolitan Melbourne.

The so-called 'dire prediction' affecting Australia's premier river has been made so often by such respected institutions as the CSIRO that it is now taken on trust and uncritically as true. But like many locals who know and love the river, I was pleased to see that the tide of opinion may be beginning to turn towards the truth.

An article in the *Australian* last week headed 'River argument runs dry' canvassed the astounding possibility that much of the doom and gloom is misplaced. Professor Peter Cullen, a director of Land and Water Australia and member of the infamous Wentworth Group, is quoted in the article as saying:

I don't think the river is dying at the moment.

Surprise, surprise — and from such a doomsayer!

The article, one of the most sensible I have read in a long time, concluded by suggesting that we must moderate our expectation of Australian rivers and realise that they will never be clear blue streams bubbling through lush meadows. They are old, murky, sometimes salty waterways, meandering through arid environments, much more resilient than we ever imagined and much less in need of a technological 'quick fix' than we believe.

Schools: Mulgrave electorate

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave) — Education is the Bracks government's no. 1 priority, and this was clearly demonstrated in last week's state budget with record levels of investment in our schools. In my local community this commitment is expressed by \$4 million to provide a new Monash Special Developmental School in Wheelers Hill to benefit local kids with special needs.

This government is providing local kids in my community the best start in life by giving local schools the funding and facilities they need. Further evidence of our commitment was provided through a record \$50 million maintenance boost. Schools in the Mulgrave electorate will share in almost \$345 000 in important maintenance support. This funding and the government's ongoing commitment to education is great news for local families.

Waverley Adult Training Centre for the Handicapped in Mulgrave is a dedicated and first-class provider of care and support for local residents with a disability. I was pleased to recently visit WATCH to celebrate the opening of the new Vucic annex. The \$200 000 multipurpose room is a great addition to WATCH facilities and will increase the range of day programs possible. This new facility was only made possible through the extraordinary generosity of the Vucic family, whose son, Jo, is a client of WATCH.

Well done to all at WATCH, especially coordinator Bernadette Baillie. Sincere thanks on behalf of my community to Milan, Maria, Tony and Jo Vucic — your generosity is truly inspirational.

Schools: Warrandyte electorate

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — Despite seven years of this Labor government, which claims to have made education its no. 1 priority, none of the 11 government primary schools and 4 government secondary schools in my electorate has received any upgrade of their classrooms and buildings. The only exception has been Croydon Hills Primary School, which has a rapidly expanding enrolment and has received a few new classrooms, but the vast majority of that funding came from federal government money.

In the meantime Norwood Secondary College has a technology wing that is of Third World standard; Warrandyte Primary School has rotting classroom walls and ceilings; and Ringwood North Primary School is coping with clusters of portable classrooms and archaic permanent buildings that are in appalling condition, notwithstanding incredible parent volunteer support.

Despite any number of letters, representations and speeches in this house my requests for some level of equity for education infrastructure in my electorate has fallen on deaf ears. You can imagine therefore how cynically my constituents took on board the Treasurer's comments on television last week in attempting to sell his state budget, when he said that the major school upgrades in Broadmeadows and Altona — his electorate and that of the Minister for Education and

Training respectively — would not be affected by the \$600 million black hole in his state budget.

As for maintenance, the Auditor-General is on record as saying that the previous Liberal government over its seven years cranked back the \$800 million Cain-Kirner shortfall in school maintenance by two-thirds before leaving government. This government is giving meagre maintenance money, notwithstanding in members' statements this morning the shopping list of maintenance jobs at schools announced by members from the Labor Party. We should recall that this meagre money was totally frozen by the former Minister for Education, the member for Northcote, for two years on the excuse of bringing in a new physical resource management system.

Patterson Lakes Primary School: radio station

Ms LINDELL (Carrum) — I acknowledge the very fine work done by the teachers, staff and parents of Patterson Lakes Primary School. I had the great pleasure of attending the school on 25 May for the launch of its very own radio station, School of Rock at Patto, 104.7 FM. The radio station will assist in engaging students in a high level of literacy activities and will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This initiative is led by the principal, Stan Szuty, and the vice-principal, Paul Clohesy, and their very gifted teacher, Brad Canavan, who spent much of his own time and effort purchasing the necessary equipment.

Patterson Lakes Primary School delivers an excellent standard of education. It is very well supported by the community of Patterson Lakes. The children there are engaged in their learning, and they take responsibility for it. In every sense it is a prime example of the wonderful quality of government education that can be achieved when communities work together to make sure that Victoria remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Manningham: parkland auction

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — Manningham City Council ignored the needs and wishes of the community by auctioning two pockets of precious parkland last weekend. In what one resident described as 'an act of absolute stupidity' the council went ahead with the sale of Doncaster's Leeds Street reserve and auctioned Donvale's Burge Reserve near Kevin Court despite an active community campaign to keep the areas for public use. The Leeds Street site sold for \$263 000, with Burge Reserve passed in.

As Leeds Street resident Rod Sayers said:

This decision simply defies belief. The amount of money that the council will make from this sale is nothing compared to the quality of life we will lose. This [was] a once-off sale, but we will lose those parks forever. And with the onset of high-density housing, it is more important to keep the open spaces that we actually do have. Selling [was] short-sighted and crazy'.

Mary Wooldridge, Liberal candidate for Doncaster, joined the residents on this matter. She is quoted as saying:

At a time when there is an obesity epidemic, we should be promoting lifestyles and facilities that encourage playing in parks ...

Children will now have to cross dangerous roads just to have a run around or have a kick of the footy.

Manningham has always prided itself on being a family-orientated community and is renowned for its large areas of open space and parkland ...

Selling off the parks does not reflect our community's spirit and clashes with the council's own philosophy of encouraging healthy living.

It's a shame the council is prepared to put families, health and recreation aside and sell public reserves for a 'fast buck'.

She also said the Bracks Government needed to share the blame. If the Bracks Government did not short-change local government with cost shifting, the council would not be forced to sell its assets.

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

Gordon Institute of TAFE: Weinig Australia open day

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — On Friday, 2 June, I had the pleasure of attending the Gordon Institute of TAFE Weinig Australia open day at the Gordon's East Geelong campus. The open day, which was held in the school's carpentry school, highlighted the state-of-the-art woodworking machinery that has been purchased by the college. The day included demonstrations of the most advanced moulding, grinding, tenoning, automatic docking, template making, tool measuring and set-up technology. This equipment is being made available to apprentices at the Gordon TAFE courtesy of the state government's \$12 million grant allocated to TAFEs across Victoria to install such equipment.

Through this magnificent funding incentive, apprentices in TAFEs are being trained to use new technology before it becomes commonplace in industry. I take this opportunity to congratulate and recognise all those individuals involved in the open day

initiative. From the Gordon TAFE they were John Lane, education manager, joinery and cabinet making; Fred Baltetsch, head of school, building and construction; Mark Hyde, the Australian Education Union president of the TAFE; and Mark McDonald and David Rush, cabinet-making teachers. From Weinig Australia they were Neil Forbes, managing director; and Craig Stevens, sales manager, Victoria. It was a job well done by them all. The Gordon TAFE continues to be a leader in apprenticeship training in this country.

Rashika Kumar

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I recently had the pleasure of having a work-experience student named Rashika Kumar with me for the week. I always ask these students if there is anything they would particularly like to say to Parliament. Rashika had this to say:

My name is Rashika Kumar and I am from Mentone Girls Grammar. I recently had the pleasure of undertaking work experience with Janice Munt. This week had me doing a variety of things from filing documents to accompanying Janice in her duties as MP. While I myself was adapting to a different environment and situation, so were two men trapped almost 1 kilometre underground in a mine. During this tragedy the people of Australia stopped, listened and rejoiced as the news of the Beaconsfield mine disaster flooded our televisions, newspapers and thoughts.

But perhaps the greatest story to be told here is the support and mateship offered to the small town of Beaconsfield. I was and am continually amazed at the words of encouragement that were offered to these men, as well as to their family and friends, from prominent media figures to everyday Australians. It is these small gestures that can make an impossible situation seem tolerable without reason. With things happening all over the world, I take comfort in knowing that this country really does care about its people, a country distinguished from many others and one I am proud to reside in.

When Brant Webb and Todd Russell exclaimed that they were finally going home, they were not just going back to their family and friends but back into the arms of the best country in the world! Thank you and I hope you are as proud an Australian as I am.

Schools: Narracan electorate

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — I rise this morning to talk about the magnificent Bracks government, a government that is for education, as demonstrated by the budget's maintenance funding for schools. A quick look at those figures show that additional funding of \$820 000 for maintenance is on top of \$13.6 million already allocated for schools in the Latrobe Valley. There is another excellent story across my electorate, where in excess of \$530 000 has been allocated for additional maintenance for schools. Warragul Regional

College has received \$129 000, Newborough East Primary School has received \$28 000, Nilma Primary School has received \$20 000, Neerim South Primary School has received \$18 000, Moe (Albert Street) Primary School has received \$22 000, and Drouin West Primary School has received \$22 000. The list goes on and on and on.

That is not to mention the construction work currently under way. There is \$2.3 million for the Drouin Secondary College and Leading Schools funding for schools at Neerim South, Drouin and Warragul, at a school that has just been completed, and also Trafalgar High School and Lowanna College in Moe. They are receiving significant funds as well as this maintenance upgrade from the Bracks government. The Bracks government in my electorate and across Gippsland is delivering for our community, delivering for education and ensuring that our children will have a bright future in this great place to live.

Dr Paul Fullerton

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk) — I would like to pay tribute to a local unsung hero, Dr Paul Fullerton. A number of local residents have approached me recently expressing their sadness that Dr Fullerton is leaving their local area and indeed the country. Before he does I want to put on record on behalf of the local community our sincere thanks.

Dr Fullerton was born in Fiji in 1947 to Methodist missionary parents. He moved to Australia with the aim of becoming a doctor. After graduating from the University of Sydney he transferred to the Royal Children's Hospital to undertake postgraduate paediatric training. Paul spent seven years in the Northern Territory as a paediatrician and was involved in establishing a neonatal unit, promoting health care by Aboriginal health workers, visiting Aboriginal settlement areas to provide paediatric care and becoming involved in teaching resident medical officers.

Paul moved to Melbourne in 1986 and eventually settled in Upwey. He became involved with the Angliss Hospital and the Knox Private Hospital, commenced a private practice in Boronia and eventually in Upper Ferntree Gully. Dr Paul Fullerton's aim was to provide families with quality health care where the child and family felt at home and not intimidated by a medical setting. Thus the clinic at Upper Ferntree Gully has been a unique family-oriented setting where children are generally happy to come and see their doctor and parents feel free to ask many questions without being intimidated. The children roam the rooms. Some are seen

by the doctor in the car park if they are unwilling to come inside. Others choose to feed the cockatoos or play on the balcony during their visits. He has become Uncle Paul to some, and Dr Pumpkin Ears, the Funny Doctor, G'day Mate and My Doc Paul to many others. It has been a difficult decision for him to leave the practice and take up a position with Monash University in Johor Bahru in Malaysia. However, it will allow him to follow his passion for teaching and pass on to a new era of medical students — —

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

Sally Kelynack

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I want to place on the public record today my congratulations to Sally Kelynack, who is the manager of the Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre, an organisation that serves the eastern suburbs and is located in Ringwood. As an occasional volunteer driver for the centre I am aware of some of the work that the centre does under Sally's management, but it does a lot more than just offer driving services to older people. According to Sally's last newsletter, she is to retire shortly.

The service helps some 60 people a month find satisfying voluntary work. The social support arm of the organisation also organises volunteer transport for about 60 people every day, and its transport projects continue to work in finding ways to assist older people and people with disabilities in their transport needs. One example of this is the transport register and its use for the provision of minibuses for transportation services. Some 728 people benefited from that in the last month.

Sally is shortly to finish up with the Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre and is moving to Cairns. I am sure all the people who have been involved with the centre and who have had contact with Sally wish her every success in the future — as we also wish Mr Vic North every success in taking on a very big position.

Melbourne Storm: support base

Mr LOCKWOOD (Bayswater) — The Melbourne Storm National Rugby League team is having a very successful 2006. It needs support from the Melbourne community in its battle to win this year's premiership. Storm is currently on top of the table, a position it shares with the Brisbane Broncos, who have a slight for-and-against advantage. Storm has now won 10 games straight at home here in Melbourne at Olympic Park. It looks forward to playing at its new

home ground once the new stadium is completed in 2008, in time for the 2009 season. With a bit of luck we might see a few games at that stadium in 2008.

Melbourne Storm has to face a constant battle against a difficult local media, with local television frequently giving it the brush-off. Matches are replayed late at night and match results are not always featured on sport bulletins. Storm rarely makes it onto Channel 9's featured matches — there are two each weekend — despite its winning performances. If it were not for Fox Sports, we would struggle to see Storm on television at all. The team has a much bigger battle against the members of the Sydney media, who seem to think that Melbourne has no right to its own national rugby league team.

They are wrong! We have every right to our own team. We have a team that regularly gives the Sydney teams a lesson in how to play the game. Storm continually unearths new talents, like 19-year-old sensation Greg Inglis. Along with Matt King, Cameron Smith and Dallas Johnson, he has played in the game's pinnacle event, the state-of-origin game.

Melbourne will host round 3 of the state-of-origin series this year. In a few short weeks we will get to see first hand the wonderful spectacle that is Queensland versus New South Wales. Again Melbourne has had its detractors, many in Sydney arguing against Melbourne hosting this match. We are the sporting capital of Australia and always turn out to great sporting contests — more so than in Sydney.

Players Brett White, Ben Cross, Garret Crossman, Mick Crocker, Cooper Cronk, Ian Donnelly, Matt Geyer, Scott Hill, David Kidwell, Billy Slater, Steve Turner and Jake Webster are going great guns this year and will continue to go great guns for the remainder of the season, taking Storm all the way to the top.

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES (CONSEQUENTIAL AND OTHER AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second reading

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Children) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Children, Youth and Families Act was passed by the Parliament in 2005 and received assent on 7 December 2005.

The scientific evidence that underpins the act conclusively demonstrates that children need a certain type of environment in order to develop healthily and that the absence of such an environment affects the development of the brain in such a way that the child's development can be seriously impaired, leading to an adult with poor cognitive and social skills and higher incidences of mental health and other problems.

That is why investing in children's early years, giving parents the help they need to raise their families and ensuring our most vulnerable young people receive the support they need — when they need it — are among the most important things any government can do.

The Children, Youth And Families Act recognises that every child deserves a stimulating and nurturing environment where they can grow and develop to their full potential.

The act translates the science of childhood development into law by making children's best interests paramount in all service delivery and decision making and by enabling and promoting earlier intervention, stronger responses to cumulative harm and greater emphasis on children's stability, development and cultural identity.

Significantly, the new act provides the legislative basis for a more integrated system of child, youth and family services — a system that focuses more directly on children's safety, health, learning and wellbeing and development.

Through this legislation, and through the related policy and service delivery reforms, we want to connect families to the services they need earlier and make those services more accessible and more adaptable to the changing needs of today's families.

As with any major piece of legislation, there are a significant number of consequential amendments to be made to other acts. There are also a number of transitional arrangements to be made, especially with regard to matters before the Children's Court. We have taken care to strike a balance between administrative ease and fairness, so that no party is disadvantaged by the implementation of the Children, Youth and Families Act.

Today's bill incorporates appropriate transitional arrangements and the necessary consequential amendments. The bill provides that provisions of the new act will take effect on the day the act commences, with three exceptions.

The Children, Youth and Families Act spells out maximum time frames, after which the secretary

must assess children's needs and parental capacity and determine whether a stability plan should be developed. A stability plan will address a child's longer term care away from home. Time frames commence when the Children's Court makes an order, which results in a child being placed in out-of-home care. Under the transitional arrangements, any time spent in out-of-home care prior to the commencement of the act, will not count towards the time frames for stability plans. This means that time frames for making of stability plans will not apply retrospectively.

Similarly, new minimum time frames for the making of permanent care orders will not have retrospective effect. On commencement of the act, the Children's Court will only be able to make a permanent care order if a child has been out of home for two years — as currently provided under the Children and Young Person's Act — or the new six month minimum time frame for these orders is met.

Finally, transitional arrangements will provide for pre-hearing conferences to continue in their current form until October 2007. This will allow for new models of dispute resolution to be developed, in consultation with the Children's Court and other experts and stakeholders.

The act has been subject to the highest levels of scrutiny, and this close scrutiny has continued. As a result, some technical amendments to the principal act are proposed, to achieve the policy objectives of the act. Some of the additional amendments are very minor but there are some matters we do wish to draw your attention to, as follows:

Timely and appropriate information sharing is critical to ensure children's safety, stability and well being. Today's bill amends information-sharing provisions to enable child protection to undertake effective risk assessments when they receive a report that a child may be in need of protection.

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act, information holders are defined as including a range of professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers, police members and psychologists. The act was intended to allow family services intake services and child protection to consult with these and other defined professionals to assess a child and family's needs and risks. The capacity for child protection to consult with these professionals was inadvertently omitted in the act and the amendment bill corrects this oversight.

Community services include family services and out-of-home care services. Under the current drafting, child protection may only consult with family services in determining whether protective intervention is required. The consultation provisions will be amended to enable consultation with all community services, as was originally intended, and as is consistent with the provisions enabling information disclosure to child protection after an investigation has commenced.

The bill also contains an amendment to provisions supporting the referral of families between a family services intake and child protection. The act provides for the protection of the identity of people who make reports or referrals to a family service intake or child protection intake. The act also enables that a referral or report to one intake can be referred to the other, if this is the most appropriate way to respond to the matter. Proposed amendments more clearly enable the disclosure of the identity of the referrer or reporter to the other intake, while also prohibiting the further disclosure of their identity by the other intake service to anyone else.

The final amendment to information sharing provisions relates to the compulsory disclosure to the secretary of information about children subject to Children's Court protection orders. The act currently spells out that the secretary can only require information that is relevant to the protection or development of the child. This bill clarifies that the secretary can then use and disclose this information for the same purposes of protecting a child and promoting their healthy development.

The act contains a range of measures to assure the quality and safety of services provided to vulnerable children and families. In particular, regulations will prescribe criteria to be applied by out-of-home care services in approving foster carers and employees and contractors of residential care facilities. In recognition that other professionals may also come into close contact with children, the act also requires agencies to approve providers of services to children in residential care facilities. This bill excludes prescribed services from this requirement.

A key aim of the new act is to strengthen service responses to Aboriginal children and families and better maintain Aboriginal children's connection to their community and culture.

Amendments spelt out in this bill clarify the requirements in relation to voluntary child care agreements for Aboriginal children. These agreements are made voluntarily between parents and either the

department or out-of-home care agencies — for example to provide respite care for a child away from home. The Children, Youth and Families Act requires voluntary agreements to be subject to the Aboriginal child placement principle. This requirement is maintained under this bill. In order to promote parents' right to choose whom they enter into such an agreement with, an amendment is proposed to remove the requirement that a gazetted Aboriginal agency must advise on the appropriateness of a voluntary placement.

Provisions in regard to Aboriginal family decision-making convenors will be amended to enable them to be appointed by any Aboriginal agency registered with the Secretary of the Department of Human Services. The act will clarify that Aboriginal family decision-making processes should be utilised in relation to significant decisions about an Aboriginal child or family.

Finally, today's bill spells out amendments to youth justice provisions of the act, including in relation to the children and young persons infringement notice system (CAYPINS) and the payment of fines.

Conclusion

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 is a once-in-a-generation reforming piece of legislation. This consequential and other amendments bill enables effective implementation and rectifies some minor matters that have been identified as requiring clarification.

Having passed the principal act last year, I am now calling upon you to pass this amendment bill that will enable its implementation.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr DIXON (Nepean).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 22 June.

APPROPRIATION (2006/2007) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 7 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — At the time for the adjournment last night I was concluding my comments on the budget. In my remaining 4 minutes I would like to round off those comments.

Early in my contribution yesterday I referred to the fact that in 1999, despite your disagreements with some elements of the policies of the Kennett government, Acting Speaker, there was nevertheless a confidence in the economy and its strength and a pride in the achievements of the state. That was in vast contrast to the position we were in in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It seems to me that opportunities have been lost over the last seven years. In many senses they have been lost because in its first few years the government saw itself as the mirror opposite of the Kennett government.

For instance, with respect to IT and innovation: Bill Gates, in his book *Business @ the Speed of Thought — Using a Digital Nervous System*, had referred to Victoria as the world leader in the use of IT in education and in government services but investment quickly dropped off. For instance, with respect to the Minister for Health, who is at the table, and the health department, there is a significant underspending in the Victorian health and education systems on information technology and on systems reform to enable patients and students to get the benefits of new technology.

Indeed we seem to have been stultified by socialist thinking, believing that government has the answer to things, rather than continuing the process that was taking place in 1999 of reinvigorating the private sector, of enabling more government services to be delivered by the private sector and of seeing a movement of people in and out of the public service, leading to people in the public sector seeing a good idea and heading off to private enterprise to develop it or people from private enterprise seeing an area in need of reform in government and being able to join the public service and take a hand in modernising the state.

The Treasurer in his budget speech referred to the storm clouds that are gathering. I can see the benefits of globalisation, as I think he does, but the competitive forces that have been unleashed in China and in India in particular, with 100 million Indians speaking and writing good English and going to high-quality schools, and the fact that in many of our schools the quality of English instruction has deteriorated and spelling and grammar are optional extras, while in many schools one can observe work —

Ms Beard — What an insult to teachers!

Mr PERTON — If the honourable member takes that as an insult to teachers, she has misinterpreted what I have said. There are many good schools in the state, Catholic and independent sectors that are delivering, but sadly there are too many classrooms in which that is

not the case, and if the honourable member took the time and trouble to talk to principals about their problems with recruitment these days, probably even in her own electorate, she would be aware that there are many principals recruiting students from universities whom they have to put through remedial English and maths studies.

I was at a high-quality TAFE institute today speaking to the leaders of a high-tech faculty who said that the quality of mathematics and English skills in the students they are recruiting is now so poor that they have to have remedial classes for science and mathematics. These are serious issues. If we are to compete in a fast globalising world, we have to increase our standards and improve them constantly.

Ms BEARD (Kilsyth) — It is a privilege to join the debate on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. What a budget, what a Treasurer, what a Premier and what a government! This budget invests in infrastructure, provides services and still maintains its AAA rating.

The good news in this budget rewards the people in the Kilsyth electorate and acknowledges the challenges they face. There are challenges that all parents face in educating their families, but the no. 1 priority of this government is education. Unlike the member for Doncaster, I have great admiration for the teachers in my electorate. I speak to them regularly and I meet with principals groups on a regular basis, and I admire their work tremendously. I am a primary school teacher, and I think I know fairly well the commitment, dedication and quality of teachers in our schools, particularly in my electorate.

This government provides great quality schools, quality teachers and quality education for all students. We have reduced class sizes. Pembroke Secondary College is to be rebuilt. Our literacy standards, as we heard the other day, are leading Australia. The School Start bonus, which will see a payment of \$300 to parents of children starting prep and year 7, is a fantastic initiative. The parents of all those students in government, Catholic and independent schools will receive the payment. The first payment of \$150 will be provided at the commencement of term 3 this year and will benefit the parents of 666 prep students and 469 year 7 students in my electorate.

This initiative has been scoffed at by members of the opposition. I say to them that if they do not know parents who need this bonus at the beginning of their children's primary and secondary education, they should get out and mix with the people in their electorates a little more. I know such people in my

electorate. This \$300 payment will mean that all children can have quality clothing, quality school bags and quality shoes to put them on an equal footing with other children as well as providing for the extras.

Mr Perton interjected.

Ms BEARD — The opposition may scoff, but the parents in my electorate are not scoffing at it. People in the Kilsyth electorate will share in an additional allocation of \$50 million for school maintenance, on top of the \$34 million already allocated annually, and that will be very well received by 15 schools in the electorate of Kilsyth.

Transport for people in the outer suburbs is always an issue, but it has been addressed by this government. We have increased bus routes and introduced services to areas that have never had public transport available to them. We have also increased the hours of service of current bus routes, including longer hours on route 664 from Chirnside Park to Knox City and route 737 from Croydon to Monash University, which goes right across my electorate. Before I was first elected to this place the issue of Sunday services was raised with me many times by people who felt trapped in their homes without them. We have given them the services they asked for, providing flexibility in their lifestyles. Free public transport on Sundays for holders of seniors cards will be introduced shortly. A couple of members of my family have just received their seniors cards, and they are pretty excited about that. They are great supporters of public transport.

The budget has allocated \$2.7 million for a feasibility and design study for the Ringwood station and bus interchange. Two new sets of traffic lights on Mount Dandenong Road in East Ringwood will provide safer travel for people using busy Mount Dandenong Road. The Canterbury Road duplication is another great initiative. There were 67 crashes in five years on this 1.8-kilometre stretch of road. The duplication, shortly to be completed, will hopefully see the end of those. Since 1999, \$4.388 million has been spent on roads in the Kilsyth electorate. I need not tell the Minister for Health, who is at the table, about all the money that has been provided to Maroondah Hospital, which was doomed under the former government.

It is now a showpiece of health services in the eastern suburbs, with \$47 million being provided for upgrades. Since 1999, 1256 extra nurses have been recruited by Eastern Health to service the electorate. The super-clinic at Lilydale will provide valuable services for people in the Kilsyth electorate.

Public safety is another commitment that the government made before the election. In the Kilsyth electorate we have seen a 9 per cent increase in the number of uniformed police members. The Croydon police station has been built at a cost of \$5.1 million. The Maroondah crime rate has fallen by 0.7 per cent; and drug offences, by 10.2 per cent. The Yarra Ranges crime rate is down by 17 per cent. The government has provided \$3.2 million to build the new Croydon fire station. The government is making our community safer.

People in my electorate will also share in the \$25 million committed for the Growing Communities — Thriving Children initiative for improved early childhood and health services. Another fantastic initiative for the people in my electorate where many young people are interested in pursuing a trades career is the trades bonus. That has been hailed by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce as a great assistance to apprentices, ensuring they not only start their apprentices but that they complete them.

Since I was elected to this place in 2002 the eastern suburbs — I congratulate my other outer eastern colleagues — have developed great optimism. Suddenly infrastructure is being built and people feel optimistic because they can see the government is listening to and providing services for them. I am grateful to my colleagues for that. The results are obvious — the eastern suburbs are alive. The opposition wants to cut services like schools, hospitals and police. Those opposite never understand the challenges that working families face every day.

The Bracks government is committed to doing what is best for Victorian families. It is continuing to invest in health, education and community safety while facing the challenges of the future. I consider the Bracks government is working to make the eastern suburbs of Melbourne the best place to live, work and raise a family. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I rise to speak on the appropriation bill, but in particular on the health portfolio, which is my shadow portfolio responsibility. Budget paper 3, with the subheading 'Service Delivery', shows that the government has failed to meet even its own benchmarks and key targets in the health portfolio.

There has been a failure to meet targets set by the government itself in the key area of elective surgery waiting lists, code 1 ambulance response times and patients waiting more than 8 hours on a trolley before hospital admission. We have seen evidence of these

failures in the *Your Hospital* throughput and in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports on bed numbers, and in the budget papers themselves. What an indictment of the government's capacity to provide a basic level of health care for Victorians. This is proof that under Labor our hospitals and ambulance services are chronically failing Victorians and are underperforming because this government is incapable of managing our health system and providing services to the standards expected by our community.

The *Age* headline to an editorial of 24 May is 'An ailing health system only harms the people'. To demonstrate that this is what is happening in our state, the editorial states:

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, got it right more than 2000 years ago. One of these rules about caring for people was 'first, do no harm' ... it is as equally important to those who are treating a patient as it is to the state that provides the funding and infrastructure to maintaining health care of its citizenry.

... How a society looks after its own is a barometer to its own state of health.

The editorial went on to evoke an old saying that I am perfectly aware has been passed on from one generation to the next:

As long as you've got your health, that's all that matters.

The editorial goes on to point out:

Sadly, for many people, this is not the case. They rely on the public health system when things take a turn for the worse. It can be a daunting, alien world to enter, and it shouldn't be.

The article goes on to point out a truism — that the state has a duty of care to provide a level of care that is the equivalent to the level of demand, and that this responsibility exists independent of politics. In other words, the state has the duty of care to provide enough services to meet the level of demand by the community for those health services. If they get out of kilter, you will have a lot of people who need health services but who are not getting them.

Under this government, as the *Age* points out, this duty of care has been compromised, and, sadly, patients have suffered as a result. The article goes on to reflect on some of the ways in which the system is failing our patients. An example is the news that 500 people are dying in Victoria each year while on its elective surgery waiting lists. Some of them may well be dying of old age, but the case, nevertheless, has to be answered.

The response by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons was that the government should investigate. The college of surgeons urged the government to take

this action. The usual response by the government is to talk about how much money has been spent on the health system rather than giving an undertaking to manage the system better.

Two weeks prior, as the *Age* points out, it was revealed that 569 major elective surgery operations, including heart surgery, are cancelled regularly in our major hospitals because of the lack of available intensive care beds and intensive care nurses. The problem is that our major public hospitals run at near capacity — that is, at about 98 per cent — with no flexibility when there is an increase in demand for emergency services.

This means often that when you have an increased demand for emergency services, elective surgery patients for the next day get 'bumped' or are cancelled so that the emergency services can be offered to emergency patients. This is despite the capital spending in our system, which has increased; but sadly for our health system, in this budget there is no commitment to the extra beds which may have addressed this very difficult problem.

Ms Pike interjected.

Mrs SHARDEY — There is a difference between redevelopment and expansion. On top of these problems it was pointed out that in 2004–05 Melbourne's major hospital emergency departments went on bypass 1073 times, as well as on 3000 occasions when hospitals used the hospital early warning system (HEWS) to divert ambulances from bringing patients into certain hospitals. This is a system that has been used to try to hide the fact that hospitals are not coping with the system. The hospital early warning system is not reportable, so those figures have to be obtained under freedom of information by the media and the opposition.

Finally, there was recognition that there is a chronic shortage of doctors, with the shortage estimated to be 900, and that this government has failed to negotiate new pay and conditions with Victorian doctors. I will talk about that a little later. The conclusion in the *Age* editorial is that:

The cumulative effect of all this is that through continual lowered expectations, people see the norm as less than it should be. The trouble with 'normal' in the health system is that it always gets worse. To do nothing is to do harm.

That *Age* editorial fairly summarises what is happening in our health system today.

Ms Pike interjected.

Mrs SHARDEY — Of course the minister's response across the table is very typical; she completely fails to realise what has gone wrong.

I refer to some commentary on the budget, because it is important that not just the opposition but also those sectors and peak bodies who really know and understand how the health system works respond to the budget. I refer to the press release by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) headed 'Opportunities missed in 2006–07 state budget'. I quote some of the important points:

With no significant increase in hospital beds, the government has missed the opportunity to improve patient safety, reduce hospital initiated surgery postponements and reduce infection rates — all known by products of public hospital bed shortages.

With just six additional intensive care beds when we needed 50 to bring Victoria in line with national standards, the government has missed the opportunity to reduce inter hospital transfers of very sick patients and cut urgent elective surgery cancellations.

The press release goes on:

This budget missed opportunities to attract and increase the availability of GPs and specialists to rural Victoria, and to attract doctors to Victorian hospitals.

While other states continue to take action with a range of initiatives to attract and retain doctors, the Bracks government continues to do nothing.

In addition to the AMA's comments about negotiations with the current government over doctors pay and conditions, I refer to a press release of yesterday which talks about the fact that under this government there has not been a meaningful offer to the medical profession, which has the possibility of causing a lot of problems. I quote from the press release:

Last week Treasurer John Brumby acknowledged Victorian doctors are paid less than those in Queensland and New South Wales. Health Minister Bronwyn Pike has admitted one cause of the long outpatient waiting times is a shortage of specialists. However the Bracks government is still not prepared to broker a solution.

This is a key public health issue we already know junior doctors are working interstate and our senior doctors are being headhunted by New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

It is evident that the Bracks government is stalling the negotiation process and doctors have been left with little choice but to take action ...

Finally the AMA says:

If doctors' concerns are not dealt with by the state government now, Victoria's doctor shortage will worsen and

we will have serious problems in attracting and retaining doctors ...

That really spells out some of the problems in relation to the overall work force in Victoria. The situation with rural doctors is much worse; they have raised some very important issues. The Rural Doctors Association of Victoria's media release says:

The rural medical work force situation in rural Victoria is rapidly deteriorating with older doctors nearing retirement and others choosing to leave rural practice. They are simply not being replaced with sufficient numbers of younger doctors.

For too long, there has been a reliance on overseas trained doctors to meet the needs of rural Victorian patients. And for too long there has been a failure to institute the rural-specific training pathways necessary to produce doctors who have the all round and advanced capabilities to feel comfortable in dealing with a more complex medical and emergency care they will find in isolated rural and remote settings.

That is an indictment of this government and its lack of capacity to deal with the system, which should be growing to meet the increased demands of a growing population. There has been a total failure in this area.

The last issue I refer to is in relation to room bed numbers in rural areas, as we are talking about bed numbers. My calculations from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, which came out a couple of days after the budget, was that there has been a reduction in country areas, that some 916 beds have been scrapped across the system. We have heard there are problems in a large number of country areas and that there has been a demand for an increase in funding for upgrades and improvements at Warrnambool, Nathalia, Shepparton, Echuca and Portland, just to name a few.

In relation to the government's infrastructure spending, there has been bipartisan support for the redevelopment of the Royal Children's and the Royal Women's hospitals. The Liberal Party spoke about that at the last election.

I also refer briefly to the redevelopment of Box Hill Hospital. The Labor Party spinners are hard at work with the media trying to convince Victorians that the redevelopment of Box Hill Hospital was about to happen — and happen tomorrow! — but the budget has an allocation of only \$38 million over the next three or four years. People have been disappointed, but one needs to ask whether the Labor Party is holding back on making an announcement until just before the election, and we know about its election campaign slush fund. It would be a mark of great hypocrisy if the government has not made an announcement during the budget but

holds back money until it makes an announcement prior to the election.

In my electorate of Caulfield the Caulfield General Medical Centre's claims for funding have been kept on hold since 2001. That redevelopment is worth some \$160 million, but what did it get in the budget? It got the very small amount of \$23.5 million. Again, is the government intending to make a major announcement about that medical centre as part of its election campaign? If so, not putting money for the redevelopment into the forward estimates, as it should, is a disgraceful way for a government to behave.

The problems with the rebuilding of The Alfred hospital intensive care unit have been longstanding, with roof seepages resulting in viruses which have affected patients. It is time that rebuild occurred.

The only real assistance given to country Victoria in the health portfolio was to the Rochester and Elmore District Health Service, which is the only hospital that received a decent amount of money. That redevelopment has been known about for a very long time.

The only ambulance station to be rebuilt is the Sebastopol station, and that announcement was purely made to match the Liberal Party's announcement some time ago. There are extra commitments for some additional services to other ambulance stations, but no new stations. As we saw in a report in the *Herald Sun*, there is a huge band of areas in outer Melbourne where people wait an excessively long period of time for an ambulance, far beyond the benchmarks; and paramedics are telling us that at least 50 people a year lose their lives while waiting for an ambulance in outer areas from Sunbury around the bay to places like Flinders. This budget leaves a lot to be desired, and I think the *Age* newspaper summed it up well.

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — It is with great pride that I speak in support of the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill, and in my brief contribution I will limit my comments to the primary focus areas of education and health. While speaking in support of the bill I take the opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer on once again delivering a very fine budget that truly caters for all Victorians, including those who reside in communities in regional and rural Victoria. With respect to the Treasurer, Geelong members of Parliament were very pleased last Friday to host a business luncheon at which he presented a very comprehensive overview of this year's budget. I can assure this house that business and civic leaders in Geelong welcomed the budget because they know full

well that this year's budget has once again delivered for Geelong, delivered for Geelong businesses, delivered for Geelong schools, delivered for the Geelong health sector and delivered in many other aspects of our community to ensure that Geelong continues to be a great place to live, work and raise a family.

This year's budget builds on the magnificent transformation of schools in the Geelong area that has occurred since the election of the Bracks government in 1999. In the past schools like Tate Street Primary School, East Geelong Primary School, South Geelong Primary School, Herne Hill Primary School, Hamlyn Banks Primary School to name but a few, and my old school, Geelong High School, have all been fully refurbished. Under this budget Manifold Heights Primary School and North Geelong Secondary College, to again name just a few, have been assured of a very bright future through significant funding announcements. Manifold Heights Primary School, under the fine leadership of principal Rob Baker, is a great school and one that I have worked with to ensure it is upgraded. 'Mano' has now received \$1.3 million in this budget, an amount that will see this great little school completely transformed into a modern school with 21st-century facilities. This is great news for not only the school, its students and its teachers, but also for the wider community it services.

North Geelong Secondary College has been allocated more than \$3 million to turn the school into a modern educational institution that will service the North Geelong community well for many decades to come. I take this opportunity to congratulate the college principal, Russell Elliott, and his team for their total and undying commitment over many years to ensure that their school received this funding. It would be fair to describe North Geelong Secondary College as a great school which is dedicated to providing quality education to a very multicultural school campus. This fine work is currently being conducted in very antiquated and tired buildings. As I said, this college will now be totally refurbished to become a totally modern facility that will do the North Geelong community proud.

Arising from all of this work Geelong has seen a complete renaissance in public education since 1999. Geelong's average class sizes from prep to grade 2 have declined from an average of 24.6 students in 1999 to 21.2 today, a decrease of 3.4 students. On top of that there has been nearly a 10 per cent increase in teacher numbers in Geelong. In talking about education in Geelong one cannot go past the state government's magnificent funding contribution to completely revitalise and rebuild the Gordon Institute of TAFE in

Geelong. To say that the institute has been completely transformed under the Bracks government would be an understatement. Only last Friday I was at the East Geelong campus of Gordon TAFE and saw the extensive construction program that is currently taking place.

In the government's other priority area of health, Geelong is once again a winner. I have on many occasions spoken in this house about the Grace McKellar Centre in North Geelong, an institution that was up for sale under the previous government. The Bracks government has not only saved this great Geelong icon; it has spent more than \$80 million turning it into a modern, 21st-century health facility, and the funding in this budget has ensured that this work will be ongoing.

In the area of aged care Geelong has seen this year's budget allocate more than \$50 million to build a 108-bed aged care facility in Grovedale. Although that facility is in the electorate of South Barwon, it is another initiative that will benefit the wider Geelong community. This is on top of other initiatives already committed to, including a \$26 million rebuild of the accident and emergency unit at Geelong hospital and a \$20 million upgrade of the hospital's cancer centre. Importantly, there are now 271 more nurses than there were when the Bracks government was elected in 1999. Instead of sacking nurses, this government is employing extra nurses and getting on with the job of rebuilding health facilities in Geelong.

This is a great budget; it is great news for the community of Geelong; and, as I have said before, it will make Geelong a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I am pleased to join the budget debate, and from the outset I must say that I get absolutely annoyed when I hear some of the comments made by country Labor members when they talk about country Victoria and the things that were not happening during the 1990s. I listened with a great deal of interest to the contribution of the member for Doncaster, who referred to the difficulties that the coalition government faced in 1992 when it came into government at a time when the state was absolutely broke. I think he used terms like 'the rust bucket state' and posed the question 'What is the capital of Victoria? Is it \$1.50 or \$2?'. Victoria was a laughing-stock; there is no doubt about that. The coalition government did an enormous job in turning the state around, considering the huge debt structure it had of something over \$30 billion, and bringing it into — —

Ms Overington interjected.

Mr JASPER — If the member for Ballarat West listens she will hear some comments that will be most interesting.

The important point to make is that Victoria was in a dreadful position in 1992 because of the inability of the Labor government through the late 1980s and the early part of the 1990s to manage the state. The coalition government turned the state around, and so I applaud what was done in those years. I must say also that the house would be very much aware that I was never the white-haired boy as far as the Premier of Victoria was concerned because I disagreed with many of the things that were being undertaken, particularly as they affected country people. The removal of passenger rail services in country Victoria was something I took great issue with, and it was a source of great difference within the government at that time.

I want to put on the record the fact that the state was in a diabolical position. What the present government has never recognised is that the government of the day had to make major changes to try and bring the state back into a financially healthy situation, which is what happened over those seven years.

Ms Overington interjected.

Mr JASPER — The member for Ballarat West should listen. I invite her to visit the Murray Valley. I also invite the member for Morwell and the member for Narracan to come up and visit the Murray Valley electorate.

We did well through the 1990s as far as I am concerned. We had 33 schools across my electorate of Murray Valley that did quite well too. Yes, it was tough and hard, but we had great schools. Four schools were closed, but three of them were closed by the parents, who voted with their feet and marched to another school. Three of the schools had less than 12 students, and we could not keep them open. I went to meetings because the parents wanted to keep them open, but they could not. So of the 30-odd schools within my electorate of Murray Valley, four closed in total — and they were small schools that really could not continue.

I listened to some of the Labor members who spoke in the debate yesterday. One has no hospitals in their electorate, and another did not have a secondary school in their electorate. If I go across my electorate, I look at the secondary schools I have in Wangaratta, Rutherglen, Yarrawonga, Cobram and Numurkah. They are great schools providing great education. I support what is being done with schools, but through

the 1990s money was certainly spent on the schools within my electorate of Murray Valley.

The hospitals provide excellent service, from the Wangaratta Base Hospital, now in North East Health, to the Yarrawonga Hospital and the Cobram and Numurkah hospitals. They are smaller hospitals, in the range of 30 acute beds, and they provide excellent services. But we want more — we always want more — and we think we do not get enough in country Victoria compared with what people in metropolitan Melbourne get. That is an issue as far as I am concerned.

I want to make it clear to the Parliament that while the 1990s were a difficult time, they were not as bad as the government members indicate. I cannot stand their comments about the seven dark years, because changes had to be made. When the Bracks Labor government came into power, the state was in a better financial position, and the government has capitalised on that since. I acknowledge some of the positive work that has been done by the government. I acknowledge that in the last 12 months three schools in my electorate — Numurkah Secondary College, Wangaratta High School and Yarrunga Primary School in Wangaratta — have had about \$10 million spent on them, and they are providing excellent service.

I also acknowledge the work that is being done on hospitals, including the redevelopment of the nursing home at the Numurkah hospital, the redevelopment of the nursing home at Yarrawonga hospital and the further redevelopment of the nursing home at North East Health at Wangaratta, which is currently being undertaken. The government is providing the funding for that work. But the government should not forget that those of us living in country Victoria face great difficulties. I wanted to put on the record, right from the start, the facts relating to the 1990s and the facts relating to our current position.

The government talks about funding and what should be done and could be done, but it is in a totally different financial position from that which existed in 1999. We had a budget five years ago of about \$20 billion, but the budget is now in excess of \$30 billion, so we now have a situation in Victoria where the government has money coming out its ears. It has a lot of money to spend, and a lot of the projects it is spending money on are very good, but we need to understand that the government is maintaining most of the taxes which were meant to be removed with the introduction of the GST, so it is copping it both ways. It is getting huge amounts of money from the GST allocations it has been provided

with, but it is also receiving huge amounts of money from state taxes.

I was interested to listen to the member for Burwood speak about the four or five state taxes which had progressively been removed. Once the GST was introduced, all those state taxes were to be removed. As a result of the representations made on the GST by the Democrats at the time, the federal Treasurer had to go ahead with only 75 per cent of what the federal government wanted, which unfortunately meant that the states were allowed not to remove state taxes as quickly as originally planned. They are being removed progressively, but not at the rate they should be.

I wrote to the federal Treasurer, because the North-East Local Government Network had expressed concerns to me, seeking information in relation to funding for local government. I will quote one paragraph from a letter I received from the chief of staff to the Treasurer:

I also note that a total of \$150 billion in GST revenue has been paid to the states from 2000–01 to 2004–05. During that time Victoria received \$31.4 billion of the total GST payments to the states. It is estimated that Victoria will receive a further \$34.8 billion in GST payments from 2005–06 to 2008–09, including a windfall of \$1.8 billion compared to the previous system of financial assistance grants and state taxes that were abolished by the new tax system.

We need to put things into perspective. The state government has certainly had funding from the GST, but it has not removed the state taxes which were meant to be removed. Despite the comments made by the Treasurer and the reductions in land tax and payroll tax, the state of Victoria will receive more revenue than has been indicated.

It is interesting to go through the budget summary provided by the Treasurer's office. The thing that struck me when I read this document is that all the information is about the large amount of funding — \$12.6 billion — that is to be spent over the next four or five years. That is a big figure. But given the way the budget is presented, it is no wonder that the person in the street, who does not read the budget papers — and quite frankly they are hard to read anyway — does not understand precisely what is happening and what is being done.

We see all these commitments. There is the \$36 billion trades bonus, but it will be provided over the next four years. I applaud some of these commitments, such as the commitment to provide assistance for apprentices, particularly when they need accommodation. But again I take the government to task about the changes made by the Treasurer last year to the assistance provided to businesses that take on apprentices. The initial payment

that was made when an employer took on an apprentice has been abolished, and the payment will now be made at the end of the training period.

An employer also has to employ three apprentices to gain any access to government support. That is a ridiculous situation when the Treasurer and others, in talking about the assistance the government provides to small business, say that small business drives the economy of Victoria. Small businesses cannot drive the economy without assistance, and the requirement to employ three apprentices to gain assistance is ridiculous and must be changed. If the government wants to get business and industry to develop — and it is business that drives the economy, not the government — it should give incentives and encouragement.

There is a lack of incentives to hire apprentices. The federal government is providing its incentives, both at the beginning of an apprenticeship and at the end. The state government took away the assistance at the beginning. It requires employers to have three apprentices to obtain assistance. Most small businesses that I have talked to do not employ more than one or two apprentices. The further complication is that the Treasurer then said, 'If you are paying payroll tax, you have to include the salaries and wages paid to apprentices in the calculation'.

The excuse the Treasurer gave at the time was that Victoria was falling into line with New South Wales. When the government wants to take credit for a situation or utilise another state when that state is doing it, it mentions that, but then the government criticises the fact that Queensland, New South Wales or other states are not doing it as well as Victoria. This is the sort of spin put on the budget by the Treasurer. The general public of Victoria do not understand the true facts of the situation.

There are many other issues I would like to cover, but I will not be able to do so in the time that I have. I indicate my disappointment that the Rural City of Wangaratta has not received funding for the development of the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre. This is an issue we have been working on for many years, and the government should support it. Initially the proposal was for support of about \$2.5 million, but now that it is for a building that will cost about \$7.5 million, with the redevelopment of the civic centre, we are seeking \$5 million from the government. I trust that the Minister for the Arts and the Treasurer will give strong consideration to this project. It has a high priority as far as the arts department is concerned, but at this stage it does not have the funding. Hopefully in the run-up to the state election there will

be some announcements to encourage the Rural City of Wangaratta.

It is not all doom and gloom. As I said earlier, there have been some developments. I applaud the fact that funding has been provided to Wangaratta. The \$8 million in funding for a technical education centre at Wangaratta is an excellent result, as is the redevelopment of the library. Activity is certainly taking place; we are going forward. The north-eastern part of Victoria is a great place to live — —

Mr Doyle — Work and raise a family!

Mr JASPER — I did not hear that. The issue of further concern is the lack of public housing provided within my electorate of Murray Valley and across the state of Victoria. The minister indicated there was funding in the budget for 130 new homes to be built across the state of Victoria. That is a disgrace! In the 1990s the department of housing built 20 to 30 new homes every year in Wangaratta, but in recent years there have been virtually none. It has dried right up. When the housing commission was established in the late 1950s or 1960s it was to provide housing in country Victoria for country people. Progressively that has been changed; most funding for housing now goes into metropolitan areas or large regional centres. I believe the government needs to rethink the development of housing in country areas. It is a question of which comes first: the chicken or the egg? You need housing to attract people into country areas.

Finally, I wish to mention my great disappointment at the lack of recognition of the importance of the manufacturing industry in Victoria. The announcement by Kraft Foods that it would remove 150 jobs from what is currently a 400-strong work force in Strathmerton is a disaster. Where will its cheese now be produced? In the Middle East. This is a crisis situation. The Treasurer indicated the government is interested in this issue, and that funding would be provided for a development at Tatura. Tatura is a long way from Strathmerton, and people will not travel to Tatura for employment.

Whilst I applaud the fact that the government and the Treasurer are interested in state and regional development and in developing industry, we have huge problems in retaining manufacturing industry in Victoria. That is an issue that must be addressed, not only for Victoria but for Australia in the future. There are some other concerns I have with the budget, which I cannot cover right — —

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

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. I particularly want to congratulate the Treasurer and his staff and the cabinet for another fantastic budget that not only continues to promote economic growth in Victoria but also continues to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family. Whilst there are many wonderful initiatives in this budget, I want to talk about the great projects for my electorate of Ballarat West, particularly in health and education. We will see \$5 million for a new concept at Wendouree West. The existing Grevillea Park Primary School building will be demolished and a new state-of-the-art education precinct will be built. It will incorporate Grevillea Park Primary School and the nearby Yuille Primary School on the new site. It will bring a new concept of learning to Ballarat West, as the new site will provide for students from kindergarten to year 8.

It is really interesting that this concept grew from the Wendouree West community neighbourhood renewal program. It came from the community, was promoted through the schools and has the total support of the school councils and communities. Let me tell you, everybody is really excited. From other funding previously announced, a community hall, with a half-size basketball court and meeting rooms for residents of the Wendouree West community, will also be incorporated. This is a great project, and I am very proud to have been involved with it.

Urquhart Park Primary School will receive \$2.9 million for general purpose classrooms, a library, a multipurpose room, an art and craft room and a much-needed canteen. With Urquhart Park Primary School's increasing enrolments, news of the funding was very much welcomed by the school community.

The announcement of \$6.8 million for a 24-hour ambulance station is also welcome. It is interesting to note that the member for Caulfield in her contribution claimed that that was a Liberal Party policy and that it would be one of its projects — if it ever gets re-elected! Let me tell you, this is not the same as what it believes to be its project, which does not include any staff. When the unions took it on and asked the then Leader of the Opposition about it, he said he would take the staff from existing stations. The roll-on effect of that would be to underman the other, existing stations.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms OVERINGTON — Yes, that is the one! This proposal, costing \$6.8 million, will include 11 new staff members. I am so pleased about this announcement. Whilst response times at the moment are adequate, we know we can always do better. Although it is being built at Sebastopol, it will serve not only the Sebastopol community but also the southern end of Ballarat. There are many growing small towns out there at the moment, and we need to ensure that response times to that southern end of Ballarat are the best we can provide.

Ballarat will also benefit from the previous announcement of \$32 million for four new technical education centres. The centres will ensure that our senior students have numerous pathways to choose from.

I am very pleased about the announcement of a \$300 one-off payment to families when their children start primary school or secondary school. This payment will assist families at the start of the year when they need to buy uniforms and books. It highlights the importance that this government places on education. I also welcome the \$500 payment to trade apprentices who stay beyond the first year of their apprenticeships. This payment will be made to combat the alarmingly high first-year drop-out rate.

I also welcome the increase — again — in spending for mental health. This funding is in response to the growing need for mental health services across all sections of our community. This is a great budget, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — One of the quotes that we will undoubtedly not hear from the Treasurer when he gets up in question time today and does his usual Thursday special by quoting selectively from a number of articles in various newspapers is a quote from Josh Gordon's article in today's business section of the *Age*. The article describes Victoria and New South Wales as the laggards of the Australian economy — 'laggards' because the growth in our economy is lagging well and truly behind the national average. Compared with states like Queensland and Western Australia, we are very much in the doldrums.

What is also of concern is that a number of commentators have said this budget indicates that the Victorian economy is unsustainable over the longer period, which gives rise to the spectre of state debt. We know from the forward estimates in the budget that that is one of the principal funding sources this government is going to embark upon in forthcoming years. This unsustainability is doubly concerning, because the Victorian economy is like a big balloon — it is being

pumped up by a lot of hot air and rhetoric coming out of Treasury — and there does not seem to be the necessary input of capital.

This government's legacy from the last seven years will be very much one of wasted opportunity. Rather than maintaining an appropriate expenditure level, it has used all of its capital and wasted its opportunities. Certainly there is the spectre of that balloon bursting and the economy becoming unsustainable, and the government's borrowing is an indication of that. The effect of that on vital services, particularly in the administration of justice, is of profound concern.

A matter that has been of profound concern to the opposition over the last few years is the delay in forensic testing caused by the lack of proper staffing levels at the police forensic laboratory at Bundoora. As we know, DNA testing is something I am sure everybody in this house accepts as being a vital part of our criminal justice system. Not only does DNA testing provide a mechanism for proving someone is guilty of a particular offence, but also, and equally, it provides the opportunity to get proof that someone did not commit a particular crime. That is vitally important. The papers have reported delays of up to 18 months in testing, which is completely unacceptable — and it does not end with DNA testing. Delays also occur in drug analysis, which of course is a vital part of the prosecution's obligation to provide proof in drug trials and in trials for other offences such as arson. It is a very vital part of our criminal justice system.

Those delays have led to the same consequence in two reported cases. In each case someone was charged with an indictable offence, a show-cause offence, of trafficking in a commercial quantity of drugs. In one of those cases the magistrate had the head of the forensic laboratory attend the court to explain the delay. The laboratory head said there could be as much as an 18-month delay for a particular drug analysis, occasioned by a lack of appropriate staffing levels at the forensic laboratories. On that ground the magistrate granted bail, notwithstanding that it was a show-cause offence. That has happened on two occasions over the last couple of years.

I acknowledge that the government has within the last couple of weeks announced a proposal to pump \$15.4 million into the forensic science laboratories of Victoria Police. While that announcement is welcome, on my calculation that \$15.4 million will only go on capital expenditure. The \$9.6 million for the forensic information management system, which is an IT system that enables the quick exchange of information, is certainly welcome, but the announcement did not

address how many staff are needed to man that particular IT system.

The \$1 million for an electron microscope is a welcome announcement. The microscope is designed to analyse paint, glass, chemicals and other evidence in assisting in the investigation of serious crimes, including homicide. It is a welcome announcement, but again we come down to the root cause, which is a lack of staffing. That root cause is not addressed in the government's announcement. Hopefully the government can ensure that staffing levels at the forensic laboratory are appropriate, because it is certainly a very vital part of our criminal justice system, and delays will be aggravated if that is not attended to.

In relation to the courts, the government was very forthcoming in announcing that it had a master plan for the redevelopment of the Supreme Court, but that master plan did not involve putting any cogent plans on the table as to when, how and how much will be incurred. It is an important development. What concerns me about the laggard economy we have here in Victoria is that it will probably be the criminal justice system that will pay the penalty as the money is diverted off to more sensitive political issues. It is vital to our political make-up here in Victoria that we ensure the Supreme Court is redeveloped in a very timely manner.

One of the other things that concerns me is court backlogs. The budget papers themselves clearly demonstrate that those backlogs are getting worse. In the Supreme Court only 80 per cent of civil cases will be completed within a 12-month period, but the really worrying factor is the backlogs that are now occurring in the County Court. This issue was brought up in a recent meeting I had with the Criminal Bar Association, and other people have independently verified that after a person's committal, if they ring up the listings unit for a trial date, they will not get one inside 12 months.

The most profound concern that I have about this relates to the experience in countries such as Canada, where those sorts of delays actually led not just to the deferral of cases and trials but to their dismissal and the staying of charges. The Supreme Court of Canada has said in Askov's case that delays beyond eight months between charge and trial are unacceptable. In that case the Supreme Court decided that a very serious charge of criminal distortion would be permanently stayed as a result of such a delay. That led to some 43 000 related applications for the staying of charges in the province of Ontario alone. One manslaughter charge, a number of assault charges, including those of assaulting police and assault with a deadly weapon, and about 11 000

drink-driving charges were stayed as a result of the delays that were endemic in the Canadian court system. I would hate to think that we would do anything that would ensure that that sort of consequence came about in Victoria. Instead of accepting continuing delays in the County Court the government should be using its best endeavours to address those circumstances.

I will also mention a concern — and no doubt the government has shared it, because the Attorney-General mentioned it in his second-reading speech in relation to the Infringements Bill — which relates to some terrifying fines non-payment statistics. I have said before that there are some \$700 million in fines outstanding in this state and, even worse, there are 40 000 Victorians who have 10 or more warrants against their name. While the Infringements Bill was welcome, I do not see the government resourcing the Sheriff's Office to ensure that those fines are ultimately paid. In fact funding for the Sheriff's Office has again fallen this year.

I also mention the much-lauded asset confiscation scheme. The Attorney-General has amended the legislation under which it operates to make that an even more for draconian piece of legislation, something which was supported by the opposition, but the scheme is being under-resourced. This would indicate that the government is either not fair dinkum or just does not have the money. It is a matter of profound concern that the Sheriff's Office and the asset confiscation scheme cannot work effectively.

I will mention a number of matters in my electorate that are of concern. In relation to the Eastern Freeway there is the spectre — raised by the Premier himself — of more money coming into the government by illegitimate means to pay for a tunnel which is off into the never-never. The spectre of tolling being imposed on the existing freeway to pay for something that is off into the never-never is a matter of profound concern.

I have raised the matter of Kew High School on a couple of occasions in this place. It has an application that dates back some three or four years for a community services facilities grant to build a senior school centre. Notwithstanding that it has been supported by the regional area unit of the education department, notwithstanding that it has been supported by some 16 or 17 community groups, notwithstanding that the City of Boroondara supports it, notwithstanding the fact that Kew High School and the school council have worked assiduously to try to get that grant up by working with the government, the local council and community groups, the application still has fallen on deaf ears.

I also raise the issue of Yarra Bend Park. The government promised almost \$2 million in relation to the bats at the park. While we accept that grey-headed flying foxes are a protected species — and they certainly deserve the protection of the state government as well as the commonwealth government under its legislation — it seems to me that the government has ignored the problem. There are two simple questions that this government has failed to address. Firstly, what is the sustainable population? Secondly, and most importantly, once the bat population reaches that sustainable level what is the government going to do to deal with that problem? It is a matter of profound concern that that question is completely unanswered by all of the related papers, freedom of information documents and even by the departmental web site.

Mr Hulls — Do you want to gas them?

Mr McINTOSH — The Attorney-General is raising the spectre of gassing. Presumably he wants to gas the bats. I would be very grateful if the government would come forward and say what it proposes to do in relation to the bats.

I also raise the issue of Kew Cottages, which is a matter of real and profound concern. One of these days someone is going to have to explain to me what the government's position was on Point Nepean National Park in relation to the old army barracks down there. That area of course was not natural bushland; it was overdeveloped, as we know. There are profound concerns about unexploded weaponry in that area, and hopefully it is an area that can be returned to its natural state in an appropriate amount of time.

The Kew Cottages site is adjacent to the Yarra Bend Park and, if there was land surplus to the government's needs, it would — instead of being flogged off — be a great addition to that park. One can only hypothesise that it is being flogged off simply because it is in a Liberal electorate. That to me is outrageous. The government takes one stand in relation to Point Nepean — for political purposes — but it will not take the same stand in relation to Kew Cottages.

I can only hypothesise that the only difference between the two examples is that far more people will probably use Yarra Bend Park on a Saturday or Sunday than will use Point Nepean for the whole of the year. You only have to go down to Yarra Bend Park to realise that thousands of Victorians from both sides of the Yarra, from right around the state and probably from all round this country go to Yarra Bend Park. Places like that and Studley Park Boathouse are of course icons of this city.

As I said, this budget is a matter of profound concern because of the spectre of debt on the horizon as well as the slowing down of the Victorian economy and the reduction in GST revenue to unsustainable levels. The balloon is getting bigger and bigger with all the hot air and rhetoric of this government. Unfortunately it may very well burst, and if it does it will be ordinary Victorians who will suffer.

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — My final speech on the budget could not be delivered at a better time in terms of where the state is positioned. The enviable balance of strong growth, reductions in state taxes, record infrastructure investment and the provision of comprehensive and compassionate services across the state is a tribute to the skill of the Treasurer and the Premier.

What a contrast to previous years! I recall our seven years in opposition and the brutality of those budgets. In my first budget speech I commented on the combination of privatisation and cuts to services which saw a projected 44 000 reduction in public sector employment in this state and a massive rise in taxes. My second budget speech in 1994 was in a 4-hour stretch that began at 12.30 a.m., part of a brutal tactical battle which saw the Kennett government attempting to force the then Leader of the Opposition to give his budget response in the dead of night to deny him any media exposure.

If nothing else, the relatively civil and respectful way in which the Parliament and the budget debates are now conducted indicates the progress we have since made. It is also hard to believe the transformation the state has seen. It would have been hard to imagine, in the midst of the carnage inflicted on government services and on the independence of judicial and semi-judicial officers back then, that Victoria would now be in the situation it is. To have built 28 schools with another on the way, to have hired an additional 6200 teachers and support staff and to have the lowest primary school class sizes since records began are a tribute to the commitment of the Premier and the education ministers. To have treated an additional 250 000 patients a year in what has been described and assessed in national surveys as the nation's best hospital system, with access to an additional 1300 doctors and 6000 nurses, is also an outstanding achievement.

In terms of community safety, the government has restored the number of police officers cut by the Kennett government and added 1500 police in the context of vastly reduced attrition rates and higher morale, so it is no wonder that the crime rate continues its steady decline. The transport system has also seen quite a

dramatic U-turn. While it has not been possible to reacquire and restore all the services cut and sold by the former government, the visionary \$10 billion expansion of the public transport and road system, without tolls, has changed the policy agenda in this state.

My electorate is a manifestation of these trends. The new Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre, built with the largest grant ever given by a state government to a municipality, opens in two weeks. Our new \$15 million police complex is under construction. Three secondary schools have Leading Schools excellence program funding, and the building of the State Sports Centre at Maribyrnong has been announced. Our community health centre funding has resulted in a dramatic increase of over 300 per cent in the size and scope of services. Hospital resources have been increased by over 85 per cent, and the government has stepped in to take control of the dreadful supported residential services at the Western Lodge emergency accommodation centre. These are all indications, like the neighbourhood renewal initiatives in the heart of Braybrook and Maidstone, of a government committed to making significant progress in improving services.

In my electorate some specific announcements for this year include \$730 million for improvement to the West Gate–Monash link, which will have a dramatic effect on the flow of traffic around and through the southern part of the municipality; \$2.4 million for the Footscray West Primary School; \$1.8 million for the Kingsville Primary School; \$1.5 million towards the Footscray transit city project; \$440 000 in School Start bonus funding; \$530 000 for extra equity funding for local schools; an increase in recurrent funding for the innovative and multiculturally oriented Footscray Community Arts Centre; and additional train services.

I am proud to have been part of the renaissance of this state and the rejuvenation of my local community. In my role as parliamentary secretary I have been proud to take part in veterans affairs activities such as the Spirit of Anzac initiative and other commemorative functions, and in the arts portfolio I am pleased to see the visionary Melbourne Recital Centre finally starting to move, balanced by the enormous efforts to assist multicultural arts and to get that agenda moving quickly in this state. It has been a great experience to be part of that renaissance, and it has been a pleasure to bring these matters before the house on many occasions. I commend the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill to the house.

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — It is a pleasure to join the budget debate from this refreshing and new perspective.

Mr Hulls — Hello! Hello!

Mr DOYLE — It is a great pleasure, as always, to look down on the Attorney-General, and I look forward to doing so in many future speeches.

Before I start my contribution I express the hope that the Parliament has a chance to pay its respects to the memory of Ian Little, the recently deceased Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance. It is probably fashionable in some political circles and outside this place to knock public servants and to denigrate the work they do. But in truth, at the top of the public service we are blessed with some of the finest minds in our community. The loss of Ian Little will be a great one. I am sure that as part of these budget deliberations we should consider the enormous amount of work Ian did in his time under both governments. I hope the Parliament has the chance to pay its respects to him in a formal way next week.

Last year the big story was pre-budget and it was the leaking of the budget to Channel 9 the night before it was delivered by the Treasurer. This year I suspect the big story will be post-budget. The story will be about just how the government reconciles its self-proclaimed no. 1 priority — that is, education — with the collapse of the sale of Snowy Hydro Ltd, which was to provide \$600 million to the education infrastructure budget. As yet we do not have any understanding of what the plan is to plug that \$600 million black hole. As I say, I think that this year the big story of the budget will be about reconciling those irreconcilable differences.

Before the sale was cancelled the \$150 million which is in the budget for education was a great thing which would be provided for from the proceeds of the Snowy Hydro sale. After the collapse of the Snowy Hydro sale we were told not to worry about it and that that \$150 million had nothing to do with the Snowy. I will come back to a couple of those contradictions later in this contribution.

It is interesting to me that the budget, on a very quick count, mentions the sale of the Snowy Hydro scheme some 13 times: once in the Treasurer's speech; about four times in budget paper 2, the strategy and outlook paper; five times in budget paper 3, which is the service delivery paper; and three times in the final paper, the statement of finances. That shows the importance of this single item to this state budget, yet since the collapse of that sale we have been told not to worry about it and that there really is no problem with the fact we now do not have \$600 million that this budget so demonstrably was counting on.

I must say that I am not one of those people who since the collapse of the sale have gone all misty-eyed over

some engineering icon hagiography. I do not think that about the Snowy Hydro scheme, but I do not know if other members have had the chance to have a look at it. I well remember being a primary school student in Myrtleford in the 1960s — —

Mr Hulls — Spell 'hagiography'!

Mr DOYLE — I can actually — it is almost entirely phonetic. The Attorney-General should know that word because the Labor Party practices hagiography par excellence. Just have a look at the way it treats its former leaders, with the exception perhaps of its former federal leader.

Mr Hulls — You're projecting!

Mr DOYLE — No, I can promise the scars do not show.

I can remember being taken to that great scheme as a schoolchild in the 1960s. The 1950s and 1960s were the time when the Snowy scheme absolutely exploded. As we know, it is now something like 16 dams, about 7 power stations and nearly 150 kilometres of tunnels. I remember as a primary school student marvelling at the idea that the snow melt run-off could be captured in those dams and then used to generate electricity and for irrigation. That irrigation scheme is guaranteed for something like another 70 years, and I will come back to some of the misapprehensions about the sale and why it collapsed a little later.

That is one of the problems. I have looked long and hard at this problem. There is no doubt it probably made little difference to the commonwealth. It made a large difference to Victoria because of the \$600 million, but the biggest difference was to New South Wales. Its 58 per cent of the scheme, compared to our 29 per cent, made a huge difference for it. We have a surplus of about \$300 million. Has it not been a blessing for this Labor government that it has been through an economic nirvana in the last seven years that we in the government before Labor took office could have only dreamed of? However, New South Wales is facing a deficit of about \$500 million, so it needed that money desperately. Its ineptitude, and particularly the ineptitude of the New South Wales Treasury in allowing that sale to collapse, cannot be underestimated.

However, I want to go to what was happening in this state. It is interesting how the rhetoric changed from before the collapse of the sale to after the collapse of the sale. The Premier said back in February about the sale of Snowy Hydro that:

This is a responsible decision to best protect the state's environmental, agricultural and commercial interests as well as delivering a better future for our schools.

What he was saying was he was wholeheartedly in favour of it. This was a good thing for the state, it was something a responsible government should be doing, and, by the way, we would be getting this enormous windfall that we would not otherwise have. That is what that \$600 million represented — a windfall for education. We said at the time, as I recall, that that was great but where was the plan? Which schools? Which projects? How was it going to be divided up and according to what priorities? There was no answer to those questions.

It is interesting to look at the change in rhetoric after the collapse of the sale. The Treasurer said:

We remain committed to those projects and that broad direction but those projects will be completed over a longer time frame.

What on earth 'that broad direction' means is beyond me, and has not been spelled out by the government. The problem is the government still does not have a plan. It did not have one when it made this hasty announcement and it does not have one now the sale has collapsed. That was the problem: the government spent the money, and it was not sure upon what, before it had it. What does the government want us to believe now? It wants us to believe that it never wanted to sell the Snowy Hydro, that it was dragged kicking and screaming to it but that the sale's collapse will make no difference at all to the budget. Both of those statements are false.

Going back to look at why the sale collapsed, I think one of the problems with the whole thing was that no-one adequately explained to the grassroots protest that the water itself was not actually being sold. I do not think people understand that that water does not belong to the Snowy Hydro scheme; in fact, it belongs to the New South Wales government which in turn licenses it to Snowy Hydro. As I said before, the irrigation aspects are guaranteed for the next 70 years. They were not the problem, although they seemed to be the root cause of the discontent in the community. However, there were complicated issues.

The Premier assured us that these issues had been solved, but I never saw the solution, whether it was the water-sharing agreements — always problematic between New South Wales and Victoria — whether it was the reliability of water entitlements in drought or whether it was the deals that had already been done with irrigators. They were complex problems. I have yet to see the evidence that they had been worked out

behind the scenes by the New South Wales and Victorian governments. That fuelled the discontent about the possibility that it was water that was being sold and, as we have seen, the steps that led to the collapse of the sale.

However, it seems to me that those things left Victoria in a very nasty position. New South Wales is an absolute basket case. I look forward to welcoming Premier Debnam and when he is Premier I am sure he will look back on the way Mr Iemma handled this privatisation and thank him every single day of his premiership. Nevertheless Victoria faces a problem of its own.

The Premier said this would not harm the state's balance sheet. I understand that: if you never get what you were counting on and you did not count it, then you can probably make that claim. But how does that sit with the Premier's statement back in February that the sale would deliver a better future for our schools? That is what the Premier predicated that statement upon — that we were getting the \$600 million. There is one central question which I believe the government now has to answer if we are to believe its claim that this has no effect on the balance sheet. That is, what is the plan? How will the government proceed with this program, which presumably it has already worked out?

Can you imagine if we were in an election campaign and the opposition and its very worthy spokesman for education, the member for Nepean, came out and said, 'By the way, we are going to spend \$600 million, but we are not going to tell you where it is coming from and we are kind of not going to tell how you are going to get it, nor are we going to tell you what we are going to spend it on. But trust us, we are going to spend \$600 million on schools.'?

The Treasurer of this state would be out the front of the Treasury building with his famous and patented splurge-o-meter claiming that the opposition was totally irresponsible, unfit for government and not ready to govern. That would be the rhetoric if what we were saying was what the government is saying now. But it is saying, 'Trust us nevertheless, we will build tomorrow's schools today, or perhaps the day after or maybe even the day after that, but we are not going to tell you that either'. The central question is how will the government proceed with its program? That seems to me to be the missing link in this discussion about how this has not affected our budget, how it has not affected this budget and how it has not affected our balance sheet.

What a joke the education services portfolio, with its minister for carpet laying, cleaning gutters and school tuck shop menus, has become! Fair dinkum! I do not know why the ministry was created in the first place, but I suppose it was to give one of the rising stars of the Labor Party a place to hide until she is really ready for a ministry.

Yesterday the minister was trumpeting that the government was going to spend money on maintenance. What a remarkable thing for a state government to claim: 'We are actually going to do some maintenance on our schools'. By the way, it is not just maintenance anymore. Just as we do not have water restrictions but have water saving measures, we now do not have maintenance but have what is called school renewal. I love the way Labor is able to manipulate language in that way to create the illusion of reform when in fact it is just smoke and mirrors. With a budget that exceeds \$30 billion, one of the responsible ministers, I think in answer to the only question to her so far from her own side about the budget that she controls, was making statements about the tens of thousands they are going to spend here and there. Is it not remarkable that they are going to spend those huge amounts of money in a \$30 billion budget on their no. 1 priority?

But I will bring this back to something local, because at the end of this we might be talking about hundreds of thousands, millions or even billions of dollars, but if you are talking about education, it is the kids out there you are talking about. Lloyd Street Primary School is one of the great schools in my area, and as I listened with interest, as I often do, to the member for Footscray, I was delighted for him that he was able to claim all those wonderful projects in the seat of Footscray. But then he went on to make a leap of faith, claiming that therefore this government is growing the whole state and that the whole state benefits.

I cannot get up and make that list of claims for the seat of Malvern. I do not know why the kids at East Malvern are any different from the kids in Yarraville. I do not know why the kids at Lloyd Street should have to put up with lavatories that frankly make you sick to walk into them, when all of those projects can be announced in Footscray.

I remember when I came into this Parliament in 1992 that not a cent had been spent on maintenance at Lloyd Street over the previous 10 years. The Liberals spent money on that school and got it back up to standard. It is a great school, with great staff and a great community supporting it, but there has not been a cent spent on it in the last seven years. In the meantime kids are going into

lavatories that, as I said, would make you sick to look at. Where is their promise in this plan? Where is the lavatory replacement program?

It might not be the most romantic thing to be talking about in Parliament, but it makes a difference in those kids' lives, and that is why I want to see this plan actually spelt out. What are you going to tell the kids at Lloyd Street? That Victoria is a great place to live, work and raise a family? To be honest, that will not cut any ice with them, nor with their parents, nor with their school council, because they are not interested in sloganism. They are not even interested in political head-butting. They are not particularly interested in the wonderful things the government has promised. What they want to know is when they will get their toilets replaced.

That story is being echoed all over Victoria. That is why I say it is a nonsense to expect us to believe those on the other side who say that the loss of 600 million infrastructure dollars makes not a whit of difference to the government's program. That is patent nonsense. Surely the government's task now, if education is its no. 1 priority, is to spell out what its program is, how it is going to be funded and over what period of time.

In my electorate that boils down to letting the kids at Lloyd Street know when they can have reasonable toilet facilities. For other schools there may be different priorities. I can look at any number of other schools and see things that should be done, but surely it is now incumbent upon government to take responsibility for the fact that this sale has collapsed and explain, if education is the no. 1 priority, just what it is going to do, not for the bells and whistles stuff but for the normal work of any good state government — that is, to maintain our schools for the great kids who use them and the parents who support them.

I am looking forward to hearing those answers from the government, not just for Lloyd Street but for all the kids and all the schools across Victoria.

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I am pleased to speak on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. This is a good, practical budget. It sets a framework for the future and provides in this and future years \$3.1 billion in infrastructure spending, which is three times the amount the Kennett government spent during its years and half as much again as we have spent in the six and a half years of the Bracks government to date; on average we have been spending around \$2 billion per year. What really is important is that this record investment includes rural and regional Victoria and goes right across the state.

This budget will meet the challenges in the state. The member for Malvern raised a number of issues to be addressed in making up for the neglect of past governments that have not made the investment we have made in infrastructure — for example, school toilets. There are schools in my electorate that would probably like to have some upgrades, but Dixons Creek Primary School, Pyalong Primary School and Beveridge Primary School have all had upgrades to toilets during the term of this government. It is not a cheap exercise, usually costing over \$100 000 to do those jobs in even the smallest of schools, but we are getting through those things, and we are taking maintenance issues very seriously.

Seymour electorate benefited greatly from the budget. It benefited from direct projects such as \$3.67 million for Broadford Secondary College to build new rooms for science, IT, home economics, and staff and administration areas. The Minister for Education and Training, who is at the table, will remember coming to Broadford to open the first stage of redevelopment conducted under this government, which fulfilled an election promise, and this funding is a further vote of confidence in that school. I am very pleased this has happened. It is a great school for local students.

Further down the road a \$4.3 million upgrade will see Kilmore Primary School able to cater for the significant growth that is going on in the area and provide its students with not only a great education but great facilities. There will be 13 new classrooms, a small gymnasium with toilets, a storeroom, a multi-use area, a dedicated computer centre, a refurbished art facility, two hard courts and on-site parking. That will address many of the problems that school has had over time in meeting the needs of its students. What often happens is that schools in those situations become portable cities, but this funding will ensure Kilmore Primary School has a great environment for its students.

The school community has worked very hard in both of those cases, and I commend them very much for that. I thank the education minister and the expenditure review committee of cabinet for seeing fit to ensure that those schools got in the budget what they needed.

I want to talk about other areas of the budget. I refer firstly to the neighbourhood houses funding of \$27.8 million, which recognises the fantastic work they do in our communities. A lot of the work they do picks up on work that cannot be done by governments directly, and if they had to do that work, it would cost the community significantly more money. The voluntary efforts from those people are fantastic. It is

great to see the Bracks government again recognising the work they do by allocating further funds.

The budget sets up Victoria for the future. This budget plays a small part in addressing the skills shortages we have in this state, across Australia and worldwide through the \$500 paid to apprentices, with \$250 being paid when they are halfway through their apprenticeships and a further \$250 being paid at the end of the first year. We are doing that because many apprentices do not complete their first year. The increase in the allowance from \$7.20 to \$9 to \$25 will make it much easier for students from regional and rural areas to complete their courses. It will mean we will have more skilled tradesmen for the future.

I am pleased to see the \$850 million allocation for the redevelopment of the Royal Children's Hospital. Many of my constituents have to use that hospital on a regular basis. To know their children will be going to a world-class facility for today and the future gives families more comfort when they go to visit, and that comfort will come about through this fantastic redevelopment. I am being brief in this debate, so I commend the bill to the house.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Going back more than 60 years ago there was an Australian Labor Party speech that spoke about 'The light on the hill'. The main lights we have on the hill in this state are from the jingling of the poker machines and the massive amounts of money being ripped off Victorian families to subsidise the government budget. It is one of the tragedies of the state government today that its excessive reliance on the gambling dollar is impacting upon Victorian households.

One need only look at the newspaper crime reports to see the correlation between gaming machine dependence and the criminal outcomes in the workplace and in other circumstances. Much more needs to be done in this state to redress that very serious problem. The winding back of gambling counselling services and the dislocation to family and community life through the excessive reliance on gaming dollar revenue in the state is a tragedy for many Victorian families.

The state budget also has a number of shortcomings. One is the black hole from the proposed sale of the Snowy Hydro of some \$600 million going into school infrastructure. When the Kennett government was elected in Victoria in 1992 there was a \$600 million school maintenance backlog which the Kennett coalition government sorted out and redressed. One had to see first hand what the impact of the maintenance

backlog had been as the government had given in to union demands and overstaffed the system on a number of fronts.

To understand the impact on school infrastructure I made a visit to inspect Coburg High School. I saw where walls had been punched in and weeds growing out of the spouting. There had to be a serious approach to look at the outcomes in education that actually improved the learning environment for Victorian students. One needed to work out the scale and magnitude of reform to deliver outcomes on the ground. Today we have a \$600 million project that has fallen down, so the money will not be there to improve the living environment of Victorian students. It is a serious deficiency in what the budget will deliver.

Mention was made of extracting my comments out of *Hansard*. The former coalition government was redressing a \$30 billion liability on the part of the state as a result of the cost overruns of the former Labor government due to the failure of the then Victorian Economic Development Corporation, the Pyramid Building Society and the economic incompetence of the Cain and Kirner eras, which purported to apply modern methods of financial management but had failed to do so. The current government has been the beneficiary of the financial inheritance of those years, but what do we have to show for it in the electorate of Sandringham?

Almost 18 years ago the then Labor police minister, through the local candidate, made a promise that if the Labor Party was re-elected at the 1988 election, which it was, there would be a new police station built in Sandringham. If one visits Sandringham today and looks at the barren site of the proposed setting of the new police station, there is nothing there but fresh air, rubble and concrete. There has been no attempt in this budget to fulfil a promise made 18 years ago — again, in an election period.

Ms Beattie — Why didn't you do it?

Mr THOMPSON — I point out for the record what has been achieved in that regard. In 1988 and 1992, when the Labor Party failed to implement a promise, it built a police barn on the Nepean Highway to try and shore up another political seat. It was envisaged under that particular program that a local police station could be drawn up — —

Ms Kosky — This is a wander down memory lane.

Mr THOMPSON — The minister interjects that this is a wander down memory lane; I am happy to take that interjection on board. The memories of Sandringham residents are very strong because they are

still waiting for the Labor Party to fulfil a promise it made 18 years ago, but it has failed on multiple fronts to fulfil those basic core promises.

A number of years ago the Sandringham hospital was threatened with the closure of its midwifery services. In the last period of time midwifery services have been closed at the Moorabbin hospital while the services at the Sandringham hospital are still running. It needs good support for infrastructure improvements and good support for upgrades, but at present it is relying on money from car parking revenue. The hospital imposed a \$4 car parking fee. Because hospital staff have to pay for their parking, they park in local streets, taking car parking spaces from local businesses and disrupting parking in the area.

What is required is visionary planning for the hospital and council precinct. In a 50-year vision it is unlikely they will be able to coexist in that area without some serious thought being given to car parking and the provision of further amenities. In relation to the land near the hospital that is currently open space, I call on the local council to commit to making that public open space in perpetuity in order to realise the original plan, developed in the 1930s, of what that precinct might look like, rather than see it as a space for further buildings or car parking.

In relation to planning, going back a number of years, at the 1999 state election the Liberal Party had very good planning policies which would have retained the existing amenity of the Sandringham electorate. One policy was to provide for councils to introduce minimum lot sizes for residential allotments by increasing the minimum resultant block size for the development of single dwellings in established suburban areas to 500 square metres. That would have been an outstanding policy if the Labor Party had chosen to run with outstanding Liberal policy initiatives.

Another idea the Liberal Party had at that election was to give stronger recognition to the role of restrictive covenants. It was proposed that loopholes that allowed for the granting of a planning permit before the consideration of removal of a covenant on the same piece of land would also be closed. The Labor Party attempted to deal with that, but it did not go as far as the Liberal Party had intended to go in closing that loophole.

In the two areas of minimum lot sizes and the way to deal with restrictive covenants, if those policies had been dealt with in 1999 we would not have seen the magnitude of planning development in areas that have

some of the best residential amenity in the state of Victoria. It is important that that amenity be preserved to the best extent possible. The residents of the city of Bayside and the seat of Sandringham are quite certain that Melbourne 2030 does not achieve that objective — it does not achieve that end outcome — and that is why the Liberal Party will withdraw Melbourne 2030 and why it proposes to work with local committees and local councils to deliver better outcomes.

In relation to school maintenance funding in the Sandringham electorate there has been a serious shortfall for Sandringham College, Sandringham East Primary School and Beaumaris North Primary School, to name a number of local schools. These schools need funding to improve the learning environment, and that funding has been required for a long period of time. The Labor Party has not done enough to commit funding and appropriate resourcing for the upgrading of local schools.

In relation to the coastline, the Labor Party, again, has only recently come into line to provide more regular funding for beach renourishment. There was a long gap of four or five years with no commitment on the part of the Labor Party to provide recurrent programming for beach renourishment funding for the Victorian coastline and also for Port Phillip Bay. I am pleased to see that in recent times it has followed the Liberal Party initiative between 1996 and 1999 of providing for recurrent funding for beach renourishment so that the association of bayside municipalities and the different coastal boards could plan and prioritise on those projects which they believed would best advance the conservation of the environment and the stabilisation of local cliffs.

Then there is the failure of the government to renounce the \$80 impost on the pensioners of this state for its motor vehicle registration charge. It is a very clear policy of the Liberal Party coming into the next state election that when elected it will remove that impost on senior Victorians in this state.

There is the example of land tax where local businesses have a static asset and are being levied an enormous amount of money. An example earlier this week was of a business that has had its land tax increased from \$4000 or so to around \$30 000 a year. That is an extraordinary increase as a result of the direct failure of the Labor Party to adjust the land tax scales. It has been argued that it sees the taxing of 120 000 land tax payers as a well-directed or well-targeted tax, but amongst this community there are self-funded retirees and people who are trying to run a business and contribute constructively and productively to the economy. By not allowing adjustment in the scales, these people are

having imposed upon them a disproportionate burden of the taxation dollars of this state.

Then there is the question of stamp duty for first home buyers. The Master Builders Association of Victoria (MBA) has taken a very keen interest in the recent state budget. In a press release dated 30 May it has this to say:

Victoria's peak building industry body today said first home buyers had been left out in the cold — as housing affordability continued to slump in Victoria.

The MBA said the lack of any stamp duty relief, and the end of the state's contribution to the first home buyers grant, was a poisonous combination for Victorian families looking to purchase their first home.

Association executive director Brian Welch said that while his members would welcome land tax relief — Labor needed to do more for young families.

'Victorians pay too much stamp duty — this budget has done nothing to fix the situation', he said.

'An average home in Victoria now costs \$360 000 and every time this average home is purchased Mr Brumby gets a cheque for \$17 000.

For an equivalent home in Queensland the quantum is about \$3000, and in New South Wales the fee is nothing. I say, and Mr Welch said:

This is too great an impost on families — and this budget has failed to reverse the situation.

There is the indication in relation to public housing. It is important to have a strong and flourishing housing market as it then provides opportunities for there to be a strong rental market that operates to enable Victorian families to have a roof over their heads. An article in the *Age* earlier this week states:

There are some 70 000 Victorian households in public housing, but commonwealth figures obtained last year showed that the state's total net stock had fallen since 1999.

The article cites an example in Carlton of a new development.

Up to 140 public housing places could be lost under the \$250 million redevelopment of the Carlton public housing estate.

Private and public homes will replace 40-year-old, low-rise flats on the Rathdowne Street and Elgin Street estates, and homes will replace a vacant health centre in the government-led redevelopment with the private sector.

According to Rachel Kleinman, city reporter for the *Age*:

The reduction in public housing places has angered welfare groups, which say the state budget did nothing to reduce the 35 000 households on the public housing waiting list.

There are 510 people living in the Carlton public housing estate, but after redevelopment there will be about 371 people in public housing and 729 in private housing.

Church of All Nations worker Steve Dobson said the reduction was outrageous.

‘They should be increasing numbers, not reducing them’ ...

The impact in general terms of the Labor Party’s planning policies can be seen in the example where a 100-unit redevelopment is being proposed in Sandringham at the present time for an eight-level building, with six levels above ground, incorporating 14 existing tenancies and properties. I do not believe that is an appropriate development in scale and magnitude for the Sandringham area. While it does have the benefit of proximity to public transport, there is insufficient provision for car parking — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order!
The member’s time has expired.

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — I rise with enthusiasm to support the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. It is really good news for the Pascoe Vale electorate and for the citizens of Victoria. The Pascoe Vale electorate has benefited greatly from the Bracks government’s commitment to education, health, community safety and general community building. Education is our government’s top priority — and that is not just words. The government has delivered significant dollars and made a huge philosophical and intellectual commitment to education. I pay tribute to the minister, the parliamentary secretary and all the staff involved.

This budget has allocated \$2.36 million to complete the Oak Park Primary School, and on Tuesday there was absolute elation at that school. This was in addition to the \$1.26 million that had already been allocated some budgets ago for the stage 1 rebuild of the school. I want to record the fantastic leadership provided by the principal, Gavin Healy, the vice-principal, Trevor Daly, and the school council president, Paul Mamro, in pulling together both the first and final stages of that project. I also record my congratulations to all the teaching staff, to the fantastically efficient and always smiling office staff at the school, Mandy and Sandra, and to the wonderful architect, Bruce Baade, who is getting not only statewide renown but Australasian-wide acclaim for his fantastic work.

On Wednesday I was able to ring a number of the schools in my electorate about maintenance funding. I

thought it was great news on the Tuesday, but it got even better on the Wednesday, when I was able to ring Coburg Primary School, Pascoe Vale Primary School, Glenroy Primary School, Westbreen Primary School, Coburg North Primary School, Oak Park Primary School — principal Gavin Healy got a lovely surprise with the second positive telephone call in two days: I told him on the Wednesday that he would not be getting a telephone call the next day — Pascoe Vale North Primary School, Glenroy West Primary School, Coburg Special Developmental School and Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College. The people I spoke to were not only pleased about the maintenance funding but also recognised that it built on the significant contributions that had already been made to providing more teachers, more computers and better outcomes for the children at their respective schools.

I also want to mention a second area, and that is community safety. Recently it was a great joy for me to be able to go to what is now the Fawkner police station, which has replaced the antiquated Coburg police station. That was a \$14.3 million project, and I want to place on the record my congratulations to Senior Sergeant Phillip Pearson, who leads the team at that station, and all the others who have been integral to its development, particularly retired Chief Superintendent Peter Driver. Peter served for many years in a range of operational roles, as well as being committed to the implementation of crime prevention programs, not only in my electorate but in surrounding electorates. To my mind he has earned a wonderful reputation as a community-minded policeman, and the fact that he joined the police force as a 16-year-old cadet and rose to divisional commander with one of the best reputations around is a true tribute to both his personal and his professional integrity. Graham Brandt also worked extensively with Peter Driver to bring that wonderful police station to fruition.

The budget was pulled together by a range of very dedicated ministers, advisers and public servants who all worked conscientiously. I pay tribute to the Treasurer and to the late Ian Little, the former Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance. Together they were instrumental in presenting this outstanding budget to the Parliament. They were a formidable duo, and Victoria will be well served by this budget and their combined work.

I also want to place on the record my appreciation of my electorate officers, who worked so hard to deliver good budget presentations for my electorate to a range of departments. I say thank you to Karen, Kerrie and Jenny.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill and the budget speech delivered by the Treasurer and to say that it is not only a bad budget but also a very sad budget in many respects, especially for the Polwarth electorate. In fact the Polwarth electorate has failed dismally to attract the sufficient funds it has received in the past under Liberal governments.

This is a very poor budget, particularly for regional and country Victoria. The fact is that the Labor government inherited a bucket of gold from the previous Liberal government. From that point onwards it has had the benefit of massive windfall gains in gaming taxes, payroll taxes, stamp duty and GST revenue, yet the Victorian public has not seen the benefit of any of those gains over the last seven years.

Here we have a situation, with the Labour government going into its seventh year, that you could not possibly have dreamt of in 1999, given that the state budget has almost doubled in that time from \$19 billion to over \$32 billion. We have the Premier and the Treasurer of the state on the doorsteps of the banks with their caps in their hands, looking to borrow more money for Victoria, which will take us from having a debt of about \$1.5 billion to having a debt of \$7 billion, even allowing for windfall gains. Yet we still cannot build a bridge, a major road or a major tunnel in and around the metropolitan area. Infrastructure spending has fallen dismally under Labor, even though the government has had these windfall gains. As I said, it has been borrowing again while at the same time pushing major infrastructure projects out into the never-never.

Never have the standards and delivery of major projects, or indeed transport services, been as appalling as they are in Victoria at the moment, even though we still have enormous amounts of revenue flowing into the Treasury. We have had massive blow-outs in rail projects, and other promises as far back as 1999 have been dumped or delayed. I am referring to projects such as the South Morang rail extension, the Knox City tram extension and of course the fast rail project — originally named 'fast rail' and now called 'farce rail' — and I understand that because of the roting on the system by contractors it has now been dubbed 'the gravy train'. It has turned out to be one of the greatest white elephants in the history of infrastructure projects in Victoria.

Punctuality and reliability of the public transport system is in decline, and targets for improvement to the service have been dumped and continue to be dumped. When you look at Labor's targets you have to ask the question: are they genuine targets or are they just

jingles dreamt up behind the scenes by some of the Labor Party's spin doctors? One of those particular promises — and I believe it is more a jingle than a promise — is that 20 per cent of all trips taken in Melbourne by 2020 are to be made by public transport. Someone said '202020, that sounds good. Let's go out, set that as a target and run that out as a policy initiative'. But the government had absolutely no intention in any way, shape or form of ever delivering 20 per cent of trips in Melbourne on public transport by 2020. Even as recently as last week it was acknowledged in the media that government spokespersons had started to admit that the government had walked away from that particular target. So a target has been dumped in relation to the number of trips to be taken by public transport.

Another target that was set and identified in the budget documents last year was for 38 level crossings to be upgraded in 2005–06. How many were delivered? Just 20 out of 38 level crossings across the state have been delivered by the minister. I have made several comments about that over the last couple of weeks. It goes back as far as 29 September when the minister issued a press release that more level and pedestrian crossings would be upgraded across Victoria after tenders were called by VicTrack for installation of boom barriers, flashing lights and pedestrian gates. The minister went on to refer to 11 of those level crossings across the state that were going to be upgraded, yet as we stand here today not one of those levels crossings that were identified in September of last year has been completed.

In what can only be described as an appallingly slimy comment by the Minister for Transport in the house on Tuesday, 6 June, he tried to sell the story that there had been another 76 level crossing upgrades when he knew very well that that was not what was referred to in the budget documents. The documents referred to level crossings over and above the fast train project, so the minister is trying to include works that were carried out on the fast train project level crossings and say that the information in the budget documents is incorrect. The fact of the matter is that the budget documents are as stated. The minister has failed dismally to upgrade an additional 18 level crossings as promised. They will be rolled over to the next year and those communities will be faced with the devastation of dealing with level crossings that do not have upgrades in relation to flashing lights or boom gates. Once again, that is a target dumped by the Minister for Transport and by the Bracks Labor government.

In relation to fast trains, proclaimed targets for express services is another set of targets. The government loves

targets. It loves setting targets — it loves rolling out these jingles — but it can never deliver. It is hopeless when it comes to delivering targets. It is hopeless when it comes to delivering basic services on the public transport system. The government had set a target of 60 minutes for the Ballarat fast train. It has been changed to 64 minutes. Will that be delivered? We all doubt it. The Bendigo target was 80 minutes. It was changed to 84 minutes. The Latrobe Valley target was 90 minutes. That was scrapped; there will be no express service into the Latrobe Valley. It has been dumped again. That was another target set by the Labor government, set by the Minister for Transport and rolled out as a policy announcement. The target has been dumped; the target has been walked away from!

There is a target to have Melbourne trains run on time. In relation to punctuality of suburban trains in 2005–06, budget paper 3 shows 7 per cent of trains were at least 6 minutes late on a weekly basis, 3 per cent were below the set target of 2005–06, with only an expected decline in late trains of 1 per cent in 2006–07. The usual target against which performance payments or penalties are calculated is that no more than 8 per cent of trains will run more than 6 minutes late in a month. There we go, another target set by the Minister for Transport, set by the government of the day, a target that has been dumped and a target that has been walked away from.

Let us look at the targets for V/Line trains. Budget paper 3 talks about 18 per cent of V/Line country trains in 2005–06 running late, which is 5 per cent worse than predicted. It will supposedly increase to just 14.5 per cent of trains being more than 5 minutes late in 2006–07, but that is way above the monthly 8 per cent target. Again we have another target in relation to service delivery of V/Line trains into rural and regional Victoria, and the government of the day has once again dumped and walked away from that target.

The Latrobe Valley fast train is two years late. It is expected to be only 94 per cent complete in 2005–06. Here we have another target set by the Bracks Labor government, set by the Minister for Transport, and another target dumped and walked away from. Another target by the Bracks Labor government is for the amount of freight to be moved from the roads and placed on rail. The target is to have up to 30 per cent of freight on rail by 2010 — not 2008, 2009 or 2011, but 2010. We have Melbourne 2030, which says that 20 per cent of people will be travelling on public transport by 2020. Now we have 30 per cent of freight on rail by 2010. The government loves to round things up into 10-year cycles to give a spin to the community. That target has now been dumped, with an analysis showing a decline of freight travelling on rail; it is another target

that the government set and another transport target on which the Victorian government simply cannot deliver.

Last year's target for the sealing of the pavement on roads in rural and regional areas was also dumped. Another target set by the government regards upgrading country roads, improving pavement and bitumen, improving the shoulders on roads and trying to make roads safe for country and regional Victorians, but the target for the amount of regional pavement resurfaced has also declined to 10.098 million square metres — that is, down 85 000 square metres from the estimated outcome for 2005–06.

Regional and rural roads crumble while the lazy government does nothing in relation to the targets it sets for upgrading country roads and providing good, safe surfaces — renewed surfaces on country roads. The government could not even meet these types of targets, yet again we see work on rural and regional roads decline. The government will not embrace the Liberal Party's policy of providing nearly \$127 million to rural and regional councils to upgrade regional roads. The Treasurer has said that it is not a responsibility of the state government, and it refuses to get involved in any way, shape or form in assisting rural Victoria. Once again, it would be another target.

When you look at these issues in relation to infrastructure projects and service delivery, it is fair to say that the Labor government has missed the target when it comes to all forms of transport, infrastructure, service delivery and looking after the interests and safety of people in Melbourne, rural Victoria and regional Victoria as well.

Another target was the number of trips undertaken under the multipurpose taxi program. The target set in the budget paper was 4.4 million trips; the actual number of trips carried out was 4.2 million. We know what has caused this — the cruel cap on access to the program the Labor government placed on the frail elderly and people with disabilities. This is not an issue of lack of infrastructure, it is not an issue of lacking the people out there to do the work; it is an issue that is associated with a cruel-hearted government that is prepared to attack the most vulnerable people in our community — our frail elderly and those with disabilities, who rely heavily on the multipurpose taxi program. We know very well that once they reach the cruel cap, they are socially isolated in their homes. They have to give up their trips for social interaction in the community, trips to the doctors and trips down the street to do their basic shopping. This cruel government has attacked the most vulnerable people in the community.

I look at the budget and ask what could have been done for the Polwarth electorate. Again no money has been allocated for the Princes Highway west of Geelong. The government of the day, a Liberal government, committed to duplicating that road, one of the most dangerous sections of road in Victoria, along with the Midland Highway. Again there is not a skerrick — not a cent, not a miserable dollar — from the lousy Bracks Labor government for the Princes Highway.

There is no money for the emergency helicopter for south-west Victoria. This government has made every move it could possibly make to dodge and weave, duck and dive on providing an emergency helicopter for the region. A similar service is provided to other parts of the state, but the government has seen fit to cut south-west Victoria loose. It is happy to promote the area and to send as many international tourists out there as possible. We have a host of accidents and near misses, one of which came to my attention last week when international tourists were driving on the wrong side of the road. Accidents, fatalities and serious injuries are waiting to happen; but when they do happen, we have to wait. There is what is known as a golden hour for getting emergency services to people and getting them to an emergency centre; we often lose that opportunity.

The budget has nothing in it for the Lethbridge Primary School relocation, and I know the Golden Plains Shire Council was hoping there would be money in the budget for that. Regarding the Anglesea school redevelopment, I know there is land available up the road, and with a land swap that project could be carried out with very little contribution from the government. Alcoa has been working with the local school community on that. Again there is not a single dollar in the budget for that project nor is there any money in the budget for the ongoing beautification of Lake Colac.

Schools were relying on the money from the Snowy Hydro sale. The Premier has been quoted a couple of times in the newspaper as saying even though the sale has been called off, that money will still be available to schools. I want to know when it will come to the Polwarth electorate and when the two nominated secondary schools in my electorate will get money for their upgrade — not for the planning, but for the upgrade.

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

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It is an honour to speak on the budget. The member for Polwarth's memory is obviously rather short. The last time the Liberals were in they deliberately targeted

rural and regional Victoria. They shut schools, they shut railway lines and they shut hospitals — they did everything. Yet the member for Polwarth suggests our record is ordinary. Our record is very good in rural and regional Victoria. At the end of the day the member for Polwarth needs to read the papers, refresh his memory and get real.

This is a great budget. I am overjoyed when I look at what is coming specifically to my electorate. The new technical education centre being built in Berwick for year 11 and year 12 students will provide vocational training; it will be a wonderful contribution to education in the area and is in addition to the seven new schools we have built in the city of Casey and the major upgrades to 16 schools, as well as the proposal to build another two schools as was announced in the budget.

Training is a major issue for my electorate, which has many tradesmen, contractors and small business people. Victoria is leading the country in providing training and apprenticeships. The budget will be marvellous, because we really need to keep up the skills base in my area. My greatest concern for students reaching year 12 is that they may finish that year at school but not go on to university, so we really need to provide a skill base for them so they can go out into the work force with skills rather than entering basic, unskilled jobs and hoping that will be enough to get by. I believe all year 12 students need a skill of one type or another.

The budget will also provide relief to congestion in my electorate. We are building an extra lane on the Monash Freeway and also on the West Gate — but the Monash Freeway, as it runs through my electorate, is obviously more important for me. It is a major issue for the people of the south-east.

There are some other proposals, which I believe will be announced in the coming months. We have a marvellous new aged care facility in Doveton. That comes on top of the new Casey Hospital, which we built with previous budget funding. There are also improvements to the community health centre, including more dental services and physiotherapy services. So in terms of health we have been very fortunate in Casey.

The 827 and 893 local bus services have been extended substantially. Members have mentioned previously that the bus services are not perfect, but at the end of the day they have improved substantially over the last four to five years, with increases in funding of somewhere between \$2 million and \$4 million for services in the city of Casey.

The Berwick-Cranbourne Road is another one of those vital link roads within the city of Casey. There is \$17 million for the project to duplicate the road between Pound Road and Thompsons Road, in Berwick. This adds to the \$300 million that this government has spent over five years in the city of Casey. Compare that to the Liberal record over the last three years of its term. It spent \$3 million on roads in Casey, and we have spent \$300 million. That should give a small message to the council, which continually whinges and whines that it does not get enough. If you compare it to any other council in the whole of Victoria, you realise that Casey has done incredibly well. I am very fortunate as a member to have so much money going into my electorate's roads, because it is desperately needed.

There is also the marvellous \$300 School Start bonus for students starting prep or year 7. My municipality has the third highest debt per capita of any municipality in the whole of Victoria. There are enormous debt pressures on families there, and this \$300 will go some way towards relieving the pressure they are under.

The third railway line into Springvale is going to be absolutely marvellous, and there will be a further extension into Dandenong in the out years. This will allow for more peak and bypass services on those lines. It will also substantially increase train services on the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines and give people an alternative to hopping onto the freeway each morning. That is a marvellous contribution from this budget.

We are also getting more child welfare and health services. Casey will be one of five outer suburban councils which will be sharing in the \$25 million allocated to childhood welfare and health services.

Generally this is a very good budget, and there is a lot for small business. WorkCover premiums will have dropped by 30 per cent over three years, and payroll tax will also be dropped. Stamp duty will be the lowest in the country for holdings between \$380 000 to \$3.4 million. We are looking at a surplus in 2006–07 of \$317 million, with an average surplus of \$316 million going forward over the next three years. I commend the bill to the house, and I believe it is a wonderful budget.

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I sum this budget up as a missed opportunity for the state of Victoria, and in particular the people of Victoria. It is a typical Labor budget: it is high taxing, makes many promises and sends us further into debt. Why should we be surprised? An article in yesterday's *Australian*, headed 'In the red is the new black for the real budget chic', says:

There are fashion cycles in state budgets — and this year's budget round confirms a new one has taken hold.

Debt is the new chic ...

At the end of the 1980s boom Victoria, under the Labor premiers John Cain and Joan Kirner, was the trendsetter.

More spectacularly than any of their contemporaries, they showed what happens when you use a temporary flood of revenue to fund big, continuing spending programs.

The boom went bust, the Victorian budget plunged into deficit, and they resorted to borrowing to fund the spending and ended up borrowing to pay interest on the borrowing.

I, along with most people in Victoria, am worried that we are heading down the same track. The article goes on to say:

State treasurers all around the nation made an absolute virtue of fiscal rectitude, rebuilding their balance sheets, running down debt and pursuing a AAA stamp of good housekeeping from the international credit rating agencies.

Now a new fashion wave is sweeping through state budgets —

again. It is:

... one that features record infrastructure spending, funded by gearing up balance sheets. Borrowing is back, at least outside Canberra.

Again, why should we be surprised? This government will say anything, do anything, spend everything and borrow everything.

Ms Beattie — The member for Murray Valley said we had plenty of money. Now you are saying we have not.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The member for Yuroke yelled out across the chamber that we should spend money, but we do not have to borrow money. The government has an enormous amount of money pouring into the state coffers from the GST, stamp duty — I know many in this house have bought a house over the last couple of years and have had to pay an enormous amount of stamp duty — and speed camera revenue, as well as all the hidden taxes, including the hidden taxes that will come about on 1 July when all charges will go up in line with the rise in the consumer price index (CPI).

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — The member for Melton said they are voluntary. There will be CPI increases to a lot of the charges, and we are going to pay them voluntarily! He has to be joking. The reality is that this government cannot manage money and cannot manage

projects, and that is why we are going to have to borrow again.

It was interesting to read an article in the *Australian* of 6 June under the headline 'States face \$50 billion borrowing binge':

State governments will have to borrow more than \$10 billion every year for the next five years to balance their books ...

It goes on to quote Prime Minister John Howard as saying:

I think the states, by and large, have squandered the GST bonanza ...

GST is the greatest thing that the states have had, revenue wise, in my political lifetime. We give them access to a growth tax, they don't spend it on tax relief and infrastructure, they spend it on expanding their administration.

That sums it up for most people in Victoria.

Today I want to comment on a couple of other things. Firstly, I want to comment on my great electorate of Lowan in western Victoria. Secondly, I want to comment on my portfolio responsibilities in health, aged care and Aboriginal affairs.

I have to say that the greatest disappointment in the Lowan electorate is the non-funding of the air ambulance helicopter. All other areas of Victoria are covered by an air ambulance helicopter, but western Victoria is not. There have been serious accidents in my electorate — in fact a policeman died on Mount Arapiles only a week or so ago. The electorate has national parks, including the Grampians National Park; and it has busy highways running through it, including the Western Highway which is the second busiest highway in Victoria. Yet still the government has not funded the provision of an air ambulance helicopter for the district. Despite all the revenue coming into its coffers, the government cannot afford to make sure western Victoria gets a service similar to the services provided in other areas. We have been very much disappointed by not getting the air ambulance helicopter.

Very little money has been provided for roads and bridges. I quote from a *Wimmera Mail-Times* article which talks about Horsham's Cr Bernard Gross and the mayor, Cr Ros MacInnes, who have said they are very disappointed that no funding was provided for roads and bridges in their area. The article goes on to quote a Quantong dairy farmer, Lance Netherway, as saying:

The Natimuk, Goroke and Frances route is now a scary trip — just the roughness of the road.

I would like to put some of those pollies in a truck down the road and have them bounce around.

As members may know, some of these roads, particularly the Henty, Glenelg and Wimmera highways, are roads for which the state has responsibility, yet we have very little money for them.

As the minerals sands industry in our area expands and as more blue gums are being planted or are due to be harvested, there is going to be greater demand for road infrastructure, and particularly bridges, with heavier usage levels. However, there is very little in this regard in the budget for my electorate.

Another major concern is the reduction of \$28 million in funding to the Department of Primary Industries. Agriculture in our area has a big influence on our economic and employment fortunes, particularly when the agricultural sector has a cold — and the petrol prices have a big impact on that. The reality is that the government is reducing money to the Department of Primary Industries by \$28 million. Not supporting an enormous industry which has enormous benefits for rural and regional Victoria, and in particular for the Lowan electorate, is also a major concern.

There is little money in this budget to address the control of noxious weeds and vermin. Again I return to the *Wimmera Mallee-Times* — —

Mr Nardella — That would get rid of The Nationals!

Mr DELAHUNTY — The member would like to do that, because he would not have anyone hammering him about infrastructure and matters concerning rural and regional Victoria.

It is interesting to note that Cr Darryl Argall is quoted in the same article as saying that:

... farmers in his shire were also upset that the Department of Sustainability and Environment had stopped baiting rabbits with 1080-poisoned carrots and now gave farmers poisoned oats instead.

Cr Argall goes on to say that farmers do not need the oats but want the program that has already been working. There is little money in this budget to control noxious weeds and vermin.

Ms Beattie interjected.

Mr DELAHUNTY — I will give some credit to the state government; the budget has some small projects listed, and I suppose we have to be grateful for them. The big project was the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline, and I will come back to discuss that — there is nothing

clear about it at this stage — but other small projects and programs are listed.

I have lobbied hard in Parliament on behalf of the Branxholme community for the upgrade of its police residence. It has a new police station, but unfortunately because the police residence does not meet requirements the policeman moved out, and now there is not a full-time police presence there.

It is interesting to note that \$500 000 has been provided merely to upgrade a house in Branxholme; that is an amazing amount of money. I am waiting to see what the outcome will be. I think the house will have gold taps, gold awnings and the like! The Branxholme community is also waiting for Glenelg Water to upgrade the water quality in the area, and I will very much be keeping an eye on that because the Branxholme community, like many communities in my electorate, needs to have a police presence, good water quality and infrastructure with which to remove wastewater.

There is money in the budget to address the skills shortage. We often refer to it in this way, but I think it is really a labour shortage. The \$500 assistance for apprentices to complete their trades school placement is welcome, as is the accommodation allowance. However, those measures really only replace the incentives removed for employers taking on apprentices.

The \$300 School Start bonus for students starting prep and year 7 is welcomed by the parents who will benefit from it, but I do not think it really covers the cost of fuel prices, particularly in rural and regional Victoria. Our big concern in the education area — and it is a pity the Minister for Education and Training has left the chamber — is the vocational education and training (VET) buses. Over 300 students from around Horsham and Longerenong colleges use those buses, as do students at Lake Bolac, Hamilton and Casterton. We need more money for VET buses to allow these students to do the very important VET and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning programs.

The budget provided some funding for neighbourhood houses, and that is to be welcomed. Neighbourhood houses play a very important role in providing services to their local communities. However, for the life of me I still cannot work out why the government is providing \$27 million on the one hand, when it had reduced adult, community and further education funding for the delivery of programs by 3 per cent last year and is proposing to reduce it by another 3 per cent this year. That is a matter I will probably be taking up with the

Minister for Education and Training tonight during the adjournment debate.

Our big concern is that there is nothing in the budget for preschools. We now have teacher parity — that is to be welcomed — but we need funds to pay for those teachers. Also, I believe that preschools should be moved into the responsibility of the education portfolio, like the majority of our families and teachers — —

Ms Beattie — Is that your policy?

Mr DELAHUNTY — Yes, it is our policy, it has been our policy for a few years and it will be our policy — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr DELAHUNTY — And it is interesting to note that it is the Australian Education Union's policy too. Wait and see! There could be a debate on this in the upper house next week.

Public housing is a major concern. There is very little money in the budget for it, and rural and regional Victoria is not going to get much of that budget money. Housing constitutes a major problem in attracting people, particularly skilled people, to our rural communities, so I am very disappointed that the budget does not address that. We need to do more not only for public housing generally but specifically for public housing in rural and regional Victoria.

In the health portfolio there is no money in the budget to help in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in country Victoria, particularly doctors, dentists and podiatrists. An Australian Medical Association media release highlights this:

AMA Victoria president Doctor Mark Yates today criticised the state government for failing to address the critical shortage of rural GPs and specialists in the state budget.

The release goes on to quote Dr Yates as saying that:

AMA Victoria's budget submission put a proposal to the government which would have attracted doctors to come and, most importantly, stay in rural towns.

The release says that the:

... AMA Victoria package includes: after-hours roster support; local relief; strengthened professional networks; increased clinical development and training opportunities; increased engagement in local medical service planning ...

Dr Yates is further quoted as saying that:

There are currently more than 60 unfilled GP positions and many specialists services no longer available in rural Victoria.

The house can understand why the AMA is concerned about this issue.

I went to a Our Health, Our Way conference on the rural work force in Victoria a couple of weeks ago. A white paper has been put together, which I know the government has received, which has some plans to address the critical doctor shortage in country Victoria. With Queensland, South Australia and now New Zealand putting a lot of effort into recruiting our medical professionals, Victoria has missed another opportunity.

However, funds have been allocated to address obesity. I am a board member of VicHealth, and I congratulate the government for putting some money into that area. I am pleased to see that VicHealth and others will work with the government on that. Also more money is going to medical research, which is to be welcomed, and there is \$170 million over five years for mental health. The state government has been dragged into that area because of work done by the Council of Australian Governments — the budget papers even mention that it has to work with COAG — but I am waiting with a great deal of interest to see if there is going to be any money for this for rural and regional Victoria. I have had a parliamentary intern working with me on this topic, and I have seen his draft report, which is to be tabled in this Parliament tomorrow. There is a lot of good work in it, particularly on rural and regional Victoria. The Australian Medical Association believes another \$80 million a year is required to address this area of chronic need in our health system.

In aged care there is \$22 million for Warracknabeal. That is to be commended, and we welcome it, but there is no money to replace the \$82.50 car registration hit by the government on pensioners, health care card holders and some veterans.

Public transport services in metropolitan areas are free for seniors, but what about rural and regional Victoria? We challenged the government in relation to people travelling down to the Commonwealth Games, and we won that fight. The member for Shepparton took up the cudgels years ago when the concession applied for only three days a week — Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We had that extended to include Mondays and Fridays, so we will have that fight again.

In Aboriginal affairs, I note that there is some money to implement the new legislation that has gone through the house. We will wait and see what is going on there, but I question the amount of money being put into education and community involvement. If we give these people the skills to be able to — —

Ms Beattie — Which people?

Mr DELAHUNTY — Aboriginal people. I am speaking about Aboriginal affairs.

If we give these people the opportunity to gain skills through education and training, it would be an enormous boost for them. I do not want to politicise this, because it is an area where we need to work in a tripartisan way, but there is some money in the budget for that.

There is no redress in relation to the fire services levy, and it is a pity that I have no time to talk about that. Likewise there is no money to address the situation with fire hydrants on the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. Looking at Regional Infrastructure Development Fund projects, this week's *Weekly Times* reports that the government promised to spend \$446 million over four years, but it has spent only \$150 million. Where has that money gone? That is another missed opportunity.

The Wimmera–Mallee pipeline implementation is concerning me greatly. We have seen the project costs go up over \$500 million — the current price quoted by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water is \$521 million — and not one pipe has been laid since 2004. It is interesting that the northern Mallee pipeline cost \$100 million, which was good value for money, but this is going to cost about \$300 per hectare. There is concern about concept designs, about staffing issues and about future water rates. With those few words I indicate that I think we have missed a few opportunities in this budget.

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

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — In the lead-up to the budget the Treasurer announced that it would redress some of the imbalance that the outer suburbs had experienced. That was his target, and he has zeroed right in on it, certainly in my electorate, which as members know, takes in the outer suburbs. It has been a very good budget indeed for the outer suburbs.

I want to talk a little about my electorate. After that I will talk about some schools and then focus on some of the initiatives in veterans affairs. First of all, what does the budget mean to my electorate? It means that the council and staff of Wilmott Park Primary School, after working very well with me to get funding for new classrooms and a music area, have been granted \$1.66 million. I joined the school council and the staff last Friday in a celebration, and I might say that they are overjoyed with the Bracks government. There is also in excess of \$1.5 million for Gladstone Views

Primary School. I would like to pay tribute to the principal, Jill Ramsay, and her school council president, Dissio Markos, who has worked tirelessly to get that project up. They are also overjoyed with that result.

There is in excess of \$16 million for the much-needed duplication of Mickleham Road right up to Somerton Road. I know many members from the country use that road when they come to Melbourne, so they will be overjoyed with the Bracks government too.

I would like to talk about my growing communities and what we have done for them. We have invested \$8.53 million to develop and integrate local infrastructure over the next three years, because as you know, Acting Speaker, sometimes when things are developed in the outer suburbs there is no integration of services. That investment will see the establishment of six extra children's centres in the growth corridors of Hume, which is in my electorate, Whittlesea, Melton, Wyndham, Cardinia and Casey; support for nine multipurpose service facilities in neighbourhoods with limited children's services in all interface councils; and grants to non-government providers to relocate to poorly serviced areas. They are great initiatives for the outer suburbs.

I want to talk also about a couple of the school initiatives in which I am particularly interested, including the Leading Teachers initiative. It involves the equivalent of 250 leading teachers delivering programs to improve the performance of students in years 5 to 9, particularly in the areas of maths and science, and it will of course allow experienced teachers to work with their colleagues to improve classroom teaching.

I want to talk about leadership in schools, because we have allocated \$11.6 million to build the capacity of school leaders in order to further improve the teaching of students. This is a most important area, because we saw in seven years of the Kennett government a whole lot of great teachers — a generation of great teachers — ripped out of our schools. We have to boost those services so we get the leadership coming up from the bottom, after the guts were ripped out of the schools.

I want to talk about veterans and how well we have served our veterans, as indeed they have served us. In the past I co-chaired the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee's Anzac Day inquiry. It made recommendations to the government and I am pleased to say that many of those recommendations have been taken up. An allocation of \$1.16 million has been made to honour the service of Victorian veterans. We are building new rehabilitation facilities for veterans in the

redeveloped Austin Mercy Hospital. That will be funded through the Department of Human Services as part of Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital Mental Health. There will be a veterans gymnasium and a pool, which will be great. We will continue the Victorian Spirit of Anzac prize for a further four years. It is important that we honour our veterans, and we have done that.

As I said at the start of my contribution, this budget is well targeted. It delivers everything the Treasurer alluded to in the lead-up to the budget. I commend the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill to the house.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — It has been very interesting listening to various government members get up and say, as the member for Yuroke did, 'This budget is very good for my electorate', and they then run through all the goodies they have got for their electorates. I am afraid that we in country Victoria are not able to say that. We have missed out on all of those major projects, with a few exceptions. The big one is the Rochester hospital, which I am very pleased about. I acknowledge that \$20.7 million right up front.

The point I want to make right at the start is Labor simply cannot manage money. I think that comes through loud and clear. I get sick and tired of members of the government, time after time, regaling the house about what happened in the Kennett years. The member for Yuroke talked about ripping out teachers. That, in fact, did not happen. There were teachers who were out on various sorts of leave and they were required to come back into the system — they were not sacked. This rhetoric has been built up by the Labor Party about what happened in those years, without acknowledging that when the Kennett government came in it inherited a state which was effectively broke. If you have a look through any of the papers from that time or the independent audit that was done shortly after that, the state was broke.

This government talks about being open, honest and accountable. In those days, and there are members here who were part of that government, the government, without talking to the people, was selling off the trams and the trains and the buses. Not only was it not speaking to the people about it but it was not even referring to the Parliament. The Parliament knew nothing about it until it was ultimately flushed out. Members of the Labor Party can rail all they want about our side of politics selling off various assets from time to time but in their case they have a track record of doing it without telling the people, whereas on our side of politics we have been up front about anything we have done in that sense. The people have known about

it, there has been a debate within the Parliament and it has been for the good of the state.

This is a government which in opposition was very strong against selling any of our national assets. Yet when it could see \$600 million to shore up its budget it was only too happy to flog off the Snowy. The Snowy Hydro scheme is one of our great national icons. I commend the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the federal government for taking decisive action to keep the Snowy Mountains scheme in public hands. It should be in public hands because of the icon it is, and, equally important, so we have unequivocal public control of that very important water component. Water is our lifeblood. While all the agreements are in place, they can be changed very quickly. I commend the Howard government for taking action to keep the Snowy in public hands.

That has left this government with a \$600 million black hole, and so far it has done very little to explain how it is going to fill it. I ask how that is going to affect schools in my electorate, for example. I have a proposed P-12 college in Kyabram. It is a very innovative project. The whole community is very much behind the project. Money was allocated for planning purposes in this budget with the capital works to flow further along. That money would have come out of this \$600 million. I am concerned for my community, in this case the Kyabram community. How much longer will they have to wait?

The Minister for Education and Training and the Premier have indicated that we will have to wait for another couple of years. However, I can tell you that the Kyabram Secondary College is effectively falling down. There are floorboards which children and staff fall through, there are toilets which are totally unacceptable. That school has been waiting and waiting for this capital injection and it now looks like it will have to wait even longer. That \$600 million black hole needs some explanation from the Minister for Education and Training or the Premier, rather than them just saying, 'Trust us, it will be okay. We will find the money elsewhere'.

Talking about the Kennett years, this government is talking about additional money for maintenance. I remind the house that when the Kennett government came in to office there was a \$600 million black hole for maintenance at schools.

Mr Dixon — It was \$670 million.

Mr MAUGHAN — The member for Nepean corrects me. It was a \$670 million backlog where

schools were really falling down. I know that during those Kennett years every one of the schools in my electorate had money spent on it to bring it up to an acceptable standard. Do not tell me about black holes, do not tell me about this government being so caring about education when during its last opportunity in government it allowed maintenance to fall down. That is happening again.

I have schools in my electorate where maintenance has not been kept up to scratch. The government is doing something about it in this budget. I look forward to getting the detail of what that means for individual schools in my electorate where maintenance has been neglected because this government has not been prepared to put in the funding. As I indicated, we are looking for a significant upgrade of Kyabram Secondary College. If the maintenance money does not come through, money will have to be spent on occupational health and safety issues.

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

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Snowy Hydro Ltd: prospectus

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his evidence at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on Monday, when he urged Victorians to look at the Snowy Hydro prospectus which would reveal \$143 million in anticipated dividends, and I ask: in the interests of assuring the public of the accuracy of the claim, will the Premier provide a copy of the prospectus to the house?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. We will check with the other shareholders of the organisation — the federal government and the New South Wales government — and, if they approve, of course that will be made available.

Employment: rate

Mr LOCKWOOD (Bayswater) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to reducing unemployment and creating new jobs across Victoria, and I ask him to detail for the house how today's Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force figures demonstrate that the government is delivering on that commitment.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Bayswater for his question. All members of the government can be very proud that we have created some 320 000 jobs over the last seven years. That is a greater number of jobs proportionally in Victoria than in other states in Australia. I am also very pleased that from a high unemployment rate of 12.4 per cent under the previous government — that is what was occurring in the seven years of the previous government; 12.4 per cent was the highest unemployment rate — we now have in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures released today the lowest unemployment rate that we have had in Victoria for 16 years.

Some years ago we indicated that we aspired to achieve an unemployment rate of 5 per cent in Victoria. That was the target we set ourselves over successive elections, and we have tried to ensure through our budgets and economic settings that we would achieve that very aim. I am very pleased to say — and I know the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs is also very pleased, as are other ministers and members of Parliament — that today's ABS figures show that Victoria's unemployment rate dropped to a new 16-year low of 5 per cent. This is a great outcome for the state, but it is not only about unemployment. As I have mentioned, we have had 320 000 jobs created — that is, 70 000 more jobs than were created in the seven years of the Kennett government. So over a similar period we have achieved 70 000 more jobs, and we have achieved a 5 per cent unemployment rate. That underscores — —

Mr Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Scoresby!

Mr BRACKS — That underscores the strength of the Australian economy. As we have said on this side of the house, what will drive economic gains in Victoria is going to be infrastructure properly allocated for the future, it is going to be making sure the cost of doing business is kept at a reasonable rate, which it is in Victoria and it is also going to be about skills. Having people in employment is part of that, and I am very pleased with this outcome today.

Central Gippsland Health Service: paediatric services

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to today's resignation of two paediatricians from the Central Gippsland Health Service. I also refer to the minister's assurances in this house in September last year that

there would be no cuts to services at the Sale hospital. Will the minister guarantee the Sale and district community that paediatric services at the Central Gippsland Health Service will continue to be provided at appropriate standards in the future?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Health) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. The strengthening and renewing of the Central Gippsland Health Service took a major step forward very recently when I announced the return of the community-led board of management, about five months ahead of schedule. We have been able to do this because the Central Gippsland Health Service is now on a sustainable financial footing, thanks to the intervention of the government and the work of the administrator, Peter Craighead. Mr Craighead has done an outstanding job in running the health service and getting it back on its feet after quite a long period of poor financial performance and instability.

Members will remember that the previous board was sacked in November 2004 following concerns about governance, management and financial issues. It has been a very difficult time for the service and for the staff. Shortly before I removed the board the hospital was running a deficit of about \$1.2 million a year. It was, in fact, the worst deficit in percentage terms of any large rural hospital in Victoria. Since then it has really turned around completely. Its finances are in good shape.

Obviously the resignation of two specialists is something that we accept rather reluctantly. I am heartened that they have given a considerable period of time to allow the hospital to make arrangements. Doctors will make decisions for their own reasons about their particular employment. I note that one of the specialists has not ruled out revoking his decision, pending further discussion with the service.

The member also asked me about the future of the Central Gippsland Health Service. Like it has for every single country hospital, this government has increased funding to the service every single year. The Central Gippsland Health Service is in the same position as every other hospital in the state. In its budget this year it will receive even further funding. I think the future is looking very bright for the service, and I am very confident that the paediatric services will continue. I understand that the board is already talking to replacement clinicians. The service will in fact grow, just as it has over the past few years.

Budget: police infrastructure

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to making Victoria a safe place to raise a family. I ask the minister to detail to the house how infrastructure and equipment is delivering on that commitment.

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I thank the member for Derrimut for his question. Like all members on the government side, the member for Derrimut — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The comments of the member for South-West Coast are inappropriate.

Mr HOLDING — The member for Derrimut, like all government members, has a commitment to supporting Victoria Police and seeing things done to continue to reduce the crime rate in Victoria. As all honourable members know, the crime rate is way down — it is now down 21.5 per cent since 2000–01 — and that is something all honourable members are very pleased about. A significant reason for the reduction in crime is that this government has embarked on a campaign of recruiting additional police. Rather than cutting police numbers, as the previous government did, this government has recruited something like 1500 additional police to support Victorians right across the state.

We have also been investing in Victoria Police infrastructure. One of the most significant and telling examples of that is that Victoria Police had more spent on its infrastructure in the first four years of the Bracks government than it had in seven years under the Kennett administration. In fact, after seven years this government has doubled the spending on infrastructure compared with the spending under the previous government.

We are very pleased to see that something like 140 police stations have been constructed or funded — —

Mr Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have already spoken to the member for Scoresby once.

Mr HOLDING — That involves police stations that were funded in the last budget, including \$13.9 million for a new police station at Lilydale. I know the member for Lilydale was very pleased about that. We were able to celebrate that announcement with police personnel at

Lilydale last Wednesday. In fact, we were very pleased that the member for Scoresby was there just a month before, promising \$6 million to upgrade the police station at Lilydale. I am very pleased to commit to the house that we will be building a full police station at Lilydale, not half a police station. I am very pleased to assure the people of Lilydale about that.

We have also funded a new police station in Yarra Junction and a police station upgrade in Hastings, which will be well received by the police and local community there. I was very pleased to join with the Premier and the member for Ivanhoe to announce new funding for and to celebrate a significant capital upgrade of the forensic services department at Macleod. This is part of our high-capability crime fighting capacity in Victoria. We have already spent \$3.2 million upgrading the chemistry wing there. We have announced another \$2.3 million to support expanded infrastructure there, as well as \$13.2 million to support the purchase of additional equipment and capability and to provide a new information management system for the department. These are all part of our effort to make sure not only that local police have the best possible facilities at local police stations but that our crime fighting effort is supported as much as possible.

We have supported the purchase of mobile police stations for Victoria Police. This will make them more visible, more flexible, more responsive and more able to respond to the needs of Victorians right across the state. We are also pleased to support the purchase for Victoria Police of new covert and overt ballistic vests. We are pleased about that investment, and about the funding of new communications capabilities. There is a whole range of new investments that will continue to ensure that Victoria is the safest mainland state in Australia and that Victoria Police is well resourced.

We remember that the previous government promised more police, but instead of cutting police numbers — —

Mr Cooper — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has now been speaking for over 4 minutes and is starting to debate the issue. I ask you to bring him back to order and conclude his answer.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

Mr HOLDING — In conclusion, I am very pleased to be reminding the house that under this government funding for Victoria Police has increased significantly in terms of both resourcing the recruitment of new police and developing police infrastructure, unlike

under the previous government, where police resources were run down over successive years.

Mr Cooper — On a point of order, Speaker, I do not know whether the minister has concluded his answer, but if he has not, he is once again debating the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I understand the minister has concluded his answer.

Transurban: probity audit

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise the house who undertook the independent probity audit in assessing the government's dodgy deal with Transurban?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the opposition leader for his question. I am not aware who in particular undertook that, but I will certainly make sure that information gets back to the house.

Budget: hospital funding

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to invest in Victoria's health system, and I ask the minister to detail for the house how the government's recent investment in hospital infrastructure and equipment is delivering on that commitment.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for Footscray for his question. New technologies and new advances generally in medicine are making more and more treatments possible in our hospitals. We are now coupling those new advances with strong investment in medical equipment so that we can bring those treatments to many ill and vulnerable Victorians.

Since 1999 over half a billion dollars has been provided for medical equipment in Victoria. It really has been a very substantial boost to funding for medical equipment. I can outline to the house some of the advances. For example, we now know that because of new technology we have more premature and low weight babies surviving. We also know that new imaging technology is now able to pinpoint, for example, cancers that in the past would have gone undetected. However, these advances in medicine really mean that we have to pay for them with new equipment.

More premature babies means more NICU beds — that is, neonatal intensive care unit beds. Advances in cancer research mean we have to back those up with appropriate technologies. In this budget, for example, we have provided \$3.7 million to expand intensive care equipment to our hospitals. We have also provided the Peter McCallum Centre with a new Trilogy machine, which is a real breakthrough for Victoria's cancer patients. It is in fact the first of its kind in Australia. It offers very precise patient imaging and treatment, and it is all available in one machine. It means the risks that were previously associated with cancer treatment are drastically reduced.

The 2006–07 state budget allocated \$47.7 million, with \$30 million already allocated last month for medical equipment. I have a list here of hospitals right around the state that are benefiting from these substantial increases in equipment grants. We certainly have a very high priority on items such as gamma cameras, cardiac catheter laboratories, beds and trolleys, general X-ray and imaging equipment, and dental health equipment.

These grants include some really big ticket items, but they also purchase some smaller things that are really essential for the hospitals to continue to deliver their services. This funding provided by the government allows the hospitals to take advantage of these new advances in medical technology, to buy the latest equipment and to treat people more accurately and more quickly. It is just another example of the way the government is meeting the demands and the challenges that are being presented in our health system every day and growing the system so that we can treat more patients more effectively into the future.

Transurban: probity audit

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — My question is to the Premier. Given Rothschild is both Transurban's banker and the government's adviser how can Victorians be confident the Labor government has received independent advice on the government's dodgy deal with Transurban?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Polwarth for his question. The public can be very confident that they have got great value for money in this project. Not only have we been able to move on the Calder–Tullamarine freeways, bringing that forward, but we have also been able to put a significant contribution into the West Gate–Monash freeways which brings forward those concession notes which otherwise would have been paid in 2034, to get the benefit of that for generations of Victorians for a long time to come.

This is something which obviously will be the normal course of business that the Auditor-General would examine. We welcome that; that is his job. We know that this is good value for money, and we know that those proposals will be seen as good value for money.

Budget: transport infrastructure

Mr WILSON (Narre Warren South) — My question is to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the government's commitment to investing in social and economic infrastructure projects for all Victorians, and I ask the minister to outline the government's plans for investment in new and updated transport infrastructure.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I thank the member for Narre Warren South. The member, as representative of people from the city of Casey, knows about the huge infrastructure improvements that have been undertaken in the south-eastern suburbs. The Bracks government has a very proud record of investment in infrastructure, both in roads and in public transport, unlike the previous Liberal government that closed down railway lines. The member for South-West Coast is laughing about that at the moment. The member is only sorry he did not close down more railway lines. It left other infrastructure to wither and rust right across Victoria. We are repairing that damage from the past and we are rebuilding for the future.

Our country rail network has been improved: there has been the biggest investment in country rail in 120 years. We have reopened railway lines to Ararat and Ballarat — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West coast will cease interjecting in that manner.

Mr BATCHELOR — We have upgraded four other railway lines and in this financial year alone we have upgraded 96 level crossings. We have completed the metropolitan rail extension out to Sydenham and currently have a \$100 million project that extends the metropolitan rail network out to Craigieburn. We have extended the bus network. We have extended trams into Docklands, to Vermont South and to Box Hill. The Southern Cross station has been rebuilt into a world-class interchange — —

Mr Cooper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mornington!

Mr BATCHELOR — We have invested over \$100 million in building new bridges and in upgrading older bridges. and I can report to the house that 99 per cent of our arterial road bridges are now able to carry the higher mass vehicles. We have really delivered to the road freight and logistics industry in a huge way, and we lead Australia in the support of that important part of our economic lifeline.

Other road improvements have included the Craigieburn bypass, the Hallam bypass, the Geelong bypass, the Tullamarine–Calder freeway interchange and the upgrade of the Calder Highway, and we are about to get on with improvements to the Monash–West Gate freeway corridor. Of course EastLink, the largest road project in Australia, is currently steaming ahead at a great rate of knots. We have invested more than \$500 million in road safety measures and we have seen over 1100 — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for South-West Coast.

Mr BATCHELOR — We have included improvements to treatments at 1100 accident black spots across Victoria. This is only the beginning, as members would have seen in the government's \$10.5 billion investment program to be undertaken over the next 10 years.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of interjection on my left is too high.

Mr BATCHELOR — In meeting our transport challenges we have provided \$2 billion to increase the capacity of the metropolitan train network, \$1.8 billion to improve train and tram services, \$1.4 billion to improve bus services, \$2 billion to upgrade the arterial road network, over \$700 million to improve the Monash–West Gate corridor and \$1.1 billion for rail safety improvements. In the meantime we have not heard one promise from the Liberal opposition. Not one road, not one railway level crossing, not one bus service has been promised.

Mr Cooper — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is taking us on a tour, and I suggest he is taking too long to do that. He has been speaking for over 4 minutes, and he is now starting to debate the issue.

Mr Helper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the member for Ripon that members are fully entitled to raise points of order, whether he agrees with them or not, and I ask him to be quiet while they are being raised.

I ask the Minister for Transport to conclude his answer, and I ask him to return to answering the question.

Mr BATCHELOR — Members of this government are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and get on with building Victoria, repairing the past and rebuilding for the future. If members of the opposition were only prepared to commit to something — we know they are committed to nothing, because they stand for nothing — —

Mr Cooper — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has concluded his answer.

Australian Labor Party: Western Metropolitan Region candidate

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — My question without notice is to the Premier in his capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Does the Premier support the much-publicised comments made by Khalil Eideh, an endorsed Labor candidate, which promote racial and religious tension and concern, particularly throughout Victoria's Jewish community.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier, to respond insofar as the question relates to Victorian government business.

Mr BRACKS (Minister for Multicultural Affairs) — I thank the member for Caulfield for her question. I can say that on this side of the house every member of Parliament supports multiculturalism, and that is our very strong aim. The member referred to comments, but the only comments I am aware of from the candidate are these comments, that 'if elected I will continue to work towards a tolerant and diverse society that embraces and celebrates cultural differences'.

That is certainly, on this side of the house, what we commit to: celebrating cultural diversity, adhering to the principles of multiculturalism and supporting them wholeheartedly.

Budget: government performance

Ms CAMPBELL (Pascoe Vale) — My question is to the Treasurer. I refer him to comments made by the federal Treasurer regarding the Victorian government's

2006–07 budget, and I ask him to detail for the house how the budget is delivering for Victoria through infrastructure investment and responsible financial management.

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — On this side of the house we believe it is vital to invest in economic and social infrastructure to ensure future economic growth and prosperity. In the budget I released last week the government chose to invest a record \$12.6 billion over the next four years in infrastructure to meet the challenges ahead.

Unfortunately not everyone shares this view nor indeed makes these important choices about the future. In 2006–07 Victoria's net infrastructure investment per capita will be \$434. That compares to a figure of \$152 per capita invested by the commonwealth government. The same story emerges going forward. Over the forward estimates period the growth in net infrastructure investment in Victoria by the Bracks government will be 19.4 per cent. The commonwealth government's investment will actually decline by 20 per cent. On the taxation front our forecast is for around 10.4 per cent growth over the forward estimates period, compared with the commonwealth's massive 14.9 per cent growth over the same period. Our budget not only invests in infrastructure, but it also brings business costs down.

I saw today — and the member for Pascoe Vale asked me specifically about this — an article in the *Australian Financial Review* where the federal Treasurer has attempted to lecture us on our expenses growth. He claims that our expenses are growing at a rate that is not sustainable in the long term. You could be polite and say that this is the pot calling the kettle black, but you could go even further and say that that is a whopper of enormous dimensions. In fact it is a double whopper with cheese, with large French fries, with large Coke and with a chocolate sundae. It is the biggest double whopper with cheese you could ever get at Hungry Jack's! I will tell the house why I say that. The federal Treasurer, who has just jetted off overseas after giving us a lecture about expenses growth — and just for the record, commonwealth expenses — —

Mr Perton interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — You are all there in the departure lounge; you are all set to go.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Doncaster and members on my right not to interject

while the Treasurer is answering his question, and I ask the Treasurer to answer his question through the Chair.

Mr BRUMBY — What the respective budget papers of the Victorian government and commonwealth government show is that over the next four years Victoria's expenses will grow by 9.5 per cent, which is a modest amount, and the commonwealth's expenditure will grow by 14.9 per cent. I am not sure where that leaves Peter Costello, but if our expenditure growth is unsustainable at 9½ per cent, I am not sure where the commonwealth is at with 14.9 per cent.

Today the Premier released a report entitled *Governments Working Together*, which shows also that the Victorian government is shouldering an increasing burden of what used to be joint responsibilities. For example, under the Australian health care agreement Victoria is now providing 60 per cent of the funding to public hospitals compared to just 40 per cent by the commonwealth, and this is supposed to be a fifty-fifty arrangement.

I have one other point to make about our expenses. Apart from the growth going forward, which is less than the commonwealth's, over the last 12 months Victorian government public sector wages have grown by 3.3 per cent. That is less than the commonwealth's 3.6 per cent, less than private wages in Victoria, at 3.7 per cent, and less than every other state in Australia. But this is unsustainable growth!

I will say one final thing. Our budget is about a plan for the future. It is a plan about skills, a plan about business competitiveness and a plan about investing in infrastructure. I saw a recent comment by Saul Eslake, who has been looking at our budget and at the commonwealth budget. This is what he had to say about the commonwealth government —

Mr Cooper — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer has now been speaking for over 5 minutes. I ask you to bring him back to order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not believe he has been speaking for that long. The Treasurer, concluding his answer.

Mr BRUMBY — This is what Saul Eslake said in the *Age* of 13 May:

The commonwealth government has spent almost every dollar that the resources boom has dropped into its lap ... I have to confess that I struggle to think of anything of significant lasting value that has been done with it.

APPROPRIATION (2006/2007) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — Prior to the break for lunch I was talking on the theme that Labor cannot manage money. I gave many examples of that, as have other members. But to be fair I need to say that in his speech the Treasurer acknowledged that the Labor government inherited a very strong financial position. I have not heard many other Labor members say that, and I pay tribute to the Treasurer for acknowledging that point.

Just to expand on that, in the last seven years expenditure by this government has exceeded estimates by \$8.374 billion. Let me repeat that: actual expenditure has exceeded estimates by \$8.374 billion. The government has been fortunate that its revenue has also grossly exceeded its expenditure by \$10 billion. That is the result of a whole range of things — the boom in the property market, stamp duty, payroll tax and the GST. This government is receiving about \$8000 million dollars every year from the goods and services tax, and over the last five years alone it has received some \$30 billion from the commonwealth in the form of GST revenue. No wonder that time after time government members and ministers can get up and claim that this government has increased expenditure by X amount of dollars compared with the previous government. Of course it has, because it has had that huge \$30 billion revenue stream coming from the commonwealth. That is not just my figure; it is backed up by the Auditor-General in his report. But at the same time costs have been going up too, because various taxes and charges are indexed.

I welcome the small reduction in payroll tax in this budget. As I said earlier this week, I think payroll tax is iniquitous because it is a tax on employment. As employers get to that threshold where payroll tax cuts in, many of them decide they do not want to put on further employees, because they feel they would be putting on a couple of employees just to stay where they are — so it is not until they get to the next stage that the business starts progressing again.

Many members will probably be unaware that in recent months the government has decreed that people who were previously working as contractors are to be considered employees. One business in my electorate that has employed a number of highly paid contractors — this can happen in a whole range of different industries — will have an additional cost of

\$130 000 to \$160 000 over and above what it had budgeted for because independent contractors have been deemed by the government to be employees.

The tax on insurance is another iniquitous tax. A little more than half of what most people pay in premiums on their home insurance policies is made up of taxes and charges of various sorts, so many people are opting not to insure. That causes problems in financing the Country Fire Authority. I will not get into that debate today, but I think it is very important.

I come back to the point: Labor cannot manage money and it cannot manage projects. I will instance only one of those — that is, the fast rail project, which was a disaster right from the start. It was never properly thought out or documented. It was sold to the people on the basis that the government would contribute \$80 million and the rest would come from private industry. We are now up to \$800 million — and the price is still going up — yet we have not had a single train run on the so-called fast rail. It will be many years yet, and there will be very few trains that are much faster at all.

Let us not be negative about the whole thing.

Mr Perton — Go on — do!

Mr MAUGHAN — There are some good things. In my electorate I have had a wonderful win. I thank the Minister for Health for allocating \$21.7 million for the Rochester hospital — it will be a brand-new hospital with an operating theatre. It just shows what can be achieved if you have the community working with you, if you have the hospital and a damn good local member who works in cooperation — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — It has not been started yet, but I can assure the member it will start this calendar year and will be finished within the next two or three years. That funding is already there.

Things are not quite so good for the Echuca hospital. It is in the middle of a \$30 million redevelopment and was expecting some funding, but it did not come through. There is nothing for the Rushworth or Nathalia hospitals, nothing for health facilities in Kyabram and nothing for the Cohuna District Hospital, so there are some disappointments for health in the budget.

There is nothing in the budget for dental services, and the lack of them is a real problem in country Victoria. A lot of metropolitan members do not appreciate just how important it is for people on low incomes to be able to

get dental services in country Victoria. The Echuca hospital has a very well-equipped dental surgery, but dental services have not been provided there for a long time, for a whole range of reasons I will not go into now.

When Labor was in opposition it promised it would do all sorts of things to reduce hospital waiting lists. But what did we find? The waiting period for semi-urgent patients was 35 days in 1999–2000, and last year it was 42 days. You can go through a whole range of other criteria, but I will cite only one: in 1999–2000 the waiting period for non-urgent patients from July to December was 52 days; last year it was 65 days. Waiting lists have blown out, yet the Labor Party was the party that promised once it got into government it would fix all those problems. I acknowledge that it has poured a lot of money into health, but it has not fixed the waiting lists, which are still a real problem.

The government has also been found short on funding for neighbourhood houses and community houses. Some money went into that in the budget, but nothing like what the sector wanted. It wanted \$80 million over four years but got nothing like that. What about the 30-odd houses that are not accredited? For three years the Rochester community house in my electorate has been doing a fantastic job with volunteers. It has no money for a paid coordinator or for insurance. Those volunteers do a fantastic job — as volunteers do in those other 30 unfunded neighbourhood and community houses — but they are getting tired, and they are a bit sick and tired of this government talking about building better communities but then denying sufficient funding to organisations like neighbourhood houses.

I could go into a whole range of other issues, including preschools, which are close to my heart. That is the most important part of the education sector because the first five or six years of a child's life are absolutely crucial, yet there is nothing in this budget for preschools.

Responsibility for preschools should come under the Department of Education and Training not only so that preschool teachers receive salary parity with primary school teachers but, even more importantly, so that the bricks and mortar are not dependent on the goodwill of local government or the local community but are funded by the state government in exactly the same way as are primary and secondary schools.

With regard to public housing, it is an absolute disgrace that funding has been provided for only 130 new homes. We could use 25 per cent of those homes in the

Rodney electorate alone. This government has fallen short of being open, honest and accountable and delivering — —

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

Mr JENKINS (Morwell) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and speak on the — —

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, there is no minister at the table.

The SPEAKER — Order! We will wait until the minister arrives at the table.

The member for Morwell, to continue.

Mr JENKINS — It again gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and speak in support of the budget — and a great budget it is, too! It not only delivers for the Melbourne metropolitan area, which the Kennett government tended to concentrate on, but importantly right across regional Victoria. As members should know, this government gave a commitment to regional Victoria; it has delivered every year on that commitment, particularly for my constituents in the Morwell electorate.

Stage 3 of the redevelopment of the east campus of Traralgon Secondary College will be commencing because of the decision to allocate almost \$4 million to it. That is on top of stages 2 and 1, which were funded by this government's previous budget commitments; they have greatly improved the school. Traralgon Secondary College is a great school, with its great staff and very dedicated community that centres around it, but it needed great facilities. After years of neglect under the previous government it is finally being totally rebuilt — through stages 1, 2 and 3.

It does not matter if the debate is about literacy or numeracy — you cannot run away from those figures. This government has delivered, and continues to deliver, for my community. It is not just the senior secondary campus; it is also the junior secondary campus. There is also an allocation for stage 2 of the west campus redevelopment. Just over \$4 million has been allocated by this government for educating the most important people in my community — that is, young people at school. The state schools are great.

On the Friday after the budget was handed down here I was joined at Traralgon South Primary School by the Premier for one of the biggest and most wonderful announcements associated with the budget. For 27 years Traralgon South Primary School has had

portable classrooms. The previous government totally disregarded it in its funding rounds, but this government is going to build a permanent school at Traralgon South. The existing primary school is fantastic, it has fantastic and hardworking teachers and is a beautiful place to be educated. Now the staff and students will finally get a permanent school. In its first term the Bracks government gave them their first permanent building, which was an ablutions block, and now, in this term, finally Traralgon South Primary School will have permanent classrooms.

Particular mention must be made of Bruce Fulton, the principal, and also, very importantly, Chris Madsen, who for years has been working for the funding as the school council president. He and the school community have done a wonderful job. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Education and Training — and, of course, the Treasurer — for making sure the kids in my electorate are going to be treated as well as they should be by getting new facilities to work in at Traralgon South Primary School.

The government will continue to make improvements through the health budget. After its first term this government bought back the Latrobe Regional Hospital. We heard about the disinvestment that was being made under the previous government, and that was nowhere more stark than in the Latrobe Valley where it shut two perfectly good hospitals in Traralgon and Moe; it shut their casualty facilities.

People can talk about doctors not being available at various hospital casualty departments — Traralgon and Moe do not even have casualty departments any longer! One of the hospitals was privatised. What did this government do? In its first term it bought the hospital back, and in this term it has put in \$21 million for a cancer care centre and psychiatric services, which will open within the next couple of months. Great improvements have been made through what is a real investment by this government in my area in regional Victoria.

That funding is part of the \$800 million capital investment allocated in this budget for regional Victoria alone. The average capital spend during the term of the Kennett government for the whole of Victoria was \$1 billion, yet this government is investing \$800 million in regional Victoria alone. This is a great budget. This is a budget that deserves to be applauded and congratulated by all members of the house, including those on the opposition side. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — This is another great budget for my electorate. Preston has now had eight great budgets to help it recover from the ravages of the Kennett government, which pillaged Preston. I am happy to list a few of the atrocities that the Kennett government inflicted on my electorate and to now reflect on what happened then, as this will be my last opportunity to speak on a budget.

The Kennett government during those dark years closed the public hospital in my electorate — that is, the Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH).

Mr Lim — Hear, hear!

Mr LEIGHTON — No, not ‘Hear, hear!’ — that was an absolute shocker.

Mr Lim — A shocker!

Mr LEIGHTON — That’s better! They tore up the contract to build a new police station, they tried to close the courthouse, they tried to close Northland Secondary College — in fact, they forced the closure of its doors for a year until the Equal Opportunity Commission ordered it to be reopened — and, of course, they sacked nurses and teachers. I am proud to contrast that with what the Labor government has been able to achieve for Preston and the rest of Victoria under eight budgets.

We built and opened the new Panch Health Service, which is functioning well and providing a great range of services. We built and opened the new Preston police station. In this budget the government is providing \$1.92 million for an upgrade to Reservoir West Primary School and the \$300 School Start bonus will certainly assist Preston families, as will the \$500 apprentices payment. We have delivered on health and education services in Preston.

In the area of transport, the announcement to upgrade the railway line between Clifton Hill and Westgarth is great news, given the improvement to services that will make along the Epping line, including to Preston and Reservoir. We are also spending \$150 000 on road safety improvements, and my 5 minutes for the debate does not allow me to give details about those.

The government has announced the red orbital bus. This is very important because while Preston is well serviced with public transport in and out of the city, with a couple of tramlines and a train line, the difficulty has traditionally been in moving across the suburbs. The red orbital bus will assist people to move from the west, through the Preston Market to Northland, then over to Box Hill. It will be a very important north-south access.

We are providing \$800 000 for the redevelopment of the Reservoir Leisure Centre and \$300 000 to revitalise the Preston Market. That is going to be one of the most important developments over the coming years. The Preston Market is one of the two major economic hubs in my electorate, the other being Northland shopping centre. Some very exciting things are about to happen at the Preston Market. It will provide a range of new living opportunities as well as business and employment initiatives. The whole Preston area is much more vibrant and active than it was during the Kennett years.

I want to finish on a couple matters close to my heart. I am pleased to again see additional funding — I think it is about \$170 million — for mental health. I urge whoever is in government and the Parliament to ensure there is continuing additional funding for mental health. In my view moving people out of the large institutions and into the community is a more expensive way of providing services. They need an increased range of supports. We have to make sure that people are treated with dignity when they are living in the community and are given the necessary supports.

The final matter is nursing. It is another area dear to my heart. I am proud that in eight budgets we have been able to employ over 6000 additional nurses, and the Nurse on Call initiative in this budget is fantastic. The government is delivering in all areas: health, education and community safety, and that has been very much apparent in Preston. It is a great budget for my electorate and the rest of the state.

Mr LIM (Clayton) — I would like to commend the government, particularly the greatest Treasurer in Australia, on the delivery of the budget. It is an excellent budget that is both financially responsible and meets the needs and aspirations of Victorians, particularly the people of Clayton.

I have always taken great pleasure in being a Victorian citizen and living in one of the fairest and happiest jurisdictions anywhere in the world. I come from a country where economic policy is almost non-existent, cronyism is rampant, the economy is stagnant, and the rights and benefits of individuals are almost non-existent — I am referring to Cambodia, not Victoria under the previous Liberal government! I greatly appreciate the fairness of Victorian society under the leadership of this government.

As the Treasurer highlighted in his second-reading speech, things were not always so happy in Victoria. Under the previous Liberal government, schools, rail links, hospitals, energy companies and other

government assets which had been built up over a century or more were summarily closed and sold off, often in sweetheart deals to mates of the government. So it was ironic to hear during question time the sorts of questions being thrown at the government. We need to remember these things, given that the Liberal Party now tries to paint itself as the party of reason and light. Not only did the Liberals sell off government assets for paltry amounts, but most of the assets were in active use, and their loss was keenly felt by the Victorian community.

It has been the task of this government to rebuild Victoria's asset base. In the seven years that the Bracks government has been in office we have rebuilt the assets base ravaged by the Liberals. We are appointing even more teachers, nurses and police officers while the state's financial position is even sounder than it was when we took office in 1999. We take our AAA rating for granted under this government. The forecast is that our economy will grow by 3.25 per cent next financial year. Job growth is strong, in fact it is the strongest in the country, and building approvals are at a record high.

Last year our population growth was the highest for 15 years and was greater than the national average for the first time since the 1960s. It is interesting to note that 30 per cent of the overseas immigration intake comes to Victoria. This is indeed a place where people choose to live — a place to be.

It is true that Victoria faces challenges: rising international oil prices, the impact of changing climatic conditions caused by global warming and the increasing average age of our population. But in no sense are these challenges unexpected or out of control. This government has the bull by the horns and is actively addressing these challenges. We might struggle with these challenges if we were a poor and underprivileged state, but as the Treasurer pointed out in his speech, Victoria's is the most productive and competitive economy in Australia, and this government is making it even more so. We are in the privileged position of being able to afford to meet the challenges that the future throws up. This government also has the sense of responsibility and the compassion to spend money where it is needed and will do the most good.

To take an example from the south-east of Melbourne — my area — in the city of Casey the average annual population growth recently has been in excess of 4 per cent per year. In terms of the family count, that is an average of 70 families moving that way each week. This year's budget recognises and acknowledges this growth by providing \$35 million for an aged care facility, upgrades to two primary schools,

a new technical education centre and \$17 million in road improvements. In my own electorate I was pleased to announce earlier today in this chamber that Monash Special Developmental School has been allocated \$4 million to relocate to a new and improved site. I am also pleased to report that the government's transport action plan has been very well received in my electorate and that the \$300 School Start bonus is also very warmly welcomed.

During this week of celebrating this budget it would be remiss of me not to mention that last night, as part of the celebrations of the budget, the Premier, some other cabinet ministers and I hosted 70 Asian business community leaders in room K in Parliament house. The Premier spelt out quite clearly what the budget was all about in terms of further growing Victoria and putting us in the best position to compete in the world market. The government is increasingly aware that we are no longer simply exporting to those sorts of countries, because in fact they have now become our competitors. Therefore we have to be in a budgetary position which reflects the government's aim and vision to make sure that we compete on an equal footing vis-a-vis countries like India and China in a whole range of fields so that we can stay ahead of the pack and make Victoria the most livable state — the state where people want to come to share in this growing economy.

Ms GILLETT (Tarneit) — It is my privilege today to make a brief contribution on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. It is with enormous pleasure that I make this brief contribution, because it is the last time I will be in this place to comment on an appropriation bill. That does not mean that these will be the last comments I make on an appropriation bill — just the last time in this place!

I hope it does not sound too self-serving to say that I feel that this budget has in a sensational way delivered for Victoria's growth corridors. It has been my privilege to represent the seats of Werribee and Tarneit for the last 10 years, and as other members in this place who represent growth corridors know, if you represent a growth corridor you stand a very real chance of making yourself highly unpopular with the Treasurer. There is always something that we need, whether it is more schools, more nurses or more efforts around community safety; there is always something that a member representing a growth corridor needs to ask for.

It has to be said that this budget has well and truly delivered not only for my growth corridor seat of Tarneit, but also for the other eight such seats. I am proud to be able to say that in the area of education

Tarneit has been more than blessed with \$6 million of funding for what has so far been a Tarneit primary school, but this stage 2 funding will actually now deliver a P-9 outcome, which is just sensational news. This school is located in amongst seven or eight new housing developments, and I am very confident that over the next couple of years this new school in Tarneit will be more than well subscribed.

We were also fortunate in that our oldest local primary school, Werribee Primary School, has been funded to the tune of \$2 620 000 for its stage 2 development, which will involve general purpose classrooms and a number of other facilities. Werribee primary has a very proud history of having educated the fine residents — the little ones — of Werribee for a very long time indeed.

I have to admit that the most welcome education funding has come for Warringa Park Special School, which is receiving \$3 620 000 in this budget. The Warringa Park school is indeed a very special school. It has a wonderful school community with fantastic students, wonderful teachers and great families. However, over the last five years Warringa has experienced enormous enrolment growth, and because of the limitations of its facilities it was seriously struggling to provide the wonderful educational services that it always wanted to provide.

This \$3.6 million will allow Warringa Park to have a new administration wing comprising junior rooms, intermediate rooms, new administration areas, toilets, a bathroom and consulting rooms, and a hall or senior wing comprising a multipurpose room, an art room, a library, a senior room, a domestic science room and some senior administration areas. There are a number of outbuildings on the site as well as a large number of relocatable units. The funding will enable Warringa Park to produce the sort of educational outcomes for some of the most special and vulnerable people in our community that it could have produced if it had had enough space. I am thrilled that the funding has come through in this way.

The budget for growth corridors and for young people is very special indeed. One of the struggles in a growth corridor is that the growth mostly comprises increased numbers of young people, especially families with young children. Families sometimes have children with special needs, and it is wonderful that the budget provides \$25 million for early intervention programs for children and families in our growing outer suburbs, as well as new children's centres, one of which will be in Wyndham.

The budget also deserves commendation for the \$27.8 million extra that has been provided for neighbourhood houses. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have neighbourhood houses in our areas know the fundamental role they play in building and strengthening communities. Neighbourhood houses in growth corridors are critical to the development of a sense of closeness and connectedness that all communities need to be able to thrive.

I am also pleased to see another \$17.4 million for statewide improvements to children's services, including 200 extra places for children with a disability, as well as money to meet the full cost of the preschool teachers 2005 wage agreement to ensure that costs are not passed on to parents. I think members will know of my personal and professional interest in improved services for children with special needs. I have to say that in terms of improvements this budget is nothing short of sensational for children and families of children with a disability. With those few remarks, I highly commend this bill to the house.

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — The 2006–07 state budget delivered by the Bracks government invests in the things that Victoria needs to meet the challenges ahead — an educated and skilled work force, people's health, first-class infrastructure and a competitive business environment. It does this through an unparalleled investment in infrastructure and by delivering high-quality services in health and education, continuing to improve community safety and driving jobs and economic growth.

The Bracks government was elected with a plan and a vision for Victoria's future. Our plan was to rebuild the key services that had been devastated during the Kennett years, in particular in health, education and community safety. Our vision was built on the principles outlined in the *Growing Victoria Together* landmark statement, the Bracks government's 10-year vision for building a better society here in Victoria. The Victorian government's vision is to develop a state with a thriving economy, quality health and education, a healthy environment, caring communities and a vibrant democracy. To fulfil that vision the government established a number of shared goals as a focus for setting government priorities.

It is timely to remind the house of the programs and initiatives in this 2006–07 budget that will continue to implement the policy settings to achieve those goals, such as more quality jobs and innovative industries. In Pahran, The Alfred medical research and education precinct is an example of this as it continues to develop, while funding for the new super-institute for infectious

disease research at the Burnet Institute will help the critical mass of researchers to develop new vaccines and treatments.

The government is also committed to growing and linking all Victoria, and its unprecedented investment of over \$10 billion in upgrading and modernising our transport system is a vital part of that. Growing the capacity of our rail system in particular is a key to improving services, and that will happen under this plan.

In my electorate we will also see extended train and tram services and more staff on Friday and Saturday nights, commencing in October. I add that that was a recommendation of the inner city entertainment precinct task force, which I chaired on behalf of the government. I am glad to see that that recommendation has been adopted by the government and funded in this budget. The development of new SmartBus routes will change our transport system from a radial to an orbital system, which means that people will not need to travel in and out of the city when they really only want to travel between suburbs.

High-quality, accessible health and community services are also another goal of this government. The Alfred hospital in my electorate has benefited from many of the 6000 extra nurses this government has employed and from the many equipment upgrades it has funded. Continuing that progress, an extra \$2.2 million was recently announced for The Alfred hospital's new patient monitoring and diagnostic services. The building of the new Alfred Centre for Elective Surgery next to The Alfred hospital is progressing well. The centre will open later in the year, ready to cut waiting lists by treating 48 000 patients a year. As chair of the community participation panel for The Alfred centre, I am delighted that this project will be completed and able to provide such benefits to our community.

High-quality education and training for lifelong learning is also another important goal of this government. We now have the lowest class sizes on record in Victoria through the rebuilding of our teaching service with more than 6000 extra teachers and support staff. That means higher numeracy and literacy standards. The new School Start bonus of \$300 for all families for each child starting prep and year 7 provides much-needed assistance with the school expenses that are most necessary when children start primary or secondary school. I am also very pleased to be able to tell the primary schools in my electorate — Stonnington, South Yarra and Toorak — that this week we have announced extra school maintenance grants for all of them.

We are also protecting the environment for future generations. In addition to establishing Victoria's world-first marine national parks, the government has moved to expand our national parks to a greater extent than any other government. I am particularly proud to have been a member of the government's alpine grazing task force which saw an end to cattle grazing in our magnificent Alpine National Park. This budget provides additional funding for Victoria's parks, including three new metropolitan parks and funding for vital water projects including the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

A fairer and safer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity is a key goal of this government. This budget adds a further \$851 million to the \$788 million announced last year for the A Fairer Victoria package. A Fairer Victoria spells out the key social justice principles of the Bracks government. It includes children's services, improving mental health funding, housing for low-income families and support for neighbourhood houses and community centres — all things that are very much welcomed in my electorate of Prahran. The important thing about A Fairer Victoria is the new way it goes about working with communities to overcome systemic disadvantage. Driving the crime rate down by more than 22 per cent by increasing our police numbers to the highest in Victoria's history and increasing the resources available to our police to record amounts also means a better and fairer society.

All of this is underpinned by sound financial management. We promised to maintain a strong operating surplus and we have done so. Our economy remains strong. By making cuts in payroll tax, land tax and WorkCover premiums we are ensuring that Victoria is the best place in Australia to do business. Our population growth has exceeded the national average for the first time in over 40 years. That will add to our productive capacity and our skills base for the future.

This is the Bracks government's vision for Victoria's future — a better and fairer society. This budget will allow Victoria to meet the challenges of the future and continue to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — It is a great pleasure to rise to speak on the 2006–07 Victorian budget. It is a terrific budget by the Bracks government that includes record investment in schools, skills and infrastructure. It is a prudent budget that builds on sound financial management. It is a budget that demonstrates the economic success of Victoria. It is a strong budget that is a product of a very strong economy.

The government is committed to building on the strengths of the Victorian economy. That means investing — investing in education and skills, investing in the physical infrastructure and investing in communities and social infrastructure. This commitment has been expressed through record investment in physical infrastructure. The government has committed itself to expenditure of \$12.6 billion over four years. It will be spending money on a whole host of infrastructure from schools to roads to public transport to community centres. The government is ensuring we are investing for the sake of the state and the sake of future generations.

A high priority has been given to skills and education. Education has been and continues to be the no. 1 priority of the Bracks government. An extra \$1.2 billion is being invested in education and training as we continue to build a strong economy and a strong population with the skills and the capacity to be protagonists in a very competitive world that demands innovation and people who can be flexible in their skills and who have a considerable number of skills.

The government is also investing in families. This includes assistance with the costs of schooling and transport. The government is committed to Victoria being not only a great place to live but also a great place to have children and bring up a family. That has been highlighted by the areas of expenditure and commitment in this budget. There are investments in health and community services — another \$1.2 billion over the next five years. This demonstrates a very strong commitment to social infrastructure in our state.

We are meeting our transport challenges with a commitment to spend another \$10.5 billion over 10 years to improve our transport system. This is a major investment program in terms of both capital and recurrent funding. It basically sees us improving the most significant freight corridor in the state — the West Gate–Monash freeway system. This will improve our freight movements as 15 per cent of freight in the state crosses the West Gate Bridge and travels along the Monash corridor. It is a significant investment to increase the capacity of that road. There are major investments in rail, particularly to build the capacity of our rail system as we try to cater for a growing population and a larger modal share. The railways have been particularly successful in the past few years in terms of growing patronage. That is the result of a number of factors. Petrol prices are one but there have also been improvements in services and increased frequencies.

However, we have reached a point where the system itself has significant constraints, and that is why there is a need for reinvestment. In the longer term that includes investment in a third rail line along the Dandenong corridor and investments in the West Footscray–Sunshine rail system and the Clifton Hill line. There is significant investment there and significant investment in rolling stock — that is, more trains. There is significant investment in trams and tram priority to ensure that our trams do not suffer from increased congestion on our roads but instead have good access through the road system.

I suppose the most significant investment in public transport is in our bus system. There is a huge commitment over the next 10 years to increase what we have called a SmartBus system, which is our high-frequency, high-quality system of priority on the roads. It includes our orbital system. We have improved public transport so that rather than it being primarily a radial system heading towards the city, which is what our fixed rail system currently is, we now have an orbital system that can move around the city. This increases the ability of public transport to compete with the motor car.

We are also investing heavily in environmental sustainability, with \$13 million to establish three new metropolitan parks.

The community I represent, the Brunswick electorate, will benefit from this budget. It will benefit from the fact that it is a sustainable budget built on good financial management. This indicates how important key investments are in terms of that community. To give the house a few examples, we have some significant bike paths running through the Brunswick electorate. There will be improvements on the Upfield bike path, which is now a major transport route through the municipality. That fits in well with the government's support for sustainable transport, which includes walking, cycling and public transport.

We have seen investment in the health precinct in Victoria Street, Brunswick, with the announcement of \$5 million for the relocation of the Bouverie Centre. This is another health facility which will form part of the complex in Victoria Street, where there are a number of health centres. That has been a great development over a series of years. This land formerly belonged to the Brunswick High School and the previous government was going to sell it for other developments. The Bracks government chose to keep the land in public hands and it has become a significant health precinct which is of benefit to the local

community and has stimulated a number of jobs in the area.

The extra \$50 million for school maintenance has been very useful. All government schools will get some funding. The most significant for Brunswick would be the nearly \$60 000 in maintenance that will be provided to Brunswick South Primary School. That funding has been very well received by the school community.

We have seen a whole host of investments. The Bell Street SmartBus will run through the Coburg area. It will be a significant improvement to the Bell Street bus system. This was another investment announced in the budget. These are terrific investments for the community. We have also seen the \$300 School Start bonus for parents of children entering prep and year 7. We have seen extra money for patients in our hospitals. We have seen further investment in public housing. One of the great things in terms of public housing in my community is the redevelopment of housing stock that had begun to deteriorate. That is terrific, and that investment has been incredibly well received by people in public housing. I am very pleased with the upgrades and redevelopments that have occurred throughout my electorate.

I want to make a couple of remarks about the rectangular stadium at the Olympic Park complex, particularly given the World Cup and the increasing importance of the world game of football. The successes of rugby league in Melbourne and of its Melbourne Victory team in terms of football are very significant, and they have been recognised by government as we complete the sporting facilities at the Olympic Park precinct with the construction of a rectangular stadium. That has been incredibly well received in my electorate. It is a very strong electorate for sport and particularly for football — or soccer.

As the member for the Brunswick electorate I am very pleased to have this opportunity to express the support there is for these programs at the community level. In conclusion I note that this is a very important budget that builds on all the budgets in the Bracks government era, which have been terrific for the social, economic, educational and physical infrastructure in this state.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — I am very pleased to contribute to the debate on the seventh budget of the Bracks government — the sixth delivered by the Treasurer, John Brumby. Prior to lunch I heard the member for Rodney preaching to the house that the previous government had been honest and transparent in the way it tried to privatise or sell the state's assets. I recall the attempt by the previous government to sell

the Austin hospital 10 years ago. That was anything but open and transparent.

Members of the house will recall that that may have been one of the reasons I was elected: because the Kennett government was anything but open and transparent. I am pleased to say that over 12 months ago the Premier opened the \$376 million redeveloped, brand-new Austin Hospital, which we had saved from privatisation, and the new Mercy Hospital for Women which had relocated to Heidelberg from East Melbourne.

Anyone who has had the 'pleasure' — perhaps that is an unfortunate word — of visiting it knows it is a fabulous hospital, with its new wards and new facilities. I was there last night during the dinner break, visiting a young lad in hospital — and I send my regards to him. Unfortunately, two years ago I had to go to ward A at the hospital. It had been built in 1931 — and that is how it looked! The new Austin Hospital is a remarkable achievement, with the new facilities it brings not only to the people of my electorate but those in all the north-eastern suburbs. I am very pleased to inform the house that it has opened and is going exceptionally well.

With regard to the health budget, I am very pleased to advise the house that the Bracks government is now undertaking master planning for the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital site, which is very dear to the veterans of the north-eastern suburbs. This budget allocates \$9 million for the commencement of master planning, some detailed work and the construction of a long-awaited hydrotherapy pool and gymnasium, which is something the veterans desperately need.

The front page of the local paper this week was all about the hydrotherapy pool and how happy the veterans were. I am more than pleased to advise the house that as part of this budget, we are starting work on the master planning of the repatriation hospital. Most of that planning will go into extended care beds and what have you, and I am certain that a new health precinct will be built there in coming years.

I am also pleased to mention to the house — I know other speakers have done so as well — that \$27.8 million will go to neighbourhood houses. I was advised by people at one of my neighbourhood houses that two weeks ago, when the minister arrived at the conference at, I believe, Lorne she was given almost a standing ovation following the announcement of that funding. The neighbourhood houses in my electorate are exceptionally pleased to receive funds of that nature. I could say they are long overdue.

Neighbourhood houses have been working tirelessly in the community for quite some time, and this money will help to pay for the hours that coordinators put in to meet all the requirements.

Education will also be boosted in my electorate with a share of the \$32 million allocated for technical education centres. I am very pleased that Heidelberg West will receive one of the four centres which were announced prior to the budget, because it needs more experience in the area of technology and trades. I also mention the \$500 trades boost allowance for apprentices, which is certainly a step in the right direction.

At the local football game last weekend one of the parents, who has some connection with politics, spoke to me. His father was a member of Parliament — not on my side of politics —

Mr Smith — He must have been a decent person, then!

Mr LANGDON — He may well have been, and still is, a decent person. He praised me for the \$300 the government is giving for students starting in prep and as they move to year 7. He is perhaps not of the same political colour as me, but he thought the initiative was excellent.

I was also pleased just before the budget came down to be at the Macleod Forensic Science Centre with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Premier to open the \$6 million phase 1 redevelopment of the centre and to announce that \$15.4 million will go to a new forensic IT system, new DNA analysis technology and infrastructure upgrades at the Macleod complex.

I am well aware that the police and everyone involved in the forensics laboratory are very pleased to get that money. More importantly they believe this money will help them keep up with the image that forensics now has. In those TV programs on Sunday nights, forensics provides a solution within an hour, but unfortunately in real life it is not quite as quick as that. I am not trying to shatter anyone's illusions, but in real life forensics does not work quite that quickly. This \$15.4 million will assist the Macleod complex but will not go to the degree that the TV shows portray. I am very pleased to support this budget, and I commend it to the house.

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I am pleased to rise to support the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. As with the previous budgets introduced by the Bracks government, this is a people's budget. It is a budget that is building

for the future by building a better society and community. It is a budget that is inclusive of all people.

This Labor government is making a big contribution of \$1.4 billion, less expenses, to business and industry. That is a great step forward, and the Treasurer should be congratulated on that. His consideration is to drive growth and business so we have jobs in Victoria. As we heard earlier today, we now have the lowest employment rate, which is tremendous, and that is because one budget has been building on the next. You cannot achieve everything in one term and in one budget. It is the government's long-term vision and the planning that has been going on that have been fantastic for the people in my electorate of Keilor.

My electorate is now a different area from what it was when we started in government. It keeps changing, and now I have new growth areas in Hillside, Caroline Springs, Sydenham, Delahey, Keilor, Taylors Lakes and Keilor Lodge and the surrounding districts, which are still farming country. We are looking after those areas with road infrastructure. We are also providing two new bus services from Caroline Springs which will connect to the Watergardens shopping centre, which is a huge complex. QIC, the owner, has confidence in the government, because it has committed a further \$150 million to expand the complex.

The City of Brimbank also has confidence in the area and is building an interactive learning centre with state government assistance. We are increasing car parking at the Watergardens railway station, which is inadequate because the growing community in that area is using the excellent public transport that the government has provided in successive budgets. We are providing extra trains on the Sydenham line to cater for the needs of the community, which is fantastic. Our transport and livability statement will take care of some of the issues in Kensington and North Melbourne, so we will get more trains going through that line. These are all projects that are worthwhile and economically feasible. One thing we have proven is that we are economically responsible, despite what we hear from the opposition.

We are looking after the disabled and pensioners in the community. We have allocated \$300 for children starting prep and year 7, which will be a tremendous boost to our community, especially in my electorate but also, I am sure, right across Victoria. It is not just me saying that; the newspapers are proclaiming that this is a great budget.

We are allocating \$737 million to remove traffic jams. We have all experienced traffic jams at times, and there

are many examples of roads that have been planned and designed by engineers being obsolete by the time they are built. I wish they had more foresight, because the western suburbs are among the fastest growing regions in Melbourne. I am sure we will all experience traffic jams in the future, but we need to catch up on the roadworks that need to be done but have not been done because of a failure of vision by past planners. That is not the case with the Western Ring Road, which has brought new industry to the Laverton area. That industrial complex would not have been foreseen, but it has given a great impetus to the region and is creating jobs.

For the disadvantaged we have allocated \$880 million that will in part fund public housing in my area, which we need. The money is also going to neighbourhood centres and child-care centres. This is a family friendly budget that will assist young families in my electorate and in this state. Having listened to the opposition crying crocodile tears, I am specifically not going to mention anything about the cargo cult mentality regarding building schools or 'building this or that in my electorate'. But what we are doing is making life easier for people by meeting their expenses in ways that are often not seen by the community, be it for dental care for pensioners or whatever. Since the Bracks government has been in power there has been less demand for dental care because we have provided extra money for our pensioners. In the early days you had to lobby forever to get people off the waiting list for dental care. That has been taken care of.

I understand other members want the chance to speak in the budget debate, so I will conclude by saying that money has been allocated to the courts and to the police to ensure that the community is safe and secure. Recently we opened the big 24-hour police station at Caroline Springs, which is a fantastic effort by the Bracks government. The ongoing funding for the station will bring some surety to the community in that new growth area. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to join the debate on the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. I must say that I have mixed feelings about the budget. It is good to see the funding for the Orbost Secondary College, which has an important project. I have met with the principal of the college, and I know it has been pushing fairly hard for this project for some time. I know there are other schools in my electorate that likewise would have liked to receive money, particularly for major upgrades, but unfortunately that is not the case in this budget. Significant maintenance funding has been announced for schools right across the

state. I know some of my schools have received some of that, so they will be grateful.

That said, there is limited direct funding for my electorate. That has to be a concern, although I will say that the provincial statement which was released earlier this year contains significant funding allocations, and they have been well received. I refer to projects such as the Lakes Entrance sandbar management project, for which \$31 million has been allocated. That is an important project which will not only keep the entrance open for the commercial fishing industry but also maintain the water levels in the Lakes.

I am cynical about government processes leading up to an election. One of the reasons for that is that if you read the budget papers you find it is fairly difficult to get a direct indication of exactly what is in there. So there are ample opportunities for the government in a budget like this to roll out programs in the lead-up to the next election. One issue that should be clear in the budget, because I have met with officers representing the Minister for Environment, is funding for the Gippsland Lakes project, which is an important project that the government has committed to in order to improve the water quality in and the health of the lakes system.

If you look at the budget, you find there is a line item that indicates a sustainability package will be released later in the year. Hopefully it will be included in that. I have expressed the wish on behalf of my constituents that that be included in the sustainability package. That is an issue that should have been included in the budget, which is not just about delivering appropriations to different sectors of government but about explaining exactly what the government will fund in the upcoming year.

The Gippsland Lakes project should be funded because it is an important project. There are many farmers in the area who have done their whole farm plans based on receiving funds to implement them. There would be great community and environmental benefits in delivering that. There are programs currently running, but some of them will be running out in the near future and that is why it is important that funding is ongoing so that we can keep improving the Gippsland Lakes. In my electorate around 70 per cent of people say the most important asset to our region is the Gippsland Lakes; with large population centres that live around the lakes, the growth is quite extraordinary. There is a lot of pressure on the lakes and they face a difficult future.

Some of the tourism opportunities in my area could have been in the budget, particularly the areas around

the iconic walks on the coast, and I know my constituents will be pushing to get some of those projects up next year. Many people in my area see some real, high-quality tourism projects as important for the future of the area.

One of the issues that has come up recently in my electorate is in relation to the Our Forests, Our Future timber packages. It was a great disappointment when I first received notification from some of my constituents who received letters in the mail from the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC). The Our Forests Our Future package, as everyone in this place would probably know, came about when it was discovered that the resource figures used by the Department of Sustainability and Environment were not accurate and large cuts to the timber available to be harvested right across the state had to be made. To implement the cuts because it was necessary to bring it back to a sustainable level, mills were closed and workers and contractors exited the industry.

DVC handled that process, and I have had discussions with the minister, the minister's office and also organisations handling the packages. One of the problems with that package is that it appears when the payments were made tax that should have been taken out was not taken out. This has meant that a large number of people — 63 people took packages under the Our Forests Our Future program — now have tax bills. Unfortunately many of those people worked in the timber industry for many years, a lot of them have retired and some of them now have tax bills up to \$9000 or \$10 000 after they have already put their finances in place. This is just gut-wrenching for those people and my sympathy goes out to them.

I call on the government to make sure that issue is addressed. People who in good faith took payments, and who in good faith exited the timber industry and retired, now have a financial debt as a result of the incompetence of others. These people did not understand that there was a problem with those payments which had not been calculated properly; tax that should have been taken out was not taken out. Some of the people who took packages probably would not have taken the packages if they had known it was liable to tax. They had been told quite clearly at the time that they would not have to pay tax.

In relation to the Gippsland Lakes I note in a letter from the Minister for Environment who is also the Minister for Water, that he refers to representations about the Gippsland Lakes funding. That letter dated 2 June indicates:

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is in the process of making recommendations ... about funding for land and water projects across Victoria, based on the recommendations of catchment management authorities.

I know the catchment management authorities are very keen to make sure the Gippsland Lakes is part of that. The minister in that letter states that he will:

... be in a position to consider further funding for the Gippsland Lakes —

at that stage. I urge the government to do that.

I would like to go on to the Snowy Hydro privatisation debacle. This has been a very interesting process. I make the comment, 'Success has many parents' — and it is an old saying — 'but failure is definitely an orphan'! The interesting thing that has come out of the halt to the sale of Snowy Hydro is that there are a few people who probably need to take a good long cold shower and a paternity test because some people probably did not have a lot to do with the halt of the sale; this was a great community-led campaign.

It is rude to say, 'I told you so', but I will quote from a letter that I sent to the Premier on 1 December 2005. I said:

I ask you to reflect on Victoria's privatisation disasters within the last 10 years:

V/Line — the state government had to buy back and operate the service;

Freight Australia — consistent difficulties in negotiating line access increased costs and project overruns;

Pacific National — \$50 million demand on the taxpayers just to keep freight rail lines open;

Latrobe Regional Hospital — government had to buy it back ...

Metro passenger rail — another taxpayer-funded bailout on top of the multibillion dollar annual taxpayer subsidy;

Gas and fuel — taxpayer still had to fund the much needed rollout of natural gas ...

Electricity — ever increasing higher prices to regional consumers ...

And on and on. I included Telstra for good measure, where 70 to 80 per cent of Australians opposed the full sale. My concluding line was:

I ask that you do not allow the sale of Snowy Hydro, as the creation of a privatised Snowy is not a monster that I think you need on your résumé and it is not a decision that the community would accept.

That was my view in December 2005 before the governments proceeded. It is good to see that good

sense has prevailed. But looking at some of the people who have taken some of the credit for this, I will quote from federal *Hansard* of 24 November 1987. That is a fair long while ago; it is 19 years ago. During a matter of public importance on that date Prime Minister John Howard, who was then opposition leader, said:

We support the privatisation of the Australian Industry Development Corporation ...

He listed a whole lot of things that could be privatised, and one of them was the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation. That was interesting. Listen to this quote, which I think is a great one:

There is no ambiguity; there is no squeamishness; there is no going to water; there is no backflipping or double standards from the Liberal and National parties on this issue of privatisation. We understand the economic need of the country. We have nailed our colours to the mast and we are saying to the Prime Minister, 'Where do you and those who follow you stand on this issue?'

That quote is from the present Prime Minister saying, 19 years ago, that he would privatise the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority. That is why there is still so much concern out there that some future government will try to sell off the Snowy Hydro scheme.

After the sittings in Parliament last week I was on the way home, and I was trying to work out how I and the community could get involved in trying to bring this debate to a head and make commonsense of the issue of privatisation. Last week I got a copy of federal *Hansard* and saw that my local member and federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Honourable Peter McGauran, was left to defend the privatisation of the Snowy. He said there was no way the government could retain its 13 per cent share in Snowy Hydro. He also said that the federal government was certain water for environment and irrigation would be protected into the future. Two days later he was on the radio saying exactly the opposite on both of those issues.

One of the real concerns was the obscene rush to privatise Snowy Hydro. Even while the death knell was sounding, issues that I raised in a letter to the Premier on 1 December surrounding the security of environmental flows and the security of irrigation entitlements were still being dragged out. A media release by the Prime Minister of 2 June reads:

In addition, there are a number of outstanding Snowy water licence issues which are creating uncertainty and affect the interests of the environment, farmers, irrigators and all those who depend on the health of —

the waterways.

That is the guts of this issue. It is not just about privatising the scheme, it is about the risks to one of our most important assets — that is, water. Whilst the frequent comment was that we were not privatising water, there was still uncertainty right to the end.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission, as I understand it, raised with the government serious concerns that were not adequately addressed, and the commission was still not comfortable with the sale, so I think good sense prevailed when the government withdrew from the sale.

The outstanding issue is that it is absolutely essential for us to resolve some of the environmental flow issues that are still there. In the middle of the debate the behaviour of Terry Charlton, who is the managing director of Snow Hydro, has been absolutely disgraceful on this issue. He was initially pushing the sale and sprouting all the positive benefits that would come from privatisation. It was his idea that he was pushing to the three governments, but then when it went feral, what did he do? He crawled under a rock like a cockroach and did not come out again.

The only time he came out to comment was when he said that if we deliver environmental flows above 21 per cent, it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. My back-of-the-envelope figures say that the figure is probably closer to \$400 million or \$500 million than a couple of hundred million — that was on the back of the privatisation.

In the middle of this what does Terry Charlton, with the support of his mate up in New South Wales, do? They go and turn the Mowamba River off. Some time ago the Premier, Steve Bracks, and the then Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, stood there and released the first environmental flows. On that day it was made very clear in the press release that:

From today the Snowy will receive 38 gegalitres a year of water from the Mowamba Aqueduct — double what has been usually released into the Snowy River.

That is what the press release by the two premiers said. The quotes from both Bob Carr and Steve Bracks are very clear, so much so that people living downstream on the Mowamba invested money in businesses because they expected water to be flowing past them. However, in the middle of the debate about the Snowy's privatisation, Terry Charlton turned that aqueduct off, stuck it back into Jindabyne and compromised the entire environmental flow. That issue must be addressed.

The issue of the 21 per cent to 28 per cent must be addressed, as must the compensation issue for Snowy Hydro. These issues are still outstanding and need to be resolved by the three governments.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park) — I wish to also lend my wholehearted support to the Appropriation (2006/2007) Bill. In the time available to me I wish to discuss a few of the benefits that will be derived by people in my electorate from the budget.

For example, \$50 million in extra funding has been allocated for school maintenance, and the 10 government schools in my electorate will be sharing in approximately \$219 000 that will allow them to have some urgent maintenance works done. I know they certainly welcome that additional funding announced in the budget.

Since the election of the Bracks government in 1999 about \$400 million has been spent on school maintenance. This is certainly well and truly over the level recommended by the Auditor-General back in 2003 when he looked into this area of government administration. That is a very good record and one that the government is very proud of. The results are there for schools in my electorate, and I am very pleased to be able to deliver that good news.

I also want to touch on the Plenty Valley Community Health Service. Those who have come into contact with this health service know it is a very fine organisation that is well run and provides very innovative programs in a very efficient manner. I am very pleased that in this budget an allocation of about \$500 000 over a four-year period has been given to the service to help it deliver an innovative project it developed two or three years ago.

The project focuses on early intervention and assistance for young kids by involving families in highly developed and close relationships with the professional health providers who attend to kids with multiple assistance needs, including speech therapy, physiotherapy and the like.

The Plenty Valley Community Health Service has done a great deal in this area in terms of the innovations it has produced, and I would like to acknowledge the assistance and guidance of the Parliamentary Secretary for Health who recognised the importance of such a program and pushed for funding so that the service can continue its most able assistance to very young families in my electorate. We will certainly reap the rewards of that work through early intervention programs in future years, when these young kids become fully integrated into society and into the community.

The A Fairer Victoria package continues to grow in its scope and its sharing of resources with the outer growth areas, including my area of Mill Park. There has been an announcement of an additional \$70.2 million to be given to new child and family services in those outer areas where services need to be augmented and improved. That sets a very clear program, recognising that the early years of children's lives is a most important time for investing in resources because of the benefits to be obtained as children become older and go through the school system into adult life. That is something I certainly applaud.

Others have mentioned the additional funding to neighbourhood house centres to integrate communities, and I wish to mention the fact that the Merriang Special Development School, with which I have a personal relationship, is very pleased to have received news that a third campus will be built in the Mill Park Lakes area, which will certainly help cater to the needs of a fast-growing population.

The trades bonus is a big plus for skilling up our Victorian community, especially our young people. I believe that is a very big step towards meeting the challenges of the skills shortages that we have in Victoria. With those few words I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I rise today to express my absolute disappointment, firstly, at the loss of the member for Hawthorn from the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, which I chair. That is a loss. He was a great contributor, and we are going to miss him sincerely. I am also disappointed in the sense that the member for Hawthorn has been elevated to the position of Leader of the Opposition, primarily because, as members would recall, I became the campaign director for my favourite candidate, the member for South-West Coast, and I have let everybody down. He had pedigree. He did his apprenticeship. He was previously the Leader of the Opposition, and I have let him down. As the campaign director for the member for South-West Coast, I am bitterly disappointed that he did not achieve that goal and the member for Hawthorn has achieved that instead of him. It was a real goal for me and also for the member for South-West Coast for him to become the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think the member may have moved away from debating the bill, which is about the budget, not about campaigning for the Liberal Party. I would ask you to bring him back to the appropriation bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The member for Melton, on the bill.

Mr NARDELLA — I am very disappointed about that. The other issue I want to talk about is that of David Proctor and broiler farms. They are synonymous with disaster and cruelty — absolute disaster for anything that David Proctor touches. Now he has spread out his tentacles to destroy those great areas in Gippsland.

Mr Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member has strayed again from the budget that he is supposed to be debating at this time and is talking about chicken farms.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The member for Melton, on the bill.

Mr NARDELLA — In primary industries, where this budget is so important, we have grubs like David Proctor and the people he takes along with him to go out and destroy people's lives. I know the member for Bass has a view on David Proctor, just like other members of the house have views on David Proctor. This man needs to be stopped. The destruction of family life that this bloke causes in these areas is just a disgrace, and he needs to be stopped.

I want to congratulate principal Allan Peach of Myrniong Primary School on the \$4.4 million to fund the new school upgrade, and I congratulate the government also on all the maintenance money for our schools. This budget is just fantastic.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The time set down in the business program for dealing with government business has expired.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

TRANSFER OF LAND (ALPINE RESORTS) BILL

Third reading

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The question is:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

**Remaining business postponed on motion of
Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Community Services).**

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Taxis: rural and regional

Mr SMITH (Bass) — I rise today to ask the Minister for Transport to give some real assistance to country taxi operators before they are forced to close their doors and deprive country travellers of a service that is so vitally needed in country towns.

Members will be aware that the government issued a press release dated 25 May 2006 and headed 'A helping hand for our country taxis', which was about a review of the country taxi industry. It has been long requested and long overdue, but it does not give any hope at all for the hardworking and stressed country taxi operators and their drivers. These people are real community contributors who give so much to our local people, often to the detriment of both their health and family lives.

The people who wrote the report, Booz Allen Hamilton, write a good report, but how much help does it really give to country taxi operators and their drivers? The truth of the matter is, not much. How many operators did they visit to see how tough it really is out there in country Victoria? I am sure they did not visit too many. I know they ignored many invitations.

The Minister for Transport has to understand that these people have nearly had their spirits broken through his neglect. I do not think he really cares, because he has

his own big, white car and his driver who picks him up and drops him off, and he does not have to put his hand in his pocket to pay a fare for the service he gets. So how would he know how tough it is for these people to run a successful business? In some towns taxis are often the only form of public transport. They do not have the trams, trains and buses that city people expect and have available. The taxis are an essential service that has to be preserved.

I invite the minister to visit my electorate and other country electorates, talk to some of these operators and see how tough the business is. We know the consultants were not too involved, and when they were invited they did not bother talking to the mum and dad business operators in small country towns. The consultants were just not interested in talking to them to see how tough it is out there. I again ask the minister to come down to my electorate. I will be happy to arrange his visit, and I will get the right people to talk to him. I am sure other members in the house would be more than happy to do the same thing.

I ask the minister to do a real review of country taxi operators and give them some real help, not just the spin from the spin doctors that was released on 25 May this year under the title 'A helping hand for our country taxis'.

Manufacturing: Ballarat

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Manufacturing and Export. The action I seek from the minister is support and government commitment for manufacturers in Ballarat. My call comes after recent negative articles about the manufacturing sector have appeared in Melbourne newspapers.

Manufacturing is a significant part of the Ballarat economy, currently employing about 5300 people in more than 250 businesses. We have some very successful manufacturing businesses in Ballarat, and I was pleased recently to congratulate three companies in my electorate of Ballarat West on their induction into the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame — fabric and plastics manufacturer C. E. Bartlett, which makes the best sunblinds in Australia; fastener manufacturers OzPress; and noodle manufacturers Hakubaku. I was so pleased for them.

I was also pleased to hear that paint manufacturer David Haymes was presented with an honour roll award at the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame dinner. Mr Haymes can look back with pride at the company he steered from being a relatively unknown

Victorian paint manufacturer to being a bustling business, supplying quality products through specialist paint shops across the nation. These companies employ several hundred local Ballarat residents, and the continued support and encouragement of the Bracks government is vital for Ballarat.

Tourism: north-east Victoria

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism, and in his absence the minister at the table, who is the Minister for Community Services. I refer to concerns that have been expressed to me by people in the tourism industry in north-eastern Victoria about changes proposed by the government. I need a response from the minister as to how he will continue to support tourism in north-eastern Victoria.

Everyone in this house will be aware that during the 1990s and through into this century particular regions of Victoria have been promoted. North-eastern Victoria was promoted as the 'Legends, Wine and High Country' — a major region in this part of the state. There has been an investigation into changing the name of these regions. A representative of Tourism Victoria visited Rutherglen last month and met with a large number of people in the Rutherglen area, in particular with tourism operators, who expressed their concern about the proposed name change to 'Victoria's High Country'. The belief was that this would adversely affect the Rutherglen area's reputation as a wine-growing region of excellence. Indeed, Indigo Shire Council expressed this concern as well.

The Tourism Victoria representative, Mr Kayler-Thomson, responded to the concerns expressed by people who were at the meeting by indicating that they would be able to access funding through the new region and to look to the Murray region, which stretches right along the Murray Valley almost to the South Australian border. He said that it was just a proposal, but there is no doubt that the decision has been made. Representations have been made by the Indigo Shire Council to Tourism Victoria and the Minister for Tourism about how they propose to promote tourism in north-eastern Victoria, and particularly in areas such as the Rutherglen wine region.

I spoke to the minister personally about this last week. He indicated that information would be provided to us, but it has not been provided to me yet. I was hoping the minister would be here so that he could give a detailed response as to how tourism will continue to be promoted in north-eastern Victoria. The minister talks

about how huge amounts of funding will be provided to tourism and about the development of tourism in Melbourne and even across country and regional Victoria, but we do not understand — and we do not have the information to date — how funding will be provided to these areas, which might be cut off with the changes to the regions. We look forward to a detailed response from the minister.

Mount Dandenong Tourist–Leith roads, Montrose: traffic management

Ms BEARD (Kilsyth) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport. The action I seek is that the minister investigates the progress of VicRoads plans to improve traffic flow and safety at the Montrose roundabout, particularly the installation of traffic lights through metering of the roundabout.

The Montrose roundabout lies on the electoral boundaries between my electorate and the electorate of Monbulk. The member for Monbulk and I have received many representations from constituents concerned about both the congestion on roads and the roundabout itself during peak periods and the safety of pedestrians crossing these quite busy roads. In response to these representations we raised the matter directly with the Minister for Transport, and as a result we understand that VicRoads is currently developing a series of measures to improve traffic flows and address safety concerns.

Installing traffic lights and metering the roundabout will mean that when traffic builds up a sensor in the road will trigger traffic lights at the entry points to the road, allowing the banked-up traffic to flow through freely. The proposal will need to address pedestrian safety and link into the existing traffic light crossings on Mount Dandenong Tourist Road and Leith Road.

I would like to quote from a letter from concerned residents and community activists, David and Robyn Dobson, who said:

Perhaps traffic lights should be installed at the Montrose roundabout and possibly at the York Road roundabout. This action may help save pedestrian lives too, as those who live on the Kilsyth side of Mount Dandenong Road often take life-threatening risks just to get to the local shopping centre.

A committee member of Japara neighbourhood house and long-time resident, Barry Lucas, says ‘the better management of traffic, particularly in peak periods, is vital’.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Montrose township group, which just last Monday held its first annual general meeting. This relatively

new community group has already made its mark in Montrose. At its community ideas day, held late last year, the member for Monbulk and I were delighted to join 80 other residents from all sectors of the local community. People were asked on the day to indicate what did not work well in the town, and top of the list was the roundabout and the traffic on Canterbury Road, especially during peak hour.

From discussions with local residents, the Montrose township group and Japara neighbourhood house, it is clear that improving traffic conditions is one of the highest priorities of the Montrose community. Once again I ask the minister to advise both the member for Monbulk and me on the progress of proposals to improve traffic flow and safety in Montrose and indicate when these measures will be put in place.

Bayside: Beach Road sightscreens

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment. In particular I seek the opportunity to lead a deputation of local interest groups and stakeholders to see him regarding the proposal by the Bayside City Council to construct sightscreens up to 8 metres high or thereabouts along the Beach Road foreshore to replace vandalised trees.

Without proof of moral or criminal culpability, the council is proposing to punish equally all local residents and foreshore users by setting up structures which may not suit the environs and which in my view would not conform to the principles of sound coastal planning. Furthermore I do not believe it has been demonstrated that the proposed solution will redress the problem.

I am of the view that the Bayside council needs to sit down with all stakeholders, including the police, environmental groups and local residents, both inland and along the foreshore on Beach Road, to review the foreshore management plan to address the relevant issues regularly raised in the local press regarding vermin, fire hazards and antisocial behaviour, as well as the serious matter of tree vandalism.

The foreshore is one of Bayside’s greatest assets and attracts users from far and wide. The amenity that the cool waters of the bay provide during the summer months and the pleasure derived year round from walks along the coastal path are worth preserving. Screens will surely detract from this local amenity. The Victorian coastline is one of the greatest coastlines in the world, and if the council successfully proceeds with this plan, it could be replicated along the entire coastline. While the council’s intention of bringing

about a cessation of vandalism to foreshore vegetation is constructive, I do not believe it has been established that the solution proposed will redress the problem.

Successive councils have failed to adequately manage what is Melbourne's and Bayside's greatest resource for the benefit of all stakeholders. Apportioning blame without due process may be regarded as ill considered. As the member for Sandringham and noting a perceived personal interest in the matter by virtue of the situation of my own family home, I will work to try to achieve a better balanced outcome that will benefit all the stakeholders in the matter and the entire Victorian coastline.

Western Port Business Centre: funding

Ms BUCHANAN (Hastings) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Small Business. The action I seek is for the minister to investigate the opportunities for the Western Port Business Centre to continue to support new and emerging small businesses around the Hastings electorate.

WPBC supports independently owned and operated businesses during their initial start-up and early growth phases. Since commencing in August 2002 this centre has grown and is now supporting over 19 clients, who in turn employ 51 people. Governed by a volunteer board of seven directors, ably chaired by prominent local leader Jim Peddie and managed by Peter Lees, this centre has enabled many businesses to get the best possible start in a very competitive environment. To date some 16 businesses have successfully graduated and are engaging with customers in a positive, viable and successful way.

One example is Rob's Catering. I first met Rob and Veronica van den Brink in 2003 and was immediately impressed by this business's service, price and quality. Rob and his wife, who are a fantastic, focused and motivated young couple and have just celebrated the birth of their first child, have now established themselves independently in Langwarrin. Their hard work, supported by the Western Port Business Centre, has paid off substantially. They have some major catering contracts across the region, and they now employ 20 staff.

However, future success stories like Rob's, which came about as a result of their gaining support from this centre, are under threat. Apart from an initial set-up grant from the surplus-overloaded federal government, this centre is no longer eligible for any further federal funding to help local businesses get on their feet and be successful. The new federal minister changed the

funding rules virtually in his first week in the job, so centres like this across the nation can no longer get any further money under Prime Minister Howard.

Centres such as this are vital in supporting small businesses across Victoria. While the federal government gives token support to some clients via the new enterprise incentive scheme (NEIS), it is turning its back on those who support NEIS participants and many other budding entrepreneurs who just need some sound guidance in their formative years. WPBC's community and business support extends further by giving presentations to local schools, supporting chambers of commerce, offering work experience and allowing welfare agencies to use its facilities. That is in addition to the large amount of business advice and support given to the inquirers referred to it from across the region. This centre is too valuable to both the business and the broader communities for the government to have to cut back on its support of new businesses.

The federal government has turned its back on supporting small businesses across the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port regions and as usual is not providing the resource support to enable such centres to gain a strong self-sufficiency status. This centre is nearly at that stage, and in our recent discussions with both Jim and Peter we have identified several intelligent options to achieve this.

Small business is the backbone of Victoria's economy, being the greatest collective employer across the state. This government recognises this through the high level of support we already provide to small business through tax relief, through reduced WorkCover premiums and through the great work of Victorian small business centres such as the one located at Dandenong. I ask that the minister look at all available options for supporting the Western Port Business Centre.

Transurban: probity audit

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Premier. It concerns the Transurban CityLink deal that the government entered into. The action I seek is for the Premier, as he indicated in question time today, to immediately provide the Parliament with copies of the independent probity auditor's report into that deal.

It is also important that at the same time the Premier provide full copies of the advice that was provided to the government from Rothschild, which the government claim market-tested the deal with Transurban.

There is a great deal of interest in this deal, as indicated by the Premier himself in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on Monday, during which the Premier indicated the deal was not initiated by Transurban but by the government. It resulted in the government selling \$2.9 billion of concession notes to Transurban for a paltry \$609 million, a deal that has been criticised widely by financial commentators.

Given the deal was initiated by the government, it is vital that full details of the role of the probity auditor be provided immediately. It appears that not only was Rothschild a banker for the Westlink M7 project in Sydney, of which Transurban is a major shareholder, but it was also an adviser to the Victorian government on the Transurban deal. This points very clearly to the fact that there must and should have been a probity auditor overseeing the Transurban CityLink deal from day one.

There have been various claims as to the role of Rothschild. The Treasurer claimed it market-tested the deal, and Rothschild claimed it did not advise the government on how to fund CityLink. If Rothschild is correct in its claims, the question remains: who actually advised the government on the best way to fund CityLink and if no such advice was provided, then on what basis did the government proceed down the pathway of what would seem to have been a crazy and bad deal for Victorian taxpayers?

In 2004 the Premier indicated that he would not proceed with the sale of any further concession notes. I quote from what the Premier said at the time:

We have ruled out a suggestion by CityLink that it would want to go forward to the full period and somehow have those concession notes right through to the end of the project used now. We reject that ...

That is what the Premier said at the time. The opposition would like to know: why did the Premier change his mind and what advice did he receive that convinced him that this was a good deal for Victoria in 2006, when he had ruled it out in 2004?

I refer to an article by Terry McCrann in the *Herald Sun* of 25 May:

Brumby makes no attempt at all to even just respond to, far less rebut, my detailed explanation of why the deal is dreadful for the taxpayer and hands hundreds of millions of dollars to Transurban and its shareholders.

It's not just about the so-called concession notes — money that Transurban owes the state, and which the state is selling back to Transurban to fund its spending.

In doing so, the state is effectively borrowing \$600 million from Transurban at a 9.7 per cent interest rate when it could

borrow directly at less than 5.5 per cent — throwing away \$25 million a year of our money. And every year, for 28 years!

Brumby's disclosure that the deal was endorsed by Rothschild only serves to establish that there are two 'guilty parties' in this appallingly inept deal.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Tourism. I call upon the minister to take action to put in place a strategy to work with our tourism operators and others to promote the Australian Garden in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. I was honoured to have joined the Premier, Deputy Premier, parliamentary colleagues and distinguished guests at the recent opening of stage 1 of the Australian Garden. On the opening day we were joined by over 10 000 people enjoying the design of the Australian Garden. This is the level — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! I am sorry to interrupt the member for Cranbourne, but can the member again indicate the action he is seeking? It may be that the matter should be directed to the Minister for Environment.

Mr PERERA — The action I seek is from the Minister for Tourism. I call upon the minister to take action to put in place a strategy to work with our tourism operators and others to promote the Australian Garden in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne.

The 10 000-strong attendance at the stage 1 opening of the Australian Garden shows the level of enthusiasm exhibited by the Victorian community. The \$14.5 million Australian Garden, the first public garden of its scale to open in Victoria for over 150 years, is a win-win situation for Cranbourne. The Australian Garden has been strongly supported by the Bracks government through funding of \$9.5 million. The garden is a symbol of the Bracks government's commitment to encouraging sustainable environments and preserving areas of public land for public use.

The new 11-hectare garden features more than 100 000 Australian plants and trees. Some of the replanted trees are over 1000 years old. The dry creeks and the red sand emulate central Australian situations. The Australian Garden has been created by a team of experts to showcase our country's diverse environment. It explores the connections between our land, plants and people in a breathtaking landscape design that is truly unique.

The state-of-the-art Boonerwurrung Cafe sits at the top of the hill, with sweeping views over the garden and its

desert colours. At night, the Boonerwurrung Cafe will host showcase dinners featuring local produce and guest speakers. The Rockpool Pavilion, with views through the landscaped garden, is available for functions with sit-down meals. The water conservation garden demonstrates three different watering regimens and the plants suitable for those conditions. Throughout, the landscape design explores the possibilities of low-water-use plants and designs.

Visitors to the garden will go home with new ideas and be inspired to transform their own gardens into low-water Australian gardens. The Australian Garden and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, present many opportunities to learn about the environment, geography, art, history and horticulture. The education staff at the Cranbourne gardens provide programs for students from primary through to tertiary students. This is a great asset for the region and will attract visitors to Cranbourne.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Adult, community and further education: funding

Mr DELAHUNTY (Lowan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training. I request that the minister take action to remove the proposed 3 per cent cut to adult community education services such as those at the four neighbourhood houses in the Lowan electorate, On Track Learning Wimmera in Horsham and other adult education services in my electorate.

The 3 per cent cut is proposed by adult, community and further education within its delivery and sustainability grants. Delivery funding is currently set at \$6.21 for every student contact hour. This funding is used solely to enable the providers to make certain educational classes more affordable. The sustainability funding is used to offset costs for professional development, publicity, networking, administration such as Quicken updates, and needs analysis.

I have a letter from Horsham community house, one of four neighbourhood houses in my electorate. I quote:

Horsham learners suffered a 3 per cent cut in funding in 2005, 2006 and will do so again in 2007.

...

These cuts directly affect access to basic adult education in Horsham by impacting on the reduction of programs offered, facilities and equipment ...

... To continue the important work of providing adults a pathway back into learning, it is vital that the long-lost funding be restored, 2007's planned cuts cancelled and a statewide increase in funds of \$5 million per annum delivered back into community education.

I also have a letter from On Track Learning Wimmera, which is based at the University of Ballarat's Horsham campus. They deliver education for adults in the communities of Horsham, Nhill, Hopetoun, Kaniva, Ararat, Stawell and the surrounding districts. In 2005 they provided learning opportunities for 214 local residents, predominantly in numeracy and literacy courses. Adult community and further education funding represents 100 per cent of On Track Learning's total budget.

It is interesting to note that its level of funding in 2006–07 was cut and that it is anticipating another cut in 2007. It is also interesting that the unions covering On Track Learning's employees have served notice that they will seek an increase of 3 per cent per annum, compounded each year for the next three years. On Track Learning can only afford to pay 76 per cent of the TAFE hourly rate, which puts at risk its ability to recruit the most highly qualified staff.

Why is the funding to support their hourly rate of pay so much lower? Does the state government believe in equal pay for equal work?

The question On Track Learning's letter asks of me is:

Why is there no new funding for ACE? ACE is nimble, local and responsive — ideal for meeting the needs of rapidly growing communities.

Its tutors are required to have the same qualification and the same professional development, so I again ask the minister to take away this 3 per cent funding cut.

Anthony's Cutting, Western Highway: funding

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Transport. I call on him to undertake to discuss with his federal counterpart the expedition or bringing forward of the funding for the construction of Anthony's Cutting on the Western Highway between Melton and Bacchus Marsh.

The Minister for Transport has been extremely successful, along with other western suburban MPs like the honourable members for Kororoit, Keilor, Derrimut and me, and at the federal level with the member for Lalor, Julia Gillard, and the member for Ballarat, Catherine King, in getting the Deer Park bypass funded by the federal government. The Deer Park bypass is part of the lifeline not only for Ballarat but also for the

western region, the Western District and Adelaide and South Australia.

Catherine King and I are both concerned that we need to get this particular part of the Western Highway built expeditiously. It needs to be constructed to minimise accidents on this stretch so that the truck drivers and commuters who use this stretch of road — the honourable member for Lowan is pointing at me — have a much quicker and safer route.

Safety barriers along the road have made that stretch safer, and the extra work required by VicRoads at Hopetoun Park has made that intersection at the crest of Anthonys Cutting safer, but the reality is that Anthonys Cutting needs to be constructed, and because it is a national highway it is basically the responsibility of the federal government, and it needs to come on board with this. There can then be some additional work undertaken to relieve some of the traffic congestion in the Bacchus Marsh township arising from the work at Anthonys Cutting, so it is important to get the federal government on track on this, even kicking and screaming as it was with the Deer Park bypass, to get it done.

Responses

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Manufacturing and Export) — The member for Ballarat West raised a matter relating to manufacturing in Ballarat and particularly bestowed congratulations on three Ballarat manufacturers — the fabric and plastics manufacturer C. E. Bartlett, the fastener manufacturer OzPress, and noodle manufacturer Hakubaku, all three of which were inducted into the Manufacturing Hall of Fame a little over two weeks ago. It certainly highlights the strength of manufacturing in Ballarat.

There are some very innovative manufacturers in Ballarat doing a great job in an increasingly competitive global market, and these Ballarat businesses really stand out. In particular, one business which is almost a household name in Victoria, if not around the country, is Haymes Paint. Mr David Haymes, an iconic Ballarat identity, was recognised with his inclusion on the Hall of Fame roll of honour for his contribution to Ballarat. This is a fitting way to acknowledge people who have made a significant contribution to what is a very vibrant industry in Ballarat. In fact, it contributes about \$1.8 billion a year to the local economy and certainly plays a very proud part in the strong manufacturing sector in Victoria.

This government is proud of its manufacturing sector and proud to support it. Indeed it is the largest provider

of full-time jobs in this state. We believe the Ballarat community and Ballarat manufacturers play their part in that very vibrant sector. However, it is very sad that we have a federal government which does not believe in manufacturing. It believes we should put everything into the resources basket and that Australia's sole role is that of a quarry. There is absolutely no commitment to industry policy by the federal government. This government has invested over \$350 million in facilitating over \$9 billion worth of manufacturing investment, which has produced nearly 17 000 new jobs in this state.

That is the sort of commitment we would like to see from the federal government, but unfortunately it thinks Australia should be consigned to being nothing more than a quarry. It thinks people in Victoria, New South Wales and Adelaide should move over to Western Australia or up to Brisbane. That is quite clearly the federal government's strategy. I thank the member for Ballarat East for her support for manufacturing. She has been a very strong supporter of manufacturing businesses in her electorate.

The member for Hastings raised a matter for me in my capacity as the Minister for Small Business. She raised what is effectively the defunding of the Western Port Business Centre, a very successful and very much supported business incubator in that area. Why the federal government would pull support for that centre is beyond me. She highlighted one business in particular, the owners of which I met during a visit to her electorate. Rob's Catering is run by Rob and Veronica van den Brink. These people have benefited quite considerably from this particular business centre. I think they are indicative of the work that is done by the Western Port Business Centre.

The small business ministerial council will be meeting in Melbourne next week as part of our Energise Enterprise month. I will certainly raise this matter for the attention of the federal Minister for Small Business and Tourism and the federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources. I thank the member for Hastings. Obviously she is somebody who is very much in touch with small businesses in her electorate and has been very supportive of them.

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr HAERMEYER — Unlike the member for Bass, who continues to interject with inane remarks and snide asides.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The members for Bass and Bulleen should cease interjecting.

Mr HAERMEYER — The member for Bass raised a matter for the Minister for Transport regarding taxis. I certainly think the member for Bass should get into one right now, but I will draw that to the attention of the Minister for Transport.

The member for Murray Valley raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism, and I will make sure that is passed on.

The member for Kilsyth also raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport. I will ensure that that is passed on.

The member for Sandringham raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, the member for Polwarth raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport and the member for Cranbourne raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism. I will ensure all of those matters are referred to the relevant ministers.

The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Education and Training, and I will ensure that is passed on.

The member for Melton raised a matter for the Minister for Transport. As one of the local members in that area I will say I am very supportive of what the member for Melton raised. The Western Highway is the link between the centre of Melbourne and the manufacturing regions of the western suburbs, Ballarat, Adelaide and the Western District. The local Labor members, state and federal — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The minister should just refer the matter to the Minister for Transport.

Mr HAERMEYER — Those local members, including the member for Melton, all campaigned very hard to get the Deer Park bypass funded. As the member has indicated, it is a project which should be federally funded, but Victoria had to cough up a fairly sizeable portion of that money to get the federal government to do it. It is about time Victoria got its fair share of federal road funding. I will draw that matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
The member for Polwarth's matter was raised for the attention of the Premier, not the Minister for Transport.

Mr HAERMEYER — My apologies, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Barker) — Order!
I am sure it will be passed on.

The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 4.38 p.m.

