

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 24 May 2007

(Extract from book 7)

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FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2007

NOTICES OF MOTION.....	1677	ADJOURNMENT	
VICTORIAN CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE		<i>Stud Road: upgrade</i>	1730
<i>Report 2007</i>	1677	<i>Gaming: problem gambling</i>	1730
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE		<i>Roads: roadside vegetation</i>	1731
<i>Budget estimates 2007–08 (part 1)</i>	1677	<i>Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre:</i>	
DOCUMENTS	1677	<i>funding</i>	1731
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE		<i>Ambulance services: Timboon</i>	1732
<i>Adjournment</i>	1677	<i>Lara electorate: community infrastructure</i>	1732
MEMBERS STATEMENTS		<i>Nurses: division 2 training</i>	1733
<i>Drought: Queenscliff sports grant</i>	1677	<i>Hume: Tullamarine Reserve</i>	1733
<i>Water: public sector investment</i>	1678	<i>Yarrowonga neighbourhood house: funding</i>	1734
<i>AMILE Advocacy Service: Living the</i>		<i>Red-eared slider turtles: control</i>	1734
<i>Experience program</i>	1678	<i>Responses</i>	1735
<i>Schools: report cards</i>	1678		
<i>Climate change: Ashburton forum</i>	1678		
<i>Fairhills High School: speed zone</i>	1679		
<i>Australian technical colleges: government</i>			
<i>policy</i>	1679		
<i>Lianne Gough</i>	1679		
<i>Cemeteries: trust review</i>	1680		
<i>Emerald performing and visual arts festival</i>	1680		
<i>Black and White Orchestra: 50th anniversary</i>	1680		
<i>Monash Volunteer Resource Centre</i>	1681		
<i>Dental services: funding</i>	1681		
<i>Barwon Valley School: opening</i>	1681		
<i>Mooroolbark Football Club: funding</i>	1682		
<i>Champion Compressors</i>	1682		
<i>Rail: Box Hill station</i>	1682		
<i>Anzac Day: Yan Yean electorate</i>	1683		
<i>Planning: Mornington Peninsula</i>	1683		
<i>Buddha's Day Festival</i>	1683		
<i>McKinnon Secondary College: Grease</i>	1684		
<i>Rail: Seymour line</i>	1684		
APPROPRIATION (2007/2008) BILL			
<i>Second reading</i>	1684, 1719		
<i>Remaining stages</i>	1730		
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE			
<i>Police: ethical standards investigation</i>	1711		
<i>Community cabinet: rural and regional</i>			
<i>program</i>	1711		
<i>Industrial relations: Australian workplace</i>			
<i>agreements</i>	1713		
<i>Water: rural and regional infrastructure</i>	1713		
<i>Member for Derrimut: conduct</i>	1715		
<i>Technical education centres: rural and regional</i>			
<i>Victoria</i>	1715		
<i>Australian Labor Party: fundraising</i>	1716		
<i>Rail: regional links</i>	1716		
<i>GJK Facility Services: Office of Housing</i>			
<i>contracts</i>	1717		
<i>Regional Infrastructure Development Fund:</i>			
<i>projects</i>	1717		

Thursday, 24 May 2007

The **SPEAKER** (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

Mr **EREN** having given notice of motion:

The **SPEAKER** — Order! That notice of motion may be a bit lengthy. The member may need to see the Clerk to edit it.

Further notices of motion given.

VICTORIAN CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report 2007

Ms **NEVILLE** (Minister for Mental Health), by leave, presented report.

Tabled.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2007–08 (part 1)

Mr **STENSHOLT** (Burwood) presented report, together with appendices, minority report, extracts from proceedings and minutes of evidence.

Tabled.

Ordered to be printed.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria — Report 2006

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Accident Compensation Act 1985 — SR 35

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — SR 33

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SR 34

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Minister's exception certificate in relation to Statutory Rule 33.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 5 June 2007.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Drought: Queenscliff sports grant

Ms **NEVILLE** (Minister for Mental Health) — I was pleased to announce this week some additional support to assist community sporting clubs in Queenscliff thanks to the Bracks government's sport and recreation drought relief packages. The community has indicated its sense of relief and gratitude for receiving funding under these relief packages.

The Borough of Queenscliffe in my electorate is one of the 14 councils in drought-affected areas across the state that will benefit from the \$4.7 million Drought Relief for Country Sports program. This program enables Victorian councils on stage 3, 3a or 4 water restrictions to apply for a \$50 000 grant for projects that reduce water use and improve the condition of local sporting facilities. The drought relief packages aim to help local communities keep their sport and recreation activities operating despite the drought.

The Borough of Queenscliffe has received \$50 000 as part of the first round of this important funding program. I am delighted that \$25 000 of the funding will enable the council to ensure precious rainwater run-off is efficiently collected and stored at the Queenscliff recreational reserve. The remaining \$25 000 will go to the Geelong winter sports fund. This fund, which the Bracks government has also assisted, was established by the local community, which has given generously to ensure the Geelong region could commence its football season this year.

In addition a further 70 projects have received funding through the Drought Relief for Country Sports program, and I am very pleased to also announce that this includes \$10 000 to the Borough of Queenscliffe.

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

Water: public sector investment

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to draw the house's attention to an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) catalogue on engineering construction activity, and specifically to figures on public sector investment in water storage and supply and sewerage and drainage. These figures show the appallingly low level of investment in water infrastructure in Victoria.

For the full 2005 and 2006 calendar years Victoria's investment is incredibly low, especially compared with Queensland and New South Wales. In NSW in those two years investment was \$1.3 billion. Investment in Queensland was \$1 billion — that was the second state. In Victoria investment for that period of time was only \$426 million, and that is to be compared with Western Australia at \$415 million, South Australia at \$190 million, and Tasmania, always last, at an \$89 million contribution. WA has rectified its performance by a \$750 million investment allocated for desalination, delivered recently in its last budget.

These ABS figures on investment in the public sector — the state government departments and the water authorities — show that the Victorian government has a lack of commitment to investing in water infrastructure, and the per capita performance by Victoria is even worse.

Again I make the point that NSW and Queensland are streets ahead of Victoria when it comes to investing in water infrastructure.

AMILE Advocacy Service: Living the Experience program

Mr PALLAS (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I recently had the great privilege of launching the Living the Experience program organised by the AMILE Advocacy Service. AMILE is a local organisation in my electorate of Tarneit that advocates for people with mental illness. The Living the Experience program will attempt to help break down the stigma surrounding mental illness, which includes depression, stress, anxiety disorders, postnatal mental health, manic depression, post-traumatic stress and schizophrenia.

Statistics show that while one in five Australians may suffer from a mental illness, there is a considerably high level of misconception and myth regarding this issue. AMILE provides support and information to those affected directly and indirectly by mental illness to educate the general public and increase awareness and understanding. Living the Experience has a particular focus on helping young people to deal with mental

illnesses and can only serve to increase our community's knowledge of these health issues.

I would like to thank Janelle and Ian Reeves for beginning this innovative initiative. Mental health is a considerable issue within our community, and I am pleased to support such a tremendous program.

Schools: report cards

Mrs POWELL (Shepparton) — Yesterday I presented a petition with 267 signatures on behalf of residents of the Greater Shepparton region. It was initiated by Fiona Shanahan, a 15-year-old student in year 10 at Wanganui Park Secondary College, and it states that the petition:

... draws to the attention of the house the problems associated with the new report cards for Victorian students. The new system is very confusing for parents ... and students. The system is confusing because people already understood the previous system that was in place.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria abolish the new reporting system and return to the previous reporting system that was in place.

I congratulate Fiona for showing leadership and on collecting signatures at her school. Parents do not understand the new system and believe that it does not encourage students to be the best they can be. It disadvantages those students who work hard. Employers want to know if prospective employees are average or above average. Teachers must find it hard to mark students appropriately. I understand that students are marked C if they are competent or average. Students receive an A if they are 12 months ahead of their class, a B if they are six months ahead and a D if they are six months behind. I join Fiona, her mother Vicki and Wanganui Secondary College students in urging the government to abolish the unfair new grading system and return to grading students on their ability.

Climate change: Ashburton forum

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — Last Wednesday, 16 May, as the local member of Parliament for Burwood I hosted a free climate change forum for my electorate. My co-host was the federal member for Chisholm, Anna Burke. The forum was also attended by Barbara Norman, the Labor candidate for Higgins and Dr Ken Harvey, the Labor candidate for Kooyong. Mary Halikias-Byrnes from Boroondara council and Joy Banerji from Monash council also supported the forum.

The forum, held at the Ashburton support services hall in High Street, Ashburton, was attended by a great crowd of my constituents. The meeting was an old-style community consultation addressed by the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, and Tony Kelly, the CEO (chief executive officer) of Yarra Valley Water. The audience heard from the minister about current plans and policies, and an extensive discussion followed. It was very heartening to hear the genuine level of concern and interest in the community and to hear what actions many people were taking to tackle these issues. The meeting was also given a range of tips on how to save energy by Katrina Woolfe of Sustainability Victoria. The people attending were also able to join a showerhead exchange program and learn tips on saving water from the save our water campaign. They were also able to discuss ideas on tackling climate change and helping to save water with the minister and the CEO of Yarra Valley Water and Sustainability Victoria.

I thank all those involved for their contributions to this very productive exercise in grassroots democracy. It follows on from a water forum which we held four years ago. We intend to take democracy to the people of Burwood and make sure our community is fully informed and fully able to contribute to policy formation.

Fairhills High School: speed zone

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I wish to raise a matter of grave concern with the Minister for Roads and Ports. I call upon the minister to install 40-kilometre-per-hour flashing speed signs outside Fairhills High School, which is located on busy Scoresby Road in Ferntree Gully. Given that the school entrance is located halfway along a hilly section of this road, it is imperative that the current metallic sign is replaced as a matter of importance. The school suffered in 2006 when a year 9 student was hospitalised after being struck by a vehicle whilst crossing this road.

Attempts to resolve this issue through both VicRoads and the former member for Bayswater have been in vain because the school is apparently located on a 60-kilometre-per-hour section of road. This is despite the fact that Presbyterian Ladies College has achieved the flashing sign on a 60-kilometre-per-hour section of Burwood Highway, Burwood. I call upon the minister to end this double standard and afford Fairhills High School the same signage.

Australian technical colleges: government policy

Mr WAKELING — I am also greatly concerned at the recent criticism by the Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment on 22 May 2007 of the Australian technical colleges which are being established at the initiative of the federal government. These technical colleges are a fantastic initiative, and the Ferntree Gully community will soon benefit from the new facility that will be opening shortly at St Joseph's College.

Whilst the former Minister for Education and Training and the former member for Ferntree Gully are both on record as endorsing this project, I call on the current Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment to fully support this important project in the Ferntree Gully electorate.

Lianne Gough

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Lianne Gough for winning the prestigious 2007 Gallipoli art prize. The oil painting of 35 fallen Anzacs, *Glorus Fallen*, won the national competition in Sydney on 23 April this year. Thirty-five individual portraits were joined together to form this striking painting. Each of these 35 soldiers — some of them Geelong men — died at Gallipoli. The painting showed the fear, determination and courage of our Anzacs. The *Geelong Advertiser* had the painting as its wraparound Anzac special.

Members may have seen Lianne on TV or read about her in the newspapers, and I can assure them that she is a very worthy winner. Along with husband Kerry and two kids she has called Geelong West home since 1984. She has been involved in local amateur theatre, and she has been drawing and painting since her early 20s. Lianne is a regular at local art shows and has paintings in private collections in Australia, England and New Zealand. Indeed I am lucky enough to have one of her paintings on the wall at home — and no, it is not a portrait. She has won many awards during her career. Her portrait of Noel Fidge was acquired by the Gordon Foundation for its collection in 2004.

Lianne is one of the region's most prominent portrait painters and is a regular entrant in the Archibald Prize, as the member for Forest Hill could well attest to. Lianne spends much of her time teaching adults and children at the Shearer's Arms Gallery in Geelong, and they must be very proud of her.

In closing I would like to use a quote from Lianne about her Anzac painting:

They turned a military disaster into a moral victory, which in turn became a national legend.

Well done, Lianne — your painting is indeed alive.

Cemeteries: trust review

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I draw the attention of the house to the interim report of the findings of the State Services Authority in relation to the review of major cemetery trusts. In particular I draw the house's attention to the finding on page 25:

While cemetery trusts recognise a reporting relationship to the Minister for Health, via the transmission of an annual report or annual financial abstracts, beyond that the understanding of government processes and accountabilities was found to be limited ...

Many cemetery trust members were unclear about the role of DHS and the nature of its relationship to the sector. In the course of the review the relationship between DHS and the cemetery trusts was generally reported as weak.

The Minister for Health is responsible for the administration of the act governing cemetery trusts. The failure to establish the appropriate relationship so that the trusts are clear about their compliance responsibilities and service standards and the government's expectations and objectives for the sector is the minister's responsibility and further proof that she lacks the capacity to administer her portfolio.

Whatever the final recommendations of this review, I suggest government needs to be particularly mindful of the unique relationship between many cemeteries and their trusts and local communities and specific religious groups and that some trusts have, through prudent financial management, accrued funds of which they would resist losing control.

Emerald performing and visual arts festival

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — Recently I had the pleasure of opening Emerald's PAVE — performing and visual arts in Emerald — festival. This festival, the second PAVE, was organised through the cooperation of the Emerald community house and the Emerald village committee.

The aim of the festival was to provide free or low-cost access to various forms of art and culture. As Emerald is a semirural township, access to arts events can sometimes prove difficult, and the townspeople wanted to make a concerted effort to address an identified need. Bringing together the many local artists enabled the

town to demonstrate the talent in Emerald and surrounding areas and to encourage wider participation in arts and culture. I was very impressed by the amount of organisation involved in the planning of PAVE, and I think it is testimony to the community spirit within Emerald.

With the assistance of many hardworking and enthusiastic volunteers, over 100 artists, performers, buskers, stallholders and tutors participated across the nine-day program, and 2000 people took up the opportunity to enjoy the many festival activities. The festival had important spin-offs for town businesses and, with the cooperation of so many community groups and individuals, provided an important community-building exercise.

The festival organisers also took on the huge challenge of breaking a Guinness world record — in this case the largest ensemble of wobbleboarders playing continuously for 5 minutes. They smashed the existing record by having 280 people, many of them local children, wobble their boards. I look forward to confirmation of the world record by Guinness authorities. I congratulate all those who played a part in the festival.

Black and White Orchestra: 50th anniversary

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — Today I wish to pay tribute to the Black and White Orchestra, whose members have entertained people in north-eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales for 50 years. In particular I wish to congratulate Merle Nolan, who was there at the beginning and is still playing the piano today, having accompanied the 50 fellow musicians who have been members of the Black and White Orchestra over its 50-year existence. The band commenced in 1957, with Bernie Clancy on piano, Don McKenzie on saxophone, Geoff Green on drums, Graeme Green also on saxophone, and of course Merle. June Kellam was also on piano in the early years. Merle has a unique talent — she plays by ear, as she does not read music — and she always makes the music she plays sound like dance music.

Last weekend current and past members gathered with appreciative fans to celebrate the orchestra's 50 years at the Benalla Bowls Club. More than 200 people enjoyed some reminiscing, including their memories of getting to and from dances on some very ordinary roads and at times in very ordinary weather. The attraction of the Black and White Orchestra's music made it all worthwhile. On behalf of the orchestra's many fans I say thank you for giving so much pleasure to so many for so long — and may you continue to do so for years

to come. A special thanks to Stacey Nolan for organising the event and to those such as Rob Dosser who travelled from as far away as Queensland to celebrate the occasion.

Country spirit is alive and well, in spite of the drought, bushfires — and the Bracks government.

Monash Volunteer Resource Centre

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — On 14 May I attended the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre breakfast for volunteers at the Village Green Hotel in Mulgrave. For National Volunteer Week, on behalf of the City of Monash the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre hosts a breakfast for more than 200 volunteers. These volunteers all contribute their valuable time to work in our communities in so many different roles. Many volunteers I and many other members of Parliament have met over the years wear a lot of different hats in the diverse and different roles they play as volunteers in our community. I would like to take this opportunity to put on record my thanks to the volunteers in the city of Monash and across Victoria who do so much to strengthen our communities. Through the work that they do on our behalf, volunteers undertake important and diverse roles in supporting and helping our neighbourhood and our community to be better places to live.

In the past 12 months the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre interviewed and referred 1356 volunteers to volunteer jobs, which is an outstanding effort. Of those volunteers, 46 per cent were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, which is of great importance and relevance in such a multicultural and diverse local government area. The Monash Volunteer Resource Centre services include volunteer referral and information; social support such as transport and social events for the aged in our community, particularly in the home and community care target group; and the senior citizens register. I commend Gloria Mahoney, the chief executive officer of the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre, and all her staff for the great job they do for our community.

Dental services: funding

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — Today I can stand here and address the house because luckily enough I am not in agony with a toothache because I need a filling, and I can leave here and go and have something to eat because I do not need to have my teeth replaced with dentures. However, many of the people in my electorate who do have a toothache or need dentures or any other dental work are looking at a

67-month wait. However you say it — 268 weeks, 67 months or a harrowing five years and seven months — it is damn long time to have to wait for public dental care.

The government is claiming that it is making inroads into slashing the dental waiting lists, but how untrue that is. The Bracks Labor government set itself a target in 2004–05 to have the maximum waiting time for public dental care to be no more than 22 weeks. However, we are three years on and the people of Narracan, in particular in Moe, are waiting more than three times that long. This is a tragic situation. Currently the system is more of a pain than the tooth! It is time the Minister for Health reassessed the public dental-care program and started making promises and commitments to the community that can actually be kept.

Barwon Valley School: opening

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — On Tuesday, 15 May, together with the member for South Barwon I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new Barwon Valley School by the Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment. It is a magnificent regional facility catering in 2007 for the education of 165 children with special needs. The school is testimony to the Bracks government's commitment to education in Geelong, with the construction of the school costing more than \$7 million and consisting of a sensory room, bike paths, a gymnasium, covered play areas and magnificent classroom facilities and amenities. The school is also testimony to the work of Lyons Construction and the architect, Richard Lowe.

The opening of the school was a wonderful day, with principal Anyta Crabtree acting as master of ceremonies. Student Matt Robertson gave a great speech — without notes, may I add — and Minister Allan was presented with flowers by fellow students Harry Reid and Harley Altman. My congratulations go to Peter Symons, the former principal at Barwon Valley, who for many years prior to his retirement had the drive and dedication to lay the foundations for the new school.

I congratulate the school council, ably led by parent Jennifer Forssman, for its work and dedication in seeing the project through. Deputy principals Anne Hume and Maureen Moore worked tirelessly, with Maureen doing a great job organising the day, and no doubt all teachers and staff have worked hard at keeping the school ticking over during the construction and transfer phase. The opening was attended by many parents and all students, who enthusiastically applauded at every given

opportunity. I wish the school well for many years to come, and I look forward to working with it into the future.

Mooroolbark Football Club: funding

Mr HODGETT (Kilsyth) — I call on the government to put more support behind small community sporting clubs which need to redevelop their facilities so they can continue to meet the growing needs in their local communities for sports such as football, netball and soccer. Local sports clubs and their facilities provide people with opportunities for inclusion, socialisation and a sense of involvement, which are the building blocks of strong, connected communities. Living a healthy lifestyle also reduces childhood obesity and encourages teamwork and sportsmanship.

One such sports club, the Mooroolbark Football Club, which is located at the Mooroolbark Heights Reserve, has put together a plan to improve its facilities to meet the growing needs of the community. Improvements include the development of a multipurpose room that will be available for function hire, the replacement of public toilets to connect them with the main building, and the extension of the kitchen. The club submitted a plan to the Shire of Yarra Ranges community small grants program but did not qualify, as it was unable to match the funds the program requested. Now the club is unable to move forward with the planned improvements and will have to continue to use its existing facilities until it can somehow meet the requirements of the program.

I praise the efforts of the Mooroolbark Football Club, which plays a major role in encouraging healthy sports participation. Its project is in urgent need of funding; otherwise it will remain on the backburner. It is often difficult for community-based clubs in local communities to raise large amounts of funds for such projects. They have to rely on funding programs such as the community small grants program I mentioned earlier to keep their redevelopment dreams alive. It is unfair that they fall through the gaps, and they should receive more support for their initiatives. This is a fantastic opportunity for the government to support small, local sporting clubs and help provide important facilities and services to the outer communities.

Champion Compressors

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — In National Manufacturing Week I would like to praise Australia's premier compressed-air specialist, Champion Compressors, which has produced its 10 000th

Australian-designed-and-built air compressor. Champion is the only Australian-based designer and manufacturer of rotary screw air compressors, with customers around the globe. It can build a compressor from the ground up and tailor it to individual client needs. At a recent ceremony at its Hallam headquarters Victoria's Minister for Industry and State Development in the other place, Mr Theophanous, congratulated the company on this milestone and its ongoing commitment to local industry.

Champion Compressors is setting a great example for other Victorian manufacturers and continues to demonstrate how Australian companies can use their experience of local conditions to build a domestic market and export overseas. Congratulations must go to the managing director, Wayne St Baker, and his team, who have led the company in such a solid direction and are committed to continuing to manufacture in Victoria. Champion Compressors is a major employer in the Hallam-Narre Warren area. The company's team of engineers and manufacturing personnel is among the most skilful in the country.

On my visit to the company I could not help but be impressed by the industrious nature of the employees and the pride they took in their work and in the very well-presented workplace. I know the company is also proud of its workers. I am glad to hear that Champion Compressors is planning to move to bigger facilities soon but will stay in the local area to be close to its skilled workforce and reliable suppliers. Congratulations to everyone at Champion Compressors, and I look forward to the next 10 000 compressors.

Rail: Box Hill station

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Public transport users in the Box Hill electorate are continuing to suffer from deteriorating standards of reliability and service under the franchising contracts negotiated by the Bracks government.

The latest case coming to my attention is that of Mr Andrew Van Graas, who lives in Nunawading and takes the train two or three times a week to Box Hill. Mr Van Graas is vision impaired and has a travel pass that will not go through the ticket-machine slot. Because the barriers are seldom manned he almost always needs to go to the customer service window and show his disability card so that staff will open the barrier and let him through. He tells me he often has to wait for staff to get out of their chairs and come to the window and then has to wait up to a further 5 minutes for them to open the barrier.

Mr Van Graas is very upset, as he is well entitled to be, that disabled people are treated with such disrespect and forced to wait so long. I know the minister says it is better that she not be bothered about such matters, but Mr Van Graas tells me that he has phoned Connex several times and that while the service improves for a short time, Connex soon falls back into its old ways.

I raised in this house a year ago the problems with the delays in people getting through the Box Hill barriers and was assured that the delays had become minimal. In view of this latest experience I urge the government to exercise the powers it has under the agreements it has negotiated with Connex to get this problem fixed so that Mr Van Graas and other vision-impaired passengers can use our public transport system as freely as other users.

Anzac Day: Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise today to pay tribute to the many thousands of people across the Yan Yean electorate who paid their respects to the fallen at the many Anzac commemorative services in my local area. Each year I am astounded by the growth in the number of people attending these services, and this year was no different, with more than 1000 people at the dawn service in Epping.

I had the privilege of laying wreaths and participating in services organised by the Epping, Hurstbridge, Diamond Creek and Whittlesea RSL clubs, and I pay tribute to the presidents: John McCrohan at Hurstbridge; Herb Mason at Epping, David Lewis, newly elected, at Diamond Creek; and Ned Panuzzo at Whittlesea. The Whittlesea march around the town in the afternoon was particularly moving because of the recitation of *The Ode to the Fallen* for the second year by Sarah Kleeman, a student at Whittlesea Secondary College, which left one veteran saying that he had goose bumps. I have heard the ode recited many times, but never have I heard it delivered with such emotion. Well done, Sarah, you are an example to our community.

Sarah and many other schoolchildren participated in the Anzac services. I also commend Epping Primary School. In the days before Anzac Day the students had their own commemorative event at the school. Well done to everyone for remembering the fallen this year in Yan Yean.

Planning: Mornington Peninsula

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — This morning I want to comment again on planning problems that we are

experiencing on the Mornington Peninsula. I have raised specific issues on a number of occasions, but there is a more general problem. Since 1999 we have had many zones replaced. Policy after policy and regulation after regulation has been added to the planning scheme, often ill thought out and with unintended consequences.

The green wedge controls are a textbook example. Much of the peninsula had been effectively protected since the 1970s by rules that everyone understood and by rules that worked. In 2002 they were replaced by Melbourne 2030, a raft of unproved theories and sloppily drafted controls. The council does its best to uphold the intent of the policy, but there are too many loopholes. The council holds the line, but the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal lets them through. Nine times out of 10 VCAT does not have any choice either, because the ordinance does not implement the policy. The minister has now put up \$45 000 so the council can try and plug the holes in the government's scheme.

I do not think he realises that with the planning controls we have at the moment the market for town planners is a seller's market, so I doubt we will get more than the contents page for \$45 000. The work has to be done, so it is the poor old ratepayers who will have to pick up the tab. It is about time the government stopped shirking its responsibilities, got busy and fixed the problems it has created.

Buddha's Day Festival

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — Along with some of my state and federal parliamentary colleagues I had the pleasure of attending the Buddha's Day and Multicultural Festival held at Federation Square last weekend. A number of people from those houses attended the world peace blessing ceremony on the Sunday morning.

I would like to congratulate the Venerable Yi Lai, abbess of Fo Guang Shan Australia, and Dominique Yu, the president of the Buddha's Light International Association of Victoria, for organising the excellent multicultural festival which has now been operating for 12 years — for the last 6 years in Federation Square.

The philosophy of Buddhism is one that I think has relevance for all of us regardless of the religion we might follow. There are some words from Venerable Master Hsing Yun which I will read to the house, as I think they may be of benefit to some of my colleagues:

Self-understanding and discipline are the main paths to conducting oneself in society.

Tolerating and helping others is the balm in establishing good relationships.

In the pursuit of learning, have a joyful attitude. In the face of advice, keep an open mind.

In taking on responsibility, have courage. In dealing with others, remain respectful.

McKinnon Secondary College: *Grease*

Mr HUDSON (Bentleigh) — Last night in McKinnon *Grease* was the word, and what a smash hit this musical was. From the opening number the classy ensemble of 60 talented students from McKinnon Secondary College, led by the T-Birds and Pink Ladies, sang and jived their way through old favourites from *Summer Nights* and *Beauty School Drop-out* to *You're the One That I Want*.

James Frecheville and Rachel Cole were superb as Danny Zuko and Sandy Dee, and left John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John in their wake. Also fabulous were Brendan Creaser as Kenickie and Tessa Ramanlal as Betty Rizzo. Incredibly Rachel and Tessa are only in year 9. The T-Birds of Pat Moran, Luke Etheridge and Aleksa Kurbalija were real cool dudes, and the Pink Ladies of Annabel Brown, Zoe Velig and Grace Greenwood set the trend for the in-crowd at Rydell High. Special motion should also be made of Marika McKinley as the school goody-two-shoes Patty Simcox and Liam Maguire as teenage heart-throb Vince Fontaine.

But the strength of this production lies in the amazing depth of talent in the school ensemble and the specialist dancers who brought this musical alive with great verve, beautifully choreographed numbers and well-blended voices. They were backed by the energetic and vibrant *Grease* band, which rollicked through all the old hits. Special credit is due to the production team led by director Liz Dark and musical director Blanka West, with the assistance of Rebecca Ginsberg, Jade Domaille, Jessica Dixon and Martin West.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! The member for Seymour has 40 seconds.

Rail: Seymour line

Mr HARDMAN (Seymour) — I rise to thank the Minister for Public Transport for funding \$4 million worth of track maintenance works on the north-eastern line to Seymour and beyond to improve travel times. This funding will allow maintenance on areas that cause speed restrictions and delay services on the line. The Bracks government's commitment to buy back the line, which was, of course, shamefully sold by the

Liberal Party and The Nationals when they were last in government, has enabled V/Line to get on with the job of targeting and improving infrastructure problems. I know the community and passengers will greatly appreciate any improvements to reliability, comfort and travel times. We have fantastic new regular services but the frustrations are there.

APPROPRIATION (2007/2008) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 23 May; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — I am very proud to rise in support of the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. This is the eighth Labor budget from the Bracks government. It is certainly a Labor budget. It delivers for working people and it delivers for the vulnerable in our community. It delivers on our promises from the last election, an election where the Labor Party was comfortably re-elected, which demonstrated a powerful mandate to run Victoria. We have a major commitment to social housing in this budget with \$510 million, \$555 million for school upgrades, capital works in hospitals and capital works for police stations. In fact we now have the largest capital works program ever undertaken by a government in Victoria. It is an important rebuilding of our infrastructure and is delivering to our communities.

I note that we are bringing forward the purchase of rolling stock for our train system. One of the major successes of the Bracks government has been the growth in public transport. In fact there has been 41 per cent growth in patronage of the rail system since the election of the Bracks government. That is a phenomenal increase in the sector. It demonstrates fundamental changes. Clearly there are now difficulties as we try to meet the increased demand but these difficulties have been created by the success of this government.

Another item in the budget was extra money to expand the rectangular stadium. That was highlighted yesterday when we had the agreement between the Melbourne Victory Football Club and the state government. Victory has now come on board along with the Melbourne Storm and the Melbourne Football Club, which will use the administrative side of that complex. It is a major development in terms of Melbourne being the sporting capital of the world. It demonstrates the expansion from the original idea of a 20 000-seat stadium to a minimum 31 000-seat stadium. I

particularly want to highlight and congratulate the Premier on his role in achieving this outcome.

I also thank the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Major Projects in another place who have worked tirelessly to expand the stadium and to ensure that it meets the challenges presented by the growth in international footy and particularly Melbourne Victory in this state. More importantly, it not only delivers for rugby and for international football, but beyond Melbourne Victory it delivers for the Socceroos, the Olyroos, the Matildas and other teams that will be able to utilise the stadium.

I also want to congratulate the Victory Fans Stadium Action Group, which included representatives of the various supporter groups for the Melbourne Victory club, who also worked tirelessly both with the club and with the government to get a resolution and an expansion to the stadium, and they still have one outstanding issue, which is the issue of safe standing. Safe standing is an important part of football culture internationally. It involves either old-style terracing or, as is common to stadiums in Germany, flexible seating, where the seating can be locked away to allow for standing room. It increases the capacity of the areas behind the goal, and it also allows for very active support.

It is an issue that the Victory fans action group and the supporter groups have been pushing for. It is interesting that Geoff Lord, the chair of Melbourne Victory, has come out in support of standing room. There is obviously an open discussion occurring now with government and developers about the possibility of introducing flexible seating and standing room as part of this new stadium. I congratulate all the parties and all the people involved in the process that made yesterday's announcement possible.

Lastly I highlight another element in the budget, which is the precinct project for Lonsdale, Lygon and Little Bourke streets. This is an \$8 million project which is about highlighting and reinforcing within the built environment the contribution of some of our large ethnic communities: the Greek community in Lonsdale Street, the Italian community in Lygon Street and the Chinese community in Little Bourke Street. It is \$8 million which no doubt will leverage further funding, both from Melbourne City Council and from private sources, and will really highlight the contribution of those groups and those communities and their importance in terms of multicultural Melbourne.

It is a terrific Labor budget. I am very proud to be part of this Labor government. I congratulate the Treasurer on bringing down this budget to ensure that we maintain our commitment to the people of Victoria.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. As the explanatory memorandum tells us, the bill provides appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary activities or ordinary annual services of government for the 2007–08 financial year, and it further identifies the sum in schedule 1. This year the sum is some \$28 522 million in net terms. With some of the figures that are bandied about in this house and the sorts of figures we deal with all the time, it is very easy to forget the magnitude of the amounts we are talking about. The sum of \$28 500 million is a very large amount of money, and of course it has got to be raised.

I made the point, I think on Tuesday in debate on another bill, but it is worth repeating: like every financial measure introduced by this government, this budget adds to the tax burden of ordinary Victorians. The tax take with this budget rises by 5.8 per cent. The consumer price index (CPI) over the same period is considerably lower than that, and in fact the tax rises by 80 per cent more than the CPI. Obviously someone has got to pay the bills, and we all know who that is: it is ordinary Victorians. Despite all the rhetoric, despite all the talk about tax cuts, every year the burden increases, every year expenditure grows. As the member for Scoresby mentioned in his reply in this place a couple of weeks ago, spending has grown by 60 per cent per capita since the government took office. And that is against a background of a rise of approximately 27 per cent in the CPI since September 1999 — in other words, growth in spending has outstripped cost rises by a factor of more than 2 to 1 in the period since the government was elected.

That might be all right if we were living within our means. If services were improving, if public assets were being created at the level we need to have them built and if taxpayers were getting value for money, then you might say that is okay. But of course that is not the case, because we are not living within our means. Certainly in the area I represent you could not in a million years say that services are improving. Infrastructure assets are being created, but they are not being created at anywhere near the rate we need to achieve to keep economic growth going and the economy boiling along. And as I said, we are certainly not getting value for money.

The public is paying more and more for less and less. I would suggest that there are not many parts of the state that are getting less than the people of the Mornington Peninsula, and in particular the people of Mount Eliza, Mornington, Mount Martha and Moorooduc. We have had population growth. Planned growth is a good thing, and we certainly enjoy it, but the downside of the planned growth we have had — we are not a growth area, and as I have said in this place before, we do not want to be — is that you do not get the massive injections of capital spending you need to sustain the population growth.

We are not only experiencing the obvious strain in physical infrastructure, but we are not getting any investment in social infrastructure either. Without the necessary social infrastructure it is very difficult for any community to move forward. The point was made in this place yesterday morning on a totally different matter, but it is worth remembering that in the end it is about people. That is why we are here — to create a framework so people can build the sorts of lives they want. We should be creating the services, facilities and opportunities to make that happen. That is what is not happening in this budget.

In the Mornington electorate roads that were built for country traffic are now acting as de facto arterials. Our police just do not have the resources to cover the ground. Planning, which certainly is a hobbyhorse of mine, is grossly underresourced. Our community health service is stuck in temporary accommodation. Our public transport, despite tinkering over recent years, remains grossly inadequate. Arterial access to the peninsula, which is already becoming difficult — it takes me the best part of 2 to 2½ hours to get home on a Thursday from here — is a crisis waiting to happen.

I would like to turn to some specifics in terms of the way the budget affects the Mornington district. As I said, population growth has been pretty steady for the last 30 years. We are not a designated growth area, so we are not getting those large injections of capital spending. But in the last seven and a half years we have had only one major road project — the Bentons–Moorooduc roads roundabout. That was promised in 2002, and it actually got built in May, June and July 2006, magically just in time for the election. In last year's budget we were promised traffic lights for a notorious intersection at the other end of Bentons Road and the Nepean Highway. It has been due for lights for at least five years, and they were announced with great fanfare once again in time for the election. The inference then was that they would be built immediately. As of midday yesterday, when I had someone go down and check for me, there was absolutely no sign of any activity in terms of putting up

the traffic lights. Some minor work is being done to realign the intersection, but there are no traffic lights.

The other two seriously deficient intersections on the Nepean Highway in the Mornington area are Oakbank Road, which carries over 100 buses every day with schoolkids, and Uralla Road, which is soon to carry a lot of school traffic. There was absolutely no mention of those intersections either. As I said earlier, we continue to struggle with rural roads carrying urban traffic volumes.

Like many parts of Victoria, Mornington is very well served by our police force. They do a great job and look after their community very well. But they are stretched way too far. They do not have the manpower resources to do the job that they want to do and the community would like them to do. As I have noted in this place before, the cells at Mornington were closed in about September last year. Now if there is a prisoner to be detained in custody the van has to travel to Frankston. That is a 1-hour round trip. That means there is no van and no police coverage in Mornington, Mount Eliza, Mount Martha or Moorooduc for the full hour that the van is away.

I must say there are some bright spots on the police and community safety front. We were fortunate to obtain funding for a closed circuit television system from the federal government through the office of the federal member for Dunkley. We had had a serious nightclub problem in the main street, with serious property damage, assaults et cetera, and within a couple of days of those cameras being switched on the problem was solved. It was a problem that had been going on for a number of years, and it was solved in two days with technology. I suggest to the government that if we cannot find the money to get more police on the streets — and I make the distinction between police numbers and police on the streets — then perhaps a more innovative approach to other problems would bear fruit.

This budget contains a couple of initiatives that will help the peninsula in terms of health. The money for the Frankston Hospital capital works is welcome, as is the money for the community health service. But before I get too excited, I think I will wait until they are built. In 2002, once again coincidentally in the run-up to an election, a Mornington aged care facility — 'a centre for independent living' was I think the brand it was given at the time — was announced with much fanfare. It was a \$20 million project, and it was really pretty simple. We had old high school land available on a good flat site with easy access. You would think it would have been pretty easy to build, and you would

think it would have just got done. Five years later, stage 1 — somewhere along the way the project got broken up into stage 1 and stage 2, stage 1 being a \$9 million construction project — is still not complete. If we look at the service delivery figures from budget paper 3 of 2005–06, they show that \$9 million was approved for the project — by this time called Mornington hospital — and that in 2006–07 it was anticipated that a further \$11 million would be found.

When the budget papers came out last year the \$11 million was not there. There may have been a reference to the project, but the money was not there, and when we look at the same table, table 4.2 in this year's budget papers, the whole project has gone. Not only is the \$11 million not allocated, but it is not set aside for the future. It seems to have slipped off the radar. I welcome the spending, but you wonder whether it will happen and, if it does happen, whether it will be of the scale promised or it will be a quarter or half of what has been promised. In Mornington the Peninsula Community Health Service is still stuck in its portable buildings. Under the Kennett government we were very close to obtaining a specific purpose-built site, but for the last seven and a half years they have languished in portables. At the rate we are going they will still be there until the next election.

I touch briefly on public transport or what passes for it in the Mornington electorate. That has also been largely ignored. In the Treasurer's press release of 1 May he mentions twice in one heading after another trumpeting changes to the zone 3 area for the Mornington Peninsula. He refers to it, firstly, under the heading 'Investing in Victoria's public transport system', and secondly, under 'Provincial Victoria'. Obviously the Treasurer was so pleased with this that he mentioned it twice. I say as an aside in view of my member's statement earlier, if the Treasurer thinks that Mornington and the Mornington Peninsula are part of provincial Victoria he might mention it to the Minister for Planning in the other place because he thinks they are part of the southern suburbs.

The reality of that announcement is that it is the only public transport initiative on the Mornington Peninsula and it follows on the heels of a half-baked scheme last year. We have seen the government adopt Liberal Party policy in part to drop zone 3 and to include it in zone 2, which has been extended. The extension of the zone has only gone halfway down the peninsula to Mount Martha, so the rest of the Mornington Peninsula is still outside the zone. It is a shame that when the government adopts Liberal Party policy it does not go the whole hog. We are still stuck with a second-rate system, a system that barely covers local transport

needs and a system that certainly provides a quicker trip from Melbourne to Frankston than from Frankston to Mount Martha.

This budget continues the tradition of lost opportunities. It could have been about improving services; it could have been about meeting infrastructure needs; it could have been about value for money and living within our means. What it is about is building up the public service; raising state debt; running down our infrastructure instead of building it up; and most of all, it is about living for today and letting tomorrow take care of itself. It looks to me as if history is repeating itself.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. In my view the budget has again been kind to regional Victoria and Geelong in particular. Not only is the hallmark financial responsibility, but it has a very strong equity basis. I note the member for Lara spoke previously about the \$40 million that was recently announced as an investment in the Corio-Norlane area for social housing, which will have a positive benefit in my area as well.

I want to nominate a number of other projects that are in this budget that are specifically aimed at South Barwon. I refer to the modernisation of Oberon Secondary College, the expansion of Torquay Primary School to year 9 in Torquay and the development of the Barwon River park from Buckley Falls to Barwon Heads, which has taken its first steps. The construction of the ambulance station in Belmont has been long awaited. As a former emergency services worker and fireman, I know that the guys and girls at the ambos in Belmont have waited a long, long time for a new facility and it is one that they are looking forward to having completed in the next financial year.

Finally, I spend my remaining time on the commitment for \$62.5 million for stage 4 of the overpass. It extends the road up Anglesea Road and alleviates the bottleneck at the Princes Highway. We have committed our half of the \$125 million. Again, I state publicly that we have guaranteed the other \$62.5 million if it is needed. Frankly, there are a plethora of individuals of different political views and organisations who advocate that the federal government needs to match the state's allocation of \$62.5 million. We have nominated that in terms of our AusLink 2 funds. It is one that councils in the region, G21 — a collection of five local councils — and councils right down the Princes Highway West corridor have been advocating strongly with the federal government to match the \$62.5 million allocated by the state government.

Unfortunately the dark hand of the federal member for Corangamite, Stewart McArthur, appears to be behind this. We are about to issue tenders for stage 3. I am fearful that the federal member may renege on the federal government's commitment to fund stage 3. He has been advocating for his crayon drawing way out west, which has been pilloried from post to post. My understanding is he may be threatening to withdraw funding for stage 3. He is hearing footsteps. Certainly the Liberal members that I am in communication with, and the minutes of meetings that have been put under my door, indicate that the federal member for Corangamite is quite nervous.

He has backed himself into a corner. He has a history of saying no to any federal funding, whether it is for the Melbourne road or other roads. Under the previous Liberal government members may be well aware that the federal member for Corangamite said no to the much-needed upgrade, and he is saying no now. I cannot help but think that he is steeped in the arrogance of incumbency. He believes the seat is his for life, and it would be a unique member in any party who actually advocates money for other seats, whether it be for Princes Highway East or for marginal seats in other states.

I cannot help but contrast his attitude to that of the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, The Nationals member for Gippsland. He advocates strongly for his electorate. Strange as it may be, he advocates for federal funding and has a proactive approach for his roads. It is no coincidence that Princes Highway East is duplicated all the way through to Traralgon. If you took the same rationale for duplicating Princes Highway East to Princes Highway West — we have very similar truck and traffic movements, similar fatalities and similar usages — the duplication of Princes Highway West would be well past Colac.

The difficulty has been that we have a federal member, the federal member for Corangamite, who actively discourages federal money for his electorate. The councils from Geelong to the border argue quite strongly that federal money is not only needed for stage 4, but that it should be honoured for stage 3. I repeat that it appears the federal member is threatening to withdraw money for stage 3 if we do not approve his particular view of where the road should go. The councils have lost patience with the federal member for Corangamite, and I know a number of his colleagues have also lost patience. The seat has contracted from being a safe Liberal seat, which it has been throughout its history to a marginal seat with around a 5 per cent swing.

Certainly Stewart is doing his damndest to make it extremely marginal, and I can see no way for the member for Corangamite to appease his own party supporters other than to support federal funding for stage 4 and also support federal funding for the duplication of the Princes Highway to Colac — something which indeed is a bipartisan view of the members in Geelong. The only two people who disagree are the federal member for Corangamite and, unfortunately, the state member for Polwarth. It is quite bemusing because previous incarnations of the Liberal Party supported the duplication of the Colac highway under the RONI (roads of national importance) scheme.

I think it was a past member in the other place, the Honourable Geoff Craige, who supported matching funding with the state for duplication of the Princes Highway. I am bemused about why the current member for Polwarth has turned that view on its head, and there are a number of individuals in his electorate as well as mine who will be asking that question repeatedly.

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill about what has been happening in Rodney and what has not happened in Rodney. There is great concern that once again the gas pipelines promised prior to 2002 have not been committed to. The towns of Heathcote, Elmore, Nathalia, Lockington, Leitchville, Gunbower and Cohuna would have all benefited greatly by having natural gas piped to them as was promised prior to the 2002 election.

We have pipelines being built all around the state for water and promised all around the state for water. It would make a lot of sense to build the gas pipelines and take industry to where the water is. There are great opportunities for the township of Elmore for further processing of grains to produce ethanol. The government talks about renewable fuels. There is a great chance for an industry at Elmore. We need the gas connected so that it becomes viable, and the energy source is there.

The police station at Echuca is riddled with white ants. Since Echuca has developed over its 150 years or so of history, it has become apparent that the police station is now in the wrong position. The police station needs to be on the highway so that there can be a quick response. The current situation is that when there is an emergency out on the highway you have to have the police car using lights and sirens going through the tourist precinct where there are lots of people. The police station needs to be on the highway where it will be safer and for the good of the community.

The police station at Heathcote is another one that was overlooked. It needs a full redevelopment. It is quite a dangerous situation. There are a lot of occupational health and safety issues within the Heathcote police station, so there needs to be a total redevelopment. Police numbers need to be increased in the Heathcote area. Many of the officers there work one-up, which is again an occupational health and safety issue. While they do not have to work one-up, the rosters say they do. The police there can say no, but they do not, and it is out of the goodness of the hearts of those loyal police in Heathcote that we keep having the service there. They need more resources put in.

There is no commitment in the budget for extra bridges. We have had a letter from the Picola fire brigade which says that it is seriously considering not going into the Barmah Forest when there is a fire. Being a fire brigade member, I understand the dangers of fighting fires. If the bridges and tracks are not up to standard, we have a disaster waiting to happen if we send people into fires in the Barmah Forest and they cannot get out. The government must commit to upgrading bridges and tracks in the Barmah Forest for the safety of the CFA (Country Fire Authority) and other personnel when there are fires. If we do not have that, there is a big disaster waiting to happen.

We heard in the budget about money being spent on CFA sheds and equipment. I acknowledge that, and I think it is a good thing. However, it is being funded by an inequitable tax on insurance. For every dollar that people in country Victoria spend on insurance, there is another approximately 80 cents on top of that in tax. Not only is there the fire insurance tax, there is stamp duty on that fire insurance tax, and then there is GST on top of that, so we have a tax on a tax on a tax. It is inequitable. Only the people who pay insurance contribute. We must find a more equitable way of funding the CFA where everyone pays rather than just people who insure. It is currently a disincentive to insure.

We have a Royal Automobile Club of Victoria report that says there needs to be an extra \$200 million a year spent on country roads. Everyone knows that, if you fix country roads, you save country lives. We will continue to do that, but the government has ignored the calls of the RACV for an extra \$200 million. We have a commitment for an extra \$91 million, but \$63 million, as the previous speaker said, is to be spent on the Geelong bypass, leaving \$28 million for the rest of Victoria, which is grossly inadequate.

Here we are in the worst drought in memory, and what do we get? We get a response of \$38 million over four

years for infrastructure savings in the Shepparton region. Compare this to the federal plan, which could deliver billions of dollars of investment for piping channels.

Ms Allan — You went to jelly on this.

Mr WELLER — We did not go to jelly. We made sure — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! Interjections are disorderly.

Mr WELLER — What we must remember is that over the last seven and a half years there have been commitments to \$50 million under the 80:20 deal. How much has been spent? Very little. There was another commitment to \$40 million prior to the 2002 election. How much has been spent? There has been a commitment for \$23 million, but only about a quarter of that has been spent. Again there was a commitment for \$20 million to be spent in the Sunraysia area prior to the 2002 election. How much has been spent? Zip. The government has recommitted. All we get are promises and no action when it comes to spending on infrastructure and water.

We have a federal plan where we could actually have billions of dollars invested in lining channels, piping channels and up-to-date infrastructure. It would be a boon for the irrigation areas of northern Victoria to have those billions invested as we recover from drought. It would generate a lot of activity with the small businesses in northern Victoria and would be a great thing for it. As to the drought, the government has ignored the situation of the farmers and the small businesses in northern Victoria. There needs to be a reintroduction of the cash grants of \$20 000 to farmers, which was quite a successful program. I will give members on the other side their due: they brought it in in 2002. They should have brought it back in again.

There are plans for a \$6 million refurbishment of the port of Echuca. It is an icon of this state — a tourist attraction that is promoted around the world by Victoria. Unfortunately this government has not made a commitment at this stage. I would have thought there would have been the opportunity in the budget to make a commitment to a contribution to refurbish the port of Echuca, noting that when he was in my electorate some weeks ago the federal Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, the Honourable John Cobb, made an announcement that the federal government would be contributing half a million dollars.

Last night in the house we listened to the member for Melton.

An honourable member — I didn't listen!

Mr WELLER — I pay attention to all speakers in this house, and I listened to him. He spoke of the year 12 retention rates, of how they were not happening in northern Victoria and of how they were not happening in The Nationals seats. Once again we have members of the government understanding the problem but sitting on their hands and doing nothing about it. They know the problem from the representation of members from rural and regional Victoria who have explained the problem well. Last night the member for Melton quite rightly put it that the year 12 retention rates in country Victoria were not acceptable. But what has the government done about it, and where is the commitment in the budget to fix it? There is no commitment. I could go on to the issue of roads.

The government understands the issue and understands that if you invest money and fix country roads, you will save country lives — and you will even save the lives of the people who come from the city and drive on those country roads. We need to have a government that does more than know about a problem; we need a government that fixes a problem. The budget was an opportunity to make a further investment of at least \$200 million as the independent Royal Automobile Club of Victoria suggested in its report.

When it comes to the issue of health, last night the member for Lowan, quite rightly, pointed to the fact that we are losing maternity services in country Victoria. The comment was made in the house by the Minister for Health that women were not having babies in country Victoria.

Ms Allan — She didn't say that.

Mr WELLER — She did. We must remember that in Echuca, in the seat of Rodney, the birth rate has increased. There have been more births over the last 12 months at the Echuca hospital than there were in the prior 12 months. The Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment went as far to suggest that there are no good men in the country to father these children. I suggest that perhaps government members need to get out to the country and have a look around. There are plenty of us good men in the country. The problem is we are out representing our constituents and not home often enough!

I turn to the issue of local government cost shifting. This government has been pushing costs onto local government, and local government cannot take it any

more. This government needs to find another way of funding local government, and the budget was an opportunity. Fortunately we have had rain over the last three to four weeks, and the chooks have come home to roost: the roads are an absolute disgrace. It has been a time bomb waiting to happen. Fortunately, from a roads point of view, there has not been a lot of rain and the roads have stood up, but over the last three to four weeks since it has been raining, it has come home to roost that the roads are a disgrace, and we have no money in the budget to help — —

Mr Batchelor — Get stuck into the councils!

Mr WELLER — It is all well and good to blame the councils, but I believe the state government has a role to support local government in giving us a standard of roads in country Victoria which is not only safe but that is conducive to getting goods to the ports for exports at a competitive rate.

We must remember that grey spot funding was a pre-election promise, and the government has delivered. But what? Fifteen million dollars! I advise members that all of that amount could be spent in my seat alone. Warrowitue Road, where it joins the Northern Highway, is a prime one for this. We need a right-hand turning lane and we need the bridge widened so that can be accommodated. The Midland Highway between Elmore and Stanhope is an absolute disgrace. On Monday I was at the corner of Neilsons Road and the Midland Highway with 15 of my local constituents.

Over the last 15 years there have been seven truck rollovers on that bend. Fortunately we have had no human deaths, but we have had hundreds of sheep killed, and the local farmer provided a burial site for those sheep. I would say that this is a soda for grey spot funding. However, \$15 million is only going to cover my electorate, let alone all the other electorates in country Victoria. The grey spot funding has been acknowledged, but we need to make sure there is a greater contribution, because there is a far bigger need than the \$15 million there. In summary, there is no doubt that Labor cannot manage money.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Mental Health) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. I am happy to make a brief contribution today, because I understand there has been an agreement with the opposition to enable all its members to have an opportunity to make a contribution.

Two key principles have underpinned the Bracks government. Firstly, our commitment to governing for

the whole of Victoria, and secondly, our commitment to governing for all Victorians. The significant commitments that we have made in A Fairer Victoria over the last few years have built on our investments in areas that have direct impact on the disadvantaged in this state. I am pleased that many of these commitments are within my portfolio areas — for example, \$171 million to continue reforms in investment in children's services; \$69 million to continue to support and implement our mental health strategy; and, of course, a continuation of our war on drugs.

These initiatives have been welcomed across the board by Kindergarten Parents Victoria and Community Child Care and of course they have been overwhelmingly endorsed by the former Premier, Jeff Kennett, through beyondblue. These investments continue to lay the foundations that will help all Victorians to share in the economic wealth that is created in Victoria.

But today I want to spend my time talking particularly about the significant investments this government is making in my electorate of Bellarine and in the communities of Geelong. As I said previously, one of the key priorities for the members of this government is our commitment to ensure that we govern for all of Victoria. There are no 'toenails' with this government! We govern for every corner, every suburb and every region, and we want to ensure that everyone benefits from economic prosperity here in Victoria.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the commitments this government has made to the communities of Geelong and Bellarine. That is seen in our commitment to schools and in our commitment to building a better health service. For example, there is the new ambulance station in Ocean Grove, the rebuilding of the Andrew Love Cancer Centre and the commencement of building of the new emergency department at Geelong Hospital. There are also the enormous commitments in community facilities like Parks Hall in Portarlington and the Springdale neighbourhood centre. As well there is our commitment to improving infrastructure by extending natural gas throughout the North Bellarine region. This budget continues these commitments and realises many of our election promises. The communities of Geelong and the people of Bellarine know that, when our government promises something, we deliver. This budget absolutely honours the promises we made.

In Bellarine very important community projects have been funded. One of my key priorities was the funding and rebuilding of the Point Lonsdale Primary School. As education remains the Bracks government's no. 1

priority, \$4.1 million has been provided to completely rebuild this primary school. This has been welcomed by the local community and of course the school community down there. This builds on the other commitments and the other building projects that have been undertaken in Bellarine. These include the new Leopold Primary School, the new Ocean Grove campus of the Bellarine Secondary College, the new Wallington Primary School and currently the biggest building project in Geelong, the Newcomb Secondary College.

The budget also delivers on the commitment we made to the residents of Clifton Springs and Drysdale to provide \$500 000 to upgrade and assist in improving access to the beach area, which is known in the local community as the Dell. It was closed for many years by the council due to erosion and cliff slippage, and although currently open it is not really very accessible. This money will go towards ensuring that we have an accessible, high-quality beach for the families of Clifton Springs and Drysdale.

The budget also provides \$1.5 million to protect the heritage elements at Queenscliff pier. This is a beautiful pier that needs substantial work to ensure that it remains a major tourist attraction in the local community. One of the really celebrated initiatives of this government has been the \$1.2 million over four years that has been provided to expand the Queenscliff Marine Discovery Centre. For those members who have not been to the marine discovery centre, I recommend it. It is in a brand-new building that was built by this government and offers one of the most well-utilised state education programs around the state, with more visitors than the Melbourne Museum. The budget also provides \$2.5 million for the Bellarine pool at Ocean Grove, which the community is extremely excited about, having again waited many years for it.

Of course the budget also meets our commitment to the Geelong ring-road by providing \$62.5 million, and there is \$2 million to plan for the expansion of the Geelong Hospital, which includes expanded mental health facilities. This has been welcomed by all quarters of the Geelong and Bellarine community. Of course the school community is celebrating and eagerly awaiting the demolition of the Point Lonsdale Primary School. As the *Geelong Advertiser* reported, it was a school budget win.

In the 2006 election we promised to invest in the services that matter to Geelong and Bellarine families. The 2007 budget focuses on making Victoria and the Geelong region the best place to live, work and raise a family. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. If only it were all true! If only we could rely on the Treasurer's figures. If only his figures stood the test of time. I offer this caution to the new members of the government: they should not put their trust in the Treasurer, because he has never turned up with the right figures before. They have all fallen away as time goes by, and that is the way of our Treasurer. He utters the figure, pushes it hard, and then it falls away. We have heard it all before. Last year I said we had heard it all before, but I cannot believe this budget. I said last year that we had heard it all before and we had been let down, and I asked in a budget response last year, 'Why should anyone believe them now?'. The budget last year depended on debt. It depended on that debt ballooning. It was propped up by the sale of assets, the stripping of authorities and the bringing forward of future payments.

Last year the government trumpeted its capital spend on schools. Let me say it again: we have heard it all before. We heard it last year. 'The biggest capital spend ever on schools by any Victorian government' is what was said about last year's budget. The education minister, the Treasurer and the Premier trumpeted that around, and in February last year they anticipated this and created the Building Tomorrow's Schools Today Fund. It was going to have \$600 million in it, and as I said, it was going to be the biggest capital spend ever on schools. That was the government's budget centrepiece last year. Two days after the budget was handed down last year I asked whether we could believe them. What happened the next day? Their budget collapsed. It fell over within four days when the sale of Snowy Hydro fell through. Remember the comic scenes of the Treasurer and the Premier trying to rationalise what they were going to do with the budget last year. It fell over!

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — You did not like it then; you do not like it now. It fell over, and still neither the Treasurer nor the Premier can explain what happened to that fund, what happened to that money or what happened to that promise.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr BAILLIEU — Made it bigger, indeed. That is the cry from the member for Melton. The Premier said at the time, 'No problems. We have got the money'. He changed his mind shortly after and said, 'No, we do not have the money, but it is okay, it will be dividend flow from the Snowy Hydro Corporation'. He told the Public

Accounts and Estimates Committee that we should check out the prospectus to see that that was the case. Twelve months later we still do not have that prospectus.

Members should look at the budget papers to try to find the dividend flow from the Snowy Hydro Corporation. They should try to find the Building Tomorrow's Schools Today Fund. It was trumpeted in last year's budget papers and listed as a fund, but it is not even there. It has gone; it has fallen over. It is just a reminder that what was said last year was a furphy — it was an open-ended public commitment with no basis in fact. The fund the government established last year is gone. There has been no word of it. There have been no press releases to say it is gone. I have searched for a press release, and I have searched for any TV ads that say it has gone. The glee with which the Premier promoted himself with regard to that measure had to be seen to be believed, but it is gone.

What has happened with this budget? It has taken only 24 hours to fall over. Last year it was four days; this year it is only 24 hours.

Mr R. Smith — They are more efficient this year.

Mr BAILLIEU — That is a good point — it is the only thing it has done quickly. The only thing it has rushed through is the collapse of this budget. Within 24 hours we had the Premier and Treasurer running around trying to justify a massive expansion of debt, a total failure to fund any water projects of significance and an extraordinary array of unfunded capital commitments — and I will come back to that.

The Premier and the Treasurer were so proud of this budget that they left town! The Dodgy Brothers left town together on the same day, and they left the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee still wondering what on earth they had said in their explanations, because the gobbledegook they offered up by way of explanation was extraordinary. They were so deeply committed to this budget that they left town within four days of delivering it. The question marks over significant portions of the budget are still with us.

What did we learn from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing? We learnt almost nothing from the Treasurer and the Premier. The Treasurer was unable to explain the unfunded capital allocations in the budget. As I said, there was no mention of the Building Tomorrow's Schools Today Fund — it has just vanished. We have taxation at record levels — other members have gone through this at some length — stamp duty approaching the \$3 billion

mark and precious little relief for first home buyers. Stamp duty rates for average home buyers are still at the top of the tree for Australia. It is extraordinary.

In terms of other money sources, once again Labor is stealing money from problem gamblers. That is the Labor way, and it has been the Labor way for 50 years. Every time there is a shortage of funds on the revenue side, the Labor Party turns to problem gamblers. Labor trumpets that it cares about problem gamblers, but nothing could be further from the truth. What we have in regard to problem gamblers is tears and taxes — it sheds a few tears for problem gamblers, then it taxes them big time.

Land tax is a classic example. As I have said in this house before, we have reached record levels of land tax. We were approaching the \$800 million or \$900 million last year. In fact, the budget figure last year was exceeded by over \$100 million. That is just a reminder that this Treasurer never gets his figures right. There was over \$100 million in extra land tax, and this year we are budgeting for more land tax than last year. Members should not think there will be any significant land tax reductions for those who are paying it.

One thing that delights me about the Treasurer is that every couple of years he trumpets how many people he has excluded from land tax. This year he said 28 000 people would be taken off the land tax list. In May 2005 he took 21 000 people off, in May 2002, 21 000, and in May 2001, 46 000. Supposedly only 120 000 people pay land tax — and the government has taken them all off. No-one is paying land tax, but the government is sucking over \$750 million out of their pockets. There are probably only two or three people left who pay land tax, and somehow or other their bills will not increase by more than 50 per cent! I have had people in my office whose land tax bills have increased by 50 per cent or more, and they are suffering. This so-called land tax relief will again erode, and once again in a couple of years time we will be removing another 20 000 people — but they will be the same people. The Treasurer sucks them into the land tax system, beats them up for a couple of years, lets them off for six months and then does it again. It just goes around and around.

We have heard other members talk about debt. I think the public is now very well aware that this government is being propped up by debt. Last year's budget figures on debt have blown out. Again, you cannot trust the Treasurer's figures. He said last year that we would have debt of \$7.1 billion by 2010. It is already up to \$8 billion, and we are racing to accumulate over \$15 billion of debt by 2011. With the unfunded

superannuation liabilities, we are halfway back to the Cain and Kirner debt levels. It is an extraordinary thing that we are being propped up by debt.

We said in the election campaign that the Treasurer could not find his capital commitments and that there was a \$300 million hole. We put out press releases and received a little bit of coverage. The Treasurer denied it. In December we had a closer look and thought it was \$800 million. It is way over that now. The list of unfunded capital commitments in this budget is extraordinary. Other members have gone through it, so I do not intend to read them all out. There is actually a list in budget paper 3 of unfunded capital commitments, particularly in education and health.

The classic example for me is selective schools. Some \$40 million was supposedly allocated to two select entry schools. Why is that not in here? Because prior to the election we announced that we were going to introduce additional selective schools in Victoria. This is in the budget because we made a commitment to additional selective schools. What did the Treasurer and the Premier do? They said, 'We had better get out there and promise that too'. They promised two select entry high schools — for \$40 million.

You might imagine that a commitment like that would be followed up in this budget. There it is, \$40 million: the government has followed it up. But how much money is going to be spent in the next four years? The answer is \$1 million! The message for anybody reading these budget papers is that it is not going to happen, that it was a furphy in the first place and that this is all a bit of nonsense. We can go through other things — for example, \$1.2 billion for the modernisation of schools, with only \$360 million committed. On the hospital side, \$90 million is assigned to the Warrnambool hospital — again a commitment the government made because we had made a commitment — but how much is allocated over four years? The answer is \$16 million! It is not going to happen. The list goes on and on, and others have talked about it at length.

There is a series of unfunded capital commitments — \$1.8 billion worth — in the budget. How much in unfunded capital allocations is there in the budget? There is \$1.6 billion, and that is before we get to the fundamental projects in water. We have had this lame approach from the government about water security, and what a disaster it has been. Now we find the government talking about up to \$5 billion worth of projects in water. It cannot make up its mind. The Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change could not tell the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee what was going to be done, when it was

going to be done, how much it would cost and who would do it. There is talk of up to \$5 billion, with an announcement soon, but where is the money? It is not assigned. In the process he failed to rule out adding recycled sewage to our potable supplies. That is quite extraordinary.

Where is the commitment to channel deepening? Search the budget papers and find a commitment to channel deepening. Search the budget papers and find a financial commitment to rail standardisation or to roads or to the east-west link or to the Frankston bypass. I heard the member for South Barwon talking about the Princes Highway duplication to Colac and his staunch commitment to it. Find it in the budget papers. He stands up here and talks about it as a vital commitment, but we cannot find it in the budget papers. This budget is everything it says it is not, and it is extraordinary in the way it has let down the community.

I might just make a quick comment about my own electorate. There is a Glenferrie community hub that needs funding, and I urge the government to support this. This is a project which makes sense. I also want to make a comment about our schools. Auburn Primary School desperately needs capital funding, as do the Glenferrie and Camberwell primaries. In the police arena, would you believe that the government is removing police in Boroondara despite outrageous antisocial problems in Glenferrie and Burwood roads! The Treasurer said — —

Mr Nardella — Going through the roof there, is it?

Mr BAILLIEU — It is, actually. Come down on a Friday night and I will show you, Don. The Treasurer said this budget is about growth. It is: it is about growth in debt, growth in taxes and growth in water insecurity and prices of essential services. He said it was a more prosperous and fairer budget. It is not, because it is a burden on the next generation. He said it would tackle the challenges of the future. It does not do that at all — no infrastructure funding, no water infrastructure and no funding for manufacturing. If this is the best Labor can do after eight years of money and power and mates, then Victorians have every right to be disappointed.

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — It is a pleasure to rise to support the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill, particularly after the comments we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition. With those rubbery figures, poor financial analysis and misleading information about the budget, is it any wonder that the shadow Treasurer was not here to hear his leader speak today? Hiding in his room, ashamed of it!

The appropriation bill outlines a budget that is economically sound whilst providing one of the biggest boosts to infrastructure and social improvement this state has seen. That is what Victorians want. They want strong industry growth, they want strong employment, they want sound economic policy and they want progressive social policy, and that is why they voted for the Bracks government at the last election — because that is what we offer. They are happy to support progressive social policy if they enjoy good economic security, and that is what this budget also delivers. They want value for money, they want to make sure their taxes are spent on good causes and they want to see the results, and they get that in this budget.

Let us have a look at just a few of the underlying statistics in the budget. Expected growth is 2.75 per cent, increasing to 3.25 per cent in 2007–08, with total business in Victoria at near-record levels. Would the Liberals not have loved to have had that under their reign? The total value of building approvals has been higher than \$1 billion in 66 of the last 67 months. Over the past year Victorian employment increased by a massive 68 900, or 2.8 per cent. In country Victoria we have seen employment grow by 5.4 per cent, the second fastest growth rate in a country area, behind resource-rich Queensland. In Victoria we have seen massive population growth of something like 1.4 per cent. These are great underlying economic statistics in this budget. They are particularly good to see because a strong dollar, bushfires and drought have shown that this budget and the state government's economic credentials have stood the test of time.

It is not just about economics, it is about this budget delivering on the social and infrastructure levels. We see in education some \$904 million, including \$555 million for the biggest ever school rebuilding program in Victoria, a massive increase from what we saw in the Kennett years, when I think it was hovering around a \$90 million annual infrastructure spend on education — now \$555 million. In public transport there is \$872 million for major upgrades to our transport system. Of course these are needed, because under Labor we have seen patronage grow at astronomical rates over the last few years.

Health, often in the media, gets a massive \$1.9 billion boost to funding for elective surgery, expanded ambulance services and capital investment. My electorate of Eltham gets \$8 million of that money for a 20-bed Austin surgery centre at the Heidelberg repat campus, which will be very welcomed by people needing to use that service. The environment is something I am passionate about and something many people in Eltham are passionate about, and the budget

sees \$520 million committed to securing water supply, protecting the environment, tackling climate change and strengthening agricultural industries. That is a great boost for Victoria's environment. Looking at business and business taxes, the budget includes a massive \$1.5 billion worth of initiatives to cut costs for business, including land tax cuts and a 10 per cent reduction in WorkCover premiums. This is a fantastic budget that delivers a strong economy, strong forward growth and massive infrastructure and social improvements.

In the Eltham electorate a microcosm of the budget can be seen quite clearly. I have to admit that, unlike the member for Rodney, I did not ask for the entire road budget to be spent in Eltham. Quite frankly if I did, I think I would never get re-elected in Eltham.

Ms Allan — You wouldn't get preselected either.

Mr HERBERT — I would not get preselected either, as the minister said. But we will have \$300 000 for new traffic signals at the Karingal Drive–Weidlich Road intersection, which is a positive for the residents. There will be \$580 000 for improvements to the Main Road–Cecil Street–Diamond Street intersection, which is a great thing for the residents of Judge Book Retirement Village, who have crossed that intersection for many years and have been lobbying very hard. We see a massive \$4.5 million being spent to modernise Greenhills Primary School and many other initiatives in the budget for the local area. I am very pleased about this budget for the state of Victoria and for Eltham in particular.

In finishing, I want to point out that, with regard to my earlier comments about the shadow Treasurer not being here, I have just been told that he is at a family funeral. I hope that it is not too hard for him and that he comes back to the chamber when it is appropriate.

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. Reading it reminds me very clearly that this government has a propensity to promise a lot and deliver very little. On top of its massive micro failures the budget has some very serious flaws. From the Victorian public's perspective it fails to deliver any leadership, vision or innovation. There is no clear direction or plan for Victoria. There is no way of finding where this government wants to take the state. How can you ask Victorians to jump on board when they do not know the destination?

However, the state government would tell you otherwise. It would tell you that it has the water crisis in hand and that we are not languishing behind the other states in education, health and infrastructure, just to

name a few. Water is another great example. Instead of implementing strategies on water using a ballooning surplus of almost \$1 billion — \$540 million more than what was expected — the government is looking into it. It is having another look. It is like a rabbit stuck in a spotlight: it does not seem able to act at all. There is no sense of urgency. There is no water, there are no dams and there is no desalination plant. There is not even a realistic approach to recycling. With \$34 billion to spend — more than twice what the last government had to run this state — there is no plan to solve the water crisis. It appears that this government is incapable of acting when there is a crisis.

The situation at Gunnamatta is interesting. The Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change has recently adopted Liberal Party policy by announcing the closure of the Gunnamatta outfall. It is a welcome adoption, but it is late and it needs to be brought forward. It needs to be done as quickly as possible. An enormous amount of water is pumped out into the ocean and wasted. It could be used for agriculture and for lots of other purposes, and it would save drinking water. I think desalination will very soon be another great example of a Bracks government backflip.

I think desalination, which was Liberal Party policy at the last election, will be adopted — again belatedly — by this government, and I am hoping that that will be brought forward as well. Desalination has been recognised across the world, and certainly across the various states of Australia, as good policy. It is just one of the elements that need to be implemented by this government to solve our water crisis. But it seems that the Bracks government's major strategy for solving the water crisis is to pray for rain.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr BURGESS — It would be laughable if it were not so serious. I am certain that I am not the only member in this chamber who has had more than one constituent in their office in tears because they are worried that this state is going to run out of water. I do not think it is something we should be taking lightly, and I do not think it is something we should look into forever. It is something we should be acting on, and I encourage the government to act.

Labor has also failed to satisfy its election pledge to make education its priority. This budget does nothing to address the sliding numeracy and literacy standards in this state. Instead of being in the lead, Victoria is now behind. That is where it was before the Kennett government came to office, and that is where it is again now. In my own electorate Elisabeth Murdoch College

and Western Port Secondary College are both schools that have good reason to be bitterly disappointed by this budget. There is no doubt the Bracks government would say that it did not give a cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die sort of promise, but over a period of time the local member and various ministers built up the expectation of these two schools that there would be substantial upgrades for them in this budget.

If members look at the Western Port Secondary College website, they will see that there was an enormous expectation by that school and by the local community that money would be spent to upgrade it. Unfortunately, when it came to budget time there was nothing. That school is bitterly disappointed, and it has every right to be. So far as Elisabeth Murdoch College is concerned, the Premier turned up, did what he usually does and made one of his normal speeches. He spoke for a long time and said nothing. However, what he did was encourage people in that school, in that community and in that area to have the expectation that their school would receive an upgrade. Again, when it came to budget time there was nothing. It is little wonder that politicians are held in such low esteem in this country. Seriously it is little wonder that politics is one the least trusted professions in this country.

Turning to crime rates, on page 26 of budget paper 3 the government makes the statement that 'since 2000–2001, the crime rate in Victoria has fallen by 22 per cent'. I have met with senior police officers in my area and we have looked at the crime statistics in detail, line by line, not just for my area but for Victoria. This is another Bracks government con. Have government members actually looked at the statistics? Do they have any idea what the mantra is that they are repeating? I will give them the government's own police department official figures for the years 1999 to 2006. For the third consecutive year there are more Victorian victims of crime. Over those years sexual assault was up 5.1 per cent; rape increased by 18.9 per cent; homicide increased by 36 per cent; and assaults increased by 45.8 per cent. Are they really figures that government members are proud of? Is the government really saying that crime is down in this state? I do not believe it when I hear it. It is an absolute con.

What is down? I will tell members what is down: police morale is down. It is the lowest it has ever been. The financial assistance to stations across regional Victoria will not even address long-term maintenance issues. In my electorate the previous member made much fanfare about a \$2.5 million upgrade to the Hastings police station, which was intended to solve the lack of police resources and deal with the fact that they were

struggling because there were not enough police to keep the station open. What did the \$2.5 million upgrade actually mean? The \$2.5 million has not arrived yet, but I am told by a senior officer in the area that in effect a large percentage of it has already been absorbed in what was described as 'regional costs'.

I am also told that out of that there will be a bill for rewiring of \$800 000. There will be very little left of the \$2.5 million for the desperately needed upgrade to the station, which our local police officers so desperately deserve. There are only two alternatives here. When this announcement was made the government either knew it was underfunding it or did not know. If the government did not know, then it just falls into the same category as the rest of its projects, large and small, and shows that it is incapable of running them.

Unfortunately the Hastings police station is struggling. It is low on staff members, and its resources are being stretched beyond belief. While this government sits and trumpets about having extra police, it is commonly known — even the police department itself has admitted it — that there are 600 less police on the front line. That is reflected in my electorate, and it is just not good enough.

I turn to the Stony Point rail service. On 8 November 2006 the Bracks government promised that it would upgrade the rolling stock on the Stony Point rail service to Sprinter trains and also increase the frequency of the service. The budget came along and we did not even get a mention. So the people of the Hastings electorate, a community which relies on that train service, have been cheated again. Again they are going to have to put up with outdated train carriages, ancient engines and totally inadequate service. It is another Bracks promise that has been smashed, not just broken. This is a perfect example of what the Bracks government gets up to, and it highlights its incompetence. Honestly, the right hand of the Bracks government does not know what its left hand is doing. In fact it would not have a clue!

If you look at this, you have one department of the Bracks government announcing that it is going to upgrade the rolling stock and also upgrade the frequency of that service, while another department of the Bracks government is planning to increase freight services on the Frankston line twentyfold. That is in keeping with the Port of Hastings Corporation plan. Anyone who knows anything about the Frankston line — and the member for Frankston should take notice of this — would know that there is no ability whatsoever to increase to that level of freight service and maintain the passenger service. It is one or the

other, but which one is it? The community has the right to know which one of those two things this government plans to do. Is it going to upgrade the service for the passengers or is it going to upgrade the freight rate? Which one is it?

The Baxter Tavern and Stony Point Road intersections are two notoriously dangerous intersections. They have gone through a lot of lives between them. This is something that should be bipartisan. We should be working to make sure that this sort of thing does not happen. Unfortunately these sorts of things become political banter. After many years of pleading for an upgrade of these two intersections, just days before the last state election the Bracks government finally relented and said it would upgrade them. That was a desperate attempt to maintain its member in that area.

After reading the budget I stood in this house and criticised the government for not providing actual funding for the Baxter Tavern intersection. Following that criticism the member for Frankston stood and accused me of misleading the house. Within 24 hours of my criticism the member for Frankston had sent out a press release to the various newspapers in our area saying that what I had said was wrong. He said the budget papers were very clear and that \$5 million had been allocated for upgrading the Baxter Tavern intersection. None of the papers bothered to run his press release, and there is a good reason for that. In fact it is the member for Frankston who has misled the community, and I will explain why.

I will be kind and assume that the member for Frankston has done this out of ignorance and a complete inability to read budget papers. I might add that is a concession I give that the member for Frankston did not give. I think this is a problem that arises when somebody else makes the bullets and the member for Frankston just tries to fire them — they inevitably go clunk! On this occasion it seems that the member has taken someone else's word for what was in the budget. I invite the member for Frankston to show this house, this community, anyone, where the \$5 million is in the budget. I look forward to that, because it is not in there. I believe this mythical figure of \$5 million has come from the member for Frankston reading to a ministerial press release. It is not there.

Having said that, I understand the member for Frankton's sensitivity on this issue. I understand it because the Baxter Tavern intersection has been lumped in with the commencement work at the Moorooduc Highway and Cranbourne-Frankston Road intersection, which is the member for Frankton's biggest failure. The reason it is the member's biggest

failure and the reason we are so concerned about this is his complete inability to get his government to put in a Frankston bypass. The Scoresby toll road is going to pour 30 000 more cars a day into that intersection and the member for Frankston is unable to get it to commit to the bypass. Everybody knows that the community needs that bypass. Unfortunately the people of Frankston will suffer for that, the people of Hastings will suffer for that and the electorates of my colleagues in Mornington and Nepean will suffer for that. The best the member for Frankston can do is criticise.

The Bracks government has form in this area. In fact it is infamous. It never does what it says it is going to do. Unfortunately the way the budget has been structured and its lumping of those two projects together has given the government more wriggle room than I am comfortable with. I will be pushing the Bracks government to make sure it actually satisfies this commitment and fixes both of those intersections. The government is on notice.

I do not believe anyone would take the word of the Bracks government about anything. Having looked at the previous budgets and looking at this budget, I believe there is just no way that the government will do what it says it will do. It is worth considering the historical value of the budgets that this government has brought down. The people of Victoria expect and need value for money, and this government has been incapable of delivering it.

Ms MORAND (Mount Waverley) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. This is a great budget for Victoria. It is also a great budget for the Mount Waverley residents I represent here. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Health I am particularly proud of the continued investment this government is making in our health services, which includes an extra \$1.9 billion in this budget as a boost for our health services.

Over the past seven years this government has made significant investments in our health services. This is in response to the growing demand on our services. In our first term it was to make up for the cutbacks made in the Kennett years. Victoria has an outstanding health service, but it is challenged by ever-increasing demand on its services and the increased availability of new technologies and new treatments. Capital investment over the past seven years has seen the building or upgrading of 58 hospitals and aged-care facilities across Victoria. Investment in the workforce to help support the demand has seen a net equivalent full-time increase

of 7200 nurses across the Victorian health system. This is an outstanding achievement.

I just want to speak briefly about the budget impacts in my local area of Mount Waverley. It was great to get the go-ahead for two primary schools — Mount Waverley Primary School and Glendal Primary School — in the first stage of the biggest school rebuilding project in Victoria's history. Mount Waverley Primary School will be funded with \$6.3 million for stage 1 of a complete rebuild of the school. The school has original weatherboard buildings dating back to 1906 at its entrance. Last year it celebrated its centenary, so the school has been providing fantastic education to children in the Mount Waverley community for over 100 years.

The original weatherboard buildings are the only things that will remain in this project. The whole school will be rebuilt. This is a massive investment in our education facilities in Mount Waverley. The first stage — worth \$6.3 million, as I said — will see 12 new classrooms with joint learning facilities, a new administration block and a new library. The principal, Trevor Saunders, who does an outstanding job in leading that school, and the school community welcomed this announcement and the investment in education in their local community.

In addition \$5.7 million has been funded for new buildings at Glendal Primary School. This is another great local primary school. It has over 620 students and is providing a fantastic education facility for local kids in Glen Waverley. The \$5.7 million is for stage 2 of a project that started over five years ago. It will provide seven new teaching spaces, a new library, a new art room, a music room, a canteen and an outdoor learning area.

Representing the oldest metropolitan electorate in Melbourne I am also really pleased that the budget has provided a further boost to investment in and support for HACC (home and community care) services. That includes \$83 million over four years for HACC services, which really help a lot of people to continue to live independently at home for as long as possible. I know a lot of my constituents support the valuable HACC services provided by the different service providers in our community.

Finally, I want to welcome the \$247 million in the budget for local road improvements. This includes \$32 million to widen Ferntree Gully Road between Jells Road and Stud Road. This is a great budget for Victoria and a great budget for Waverley. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. I want to do this on two fronts, firstly, from a generic point of view, and then more pertinently to my electorate. Obviously there are some positives, although they are minimal, throughout the budget.

One thing I want to commend the government for is the reduction in WorkCover premiums. I think it is a very sensible and proactive thing that needs to be done. It will certainly assist a number of businesses throughout Victoria. Having been involved in business in a previous life, I know the hardships associated with WorkCover premiums. This will certainly relieve some of the financial burden, although we know we still have to put up with a mountain of red tape. Certainly in my area, where there is reasonably high unemployment compared to the national average, it may even encourage employers to have a look at putting on further employees.

The other thing is that there is some relief in the duty payable on new cars, which was certainly much welcomed by the member for Murray Valley. Hopefully that will encourage further investment and assist new car dealers. Although there are minimal savings of between \$500 and \$1400 on new passenger vehicles with a purchase price between \$35 000 and \$57 009, it will assist to some degree. A pertinent point is that from an environmental aspect hopefully it will encourage new car owners to seriously look at more fuel-efficient cars, including hybrid cars and the like.

The third part which is a positive in the budget is the land tax reductions. There is certainly some relief, with the tax-free threshold increasing to \$225 000 and the reduction of 0.5 per cent in the top rate and 0.33 per cent in the middle rate. Of particular note is the abolition of the special land tax on primary production land wholly or partly in the metropolitan area.

Turning to my electorate, I am here today to express my community's reaction to the budget, which I have gathered in a couple of ways. First of all I have talked to the major players in my electorate from business, industry and the like, and I have also talked to your average punter. I have also sent out a community newsletter asking members of the community to relay their priorities on service issues and the like. I have asked them to make a contribution on the issues that are important to them — and I have not had to pay them \$120 to do that.

Now more than ever we have to stop looking to the past and playing this blame game that seems to arise. We

need to listen to the community's views, recognise their concerns and duly act on them. I will not stand here and blame the Bracks government, saying that it has had seven years to fix outstanding issues, but what I will say is that these are the issues that are hurting my electorate today, and they need to be recognised and addressed. Unfortunately the budget does not appear to significantly address the issues of main concern in my electorate. I am sure that, if the wish lists of all members were acted on, the state debt would be astronomical.

I am a realist, so I understand that we have only a certain amount of funds to draw upon, but the main issue in my electorate is certainly health. The simple way to put this is that we have a health crisis in Gippsland, and I include mental health in this equation. As I said previously, the budget does not appear to allay any of the fears or concerns that currently exist. One of the problems is at the Latrobe Regional Hospital, and I will quote a couple of statistics. Emergency department presentations to the Latrobe Regional Hospital have increased significantly.

I will refer to some data comparing July to December 2005 with July to December 2006. There was an increase of in excess of 1000 presentations through the hospital in this time. This is an extraordinary increase and has put untold pressure and stress on both staff and management. At the same time we need to remember that there has been no investment in the Latrobe Regional Hospital through its emergency department, so as the presentation demands grow the facility is certainly not growing with it. Not included in these figures are the people who were turned away. Many people tell me, through my office, that they get sick of waiting for extended periods of time and so end up leaving the facility.

Secondly and of more concern is the comparison that shows that, from July to December 2005, 93 per cent of triage category 3 patients were seen within 30 minutes and that that reduced to 84 per cent in the period from July to December 2006 — a 9 per cent difference. Now we have this unacceptable delay in the number of category 3 patients being seen within 30 minutes. More alarming are the statistics that show the number of patients admitted to beds within 8 hours. The rate fell from 80 per cent in the last half of 2005 to 72 per cent in the last half of 2006. The government's own figures demonstrate that our health system in Gippsland is going backwards, and there is no investment in the budget to eradicate these issues.

I can stand here and say what I like, and some people might say I am a whinger, but I will give the house a

prime example of what happens, day in and day out, by reading from a letter that a lady wrote to the *Herald Sun* this week:

On 13 May my 95-year-old father attended the emergency department of Latrobe Regional Hospital ... for the second time in three weeks.

The first time was on 26 April, when he spent nearly 24 hours on a trolley in a cubicle. Because of overcrowding, other patients were treated while sitting on chairs.

On Sunday, 13 May, my father, suffering from severe bronchitis and asthma, attended the emergency department.

During the estimated 2½ hours he was being treated, he had to sit on a chair without armrests close to a wash basin, impeding staff access.

On both occasions he received excellent medical care in spite of obviously overworked but kind and caring staff.

I was also concerned that medical staff were working well over their allotted time without the opportunity for overtime pay.

This is simply not good enough.

The medical staff did not compromise my father's treatment but they work under very difficult conditions, and patients are being short-changed by a shortage of beds.

Now this happens day in and day out throughout the Latrobe Regional Hospital. I am also very concerned about the stress placed on the management and staff as indicated in that particular letter. I fear that we will end up having not only a shortage of beds but a shortage of staff.

I will relay my experience with my younger son, who suffered from seizures at one particular time and consequently ended up in hospital and was supposed to be admitted to overnight care. Being told that there was no hospital bed available and that he would have to be transferred somewhere else was totally unacceptable. These are the sorts of things that are happening in Gippsland, and they need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. We had an incident just a couple of weeks ago when long-term patients at the Latrobe Regional Hospital were transferred to a nursing home purely and simply because of a lack of beds. Their beds were needed!

The other problem we have, and I heard the member for Bass speaking on this particular topic a couple of days ago, is that Gippsland seems to be perceived as a little municipality that is central to everywhere. We have to understand that sometimes patients requiring particular services have to travel from the member for Bass's electorate or the electorate of the member for Gippsland East to the Latrobe Regional Hospital. We have a number of patients presenting at that hospital because

they do not have services in their own regions. I am not advocating an investment all up in the Latrobe Regional Hospital. Maybe there are better alternatives in other electorates where services can be made available to take the heat and stress off the health services in my electorate, and in particular the Latrobe Regional Hospital.

We have a great facility in the Gippsland Cancer Care Centre, which was a great initiative. It was contributed to by commonwealth and state governments and by the local community and business. Funds are still being raised locally for the facility. It is utilised by people from extraordinary distances away in Gippsland, and again that is putting stress on staff and the like.

Mental health is another part of the budget I would like to address. A number of presentations come through this particular hospital. The underfunding of mental health services, particularly services catering for young adults with emerging mental health problems, is false economy and will lead in the longer term to higher social costs including crime, homelessness and drug and substance abuse. Minister Neville in a media release said that one in five Victorians will suffer from a mental illness at some point in their life, yet on page 69 of budget paper 3 there is an increase of only 4.7 per cent in the mental health budget and a decrease of 2.8 per cent in drug services.

A Senate report highlighted that per 100 000 people there are 80 per cent fewer psychiatric beds in acute hospitals in outer regional areas compared to Melbourne. These are the sorts of problems we are facing in Gippsland. Yet there are only 95 new mental health beds provided in the budget, and they are all at seven locations in Melbourne and in Geelong at the McKellar Centre. There are very few public or private psychiatrists operating in country Victoria, and far too many people with a mental illness receive little or no professional help. I believe there is only one independent and private psychiatrist in my region.

I want to get on to water and the energy industry. There is extreme local industry concern about water security, particularly at the moment. The concern centres around future announcements of major water-saving initiatives or infrastructure that will enable industry to continue serving Victorians through power generation and the supply of paper through Australian Paper at Maryvale. The fact that power generators are having to go to the market to purchase water was raised this week. We have heard the jibes regarding the budget, that it is okay if you just add water. That explains the concerns of industry, particularly in Gippsland.

I notice in the budget that there is a government commitment of \$50 million for a \$160 million water factory project in Gippsland. This is basically a partnership between Gippsland Water and Australian Paper. Whilst the state government has committed \$50 million to this project, ratepayers, through Gippsland Water, need to pay the balance. I can assure members that the ratepayers are not happy about this. The one thing to remember about this particular water-saving project — and we should be supporting any water-saving project — is that 75 per cent of the water passing through the factory will be dispersed through the regional outfall sewer at Ninety Mile Beach. Surely we can harness that water and use it for industry in Gippsland. I know it will not suffice to provide all the quantity required by the power generators, but surely we could use this water to cater for some of that.

Through the budget we will see the implementation of a clean coal authority in the Latrobe Valley, and that certainly is very welcome. It is a sensible and practical idea, and I certainly hope to liaise with the minister on it. I will wait with bated breath for further information and more intimate details on that.

Going on to police and security, I see in the budget that there will be 350 new police over four years. Our local police have gone to the press and advocated for eight more officers in the Latrobe Valley and certainly on the front line. I get people coming through my office everyday who basically say we need more front-line police in Gippsland. We have had a number of unsavoury incidents and acts of violence in the Latrobe Valley in recent times, one of which I raised in Parliament this week.

The police are doing an absolutely outstanding job and have been wonderful in trying to protect and serve our community with the limited resources they have. We have advocated for more officers in Yallourn North, where they are now providing some semblance of service, which is fantastic. I really welcome what the local police have been able to do in that regard. Let us hope that, as the press release by local police advocates, the government will continue to seriously look at allocating more police for the Latrobe Valley.

On education, there is a modernisation of the Kurnai College's Maryvale campus, which is certainly welcome. An Australian Education Union study showed some time ago that Latrobe Valley schools were amongst the worst in the state in relation to facilities and maintenance. Hopefully they are a priority for funding. We have a new Country Fire Authority station coming up in Traralgon. I still believe that more

could be done for our rural fire brigades, which work out of dilapidated facilities without any basic amenities such as toilets and the like. I did not see in the budget any allocations for new vehicles and equipment. Hopefully the government will take that on board and recognise that.

In closing, there is some funding for housing and roads, but as I said earlier, we need to fix country roads, save country lives and invest in country Victoria.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It is a great pleasure to again speak on a fantastic Bracks government budget that is delivering for all of Victoria, including my electorate of Yan Yean. In my brief contribution to the debate I will firstly go to health. We have had another upgrade of the Northern Hospital, which is about the third or fourth since we have been in office. This one is for \$27.9 million to double the number of acute mental health beds from 25 to 50 and provide a short-stay unit to give emergency patients a quiet place to recover. The other fantastic new and rebuilt hospital that serves the northern suburbs is the Austin, and it will get an upgraded 20-bed facility for elective surgery.

Also in health, my community in Whittlesea and the Kinglake area has been lobbying since early last year for the establishment of an ambulance service in Whittlesea township. I tabled a petition containing 6000 signatures in February last year, and I am pleased to say that a year later the government has funded an ambulance service for that township. We have a great record on ambulance services. When we took office there were virtually no ambulance services in the northern suburbs because the previous government did not care about country Victoria or about the outer northern suburbs. We have new ambulance services in Diamond Creek, Broadmeadows, Bundoora and Craigieburn and this new facility to be established in Whittlesea will plug that gap.

In education, which we have said is our no. 1 priority, the government again delivers on its commitment. The Laurimar Primary School will be built and will open in 2009. I was pleased to attend the first planning committee meeting for that this week. I am a member of the planning committee, just as I have been a member of the Epping North East Primary School planning committee. That school will open next year. The first campus of The Lakes-South Morang P-9 School opened this year and next year we will open the second campus, including a special development school. The Kinglake West Primary School is to be redeveloped, and \$100 000 has been allocated for the first stage of the \$10.5 million redevelopment of the

Northern Institute of TAFE. We have delivered very well on education.

With roads, the anti-congestion measures announced in the budget will mean \$420 000 being allocated to construct an additional traffic lane at Yan Yean Road and Diamond Creek Road to help traffic movements on to the northern ring-road, along with new traffic signals at Civic Drive in Greensborough, which I was happy to switch on last week. They allow movement over the \$17.2 million bridge that the government funded in the last term, which is improving traffic flow for the growth areas.

In public transport, \$5.3 million has been allocated to upgrade Watsonia railway station and \$48 million to duplicate the line between Clifton Hill and Westgarth stations to deliver more reliable peak hour services for my community. For kids in sport \$40 000 has been allocated to the Yarrambat Junior Football Club, a great club. The government spent some money there last year, and we are now spending more. I know that club will use the facilities well and will continue to get kids involved in sport.

Emergency services are a passion of mine, being a Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer and now having responsibility as Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services. I am pleased that the budget funds a new combined Country Fire Authority station in Whittlesea township with, for the first time in the Whittlesea local government area, a State Emergency Service facility. I am a passionate advocate for co-located emergency services such as we have at Diamond Creek, so this one in Whittlesea will be very good. In Christmas Hills North we have also a new station that will offer improved and safer facilities for the volunteers. That takes to a total of 11 the CFA stations serving my electorate that are either new or have been upgraded. It is a very proud record, and we are planning new stations at North Warrandyte and Mernda, which will mean 13 stations.

With police, I am pleased to say that we have upgraded all the local police stations in my area. That is so at Diamond Creek, Eltham and Epping; there is a new station at Kinglake; and I will be pleased to see the Minister for Police and Emergency Services open the new police stations at Hurstbridge and Warrandyte soon.

While talking about Warrandyte, I listened to the pathetic contribution to the debate from the member for Warrandyte last night. He is a pale shadow of his predecessor, Mr Honeywood. He is not a pale green. We know Mr Honeywood was a passionate advocate

for the environment and his community. The present member for Warrandyte was bleating erroneously about a lack of police resources in Warrandyte. We know he will be there for the photo opportunity next month when the Minister for Police and Emergency Services opens the station. He was absolutely silent about the fact that the shadow Treasurer said that if the Liberal Party were in government it would get rid of the urban growth boundary, which would ruin our green wedges.

At no point has the member for Warrandyte stood up for the green wedge. I will always stand up for the green wedge, as will other members in this place. The opposition has talked down this great budget that delivers to communities across Victoria. When the Liberal-National party government occupied the Treasury benches it did not care about the outer suburbs, and country Victoria was described as the toenails. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. There are many points in the bill that I want to refer to, and I have copious notes that I will be referring to because I do not want to miss any issues. The Treasurer promised before the election that election promises would be funded without a single additional dollar of debt. He said every promise made by Labor would be delivered within the budget. Yet we see in the budget that debt is ballooning, and on the government's own figures it will increase by \$923 million. It is now rising at a faster rate than it did in the Cain and Kirner years when state debt tripled. How well I remember trying to run a small business and trying to keep my staff on during those awful, dark years. We were the rust-bucket state.

As the member for Sandringham said in his excellent contribution to the debate on the State Taxation and Gambling Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Bill, the Placido Domingo of politics, who once said of his budget that it would bring home the bacon, was in federal politics and we had the Cain and Kirner governments in Victoria. What happened? Unemployment went over 11 per cent and interest rates went to 20 per cent plus, and now we have the same scenario unfolding again in Victoria. The estimate is that debt will climb fivefold from the 2005 level to almost \$9 billion in 2010–11.

The figures show that \$1.8 billion of Labor's promises could not be funded in the budget. The broken promises in Evelyn include traffic lights in Coldstream — an amount of \$1.5 million. When will they be installed? The lights are needed now, not in 2010. Mount Evelyn Primary School got a firm commitment from the then Minister for Education on 26 October. The school

complied with all the time lines and the provision of information, the stage B plan was prepared and tender documents were prepared, so there was a justifiable expectation that \$6.2 million would be supplied in the Building Futures program. School numbers are rising. The enrolment is currently at 475, and long-term projections show it will average 400 students. I quote from an email I received from a concerned teacher and parent at the school:

It was also very disappointing to learn that despite Mount Evelyn Primary School's population of 475 this did not factor into the final decision-making process. We are a growth school and currently have buildings that cater for only 350 students. Many of the older classrooms continually leak, smell and are full of asbestos.

Despite the conditions of our lower buildings, which are portables (and never intended to be permanent), I can't still comprehend that, of all the schools in our local area who submitted plans, we were the only school who missed out ...

That was from a concerned parent and teacher at the school. Mount Evelyn Primary School was not the only school in the electorate that expected funding, but it is the one that everyone would say should have had funding for the rebuilding program.

There was another broken promise at Yarra Glen, with a backflip on the Yarra Glen bypass. The member for Seymour yesterday castigated me in this house for having raised the issue, and for some reason he said I was being personal. I was pointing out to the house that the Minister for Roads and Ports and the member for Seymour had both committed to funding the Yarra Glen bypass. They had both been quoted as saying that the money was in the bank. What happened? It is not mentioned in the budget. A letter in the *Mountain View Mail* of 22 May states:

The Bracks government remains committed to providing \$9 million in funding for this important bypass project.

...

Our firm commitment is reinforced in the 2007–08 budget papers, which list the bypass as one to be considered in future budgets in this term.

There is a commitment on the one hand for the \$9 million as a contribution to the federal funding and the local council's funding, yet the same letter, signed by the member for Seymour, says it is one to be considered in future budgets in this term. The people of Yarra Glen have every right to be outraged. They are reading in their local paper 'Yes, we have the money', but they are also reading, 'We will consider whether you have got the money or not'.

Despite \$247 million of funding for road improvements across Victoria in the state budget, it appears there is no

specific funding for the Maroondah, Melba or Warburton highways. This ignores the horrific road toll in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. In the five-year period from 2001 to 2005 we had 15 fatalities on council and local roads — more than twice the state average of 6.18 fatalities. Tragically on state government-declared roads in the Yarra Ranges there were 42 fatalities — almost three times the state average of 14.5, and while some of these fatal accidents can be attributed to driver error, alcohol and the use of other substances, the conditions of the roads played a major part in many incidents.

The Shire of Yarra Ranges is in desperate need of road funding, yet the Bracks government is continuing to neglect the residents of Evelyn. On the Warburton Highway we have Wandin North Primary School. There is a steep descent past this school. Speed limits are 70 kilometres an hour except in school hours. We do not have flashing lights. This government promised that every school on a major road would have flashing warning lights to motorists, but Wandin North does not. There are many instances of trucks not familiar with the area hitting the top of the hill, driving at the required speed, and suddenly coming across the school, not having noticed or been aware of the signs that are there. We desperately need those flashing lights, but I do not know when they are going to do them. We have been told by VicRoads there is at least a two-year wait. They have not even gone out to tender. We need those now.

Last night the member for Burwood said that he did not think opposition members had read the budget papers, and I heard this morning the member for Melton also making comment that we had not read them. There are 900 pages of convoluted budget material, and I have to say I felt like a pearl diver searching for that elusive shell with that special pearl whilst I was looking for allocations to the seat of Evelyn. I have studied those pages. They are written in such a way that you cannot compare apples to apples. You cannot look at this year's budget papers and compare them to last year's and the previous year's and those of the years before that. But I could not find that pearl. I could not find that special pearl for Evelyn — the one that will help to save lives, the one that will prevent a lot of these accidents. It was not there in these budget papers.

In budget paper 2 on page 30 it shows that expenditure is at a record level, growing at an unprecedented rate under Labor from \$18.2 billion in 1999 to an estimated \$33.9 billion in 2007–08 — an increase of over 86 per cent. But not once has this Treasurer achieved his budget estimates for expenditure. Hundreds of millions of dollars more than budgeted has been spent each year, yet where has it all gone? We still have two-and-a-half-year

waiting lists for dental services in Lilydale. We have got more red tape. We have got more public servants.

The cost of red tape has climbed to \$2 billion a year. The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission has found that households and businesses face 32 000 pages of regulations — an increase of 4.5 per cent over the last year after a 4.8 per cent surge in 2005. This demolishes Labor's pledge to cut the compliance burden by 25 per cent over the next five years. Victoria has 2200 acts and regulations, which is only 5 per cent less than the commonwealth government. This government said it was going to make running a business easier in Victoria. The Australian Capital Territory has only got 475 acts, yet its businesses seem to operate very well.

We have a long list of increased taxes and charges. Budget figures show that land tax has increased to \$90 million, which is 13.5 per cent above 1999. Insurance taxes have increased to over \$1.1 billion in 2007–08, which is an 11.4 per cent rise since 1999. We have the highest stamp duty of any state, up to \$2.9 billion in 2007–08 — a 184 per cent rise since 1999. Payroll tax has risen to \$3.6 billion in 2007–08 — a 60 per cent since 1999, and on and on it goes.

Police fines have quadrupled. Gambling taxes have risen to over \$1.5 billion. The budget papers show that state government income has risen more than twice as fast as the average Victorian's wages. Average wages have increased by around 40 per cent. The state's income has risen three times faster than inflation. Are Victorians getting double or triple the service? No. Are residents in Evelyn getting increased services? No. We are still not going to get dialysis services in Lilydale at the super clinic which was promised in 2002, and the framework is only now just going up. It will probably be ready in about 2009, which will be seven years after it was first promised. Dialysis services are required.

I am pleased see the Minister for Housing at the table. I am pleased that there is an increase in funding for government housing in this budget. We have in Evelyn an urgent need for increased public housing. I have raised in this house before the fact that we have people sleeping in cars. We had a lady with her children sleeping on and off outside Lilydale police station in her car with her children because she needed the safety of being near the police station. We have people sleeping in cars at Lilydale Lake, and I am hoping that some of this money that has been promised will come into the Yarra Ranges area. It is very much needed. It is desperately needed.

Apart from the extra funding that comes in, I would also urge the minister to look at the operations of the department and ensure that repairs are carried out quickly and efficiently so that houses are not left empty, when we have people sleeping out in the open — people who may not be as capable as others, but whose circumstances have made them homeless. These people are sleeping out in the open and we have winter coming, yet there are properties all over Victoria that, because of mismanagement and incompetence, have not been repaired to house people. It is a fact; the figures are there. I find it so difficult to help them because I know that with every family that I help to get a house I am pushing someone else off the bottom of the list.

It is a very difficult decision to make. Some people will say it is the fault of that person that they are homeless because they have gambled or they have gone into heavy debt, but a lot of it is family breakdown, and that is happening at all levels, whether you have debt or whatever. I urge the minister to sort the department out and get those repairs done now so we can house these people during the winter months.

On domestic violence, because I notice my time is running out I would like to quickly quote an article that was in the *Yarra Valley Leader* of 23 April in which Ranges Community Health Services family therapist, Bernie Brendon, said:

... after almost 15 years of counselling families, she now had a waiting list.

The article continues:

'I have never had a waiting list before', Ms Brendon said.

'I have funding to see 11 clients and I'm well over that figure. I work two days; I could be here four days because they're coming in on a weekly basis'.

The funding is not meeting the demand. The funding for mental health counselling, the funding for breakdowns of families, the funding for women who are suffering from family violence is just not getting through.

The government has increased funds all the time, but it is not reaching the people on the ground so where the heck is it going? It is just being wasted. We have an increase in crimes against the person. The police are underresourced. We have victims of crime who were allocated an increase in funding in the last legislation, but they have been waiting for counselling services for six months — six months to wait for counselling for rape. We have the housing shortages. Deaf children have been put onto buses because some bureaucrat has

decided it is going to save money. It is disgusting. We had a child at Yarra Glen who sadly passed away. It took half an hour for an ambulance to reach him at Yarra Glen which is on the edge of Melbourne.

Septic tanks have not been connected. We have 22 000-plus septic tanks that are not connected to sewerage in Yarra Ranges. What is that doing to the environment. What is that doing to our creeks and streams? There was a great fanfare about all the septic tanks being connected. We do not hear anything about that now; it has just disappeared. We do not have any health services in Yarra Ranges — and we have not got a hospital! People go to Maroondah and get bypassed to Box Hill.

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

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. I particularly want to congratulate the Treasurer, his staff, the department, and the whole of cabinet for that matter, for producing another great budget that not only continues to promote economic growth in Victoria but also supports communities right across the state.

There are many great initiatives in the budget, but I want to talk about some of the projects in my electorate of Ballarat West. Grevillea Park community school in Wendouree West has been funded for a further \$3.3 million, and this is on top of the \$5 million it received in last year's budget to ensure that stage 1 and stage 2 of the new greenfield site can be built this year. Grevillea Park Primary School and Yuille Primary School have amalgamated, so the students are currently at Yuille Primary. When the new school is built, which will go from kinder up to year 8, it will be a new model within the state —

Mr Wynne — Prep to year 8?

Ms OVERINGTON — No, from kinder to year 8. It will be a model for the state, and it will be an important component of the neighbourhood development in Wendouree West. I have been so proud to be involved and associated with this project.

The Black Hill Primary School community was very excited to learn that within our budget it will receive \$3.1 million to complete the school. It is a big school with over 400 students. It is a very good school, and the community was absolutely delighted to receive that funding.

Ballarat Health Services will receive \$4.5 million this year to open a sixth operating theatre. This theatre will further ensure that waiting lists are further reduced. Other works include the upgrading of the central sterile supply department and the development of a new medi-hotel to accommodate patients from distant towns who require day surgery admission. It is a really good project.

An amount of \$510 million was announced for social and public housing in the budget, and I congratulate the Minister for Housing. This is extra money, and I was pleased to be with the Minister for Housing last week in Ballarat when he announced that \$12.5 million of that money is to be allocated to the Ballarat region. This will provide an extra 55 houses and units, and these are very welcome.

As we know, Ballarat is the birthplace of democracy in Australia. The Eureka Centre will receive \$5 million over the next two years to build stage 2 at the centre to further enhance knowledge of the Eureka rebellion. Another area of the budget that will greatly benefit families in Ballarat West is the increase of the kindergarten fee subsidy from \$320 to \$730 per year. This will effectively make kindergartens free for children of eligible low-income families.

This is a great budget and one that will benefit families right across the state. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — This, in my opinion, is a budget of missed opportunities. Some of the areas that I think we have missed out in, not only in Bayswater but also in Victoria, are water, disability sector assistance, school maintenance, dental services, hospital waiting lists and road improvements.

Something on the top of everybody's mind at the moment, certainly on the tip of their tongues, is water. We have had a bit of good rain in the last couple of weeks, but when you talk to local businesses who say that they are going to be affected and that they are going to have to start sacking people who have got families, you have to ask why it is that water restrictions were not implemented earlier. Was it perhaps because we had an election? The car industry is hurting. Car wash businesses in my electorate are frightened that we are going to go to stage 4, but as their submission to me says, if we had gone to stage 1 earlier, to stage 2 earlier or to stage 3 earlier, then we probably would have had a lot more water to go around now and they would not have to be worrying about stage 4 looming.

When we are talking about water obviously we really need a long-term strategy. I was at Winton on the weekend with the V8 supercars and I was talking to a very astute man up there. He has been living on the land his entire life, and he said he has been watching water patterns and weather patterns for over 30 years. As a man of the land he thought it was his business to do so. He watched the trends and showed me graphs — he actually had them in his pocket, which I thought was interesting — of weather patterns and water patterns. He said, 'The no. 1 thing that we need is dams. We need at least two or three dams. Why is this government not doing anything about dams?'. I scratched my head and said, 'I really do not know why not'. He said, 'What about desalination?'. I said, 'What about it? It was a Liberal Party initiative at the last election and guess what? Now this government is looking into it'. That is fantastic, but stop looking into things and let us actually do something. Let us protect Victorian water supply for the future.

Then we have the disability sector. This is something that is very close to my heart, because I seem to get an awful lot of complaints in this area, and it is distressing. I am unashamed to say that I have sat at the table in my meeting room and I have cried along with mothers who say that because their adult children who are in their 20s and 30s are not getting accommodation and beds in supported residential units and because they have become such a burden to the family they are being locked in the basement so that the family can go out. The mothers are sitting there, crying, saying, 'I wish I had put a plastic bag over my child's head when they were born'. I find that distressing. How can anybody have their dignity intact in their 20s and 30s when they feel as though they are a burden on their parents?

I say to this government that it is fine to go ahead and put extra money into housing, but it is not necessarily going where it is needed. We need more SRUs (supported residential units), and we also need more public housing. I am so glad that we have some money in the budget for this. There is a man in my electorate who is about my age and incredibly brilliant and whose body is quite severely hampered by cerebral palsy but who is capable of looking after himself. He has been on the housing waiting list — this is the general housing list, not the list for SRUs — for six years. He has very good speech, and he said to me, 'Heidi, my problem is that I know I can look after myself. My parents are getting older, and they have had to look after me for their entire lives. But guess what — I have nowhere to go, and I feel guilty that my parents do not have a life'. He has been told that he probably still has to spend another four to six years on the housing waiting list. I

find that unacceptable. This is a man who wants to be independent but is not being given that right.

Schools feature very heavily for me in this budget — although it is the fact that they do not feature that is probably more to the point! The student resource packages (SRPs) are inadequate, to say the least, for funding major works. We have a big problem at a couple of our schools in Bayswater. The backlog in school maintenance should not have blown out to the stage it has reached. The government can say that it is putting millions of dollars towards this backlog, but why did the schools get into this state of disrepair to begin with? In this budget some 50 schools will benefit from the latest architectural and building designs, but there is not one in my electorate that will benefit.

I have schools in my electorate that have mouldy bathrooms and leaking corridors and have to put buckets in their hallways to catch the rainwater. They are told there is money for maintenance in their SRPs. But guess what, it is not enough. The schools have been allowed to decay to such an extent that they need major overhauls, yet not a single dollar has been declared so far for my electorate to address these problems. We have children in unhygienic, unsafe circumstances, and that is not good enough.

Bayswater Secondary College is a good school with a great principal. It fought hard for a new technology wing to try and revive itself. Half the new wing was built at a cost of \$1.9 million. Funding of \$1.9 million was allocated in the state budget a couple of years ago, and guess what — only \$1.2 million came from the state government. The state government went to the federal government and said, 'Could you give us \$700 000?'. Where is the extra \$700 000 that should be used for Bayswater Secondary College? That money should have gone towards the second half of the building. Guess what the state government has done? The school has been told at this stage that the second half is not going to happen. So you have a school that is trying to revive itself, that is passionate about its students and that is passionate about its area, and it cannot even get the teaching resources to facilitate that. That is shameful.

Our junior schools are missing out on essential services. They are things like reading recovery programs, counselling and speech therapists. Some of the schools in my electorate have these facilities for half an hour to 2 hours per week. When you are talking about schools that sometimes have 400 or 500 students, tell me how far 2 hours of counselling goes in a week. It does not go very far at all.

Dental services are a really interesting issue. I have had three people in the last couple of weeks come into my office and ask, 'What can you do about dental services?'. I sit there and say, 'What would you like me to do?'. They say, 'Bump me up the list'. I say, 'How do you propose I do that?'. They say, 'Can't you do something?'. I say, 'Every time I bump somebody up the list, somebody else goes further down the list'. There are just not enough places for people to get access to community dental services, and this is shameful. By this government's own admission we have waiting times that have blown out to four or five years. We should hang our heads in shame, knowing that our state has allowed this to happen.

Hospital waiting lists have been a bugbear of mine for a very long time, and I am glad to see that the Minister for Health is in the house to hear this. Mrs Hart featured prominently in the election campaign. Her daughter, who is in her 60s — Mrs Hart is in her 80s — rang me and said, 'My mum needs two new knees. She is the most feisty, independent woman you could ever imagine. She wants to stay independent, and she wants to die in her own home. Can you help?' — and I have to say we did. Elections are wonderful for getting things done. We actually got her seen by a specialist.

But here is the problem: having seen the specialist, now she is on the waiting list. This lady has gone from being able to just walk, with a lot of pain, to now being housebound. She cannot go out. I had a phone call from her granddaughter not two or three weeks ago, and she said, 'Heidi, I am afraid my grandma is going to die very soon. She is going to die at home. She will not have had her knees done, and she is going to die in pain. This is a woman who deserves so much more. She has paid her taxes and worked hard all her life. What is this government giving her back?'. I could not answer her, and I feel ashamed to say that we have allowed Victoria to slip so far backwards.

Ms Pike — We have the lowest waiting lists in nine years.

Mrs VICTORIA — The waiting lists are beyond belief, and we have proof that there are waiting lists for waiting lists. If you cannot get in to see a specialist, you cannot get on the waiting list. You have to see the specialist first. Let me tell you — the waiting lists for the waiting lists are atrocious!

Let us talk about roads in Bayswater. We could do with a bit of help there! We have had fatalities on Stud Road, and the area I am talking about is a 1-kilometre stretch between Boronia Road and Mountain Highway. The rest of Stud Road all the way down to Dandenong is

three lanes wide in each direction. We have a stretch of road that is one lane wide, and we have had a couple of fatalities along it. Not only is it used by Cameron's trucking, which is one of the largest trucking organisations in Victoria and Australia, but it is home to a lovely little shopping centre and is surrounded by a lot of residences. We have had deaths and major accidents, and still there is no money. We have even put forward petitions on this issue, but there is no money. We are talking about a couple of million dollars to potentially save some lives.

While we are on the topic of saving lives, what about Waldreas Lodge on Wantirna Road? We need a pedestrian crossing there. VicRoads has come back saying it is going to consult, and I am very pleased that it now will, but we have been talking about it for nine years. People are scared to cross the road outside Waldreas Lodge, and they are therefore bound to the retirement village and do not get out. This government says, 'Go for your life!', but the only problem is that these people cannot. They are frightened of being hit by buses and speeding motorists.

We need right-turning arrows at Coleman Road and Stud Road. The infrastructure is already there, but we need an extra light. It is not difficult. There will be a serious accident or fatality there. It is not an expensive project. Instead of this, we get given lights on Heatherdale Road in the most inappropriate place right near the railway station. The shadow minister for roads had a look at it and said, 'This is so wrong. Who did the consultation?'. I said, 'That is the problem — there was no consultation'. The residents are up in arms. Nobody bothered to talk to them; nobody bothered to look at traffic flows. It is just another example of money being spent in the wrong place. We have lists of all the places it should be spent, but nobody is listening.

We all love policing here in Victoria. The police union claims another 650 front-line police are needed. Two out of my three local police stations need a boost. In fact one of them has said it needs an extra 30 police in order to function properly.

Regarding business, Bayswater has established itself as an industrial and commercial hub. In this budget we are missing initiatives to attract additional investment to Victoria. In fact Victoria's annual share of national exports is now at a record low of only 12.1 per cent.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. My electorate will get a pedestrian crossing on Boronia Road, and I am pleased with that. Funding has also been allocated to the Bayswater football and cricket clubs for a viewing deck. But guess what? These were both Liberal

promises, and they were so good that the Labor Party copied them. I applaud Labor for doing that. We are flattered that the Labor government has adopted over 30 Liberal election pledges. Their implementation heartens me. Liberals have great ideas, and I am so glad the government is listening.

However, shame on the government for misleading the public on water, for not allocating more money to the disability services sector, for hospital waiting lists and for neglecting the safety of the people of Bayswater. This budget was not good news for the families of Bayswater.

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — It is a pleasure to rise and speak as part of this appropriation debate. I believe this budget represents an effective combination of good economic management and a deep commitment to combating disadvantage. In responding to the budget I would like to concentrate on that commitment, and particularly on two aspects of it: firstly, the commitment to mental health, and secondly, the commitment to public housing.

If the function of government is to ensure that people have the best possible opportunity to have happy and fulfilling lives, then services to the mentally ill must be a great priority. I know that for this government it is, and this is obviously shown by the creation of the first Minister for Mental Health. This budget made a number of announcements that relate to mental health funding in my electorate, the most significant of which is the commitment to a \$9.6 million program to build community-based facilities providing prevention and recovery beds. Some of these beds will be located in Preston. These beds will treat people who need further help after leaving hospital and before returning home. This is exactly the sort of service that represents what this government is all about.

Further — although it is just outside my electorate, it will serve some of the residents, particularly the veterans, of my electorate — there is a commitment of \$1.5 million to begin demolition and site works to redevelop the veterans mental health facility at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. Thus mental health services in the northern suburbs of Melbourne have been given an important injection of funding which will lead to improved services in mental health.

However, one of the most important announcements, and one that I will concentrate on in my speech, is the boost to public housing. This is a truly historic boost which represents the biggest investment in public housing in a generation. The injection of \$500 million is made up of two main components — a \$200 million

boost for public housing, which will deliver 800 public housing units over four years, and a \$300 million investment fund, which will deliver 1550 new social housing units over four years.

The \$300 million commitment includes \$60 million to provide 230 new rental homes for low-income Victorian families and 120 new apartments for single people. Of this \$300 million, \$240 million will be used to purchase or construct 1200 homes, to be owned and managed by housing associations. In addition there is a commitment of a further \$9.6 million over four years, \$2.1 million of it to improve homelessness support services and \$7.5 million to deliver a new service model to assist young people in housing crisis.

As the member for Preston one of the most common issues that washes up in my office from our community is the issue of desperate people who need assistance with public housing or who are homeless. Those issues are often intractable, and dealing with them is difficult. The investment in new public housing will help meet some of this need.

In addition to public housing, public transport initiatives that will significantly assist my electorate have been announced. In particular I refer to the rail duplication between Clifton Hill and Westgarth train stations, which, although it will directly assist the Eltham line, will also have a significant flow-on effect on the Epping line, which will provide a great boost to many of my constituents who use it. In addition there is the announcement of the redevelopment of the Preston railway station.

As I said earlier, this budget represents a mix of good economic management and social justice. I noticed a number of opposition members commented on the deficiencies of the budget and the deficiencies of the government over a period of time. To be frank, I find that the debates here tend to be fairly ritualised and sterilised. You cannot get around the fact that people are voting with their feet. More people are coming to Victoria, and in particular more people are coming to regional Victoria. Whatever analysis is undertaken in this place, I trust the actions of people in the community in their individual lives and the decisions they make to choose to live here and in regional Victoria are a demonstration of the success of this government. This budget builds on that success. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I rise to speak on the appropriation bill and the budget. I would like to make some general comments first. This government is indeed fortunate. It has an enormous flow of revenue —

record revenue in fact. Since 1999 the revenue into the coffers of this government has increased by some 80 per cent. Yet we find that some \$1.8 billion of Labor's promises could not be funded in the forward estimates for this year's budget and \$1.6 billion of capital election promises are not provided for in this budget. In fact we are about to incur billions of dollars of debt as a result of the election promises. It is estimated that by 2011 Victorian state debt will increase fivefold to some \$15 billion, which will be the highest debt of any state.

People should be considerably worried about this situation. For me it is a very nasty reminder of the pre-1992 years under the previous Cain and Kirner Labor government, which left Victoria with a debt in excess of \$30 billion. Over the last years of that government, some 20 per cent of recurrent expenditure was in fact gobbled up to pay the interest on that enormous amount of debt. We really do not want to find ourselves in a similar situation, because it is just not sustainable. Yesterday one of my colleagues commented that you do not find the federal government with that level of government debt at all — in fact the federal government itself does not have debt.

I now turn to the health portfolio, for which I have shadow responsibility. Given that the Minister for Health is here, I would like to offer her just a small piece of advice, which she can choose to accept or totally reject. There is an old saying that goes something along the line that you can fool some of the people some of the time but not all of the people all of the time. I think Victorians are intelligent people, they are awake to spin and deception and they are not fooled, particularly by this minister's performance since the election, whether it is not knowing about significant public health issues, not funding election promises or not being able to work out that a four-day doctors conference should not cause a week-long blackout in surgery in one of our major hospitals. I think that most people regard these as phoney excuses and no longer plausible. Victorians are not stupid people and they will not accept these extraordinary excuses.

The budget has some promises for health, but members have to accept that, except for a couple of occasions, Victoria has had an ever-increasing climb in the number of people on the elective surgery waiting list. If one looks at the figures — which I have, and I have put together total figures — what becomes apparent is that the only times when the waiting list number for elective surgery in Victoria has gone down under this government have been prior to the last two elections. Members of the Labor government have, of course, claimed that the figures are the lowest since 1998. That

claim was made when the waiting list figure declined to 36 500 between January and June last year and it went back to July to December 1998, when the waiting list number was 37 302. What was omitted and not talked about was the fact that the waiting list under the previous government had in fact got down a lot lower, to 28 627. Under this government the elective surgery waiting list went up to well over 43 000 in December 2000 and 42 000 in June 2004.

The other major problem is that thousands of people are waiting years for an outpatient appointment. Regularly I see letters from constituents and others showing that they are waiting two to three years for an outpatient specialist appointment. The Auditor-General estimated that some 20 000 people were waiting to get an outpatient appointment. Those people are then waiting to get onto the elective surgery waiting list. I suppose if one added those people to the waiting list, it would be an extraordinarily high figure. In fact the outpatient waiting list is used to keep people off the elective surgery waiting list. That was done very successfully prior to the last election and the one before that, to reduce the number of people on the elective surgery waiting list. As members of the opposition predicted, after the election the elective surgery waiting list number went up. If one looks at the waiting list for Barwon Health just prior to the election, one sees that as its elective surgery waiting list number went down the waiting list number for outpatient appointments went up.

The government has now been embarrassed into promising more outpatient appointments. I quote from page 1 of its policy document, which lists the summary of the promises in health. The government has said that it will:

Invest a further \$394 million to meet growing demand in our hospitals over the next four years.

With this it will provide some '200 000 outpatient appointments'. If one then goes to page 22 of the overview of the budget, which is provided with the other budget papers, one sees in the summary of the health initiatives that \$222 million will be invested:

... over four years to expand hospital and outpatient capacity to provide an extra 72 000 outpatient appointments ...

So in the policy document we are promised 200 000 and in the budget overview document we are promised 72 000. At the PAEC (Public Accounts and Estimates Committee) hearing the Minister for Health went to a lot of trouble to try to convince the committee that this meant that we are going to get 72 000 additional outpatient appointments every single year, and she

accused Liberal Party members of not being able to read the budget papers. That is a pretty old trick, which I have heard reverberating around this chamber as various members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals have pointed out the problems that this government is facing in funding its promises. This is not properly funded according to the budget.

The minister went through great contortions to convince the PAEC that she is going to deliver 72 000 appointments each year. The public servant she asked to support her in this, Lance Wallace, was not quite as generous in his support. I quote from pages 24 and 25 of the PAEC transcript, where he is reported as saying:

If you are looking at the increase in the number of outpatients in the 2007–08 year and you are trying to indicate over four years whether this will meet the target, it will not ...

I support the concept of Victorians getting 200 000 extra outpatient appointments. In fact if they are going to get 72 000 a year, that would mean they would get well in excess of 200 000 — something like 288 000, and that would make a huge contribution.

Recently the Minister for Health wrote a letter to one of my colleagues, the member for Doncaster, in which she said:

The government is concerned that some patients are experiencing difficulty accessing outpatient services in a timely manner and acknowledges that outpatient services would benefit from further reform.

That is indeed the case. The problem that I have pointed out about outpatient appointments and the government's promises exists also in emergency department presentations.

We have seen many embarrassing photos of ambulances backing up outside hospitals. We certainly saw that at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, where people just could not get into the hospital. Hospitals are not able to cope. They are increasingly on bypass, particularly hospitals like the Royal Melbourne and Box Hill. Of course the government fails to admit that somewhere along the line there is a problem with beds in these hospitals, but in any event the government promised to provide for an extra 377 000 emergency department presentations over the next four years. But when we turn to the budget overview we find that it says that \$255 million is allocated over four years to treat an additional 234 000 presentations. That is not 377 000, it is 234 000. No matter how you twist it, it is something quite different.

If we turn to page 39 of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report that came out today we see something similar. In dealing with hospital futures and talking about how much money the government is providing over the next four years, the document says the government is going to provide \$643.9 million over the four years, but if one goes back to the policy document and adds up the two areas that I talked about — the amounts are \$476 million and \$394 million — one gets to \$870 million, plus the blitz on elective surgery, another \$59 million, and another \$5.4 million for physios, which brings it up to \$934 million, some \$291 million short of what has been promised.

Ms Pike — That is exactly right.

Mrs SHARDEY — The minister is saying that that is exactly right. The minister — —

Ms Pike — That is exactly right, because it is over two years, you idiot!

Mrs SHARDEY — No, this is over four years, and the minister trying to call me an idiot is something quite exceptional, because what this means is — —

Ms Pike — It is over two years.

Mrs SHARDEY — No, it is over four years, actually. What this means is that the government has a choice as to whether in fact it adds money to what has already been promised to keep its election promises. Now I will turn to other issues — —

Ms Pike — It's embarrassing. You're embarrassing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! The minister!

Mrs SHARDEY — Now I will turn to other issues which are of importance. If we look at the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, here again we find we have a promise of \$24.8 million, but in the budget what has been delivered is \$22 million. Another issue that I think is important in relation to the delivery of ambulance services is that I note on page 75 of budget paper 3 that the government has now removed the code 1 metropolitan response time. For the last number of years that response time has been set at 13 minutes, but in the last five years the government has failed to meet the response time, so it has now, very conveniently, completely removed it as an output measure or target. I also note in regard to the promised Sebastopol ambulance station, which the government claims is fully funded, that although the money might well have

been allocated, there is no sign of the building being provided.

I would just like to say a couple of things about my own electorate. In relation to schools, only one school in the electorate of Caulfield received any allocation under this budget, and that was Ripponlea Primary School. There are a number of other schools that are in enormous need, but they have really been cast aside — in particular Caulfield Junior College, but also other schools like Caulfield Primary School and Caulfield South Primary School. The toilets at Caulfield Junior College were so bad that little kids were not going to the toilet all day; they were holding off going to the toilet. We had to get television cameras in to show how bad the toilets were before anything was done. Paint is peeling and the school grounds and school buildings are totally inadequate for the needs of the children.

The master plan for Caulfield General Medical Centre was first launched in 2001, but this hospital redevelopment is on a drip-feed. In about 2001, \$10 million was allocated for the nursing home. Then in the budget after the election before last — not the one that has just gone — \$22.5 million was allocated for the period between 2002 and this last election. Now we see \$28 million. This whole development is worth something like \$160 million to \$180 million, but at the rate the money is being drip fed, that will take 15 years.

Sitting suspended 12.57 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

Mr Baillieu — On a point of order, Speaker, in recent days members would have become aware that further limitations and restrictions have been placed on the operations of the media in and around this building and this precinct. That goes to matters of access, filming and photography. From a Liberal Party point of view, we have previously expressed concern that the shift of the media out of this building has not lead to more scrutiny, and that is a matter of some concern. Indeed the scrutiny by the media and the reasonable access to this building and members of Parliament by the media is an important part of our process.

I invite you, Speaker, to ensure that consultation occurs with all parties in relation to this matter, and indeed that the rules and regulations which have applied successfully to the media in the past, and I believe apply successfully now, are not arbitrarily changed to the detriment of the service of this house.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am unaware of any changes to rules or guidelines. There was an incident the other morning when the staff of the Parliament were

having their photo taken on the steps at the front of the Parliament. The media was asked not to photograph or film the staff. I think that is a relatively normal request. Since that occurrence I have spoken with the president of the press gallery, and have agreed that in consultation with the media we will review the guidelines that we operate under. In fact since then I have spoken to another media person and have accepted that I would have a discussion around the issues that the Leader of the Opposition raises.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police: ethical standards investigation

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to a recent phone call from the minister or his office to the Chief Commissioner of Police, following which the Kit Walker investigation by the ethical standards division was downgraded so that the investigation is now subject to Police Association approval. The officer in question was not formally interviewed under the Police Regulations Act; the officer's portable computer stick was not examined; and the investigation is to be referred for assessment to an officer specifically recommended by the Police Association. I ask: what prompted the call to the chief commissioner?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — I have to reject the basis of the question. The honourable member for Kew is clearly referring to a matter that was reported in the media. When it comes to operational investigative matters, they are matters that I do not comment on, and they are also matters that the police do not seek for me to comment on.

However, while I do not comment on operational investigative matters, the police do, and the police have made it particularly clear to the press that there was a telephone call to my office from the secretary of the Victorian Police Association that related to an operational investigative matter and that as a consequence my office notified the chief commissioner to alert her to the content of the conversation. That is the proper thing to do. That is what the chief commissioner would expect my office to do, and that is what I would expect my office to do. In addition to that, the police have made it very clear to the press that my office acted entirely appropriately.

Mr Baillieu — Who has made that clear?

Mr CAMERON — The police have made that clear.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Scoresby and the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr CAMERON — The spokesman for Victoria Police has made it very clear to the press that my office acted entirely appropriately, and I agree with the Victoria Police.

Community cabinet: rural and regional program

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to make regional Victoria a great place to work, live and raise a family, and I ask him to update the house on how the government's — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am sorry, the level of interjection is far too high. I can hardly hear the member asking the question.

Mr HOWARD — I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to make regional Victoria a great place to work, live and raise a family, and I ask him to update the house on how the government's community cabinet program is an example of that commitment.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Ballarat East for his question and his support for what has been an excellent program of this government over the last seven years, and that is the initiative of this government to have community cabinets right around the state — around regional and country Victoria and also in the inner, the middle and the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

We started off our community cabinets in 1999. One of our earliest ones was in fact in Wangaratta. One of our very successful ones was in Wangaratta, as the member knows as well. From then on we have had something like 70 community cabinet meetings around this state, and there are more to come as we move even further around the state. In particular next week the community cabinet will be meeting in Mildura. We are looking forward to that very much. There are a lot of issues we want to take up in Mildura and meet the community on. Very soon we will be meeting in the municipalities of Swan Hill, Buloke and Gunnamatta — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — Gannawarra.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr BRACKS — Gannawarra shire. What is useful about community cabinet is the opportunity not only to examine how policies are being implemented by the government but also to seek advice on what will grow regional Victoria, what will improve services for regional Victoria and what will improve the quality of life of regional Victorians.

Some significant and important initiatives have come out of our community cabinets, including, of course, the very successful Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. It has resulted in significant employment growth around this state by kick-starting projects which otherwise would have taken years and years to undertake. We have an outcome now where we have something like a 5.2 per cent unemployment rate in regional Victoria — the lowest it has been for years and years and years. We have created some 124 000 new jobs in regional Victoria over the last seven years, which is two-thirds more than the Kennett government did in the seven years it was in office.

We have also seen population growth improving and increasing — about 1.3 per cent population growth. That is the largest population growth for decades and decades. We sat down with regional councils from around Victoria and worked with them on how we could grow their populations, and we have done that successfully through our campaigns and joint efforts in the partnership we have with councils.

We have also tackled some of the rail issues in regional Victoria on advice from country and regional Victoria. We saw evidence of that yesterday in the Auditor-General's report on rail infrastructure, where he justified the government's position in buying back the privatised country rail freight system.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr BRACKS — That is heroic.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Polwarth!

Mr BRACKS — That was a good gag. If you needed any evidence of why the country rail system needed to be bought back, have a look at the

Auditor-General's report on the deterioration under the privatised system. I am very pleased that we were able to secure an arrangement to bring that back into state ownership, which we have done.

We have also worked with regional communities on droughts, on bushfires, on water flows, on the low water inflows into our streams and dams and on water sustainability. We will also be utilising our community cabinet meetings to seek views from regional communities — from Mildura, from Swan Hill and from a range of communities — about the proposals to be put to the Prime Minister on the \$10 billion Murray–Darling Basin system plan. We will be seeking those views to see if the views of the Victorian Farmers Federation are replicated and supported by country Victorians. We will seek those views to see if the views of country and regional Victoria are similar to those of environment groups right across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, who today rejected and pulled out of the Prime Minister's water plan.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mr BRACKS — The member for South-West Coast mentioned the federal Labor leader. Yes, we have a different position.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will not respond to — —

Mr BRACKS — I will speculate that we have a different position because we are standing up for Victoria. We are standing up for Victoria: whether or not our federal party agrees with it, we are standing up for Victoria. Contrast that with The Nationals — —

Mr Donnellan interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Narre Warren North!

Mr Delahunty interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Lowan!

Mr BRACKS — Contrast that with The Nationals, who were urging me in press releases and commentary not to cave in to the federal government but to stand up for Victoria. Then they changed their minds because their federal party told them to change their minds. We stand up for Victoria, whether or not our federal party has a position — that is the difference. We will continue to stand up for country and regional Victoria. We are the only party which is standing up for a better deal on water for country and regional Victorians. We will look in our regional and community cabinets for

advice from communities on whether or not they support our plan to stand up for their rights.

Industrial relations: Australian workplace agreements

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. I refer to the minister's recent letter to the chief executive officer of Wangaratta-based Bruck Textiles regarding the involvement of the Victorian workplace rights advocate during negotiations pertaining to an enterprise bargaining agreement between Bruck and its staff. I refer particularly to that part of the letter which states, and I quote:

Consistent with the legislation, the workplace rights advocate may investigate illegal, unfair or otherwise inappropriate industrial relations practices.

I ask: given the startling revelations on the front of today's *Herald Sun*, will the minister direct the workplace rights advocate to investigate WorkDirections Australia Pty Ltd — a company owned by the wife of the federal Leader of the Opposition — or is there an exemption clause for Labor mates?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kilsyth! I will call the minister when the house comes to order.

Mr HULLS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I am pleased that the honourable member now has his facts right in relation to Bruck Textiles and is well aware that there was no interference, as he alleged, on the part of the workplace rights advocate. I accept his belated apology in relation to the outrageous allegations he made about the workplace rights advocate.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte will not interject in that manner.

Mr HULLS — Having read the article that appeared in today's paper, it seems that the company referred to employed workers on common-law contracts and not Australian workplace agreements (AWAs). I remind the house — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HULLS — You need to see someone about that.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast knows better than to behave in that manner.

Mr HULLS — I remind the house that, unlike the situation with AWAs, employees on common-law contracts are entitled to award provisions like overtime pay, like penalty rates and like public holiday pay. This is in stark contrast to the AWAs that are supported by every one of the noddies on that side of the house. They take away entitlements and they take away things like long service leave, and so on.

It does not matter what you call WorkChoices — and I know those opposite call it 'The policy formerly known as WorkChoices', a bit like 'The artist formerly known as Prince' — the fact is that we know it is rotten legislation.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte!

Mr HULLS — It ought to be abolished — and it is supported by the member who asked the ridiculous questions.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is very clearly debating the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Yan Yean and the member for Kororoit!

Mr Ryan — We simply want to know, Speaker, whether, if it is good for the goose, it is good for the gander.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Water: rural and regional infrastructure

Ms DUNCAN (Macedon) — My question is to the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change. Can the minister update the house on the status of major infrastructure in rural and regional Victoria to ensure water supply.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change) — I thank the member — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

The member for Bass has been consistently interjecting for the entire question time. I ask him to cooperate with the Chair in allowing question time to continue in an orderly manner.

Mr THWAITES — All over Victoria our government, the Bracks government, is working with irrigators, with farmers and with regional communities to ensure that they have a secure water supply and secure water rights. Unlike those opposite, we do not support — —

Mr Hodgett interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I inform the member for Kilsyth that question time is not an opportunity for him to sit and interject at every moment. I ask the member to desist.

Mr THWAITES — As the *Shepparton News* has pointed out, the Victorian government, a Labor government, is the government which is the prime guardian of irrigator rights and interests in this state. Our government is going to keep on doing that. We are not going to sell out the interests of farmers through this proposed commonwealth legislation, which allows a commonwealth minister to reduce water rights, override state planning provisions and even regulate the price of water. We are not going to sell out the interests of our communities. What we are doing is investing, and we are investing in the biggest rural water project in the country, the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline.

I am pleased to be able to advise the house of the further progress of the pipeline. This is a very significant project for some 10 per cent of the area of this state. It will deliver up water savings of around 100 000 megalitres a year. It will provide security for farmers, for towns and for the whole region into the future. I am pleased to advise that around 630 kilometres of pipe has now been laid. That equates to almost 50 per cent of the total amount of pipe to be laid under the first stage of the works.

I am also pleased to be advised that the second stage of the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline has been fast tracked. That contract has now been awarded this year, 12 months ahead of schedule. The works are commencing next month, in June, and the procurement of pipes by the contractor is already under way. I am sure the good local member is very aware of that and is very pleased about the progress of that. I am also pleased to say that the next stage of the works — that is, in the Cannie Ridge region in the area known as supply system 5 — will also occur this year, and we will shortly be awarding that contract as well.

Not only is it delivering water for the region, it is also delivering jobs. This project already has of the order of 110 full time employees in the region, all working on the job. I might say that the contractor is doing a very good job in working with the local indigenous community and involving indigenous employees in the contract. I have met with them, and they provide enormous benefit to the job as well. This is a contract that will secure the future of the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. It is a contract that is being delivered by a Labor government, the Bracks government, that stands up for the rights of farmers.

Across the rest of the state I am also pleased to advise that the Bendigo leg of the super-pipe has now reached the halfway mark. That, once again, is another great project being delivered by the Bracks Labor government. Crews are laying about 500 metres of that pipe each day, and currently they have about 22 kilometres of pipe in the ground. This is a project that we are delivering, and we are delivering it against the objections of The Nationals and against the objections of many Liberal members in the region — and we cannot be clear on what their position is. What this government is doing is getting on with the job of delivering the water that is needed for Bendigo.

The Ballarat leg of the super-pipe is also moving ahead as planned. I am pleased to advise that there are some 12 kilometres of pipes that have already been delivered. The contracts for the civil works will be awarded shortly, and that project will be under way and delivered so that water can be supplied for Ballarat next year.

We still have not heard from the opposition about its policy for Ballarat. Ballarat is in the most critical water situation, and we have still not heard what the opposition's policy is.

Can I say that I am pleased about one thing. While the state Liberal Party has maintained its opposition to the super-pipe, I am pleased to advise that the federal Liberal candidate, Samantha McIntosh, has now said the super-pipe should go ahead. This is the same Samantha McIntosh who, when she was a National Party candidate, called the super-pipe a half-baked idea.

We are getting on with the job, and we are delivering. All I can say is that I ask the other side of the house to get behind this great project.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Batchelor — A great pick up: Julian McGauran in drag!

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House!

Mr Baillieu — On a point of order, Speaker, I think that is an offensive remark by the Leader of the House, and I invite you to ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Leader of the House to withdraw.

Mr Batchelor — I withdraw.

Member for Derrimut: conduct

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to evidence that the Premier's parliamentary secretary, the member for Derrimut, is alleged to be involved in the fraudulent misappropriation of funds and is now alleged — —

Mr Hulls interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General will allow the Leader of the Opposition to ask the question.

Ms Kosky interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Public Transport!

Mr BAILLIEU — He is now alleged to have consorted with a man for whom an arrest warrant is outstanding, and I ask: why does the Premier refuse to refer these accusations to Victoria Police and to the Australian Federal Police to investigate so that Victorians can know the truth?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As I have indicated on previous occasions, and I will indicate it again today, the allegations have been denied in each case of course. In the case of other matters which are in the press today, my attitude to the parliamentary secretary has not changed.

Technical education centres: rural and regional Victoria

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — My question is to the Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment. I ask the minister to inform the house on what the government is doing to improve technical education and training for young people, particularly in regional Victoria.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment) — I thank the member for Geelong

for his question. I was delighted to join the member for Geelong and the member for Lara last week at the opening of the \$9 million building and construction centre at the Gordon Institute of TAFE, which once again reiterates this government's commitment to our no. 1 priority of education and skills. Over the last seven years we have seen a \$7.3 billion investment in education and training providing more options for young people from rural and regional Victoria. Whether it is in Geelong, in Bendigo or Ballarat or in the regional and rural parts of our state, we are seeing how this investment is delivering real results.

Overall across Victoria we have the best year 12 completion rate of any Australian state. Also importantly, we have seen a 61 per cent increase in the number of traineeships and apprenticeships here in Victoria. Despite the misleading campaign by The Nationals, the results have shown that since 1999 retention rates in country Victoria have increased by almost 3 percentage points. Overall participation by rural and regional Victorians in some form of education and training is at a very high 92.3 per cent. Since 1999 — we all remember who was in government in September 1999 — we have seen participation in vocational education and training in regional Victoria increase by 42 per cent.

These are very good and strong achievements, but we certainly know there is more to do, and that is what we are doing by encouraging more students to take up apprenticeships and trades. The recent state budget provided \$50 million to renew technical wings across 30 government schools and also provided all other government secondary schools with equipment grants of \$100 000.

We are getting on with the job of delivering on our commitment in last year's skills statement, with \$32 million to build four new technical education centres (TECs) across Victoria — unlike the federal government's Australian technical colleges, which we know are suffering from delays, suffering from cost blow-outs and suffering from low enrolments. But I must say that there is one achievement the Australian technical colleges have made, and that is an increase in the number of federal bureaucrats! In Victoria we are already seeing two technical education centres up and running with more than 170 students, who have now taken up the opportunity to undertake a range of courses. There is a whole range of options for young people in our technical education centres across the Victorian certificate of applied learning, the Victorian certificate of education, apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, all linked back into their senior secondary education.

Two of these technical education centres are in regional Victoria, one in Ballarat and one in Wangaratta. I am very pleased to advise the house — I know the member for Murray Valley will be joining me on the occasion — that I will be officially launching the operations of the Wangaratta TEC next week. This is a launch that would not have occurred under a Liberal government. It wanted to scrap the Wangaratta TEC and shift it to metropolitan Melbourne. It did not want to deliver a TEC to Wangaratta. I can assure the member for Murray Valley and all members of the house that the Bracks government will continue to work to improve education opportunities for all Victorians regardless of where they live. We know that that is the best way of delivering the employment and economic opportunities that will continue to make Victoria the best place to work, live, learn and raise a family.

Australian Labor Party: fundraising

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — My question without notice is to the Premier. In relation to the latest revelations on the election fundraising activities of Labor Party members of Parliament and supporters and the failure of the government to implement the 1999 Labor election commitment which states, ‘Labor will require full disclosure of all donations to political parties by closing loopholes and increasing penalties’, I ask: will the government now implement real disclosure and accountability measures to close these loopholes, or is it too afraid of what the Victorian Electoral Commission might find?

The SPEAKER — Order! I call the Premier to answer in relation to state government business.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Gippsland East for his question. I reject the implication in the member’s question that we have not implemented our policy. We have; we have implemented it in full. In fact all the disclosure rules are in accord with the national disclosure rules which govern those moneys raised and declared with the Australian Electoral Commission, and all those matters are in accord with the Australian Electoral Commission rules. We have fulfilled our obligations. We have met our obligations in relation to disclosure, and we will continue to ensure that happens in the future as well.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — The 500 Club, the Cormack Foundation! I did not mention the Cormack Foundation.

The SPEAKER — Order! Question time is not an opportunity to engage in discussion across the table.

Rail: regional links

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I refer the minister to the government’s commitment to revitalise Victoria’s regional rail, and I ask the minister to detail to the house how infrastructure improvements have impacted on V/Line patronage and make regional Victoria a great place to work, live and raise a family.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank very much the member for Ballarat West for her question and her absolute commitment to regional rail in Victoria. Unlike the other side, this government is absolutely committed to improving our regional rail services, and it has done exactly that. I am absolutely delighted to tell the house that commuters have also committed to regional rail across Victoria. I have fantastic news to announce to the house. In March this year V/Line recorded its highest monthly patronage on record, ever. That is close to 900 000 passenger trips. That surpasses the previous record set in March last year during the Commonwealth Games, and is 9.5 per cent greater than the previous record. There has been incredible growth in our regional rail patronage.

I will indicate what this means for different lines. The line to Geelong and Warrnambool has shown an increase of 11 per cent in passenger trips this March compared with last March. For Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms KOSKY — You would do well to take a trip on the regional rail service.

Mr Lupton interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Prahran will not interject in that manner.

Ms KOSKY — For Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca there has been a 15.5 per cent increase, and a massive 18 per cent increase on the line to Traralgon and Bairnsdale. While March was a record month, V/Line has informed me that the year to date figures from July to February this year show a 30 per cent increase in the use of our regional train network. There have been incredible increases in patronage right across the board. Commuters are voting with their feet and are using the services provided. But of course it has not just happened by accident. It has happened because of the commitment since 1999 that the Bracks government

has had in place to reverse the policies of the previous government to close lines and close services.

Why have we seen this increase? We have reopened the lines to Ararat and Bairnsdale, and we have invested in the lines to Warrnambool and Echuca. For Echuca we have increased services by 350 per cent. We have rebuilt the lines to Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Traralgon; we have delivered 38 new V/Locity trains; we have introduced over 400 new services every week in regional Victoria; and we have slashed V/Line fares by an average of 20 per cent. All of this together means that commuters are voting with their feet. Patronage has increased enormously on regional rail networks. We have a comprehensive plan for our regional and rail networks, and we will continue to invest and be committed to regional and rural Victoria.

GJK Facility Services: Office of Housing contracts

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's convenient loss of memory in relation to his personal relationship with Labor mate George Stamas of GJK Facility Services, and I ask: will the Premier now confirm that in addition to the meeting revealed yesterday he also hosted an exclusive function last year, paid for by Mr Stamas and GJK, which Mr Stamas now boasts as a 'fantastic opportunity', and advise the house what other meetings he has had with Mr Stamas?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As I have mentioned in this house, I meet with many people on many occasions. Not only that — I will answer the question — the parties do undertake fundraising. Whether that is — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The question has been asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The Premier is attempting to give an answer to that question.

Mr Thompson — Correct.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Sandringham is warned. The Premier does not need the antics of the opposition or the noise of government members to answer questions.

Mr BRACKS — It is fundraising —

Mr Kotsiras interjected.

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

Mr BRACKS — whether that is fundraising in relation to, for example, Progressive Business, whether it is fundraising in relation to the 500 Club or whether it is fundraising which has never, ever been disclosed by the Cormack Foundation. There is only one person in this house who knows what money was raised by the Cormack Foundation and that person is sitting opposite. That person is shielding — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bulleen! The government benches!

Mr BRACKS — That person is shielding behind disclosure laws, because the Cormack Foundation raised money before the Australian Electoral Commission rules came in. Now volunteer and give it up.

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr Napthine interjected.

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

Mr Baillieu interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition is warned.

Regional Infrastructure Development Fund: projects

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Opposition backbenchers should desist for the next few minutes while we get through question time, particularly the member for Warrandyte.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Can the Treasurer advise the house of any recent Regional Infrastructure Development Fund projects that are making regional Victoria a great place to live, work invest, and raise a family?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I thank the honourable member for his question. One of the key commitments we made in the 1999 election was to

establish a Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. In fact the first piece of legislation that we introduced after being — —

Mr Wakeling interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully is warned also. There will not be another warning for the opposition backbench.

Mr BRUMBY — The first piece of legislation that we introduced was the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. Despite the opposition of the Liberal Party at the time, we pushed that legislation through and, seven years later, it has been an extraordinary success for our state.

We have allocated something like \$580 million to the fund, and \$353 million has been committed to projects which are either complete or under way. We have announced 143 projects, the majority of which have been completed. There are projects in all 48 regional LGAs (local government areas) across the state, and I am pleased to advise the house that the total value of the projects we have funded to date, when you take into account third-party — local government and in some occasions federal government — funding, is just on \$1 billion.

Every regional member of this house can point to a project in their constituency. I mentioned in the house yesterday that in the three months to April this year there were more new jobs generated in Victoria — 18 366 — than in any other state in Australia. Part of the reason for that success is the growth that has been generated through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. There are projects all across the state. We have seen the rollout of natural gas: 950 kilometres of gas pipe has been rolled out under that program, the biggest rollout of natural gas in the state's history.

We are upgrading all of regional Victoria's local ports. We have upgraded a number of regional showgrounds, such as Shepparton and Bendigo. We are upgrading regional airports at Mildura, Portland, Shepparton, Latrobe, West Sale, Yarrawonga, Bendigo, Warrnambool and Stawell. We are supporting tourism projects like the magnificent Sovereign Hill, which we have supported to the tune of \$3 million.

With some of these projects we have run into a roadblock. I announced recently \$4.5 million towards a \$7.4 million new performing arts centre in Wangaratta and \$2.25 million towards the Wimmera regional intermodal freight facility. We have run into a bit of a roadblock, we have run into a hurdle and we have run

into a bit of a problem. That problem is the federal government. We have a particular problem, which is the member for Indi, Sophie Mirabella.

An honourable member — That is a big problem.

Mr BRUMBY — That is a big problem. When — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer — —

Mr Thwaites interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier!

Mr BRUMBY — When I announced — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of disrespect shown to the Chair and to the state of Victoria and all its constituent members this afternoon has been disgraceful. I ask members for some cooperation. I understand the opposition does not always like the answers it gets from the government, but the Speaker is not in a position to direct ministers on how to answer questions. In this chamber respect will be shown to the Chair and it will be shown by members to one another. I ask the Treasurer to direct his answer to state government business so that we can all finish question time.

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have on numerous occasions suggested to the member for South-West Coast that I do not need his constant advice.

Mr BRUMBY — The application for funding for the Wangaratta performing arts centre was made by the Rural City of Wangaratta. When I announced the funding there, I was joined by the member for Murray Valley, by the council and by members of the community, who have wanted that facility for the best part of the last 30 years. This has been a wonderful announcement for the community. The state government has committed \$4.5 million and the council, \$2.5 million. The council sought \$500 000 from the federal government. The federal government rejected that application for funding, saying that the project did not represent value for money. The federal member there, in explaining why the application had been rejected, said:

The application was made under the Regional Partnerships program, and this is a fund which focuses on projects which are unlikely to attract other grants.

I took the opportunity to have a look at the Regional Partnerships website, and the first paragraph says:

The Australian government's approach to regional development is to work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector ...

We want to see — —

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

Mr BRUMBY — We have projects right around the state. We have, obviously, major roads in Geelong, we have freight centres in Doon near Horsham and we have the Wangaratta performing arts centre, where the state government is taking a leadership role, making the investment and putting regional development at the top of the agenda. The government which is holding us back, which is not joining with us and which is not working in this partnership is the federal government. We urge the federal government to get on board the regional development agenda. We urge it not to turn its back on regional Victoria. We urge it to support the great initiatives which have been put forward by councils across this state. With more support from the federal government, we can make regional Victoria even stronger than it is today.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time set aside for questions has finished.

APPROPRIATION (2007/2008) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr HUDSON (Bentleigh) — It is a great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill, because this is a great budget. It continues the great record of the Bracks government in upgrading services, in investing in infrastructure and in growing the whole state. It is also a budget that will drive business investment and jobs growth. It tackles our environmental challenges, and it addresses significant areas of social and economic disadvantage in the state.

It is a budget that delivers \$1.3 billion in reductions in tax revenue. It reduces WorkCover premiums, and it reduces stamp duty on cars. It is a budget that is delivering one of the biggest investments in infrastructure that has ever been seen in this state, with a further \$13 billion invested over the next four years.

We have been making investments that matter in our people, with a commitment of more than \$500 million

to ensure that we can commence the most significant school rebuilding program in Victoria's history. We are tackling housing disadvantage by investing an additional \$510 million over the next four years in public and social housing. The economy is growing strongly. Over the past year Victoria has generated more than 70 000 jobs. The Victorian economy is expected to grow by around 2.75 per cent this year, increasing to about 3 per cent in the next financial year. We can see that the fundamentals of the Victorian economy — the fundamentals that will drive the state forward — are very sound.

The opposition is frozen in time. When you analyse its response to the budget you find opposition members complaining that we are not delivering sufficient services and we are not spending enough on services or infrastructure. At the same time they complain that taxes are skyrocketing out of control, that debt levels are unsustainable and that we are leading the state to the brink of economic oblivion. It seems to me that the opposition is tying its analysis to the growth in inflation. It says that if taxes do not keep pace with inflation and if debt levels do not keep pace with inflation then somehow the state government is acting irresponsibly. These claims have no credibility at all, because when you go to the budget papers and look at the total tax revenue raised by this government since it has been in power you find that it has increased by 36 per cent since our first state budget. But in that period the economy has grown by 49 per cent. If you look at state taxation as a percentage of the total economy, in Victoria it is now around 4.5 per cent compared to 6 per cent under the Kennett government. Yet the opposition says that our tax levels are too high.

If you also look at state debt as a percentage of the total economy, you find that it is lower under the Bracks government than it was under the Kennett government. For the opposition to claim that tax revenue and debt for infrastructure should be tied to inflation in a low inflation economy is to condemn Victoria to underinvestment in services and infrastructure.

This state has very significant growth in population and very significant growth in the economy. Underpinning that growth are the skills of our people and the investments we are making in roads, in affordable housing, in public transport infrastructure and in water infrastructure. If we were not making those investments, the economy would be retarded. We would be held back, because we would not be making the investment to undo the traffic congestion and the bottlenecks that exist on our roads or in our ports. We would not be investing in the kind of infrastructure that is needed to create the ideal learning environments for

our children and our young people so they can acquire the skills they need to be active participants in the community and to contribute to the society.

Here we have the opposition claiming that our infrastructure investment and our tax levels are too high and that they imperil the economy. Opposition members have been coming in here, year after year, making the same claims in their budget replies, and year on year they are shown to be completely without foundation and without credibility. The Victorian economy has been growing very strongly. Indeed it has been growing particularly strongly for a non-resource state when you compare us with a like state such as New South Wales.

The Victorian government is making very sensible investments in the future of this state, in the skills of our people and in a robust and resilient economy. These are the kinds of investments that should be made in the economy. And these are the kinds of investments that are necessary for Victoria's future. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — In my brief contribution to the budget appropriation bill I will do something unusual. I am prompted by something said by the member for Bentleigh — namely, that the opposition keeps coming in here and harping about the same old things. Certainly the opposition has been raising a number of things. One of the things I have been raising is how this budget has failed the people of Kew on numerous occasions, and I propose to reiterate that. What I will do, unusually, is start with my own electorate, because I always leave it to the last and run out of time. Hopefully I will do it justice in this short contribution. I will go the full 15 minutes, but it will be short nonetheless.

In relation to my electorate, the most important reason that people move into the electorate of Kew is —

Mr Thompson — The local member!

Mr McINTOSH — Indeed, there is the local member, but certainly education is an important reason. Kew probably has a higher density of schools — state-run, Catholic and independent — than anywhere else in metropolitan Melbourne and perhaps anywhere else in the country, I hasten to add. The independent and state-run schools are highly regarded in a number of respects.

Schools such as Balwyn High School and Kew High School are exemplars in a variety of aspects, and it is a matter of real pride that these schools are two of the leading state-run schools in this state and are

recognisable for the contribution that they make to the local community and to education generally. Balwyn High is known for its music program, and one of the exceptions to the strictly enforced catchment regions is that kids at schools around Victoria who have some skills in music are offered places at schools like Balwyn High and Kew High.

However, having said that, there are always matters on which the budget directly impacts that go to the nuts and bolts of a school rather than the spiritual background or the make-up of the students, the teachers, the parents, the school community and the broader community. Take, for example, North Balwyn Primary School, which is right next door to Balwyn High School. It is a great school, but I raised a matter in this house six months ago about its outstanding maintenance backlog, which amounts to many hundreds of thousands of dollars. It has window frames that are clearly rotten and literally held together with paint. There are whole buildings shifting off their foundations that should be admitted as part of the agreed maintenance backlog. In many cases if it were not for the contributions of parents and other members of the school community, maintenance at North Balwyn primary and many other state-run schools would never get done. There is nothing peculiar about the maintenance backlog at North Balwyn Primary; I am just using it as an example.

I raised an adjournment matter in this place some six months ago for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training at the time — and I note that the minister is sitting at the table now in the guise of the Minister for Public Transport. I referred to the state of the carpet in a school classroom that was held down with masking tape. I am yet to get a response from the then Minister for Education and Training or even the new Minister for Education in the other place in relation to North Balwyn Primary School.

Almost every single one of the state-run primary schools in my electorate is well in excess of its long-term enrolment numbers. Notwithstanding what the department says, for every single year of the last seven years that I have stood in this place to speak on the appropriation bill, I have raised the issue of the increases above those long-term enrolment levels. It does not matter what the bureaucrats say, the reality is that the population in Kew has been rising. Despite that, my electorate has remained unchanged for not just the seven years I have been in this place but for the previous eight years, including the two terms of the Kennett government. The population is rising and these primary schools are struggling, in their narrow, confined areas, to meet their commitments to the kids

because of the department's view on long-term enrolments and the fact that it will not accept that these schools are growing.

In relation to Kew Primary School, which I mentioned earlier, we all know about the abomination that is the development of Kew Cottages, which this government proposes to press ahead with. There will not be, as the Premier originally announced, 250 homes; there could be well in excess of 500 new homes — and I am even sceptical about that limitation. Given that it could easily be a huge money grab for the government, it could go well in excess of that. Even if you accept that there will be 500 homes in this area, the 27 hectares of land adjacent to a national park would be a wonderful addition to public open space in this state, yet the government is virtually saying, 'No, we are going to build houses all over it'. This is notwithstanding the fact that it is right in the middle of the catchment area of Kew Primary School. No recognition is given to the likelihood that there could be as many as 1000 extra school-aged children, of which a large percentage will be in the primary school age group, going directly to either Kew primary or other schools like East Kew primary. There is certainly no recognition of the other aspects of Kew Cottages.

I will move on to the abomination that is the situation at Kew Cottages. The loss of public open space is deeply regrettable. There is no consideration being given by the government to the management of the traffic up and down Princess Street, apart from the fact that the sole entrance to and exit from 500 homes will be via Hutchinson Drive. I express my concern that the treatment of many of the residents of Kew Cottages has been disgraceful. Many of the parents and families of the intellectually disabled residents of Kew Cottages have only recently been told where the residents would be relocated. They have been told some six years after it was originally announced by the Premier. Yes, they have been told, and the related matters have been implemented, but it is important to note that it has taken six years for those matters to be cleared up.

The parents and families of the intellectually disabled residents have had to put up with this appalling behaviour by the government. Again, I could not get over the arrogance with which the government behaved. It basically said, 'It will all be right in the end, but we will not keep you informed. We will just say that 100 people will stay and the remaining 350 will be moved into community residential homes. We are not going to tell you now, we will not tell you in the first year and we will not tell you in the second year'. Only after six years have the parents and families been told precisely what the outcome will be.

Even that supposedly precise outcome is of a general nature in some cases, and a number of parents have informed me that even the arrangements entered into are not yet permanent and could change. The terror for many of these parents is that they are very elderly and may not necessarily last too many more years. As for the prognosis for their children, many will live to a ripe old age. But these parents have to live with the prospect that they may pass on without having reached a final solution, if I can call it that, in relation to their children.

As I said, Kew Cottages is a matter of concern because of the treatment of the residents, the loss of public open space and the lack of clarity as to the impact it will have on infrastructure such as roads and schools. At the end of the day the profound concern is that nobody knows what is going on. We have had pretty clear rumours that Walker Corporation — indeed Walker Corporation has confirmed it — wants to sell the site to Mirvac as a development. All this has happened in a cloak-and-dagger fashion, because no-one can get access to any documents.

The real problem with Kew Cottages is that the government is the planning authority. It has called the matter in, and it is the planning authority. It is the owner of the land, effectively holding the land in trust for the people of Victoria, but it is now going to flog it off to the highest bidder. The worst aspect of this is that the government has entered into a very shabby and secretive deal with a developer. Whether it is Walker or Mirvac, only time will tell, but there are certainly bulldozers presently demolishing buildings as well as trees and other things in that area. The really appalling thing about it is that the agreement is a profit-sharing agreement. For the first time in this state you have the government being the owner and developer of the land as well as the planning authority, so what hope can we have for accountability? I congratulate the upper house on looking into this matter. Hopefully this will provide some clarity, perhaps enlightening the people of Victoria about this disgraceful overdevelopment in the Kew electorate.

I will also mention a matter I raised previously — that is, the loss of 12 front-line police officers in Boroondara in my electorate. Like the rest of Victoria, we are suffering an increase in crimes against the person. I was at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing recently where the Chief Commissioner of Police conceded that there seems to be a major increase in assault, particularly in Melbourne's central business district. She highlighted the unusual aspect of that, which is the involvement now of young women both as victims and as perpetrators of assaults. Assaults have risen in my

electorate by some 16 per cent over the last 12 months, along with other crimes against the person.

The thing that troubles me is the rise in the last 12 months in the Boroondara area of crimes against property. The vast majority of that would be graffiti. We recently had a gentleman who did over \$700 000 worth of damage with graffiti getting a suspended sentence. That is a matter of real concern to the people of Boroondara, in particular, where that gentleman was based. The worst part of this is that out of Boroondara's total complement of some 37 police we will have to pay the ultimate price and lose 12 front-line officers under the police allocation model proposed by the Chief Commissioner of Police. It is a matter I raised with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services last night in the adjournment debate. Hopefully he will not take as long as the former minister for education took. I am still waiting for that letter. Hopefully the minister will get back to me and resolve the issue for the people of my electorate.

I also raise the issue of the North Balwyn drains, which first came to my attention some three or four years ago when in the space of six months many houses in North Balwyn, a low-lying area that was developed at the end of World War II — and perhaps to some extent it was overdeveloped, without any recognition of the amount of water that would flow because of an increase in bitumen roads et cetera — suffered from two significant downpours of rain. At that time there were meetings with Melbourne Water, which proposed constructing attenuating drains in the following year, the 2005–06 financial year. It did not come about then; it did not come about in this financial year; and I noticed that in the budget there is no provision for these works. The construction cost we were provided with was approximately \$1 million, which seemed relatively cheap to me. Melbourne Water indicated that that would be a solution to the problem and it would require input by both local and state government.

Even when it comes to something like a drain, the water could be recycled. We are concerned about the run-off. I would have thought a government in the middle of a drought would have been very concerned about these sorts of issues. That highlights just one instance of the appalling condition of drains and sewers in metropolitan Melbourne generally, and certainly in North Balwyn. It is a matter of profound concern. What is the government doing about it? It is putting it off. It will only react to a crisis, and I dearly hope we do not have another crisis of the kind we had two or three years ago in North Balwyn in relation to those drains.

I will very briefly discuss a couple of matters. The member for Bentleigh has raised the matter of freeway noise attenuation fences. I have also been banging on about it for a couple of years, and again there has been no concrete outcome or solution. The people of North Balwyn, East Kew and Kew are being treated differently from people who live out along the freeway from Doncaster when it comes to noise attenuation. The claim is that the Eastern Freeway at Kew, North Balwyn and East Kew is an existing freeway. When it goes to Springvale Road — and EastLink will soon be connected — it is not just an existing freeway. It is effectively a new freeway, and these areas should be treated the same way, with a 63-decibel requirement. Traffic congestion is still a problem. The area is used as a rat run, no doubt because of all the schools. Again no solution has been provided by government.

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. The first comment I want to put on the record is that the budget delivers on government commitments that build on its achievements in its first two terms and provide a framework for the state's future. The second comment, importantly, is that the budget delivers on government promises to improve services, build vital infrastructure and make Victoria an even more attractive place to invest, live and raise a family.

The government is delivering on its commitment to meet the challenges of the future and invest in the services that matter to families. The budget delivered the first stage of the biggest school rebuilding program in the state's history while continuing to provide high levels of investment in health services.

I will discuss very quickly the Bracks Labor government's delivery of services into the western suburbs. If one government in Victorian history has delivered across all areas of the western suburbs on health, infrastructure, railways, transport and education, it has been this government — and every one of its ministers — since we came into office in 1999. I will put on the record some of the many services that have been provided to the western suburbs, particularly in relation to the electorate of Derrimut. A sum of \$20 million has been committed for the expansion and redevelopment of Sunshine Hospital, the first step being the creation of a new multistorey east wing housing 128 new and upgraded beds, in addition to the many other millions of dollars that the government has delivered since we came into office in 1999. Magnetic resonance imaging equipment will be provided for installation at Sunshine Hospital as part of an \$8.5 million initiative.

A new roundabout, long sought by the community of Derrimut, will be constructed at the intersection of Boundary, Robinsons and Palmers roads at a cost of \$1.9 million. There will be \$3.8 million to fund a network of 7.5 dedicated family violence community lawyers, and there will be increased resources to provide assistance for people applying for family violence intervention orders at Sunshine, including a further family violence position at the Aboriginal family violence prevention legal service.

The community has long requested that the matter of urban parks and trail bike trails be addressed, and now the extension of the Kororoit Creek trail to Deer Park and the Western Highway has been delivered by the Bracks government as part of a \$4 million initiative. There is \$68 million for the ultranet and computers in schools, which will slash the administrative burden on teachers and allow a sharing of the latest curriculum resources. What a great achievement that is for the western suburbs and for all the kids of working men and working women, who want to be able to educate their children and give them an opportunity.

This government is making sure that no matter where you live and no matter what postcode you have, you are able to educate your family adequately and house your family adequately. I now wish to turn to housing, because the current minister, in following up the efforts made by earlier ministers, is doing a terrific job in delivering on housing, which is one of the fundamental challenges for this government. Of all the jurisdictions in the land, this government has made an extraordinary announcement which I am sure will go down in history as one of the greatest legacies to have been left to Victoria by a Labor government.

The Victorian government is investing a record \$510 million in social and public housing, which will assist families in the western suburbs. There is \$200 million to build and redevelop 800 extra public housing dwellings. That is in stark contrast to the previous government, which did nothing in public housing. It did not refurbish, it did not build new units and it did not care about families that could not afford to buy into the private market. The previous government simply did not care and did not do anything. In particular it did nothing in the western suburbs.

We have provided \$300 million to build 1550 new social housing dwellings, which will be delivered through housing associations. That follows on from the initiatives we took last year when we passed legislation to ensure that housing associations work in partnership with communities and in partnership with local

government in order to empower those families that dream they will one day walk into a home and make it their own. This government is doing that in partnership with housing associations, with communities at the grassroots level and with local government. There is \$7.5 million to deliver accommodation for young homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in the metropolitan growth areas of Casey, Melton and Whittlesea.

In conclusion may I say what a great budget this is. In particular, what a great budget it is for the western suburbs across the areas of education, public transport, housing and health. I am very proud to have spoken in a positive way on this appropriation bill about the good things that this government — and every member of this government — is doing for the whole of Victoria.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill and at the outset say that it is a disappointing budget for Gippsland East in terms of direct expenditure. A number of projects about which there was a reasonable amount of expectation have missed out on funding, and I will start with those. On the education front there are a number of schools which are in desperate need of funding and upgrades. Not only that, they were included in the Labor Party's election commitments. As well as that, the Maffra primary and Maffra secondary schools were asked to do a significant amount of work to bring forward their planning processes so they would be ready for this budget. I have spoken to the principals of those schools and a number of people within the community, and there is a degree of concern that the work that was done and the efforts of those schools to bring the processes forward were basically wasted. There was an expectation of funding, but now they will have to wait for the next budget. They are important projects.

Another school which likewise had some expectation of being funded in this budget was the Eagle Point Primary School, which is not far from Bairnsdale on the way to Paynesville. It is a small school but a good school in a fairly large growth area, and whilst it was committed to, the funding does not appear in this budget. Looking at the funding for education and the amount of money that will be expended in this year's and next year's budgets, there are a large number of promises for which money will be allocated in the outgoing years.

A fair amount of work was done by local health services on the Bairnsdale hospital's hope that there would be funding for an oncology and dialysis facility. This is an issue that was raised a long while ago, and a

number of very good local fundraising organisations raised substantial amounts of money for the construction of this facility. They met with the Minister for Health and were really looking forward to some type of commitment from the government on the construction of the facility. I know the hospital has made its commitment, and \$200 000-odd has been raised locally by fundraisers. So that is a disappointment.

A number of other projects are in the planning process in my area, both in education and health. Whilst they are not ready and there was no expectation that they would be funded in this budget, it will be necessary to fund them in the near future. One of those is what is commonly called the one-stop shop, which involves a combination of health service providers that are looking at providing services out of one premises in Bairnsdale. This is an incredibly important project for our region, not only for the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service and the Gippsland Lakes service but also for other smaller service providers. For example, the Latrobe Regional Hospital provides mental health services in East Gippsland. The concept of this is to have all those providers under one roof and to offer on-site ancillary health services so that people know where to go, because at the moment things are fairly fractured and there are a lot of different, small premises around. That is going to require a large expenditure in the future, and a lot of planning has already been done on that. The Gippsland Lakes service, which is mainly based at the lakes but provides services over a large area, has been speaking with the government about funding a number of other projects.

As I said, there is no direct allocation for some of these projects, which were planned and ready to go and which are now, if you like, on the shelf. They will now be pushed back to the next budget, as will other important projects in some of the schools. Bairnsdale Secondary College, one of the largest secondary colleges in my area, has for a number of reasons not had its master-planning process undertaken. The main reason for that is that it is one of the old technical schools. There are two campuses close together — it is a split school — and there has been a lot of debate within the community about whether it should maintain the two separate campuses. They are not necessarily provided for, so they do not get appropriate funding for staffing, libraries and other things. The Bairnsdale Secondary College has finally started to resolve some of those issues and is now in the process of planning.

Because there has been a long-term debate about whether this should remain as a split campus it has become incredibly run down. More than likely it will be

pushed up the priority list once the planning process is completed, and it will be an incredibly large school rebuild because of the size of the premises. I suppose I am putting the government on notice that this is a project which we would expect to go to the government to fund, and there will be a large amount of community pressure to make sure that occurs.

One of the other issues is road funding which is always an important issue in regional areas. We have state government roads within our area like the Omeo Highway, the Great Alpine Road, the Bonang Highway and the Princes Highway east of Orbost. Sections of the Princes Highway east of Orbost were earmarked for upgrade going back about 16 or 17 years, but unfortunately it has never been put on the priority list so there are some very poor sections of road. One of the other important issues for our region is the further duplication of the road from Melbourne back to Bairnsdale. There has been a bit of a push around lately for duplication from Traralgon back to Bairnsdale and more overtaking lanes. Duplication would be welcomed in those areas.

One of the positive things in the budget is the iconic walks project. It is disappointing that there is not a lot of money allocated to it in this budget. There is an amount of money allocated in the budget mainly for planning and the rest of it in the following years. One of the walks identified is the Tulloch Ard Gorge walk. I have a personal interest in this. It is a spectacular spot in the Snowy River National Park about 400 metres vertically above the Snowy River, right on the lip of the gorge. It is an incredibly spectacular spot. It is one of those places that you go to that takes your breath away; it is quite magnificent. Unfortunately there has been no infrastructure expenditure in our national parks across East Gippsland — or very limited expenditure. That is why projects like this are incredibly important to our tourism industry. Construction of the Tulloch Ard Gorge walk and a number of the other short walks have been committed to in this budget.

There is also the land bank study which is looking at sites in East Gippsland for wilderness lodges. These are incredibly important projects for the future of the tourism industry in my area. I have discussed these projects with the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change and also with the Premier and I know they are strong supporters of the project. A report was commissioned by the Orbost forum which looked at iconic walk opportunities within East Gippsland. Some that were identified are short walks. The government has funded them, and we are hoping to go to the commonwealth government as well to get funding from it, and the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries

and Forestry, Peter McGauran, has made some positive comments. I know he is very supportive of these projects as well.

The one that has missed out — and there is still a fair amount of planning that needs to be done — is the coastal walk from Cape Conran right through to the border — to Mallacoota. The report basically recommended the other shorter walks, but said that one of the most important things for East Gippsland's tourism walking industry, or nature-based tourism, was to get that iconic walk. Anyone who has been to that area along the coast in the Croajingolong National Park will know that it is a quite spectacular piece of coastline. I suppose it rivals some of the Great Ocean Road, but it is an incredibly isolated area as well, and that is why the walking track from Cape Conran all the way through would be an incredibly positive thing for our region.

But walks on their own do not generate a lot of local income, and the idea of the iconic walk project is to try to link towns so that people stay in the local communities, spend their money in the towns and do day walks — basically break down the sections. Because of the isolated area that we are talking about here, there is some hope that there will be a continual expansion of the tented accommodation which the minister was launching recently, both at Buchan and at Cape Conran. It is a new concept. They are an up-market type of accommodation built in national parks. They are all decked out inside, including a floor, but basically they are a hard tent. They are very spectacular and we would like to think that in the future this will be, if you like, an iconic image of our region. Not just the walk and the spectacular coastline, but linking up accommodation so people can do the walk without the big heavy backpacks. People can still do that if they wish, but industries will provide services for those walking opportunities.

There is another area that is obviously going to come up in the future. I was recently at a fundraiser for an aged-care facility in Mallacoota. Like many areas in my electorate Mallacoota is a long way from larger towns. There is enormous community support for the construction of an aged-care facility. There are some challenges with it because obviously the numbers are never going to be as high as those in some of the other larger towns. A committee has been going for a long while. It has not raised a lot of money, but it has really started to get going now. It has a bit of new blood; a few young people and a few older people as well who have got together. There was a very positive fundraiser and auction a couple of weeks back.

The committee has set its targets, and it will raise its share of the money. It knows there is a lot of work in front to make sure it gets the bed licences, but we will be knocking on the government's door to fund its share of the construction of a facility at Mallacoota. It would be a positive there because one of the challenges of a place like Mallacoota is that it is nearly 2 hours drive away from any other larger town. When people retire to those places they need services, and one of the services is aged care. If they are not able to stay in their community then they move away from their friends and they move away from their family support. It basically makes it very difficult for all those people involved with aged-care facilities.

I have spoken a number of times about the bushfire response. I will not touch on that now. The Lakes Entrance sand management issue has been a real saga and there has been much commentary on it in recent times. Barry Martin, a former chief executive officer of the port authority, made some very strong comments about the failure of the current board of management, and I have to agree with him. While Barry is fairly forthright in his views, and sometimes does not necessarily say positive things about me or other people, he has a strong history in the merchant navy and a strong understanding of the management of the sand.

I fully agree with his comments on the radio yesterday. He questioned the expertise of people appointed to the board of management, and whether they have the knowledge to manage a dredging operation. He put his name forward but it was rejected for one reason or another. People thought he was not a positive influence, but I would say that if Barry Martin was still involved in Gippsland Ports we would not be having the problems we have now, and we would not be seeing the failure to communicate with the community.

Basically what has happened with Lakes Entrance is that the fishing boats have not been able to get out to work. They have been leaving the port because of the danger and the risk of running aground. This has meant that a lot of dollars have gone out of our town. This needs to be addressed, and whilst \$31.5 million has been allocated to it, we need to bring forward some of the trial to make sure that some of the hopper dredgers there — —

Mr Helper interjected.

Mr INGRAM — I know the Minister for Agriculture has been briefed on this, and I am sure he fully supports making sure the hopper dredger comes as soon as possible.

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I am pleased to offer my fulsome support for this very commendable budget, a budget that continues to invest in services that matter. There has been a little bit of quoting of newspapers in the last day or so around this place — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz) — Order! I ask the honourable member for Mitcham to hold on until we get a microphone in place.

Mr ROBINSON — That has just given more members a chance to come in and listen to my contribution.

I repeat that I would like to offer my fulsome support to what is another outstanding Bracks government budget, a very commendable budget. I was just saying that there has been some quoting of newspapers. We have had reference to the *Shepparton News* and its sterling support for the Bracks government's position on the national water plan. I think that is useful. I want to talk today about the *Australian Financial Review* — —

Mr Mulder interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — It might not be one that the member for Polwarth reads much, but 'Robust finances well managed' was the headline on the editorial in the *Australian Financial Review* of 2 May. What a great endorsement that is of the Bracks government and its very responsible financial management.

This responsible financial management is accompanied by continued strong investment in services that matter. In the Mitcham electorate over the last few years there has been no clearer illustration of that investment than in our state schools. Prior to this year the Bracks government had totally rebuilt Mitcham Primary School. Its principal, Ian Sloane, is doing an outstanding job. That school was in an appalling condition at the time I was elected to this place. We have done a major reinstatement at Blackburn Lake Primary School. David Jewell has been the principal there for many years. It is a school that has an outstanding reputation. We have completed the Laburnum Primary School upgrade. Gavin Gamble is in charge at Laburnum. He also does a fantastic job and has built that school up to be one of the best in the eastern suburbs. We have completed stage 1 of the Antonio Park Primary School rebuild; Hans Kueffer and his team there lobbied long and hard for that. We have successfully started stage 2. We have also undertaken toilet block refurbishments at a further four schools.

This year we are following up those investments with some substantial investments in our state education

system. Box Hill High School sits on the edge of the electorate but provides first-class education to many families in the electorate. It is to receive some \$5.8 million to commence its upgrade. That is tremendous testimony to its principal, Bob Jenkin, who this year, by coincidence, celebrates 45 years in the education service. I am sure all members would want to join with me in congratulating him and wishing him well with the rebuild ahead. At the other end of the electorate Vermont Secondary College will receive stage 2 funding of some \$6.1 million to progress what is an outstanding upgrade for another school with a very solid reputation.

I want to speak briefly about a third school. Blackburn High School has now gone into the formal planning phase ahead of a rebuild, and hopefully that will start next year. That is a school which the previous government rent asunder. It split that school mercilessly with its half-cocked self-governance model, which pitted families against families. That was a very bitter and dark period for that school, but it will be rebuilt under this government, and that is a fantastic thing.

Those investments in education come on top of the 300 teacher assistants for our secondary schools across the state, the \$7 million for new computers and the increasing focus on maths and science learning. This follows the huge success of the VicSmart broadband rollout. I was pleased to be at Laburnum Primary School earlier this year with the Premier, the Minister for Skills, Education Services and Employment and the chief executive of Telstra, Sol Trujillo. He is not someone I would comment on positively at all times and in everything he does, but he gave a very positive endorsement of the state government's broadband project, the VicSmart rollout. He said that in his experience of working in 30 or more countries around the world he had not encountered a government that was more committed to improving children's education opportunities.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mr ROBINSON — I suspect that people would still value any reference Sol Trujillo gave them over any reference the member for South-West Coast gave them. I think it would carry a little bit more weight.

Down the road at the Box Hill Institute we are investing several million dollars in the establishment of a nursing skills centre for excellence. John Maddock has long been an advocate for that, and it is doing so well.

All of this is being done at a time when we are managing the economy well. There is no greater

example of that than the continued WorkCover premium reductions. A further 10 per cent reduction shows we are doing exceptionally well. With the member for Polwarth in the chamber I am reminded of what he said when we instituted the system in 2000. When premiums were at 2.18 per cent the member said:

The premiums will rise and continue to rise until Victoria is back in the position it was in in 1992, with an unfunded liability of \$2 billion — and it will happen quicker than you can take a breath.

If the member has been holding his breath since 2000 waiting for the WorkCover system to go bust, then he is a very silly man. He will be waiting a lot longer, because it is an outstanding scheme which is doing very well.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Housing) — I rise to support the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill. What a sensational budget this has been, a budget that really commits the Bracks government, yet again, to the concept of fairness. Everybody gets a fair share of the resources that have been so well managed by this government.

It would be remiss of me not to discuss my portfolio areas of housing and local government. There has been very generous support across the chamber for the significant and historic investment by this government in public and social housing. It is \$510 million: \$500 million for public and social housing and a \$10 million boost for youth homelessness.

We have quite an exciting program of \$4.7 million of investment in a partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria to develop what I think will be an excellent reform package for local government in a whole range of areas, but particularly in the area of cutting red tape. There are also what I think are very exciting opportunities for joint work around purchasing and procurement. There is potential for real savings for local government in that exercise.

In question time yesterday I touched on the important work we hope to do with local government with a \$500 000 package of support to encourage local governments to go past being advocates for public and social housing and really take up the opportunities that will be available to them to work with the state government in developing comprehensive development rezoning over land where public, social, affordable and private housing can be developed. I think that is a really important next step for local government. We very much look forward to local government supporting those propositions.

I have been out and about announcing a whole range of projects: in Ballarat, 50 new homes; in Norlane, a massive commitment of \$40 million to the Corio-Norlane area for probably one of the biggest urban renewal projects outside of metropolitan Melbourne; in Bacchus Marsh, \$5.3 million for the Young Street development; and in Bendigo, \$7.5 million. Prior to this budget we had a great announcement for the member for Northcote with a \$9 million redevelopment in Roberts Street, Northcote. This is a wonderful budget.

I should briefly touch upon *A Fairer Victoria*, which is really the government's social justice document which was launched a couple of weeks ago. The centre point obviously was the housing announcements, but there were other really important initiatives there as well, particularly about the provision of kindergarten opportunities. Now 17 000 low-income families will in effect have free kindergarten access, and that is a really wonderful initiative of the government and one that gives young people the best start in life. We know about the nexus between children getting access to kindergarten, getting a good start in life and building the bridge into primary education.

That is true in so many areas, including health and education — and just briefly touching on education, what an announcement that was! The complete refurbishment and rebuild of every public school in this state is visionary stuff. It is only Labor governments that get on with this sort of state building. I am proud to be part of a government that has made such extraordinary commitments long term to the health of Victoria through our infrastructure investment and to educational outcomes with a complete refurbishment of our schools, of course topped off by this wonderful and historic investment in public and social housing in my own portfolio area.

This is a great budget for Victoria. I commend the appropriation bill to the house, because this is a budget that yet again is very much anchored in that really fine principle of fairness.

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I rise to support the Treasurer in this fantastic budget. In my electorate of Keilor the Bracks government is doing a wonderful job in providing money for work in the cities of Melton and Brimbank. It is absolutely important work that is going on.

In my electorate we have a huge amount of benefits: new schools, new bus services, improved train services, facilities for the ageing, facilities for the police and improved roads. There is work going on everywhere in

leaps and bounds in the electorate of Keilor thanks to the Bracks government. Ever since the election of the first Bracks government, when the rail line was electrified to Sydenham, progress and development have not stopped. The shopping centres in the area are booming and people are moving into the area. We have 8000 new voters in my electorate.

I support this budget wholeheartedly. There is only one budget concern, and that is that the federal budget has not provided any money towards the Calder Freeway, which desperately needs federal government money to match the state government money so that we can have an overpass at Kings Road to make the intersection safe for all the people in my electorate. I commend the bill and wish it a speedy passage through the house.

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — The state Labor budget handed down by the Treasurer delivers on commitments and invests in families futures with significant initiatives in health and education. In short the May 2007 budget secures Victoria as the best place to live, work and raise a family.

I am particularly pleased to talk about the significant investments announced in this budget for the benefit of the people living in the electorate of Northcote. As part of the \$178 million boost for sport and recreation it was announced that half a million dollars would be invested at the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre to heat the outdoor 50-metre pool that at present lies dormant in winter.

The large boost in public transport of \$872 million includes \$48 million to duplicate the railway track between Clifton Hill and Westgarth in the electorate of Northcote. The \$171 million for early years services will make kindergarten effectively free for children from low-income families, helping many families in the electorate of Northcote, as well as lifting kindergarten participation rates by funding kinder programs at long-day-care and child-care centres.

For the environment in excess of 80 billion litres of water or the equivalent of the Sugarloaf Reservoir will be saved through initiatives introduced in this budget. To help families reduce their consumption of energy without the introduction of nuclear power, as planned by the Liberals with the cooperation of the Greens, Labor will allocate \$14 million in rebates for consumers to upgrade to highly energy-efficient appliances. Labor has also introduced the Victorian renewable energy target. This will cut industry greenhouse gas emissions by 27 million tonnes. I stress again for the benefit of the Liberals and the Greens that

these initiatives have all been taken without the introduction of nuclear power.

But one of the most significant achievements of this budget that I wish to highlight is the investment in our schools. I am particularly pleased that the member for Ferntree Gully raised the issue of school closures, because it provides me with an opportunity to contrast Labor's substantial investment in education with those dark years for education under the former Kennett coalition government. To begin with, this Labor budget has allocated \$555 million to commence the biggest rebuilding program in the state's history. These funds will upgrade 131 schools across the state.

This represents stage 1 of Labor's plan to modernise 500 schools by 2010, but in total a record \$904 million has been allocated to education in this budget, including \$38 million for five TAFE initiatives, and \$201 million towards 300 new teacher assistants and maths and science grants. There has been \$10 million allocated for urgent maintenance works, and \$61 million will be invested in the new statewide ultranet to enable parents immediate access to their child's progress online. This \$904 million investment follows our commitment to make education the no. 1 priority for the state, and we have seen the results. Literacy and numeracy rates are at or above the national average, and we have the lowest class sizes in over a decade and the highest year 12 completion rates in the country.

Let us compare that with the Liberals record in education. Between 1992 and 1999 the Kennett government closed over 300 schools. Unlike the two examples given by the member for Ferntree Gully, schools under the Kennett government were closed without the consent of the community, without the consent of the school community, without parental consent and without any regard for the educational impact these closures would inevitably have on student performance outcomes.

Those members opposite from rural electorates would do well to remember that the majority of schools closed by the Kennett government were in rural Victoria. Unlike the situation under the previous Liberal government, the decision to close a school is made by the school principal and the school council, and that is just what happened at the two schools identified by the member for Ferntree Gully. That is in stark contrast to the Kennett government. The concerns of students, parents and teachers were put last under Kennett, absolutely last, in that government's consideration over which school gates to slam shut. But worse was to be revealed. The Leader of the Opposition's own real estate company was awarded the contract to sell more

than 50 of these government schools. I think the fall of the auctioneer's gavel at the hands of the Leader of the Opposition is an image that will haunt —

Mr Mulder — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is reading her speech word for word. I ask you to get the member to raise her eyes and to address the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Green) — Order! Is the member for Northcote reading?

Ms RICHARDSON — I am referring to notes.

I think the fall of the auctioneer's gavel in the hands of the Leader of the Opposition will be an image that will last in the minds of parents, students and the community for a long time to come.

The members for Ferntree Gully and Doncaster and other members opposite can only begrudgingly acknowledge the achievements that have been announced in their electorates. Let us not forget the Kennett government sacked over 9000 teachers. Its performance in education was appalling. It is a record that the Victorian community will not forget. We will hold the former government to account. This Labor budget is a credit to the Treasurer and the Labor government, and I support it.

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — In closing the debate I thank all members who have spoken on the bill. It is a great thing that 69 members of the house spoke on the bill. I understand that all members of the opposition who requested to speak have been able to speak on the bill. Most members of the government have been able to speak on the bill and it is a sign of the strength and enthusiasm for our democratic process that 69 members have spoken on the Appropriation (2007/2008) Bill.

I should say that this budget has of course been exceptionally well received throughout the community. It has been particularly well received by business groups, which see it as a pro-growth, pro-business budget, and it has been well received by community groups and particularly by those involved in building a fairer Victoria through education and social housing.

I would describe it as a budget about growth. It cut land tax from 3 per cent to 2.5 per cent. It is a remarkable thing — we inherited a rate of 5 per cent land tax and it is now 2.5 per cent. It is a budget that provided a further 10 per cent cut to WorkCover premiums and it cut stamp duty on family cars. All of that is about economic growth. It is a budget also that is about fairness, with a social housing package of \$500 million. It is a budget too that will help parents with children at

preschools. Needier families will effectively have their preschool costs paid if they are the recipient of health-care cards. It is budget which is very much about the future, with many positive initiatives about the environment and the biggest investment in school rebuilding in the state's history. It is also a great budget for the regions with more than \$1 billion of new initiatives for regional Victoria.

Above all, as many speakers particularly on this side of the house have pointed out, this is an AAA budget. Within 24 hours of the release of this budget Standard and Poor's reiterated its comfortable AAA credit rating for our state. I noted that a number of members of the opposition raised the issue of net debt in their contributions to the debate. Can I just point out to them that net financial liabilities, which are superannuation and net debt, are at 6.1 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product), down from 10.6 per cent in 1999–2000, or in real terms an 11 per cent reduction. Our net debt stands at about 2 per cent of GDP.

Just for the benefit of members opposite who need to travel a bit more around the world, in Canada net debt as a share of GDP is 30 per cent; in France it is 43.7 per cent; in Germany it is 51.5 per cent; in Italy it is 95.1 per cent; in Japan it is 86.4 per cent; in the United Kingdom it is 40 per cent; and in the United States of America it is 43.5 per cent. In those G7 countries average net debt as a share of GDP is 55.8 per cent. I will just repeat that for the opposition's benefit — 55.8 per cent. In Victoria it is 2 per cent.

This is a good budget. It has been very well received. It cuts taxes. We all know that over the last few years the rivers of gold in Australia have been flowing to the commonwealth. Company tax has grown by 109 per cent over the last five years. The GST pool has grown by 48 per cent — half of that amount. You cannot help noticing the ignorance on the other side. As the *Australian Financial Review* said recently, federal Treasurer Peter Costello 'almost certainly now holds the record as Australia's biggest taxing Treasurer'. We have a pro-growth budget here. We have been cutting taxes and creating a strong economy generating jobs. This is a budget about growth, the future and fairness.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The time appointed for debate on this bill has expired.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages***Passed remaining stages.****Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).****ADJOURNMENT**

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Stud Road: upgrade

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — I would like to raise a matter with the Minister for Roads and Ports. I ask him to take immediate action to upgrade Stud Road. As the house would be aware, it is a important north–south road in the outer east that runs from Mountain Highway to Dandenong. The government will say with the opening of ConnectEast much of the traffic congestion on that road will be relieved. But let me tell members, as the locals would inform the government, it may cut some of the traffic but not traffic that is travelling long distances or traffic that is going to connect with either the Eastern or Monash freeways to travel into the city. As the house would also be aware, there is significant industry in the area. Traffic movements from industry along Stud Road to get onto one of the freeways, including ConnectEast, mean that Stud Road will remain a very congested and dangerous road.

I would like to refer the minister to an election promise which, as the shadow minister for roads, who is at the table, would be aware, reads:

Labor acknowledges growing north–south traffic congestion in the eastern suburbs and believes the region needs and deserves an immediate upgrade of Stud Road.

I am wondering if anyone knows when that policy was brought down.

Mr Mulder — When?

Mr WELLS — It was 1999. It adds to the massive list of broken promises. The promise for the upgrade of Stud Road was contained in Living Suburbs, the 1999 Labor Party policy, but nothing has been done.

Mr Robinson interjected.

Mr WELLS — The member for Mitcham has hit it on the head when he says it is a bus lane. I am not sure how that fixes the traffic congestion along that road. It is yet another broken promise. If you look at VicRoads

documents, in 2005 there were 62 000 vehicles a day. We say that is closer now to 70 000 or 75 000 vehicles every day. The road is narrow in places, it has gravel edges on either side and its intersections are dangerous.

Every single time the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria publishes its most dangerous intersections you can count on Stud Road and Ferntree Gully Road being there, Stud Road and Wellington Road being there and Stud Road and Burwood Highway being there. In fact Wellington Road has had 147 casualties since 1989 and there have been 127 casualties at Ferntree Gully Road and Stud Road. We call on the Bracks government to deliver its 1999 election promise to upgrade Stud Road.

Gaming: problem gambling

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I raise an issue with the Minister for Gaming, who I am pleased to see is at the table. The issue I raise for action relates to funding for agencies that are supporting problem gamblers across the state, including, of course, in my electorate of Geelong. Members are well aware that gambling is a legal form of entertainment that is enjoyed by many, many people across the state. However, as we are also well aware, for some people gambling can become an addiction and pose problems, not only for themselves personally but also for their friends, families and the wider community. It is vital as a government that we have in place effective services to assist those people. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure adequate funding is provided to agencies supporting gamblers right across the state.

In my electorate of Geelong I am very pleased to report that Bethany Community Support, a magnificent community organisation under the management of Aileen Ashford and her team, provide local people with a gambling problem with great assistance, support and guidance. This support, guidance and assistance is also provided to the families of those people. The Bracks government takes the issue of problem gambling very seriously. Since coming into office in 1999 we have provided additional funding for services, as provided by Bethany, as well as a raft of regulatory reforms to address problem gambling that I have been pleased to support over the last seven years.

It is interesting to note that since 1999 the prevalence of problem gambling in our community has halved to 1.14 per cent of the adult population. A lot more can be done and has to be done. I am pleased to note that the government has invested a record level of funding to the tune of \$132 million over the last five years in this area. However, as I said, there is always more to be done and I look forward to the minister's commitment

to fighting this problem with all our community, including my electorate of Geelong.

Roads: roadside vegetation

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — I wish to raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports. The assistance I seek from the minister concerns the provision of additional state-based funding to our local government network to assist with the great difficulties associated with overhanging tree branches on many of our country roads. I make this request specifically on behalf of John Kosta, who is a resident of Wonyip, a beautiful area in the rolling hills of the magnificence of South Gippsland. A few weeks ago I went to the location that is of concern to Mr Kosta. I was there in company with Mr Kosta, together with representation from the Wellington shire, Grande Ridge Plantations and the local Landcare group.

The area in question is a distance of about 6 kilometres along the Woorarra Road. I am sure that is well known to all members of the house. The problem that Mr Kosta has highlighted to me is that because of the growth of trees adjacent to the roadway a serious problem has arisen with the overhanging of branches. A number of heavy vehicles in the form of buses, trucks and various commercial vehicles use this road, together with the tourism trade which regularly uses this section of roadway on behalf of those who just want to see something off the beaten track.

It is important that funding be provided, in this case through the Wellington shire and in other cases in my electorate through the South Gippsland shire, to accommodate this problem. I have had similar reports to those that Mr Kosta has brought to me from residents who use the Strzelecki Highway regularly in the area to cross from the Latrobe Valley to Mirboo North and then to Leongatha. They have often reported to me that they have a similar issue. This presents in different ways, most of them pretty brutal. In the case of trucks, a lot of the protective gear across the front of those vehicles is damaged as a result of these branches striking it and has to be replaced at considerable expense to the owners. I raise these matters on behalf of Mr Kosta in the first instance, but also for others who have brought the issue to my attention.

I again ask the Minister for Roads and Ports that appropriate funding be allocated to councils across the state to accommodate an issue that I know to be of great significance, not only to the constituency that I represent in this place but to many other places throughout country Victoria.

Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre: funding

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. The matter concerns the announcement in the state budget to allocate \$500 000 to the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre. I call on the minister to ensure the funding is expeditiously granted to the centre for the development of the outdoor pool. The outdoor pool at the aquatic centre was built in 1956 as a training pool for the Olympians who came to Australia and for Australian athletes. Unfortunately in the winter months it is closed, for obvious reasons. It is chilly to take a dip in the pool, which I have done myself, but it is not advised.

The indoor pool, which is not a 50-metre pool, is full to capacity. A number of lessons take place in the indoor pool. In fact my two children are engaged in learning to swim at the indoor pool, but it took a considerable period to get a lesson at a time that was available and suitable to my family because the pool is so well attended by residents in Northcote. Sitting idle outside the centre is this wonderful 50-metre Olympic-sized pool. The \$500 000 that has been allocated in the budget could not have come at a better time for the residents of Northcote. Inside we have aerobic lessons and swimming lessons. The swimming club is repeatedly involved in premierships because of the dedication the Northcote residents have towards aquatic sports in the area.

The outdoor pool is something that will add to the resources and facilities offered by the centre. The pool is something that all of Melbourne can take pride in, given its history as part of the 1956 Olympic effort. To see it sitting idle is something that should be a thing of the past. This \$500 000 will be well spent to ensure that the residents of Northcote and beyond can make use of the facility. When it is all up and running I invite all members of the house to come out and take a dip in the pool. Perhaps members opposite might be encouraged to take part in the aerobics exercises that take place in the pool. That would be worthwhile for their cardiovascular work.

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms RICHARDSON — And hydrotherapy, thank you, Minister. All those activities would be worthwhile for members opposite. I encourage them to take part. I conclude by calling on the minister to take this action to ensure that Northcote residents get the benefit of the outdoor pool.

Ambulance services: Timboon

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — The issue I wish to raise is for the Minister for Health. It concerns the minister's commitment prior to the 2006 state election that the Labor government would provide the town of Timboon with a \$1 million ambulance station and two paramedics. This year's budget, which announced \$7.4 million to upgrade rural ambulance stations did not — I repeat, did not — include the town of Timboon, which is of grave concern to that community.

The minister is reported as having said on ABC radio on 15 November that \$1 million would go to building a new ambulance station in Timboon, and the failed ALP candidate for Polwarth, Darren Cheeseman, was quoted in the *Cobden Times* on the same day as saying that Timboon would get a new ambulance station and also get two paramedics. Mr Cheeseman is also quoted in the article as saying that the announcement was 'terrific news for the community'. The terrific news has turned to horrific news, because there is no funding in this year's state budget for Timboon.

The community has been waiting for a very long time for its ambulance station. The Princes Highway is a major road for the Western District. There are ambulance stations at Colac, Camperdown, Terang and Warrnambool, but there are none down towards the Great Ocean Road or Timboon, where there is a dangerous mix of milk tankers, tourist buses, school buses and local traffic. Of course we live with that never-ending problem of international visitors driving cars on the wrong side of the road. We have had a lot of horrific head-on hit accidents that involve overseas drivers. By no means least important are the response times for emergency services in the area, with some delays of up to 45 minutes before an ambulance arrives at a scene. Clearly this situation was not then and is not now in any way acceptable to the people of Timboon.

Prior to the state election, the minister finally acknowledged that the growing complexity of cases and increasing demand on services at Timboon warranted the funding the community was asking for to provide the new ambulance station and the paramedics. I have a press release dated 15 November and headed 'ALP stands by Timboon ambulance station pledge'. It says:

The Labor Party is reaffirming an ambulance station for Timboon, in south-western Victoria, will be built if it's returned to power.

But the party seems unaware the detail for the pledge is missing from its party's policy.

The Liberal Party has seized on the missing information and is pointing to the fact the Meeting the Challenges of Country Health policy does not list Timboon as one of the 12 areas to get a new ambulance station under a Labor government.

But health minister Bronwyn Pike says \$1 million will go to building a new station in the town.

I have already called for action. I have called for the minister to provide the funding for the Timboon community. I have called on the minister to stand up to the commitment she gave. I have called on the minister to acknowledge the Labor Party's policy in relation to the Timboon ambulance station and Timboon paramedics. We want a new ambulance station built at Timboon and we want two paramedics, as was promised by the minister and promised by the Labor Party prior to the last state election.

Lara electorate: community infrastructure

Mr EREN (Lara) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Victorian Communities. The action I seek from the minister is to invest more money into the development or refurbishment of community infrastructure in my electorate of Lara. As the house may be aware, community centres and support services that operate out of them are vital to the life and health of a community. They provide a place for people to meet and interact with one another, and sometimes they house things like computer resources, counselling services, health-care facilities — resources which are not otherwise accessible to some of the more disadvantaged sections of the community.

Lara district is a mixed urban and rural electorate which contains pockets of disadvantage most obviously in need of these sorts of support services. For example, according to the SEIFA (socioeconomic indexes for area) statistics Corio rates consistently as one of the most disadvantaged areas in Victoria, yet Corio's primary community facility, the Hendy Street hall, was completely destroyed by fire over four years ago, leaving the area without adequate community infrastructure. Other community spaces like the Northside Geelong community centre are of limited utility due to deterioration. Northside is in urgent need of refurbishment. In the past these facilities have been used extensively by local groups, but these days they are in such a state of disrepair that they simply do not meet the demands placed on them.

This is why I make a request of the minister to take action to increase investment in community infrastructure within Lara, particularly in the more disadvantaged areas of North Geelong and Corio.

Nurses: division 2 training

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — The issue I raise is for the Minister for Health. With the support of the Liberal Party, legislation was passed in this place to provide for the capacity of division 2 nurses, having received the appropriate training and recognition of that training, to administer medication. This function was previously confined to division 1 nurses. The problem which has now arisen is as follows. I have a letter from a gentleman whose wife has undergone the training, and he says:

My wife has had this medication endorsement for nearly two years and is still not able to use this qualification in her position in public health. She has made two inquiries of senior management regarding this, and each time is told that they are going to trial it to make sure the process works well. No trial eventuates.

My wife has been required to go on a nurse bank of a local private hospital in order to use this qualification. This should not have to happen.

...

There is a loophole in the law where implementing this new scope of practice for registered nurses ... is voluntary ... The Minister for Health should intervene to ensure her legislation is being acted upon in a timely manner. The most logical position is for public hospitals to be required to have protocols in place by a stipulated date in the future.

Vast inconsistencies exist amongst public hospitals with some being more advanced and others not having advanced at all in extending the scope of practice to division 2 nurses.

The intention of the legislation to extend scope of practice is not being achieved on the ground.

Whilst hospital needs and priorities vary, adequate time has now passed since the legislation came into operation to enable protocols to be established.

Division 2 nurses will not remain in the public sector if unable to practise to the full scope of their qualifications.

...

Division 2 nurses in other states already administer medication.

Why does that not happen in Victoria?

The course for registered nurses division 2 in TAFE now includes the medication endorsement as standard. What happens when these nurses graduate? Are they to be told they can't give out medications? Are these nurses expected to continue to accept the now outmoded practices where patient-centred care is sacrificed, so the division 1 nurses can do medication rounds ... and registered nurses division 2 do all the hands-on care.

There was also an article in the Australian Nursing Federation newsletter in which the director of nursing at Barwon Health raised this as a problem:

The number of endorsed division 2 nurses in Victoria who are not able to — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member needs to ask for an action.

Mrs SHARDEY — I have asked the minister to address this problem and to make sure protocols are in place. The article says:

The number of endorsed division 2 nurses in Victoria who are not able to utilise their skills in the workplace is still far too high, says the chief nurse at Barwon.

Hume: Tullamarine Reserve

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — I raise a matter for the urgent attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. The urgent action I seek is for funding to be given to the Hume City Council for facilities at the Tullamarine Reserve. Members might recall that in my contribution to the address-in-reply debate on 14 February this year I pledged to work with the Hume City Council to achieve more funding results for the seat of Yuroke, and of course it is part of my commitment to the constituents of Yuroke to work with the City of Hume to gain further funding for facilities.

What the Hume City Council is asking for is a four-lane cricket training net facility. There is already a playing field at the Tullamarine Reserve, but these cricket nets for training would be some distance away so there would be no damage to the playing field and the wicket. The residents of Yuroke, and particularly those in the Tullamarine area, are absolutely renowned for their love of cricket. When there is a cricket match on television, the people of Yuroke and especially the people of Tullamarine are indoors watching the great Australian cricket team play and represent the country. They absolutely aspire to one day being able to join that team, but they can only join that team if they have first-class training facilities.

I am supporting the City of Hume's application to the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, and I call on him to release those funds so that the Tullamarine cricket club can have greater flexibility in its training programs and be more focused and systematic in its approach and can use the most modern training methods. The local community will also benefit from those improved cricket nets for their informal use.

I call on the minister to release that funding. I am sure that if that funding is released it will not be very long before we will see the benefits of it. I certainly envisage one day seeing a young lad from the Tullamarine area

striding on to the MCG with his bat swinging to represent Australia. This would be a great investment — —

Mr Andrews — Or a bowler.

Ms BEATTIE — Indeed, a great fast bowler!

Yarrawonga neighbourhood house: funding

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government in his capacity as having responsibility for neighbourhood houses. One of the great success stories in country Victoria has been the development of neighbourhood houses. I particularly refer to the Yarrawonga neighbourhood house. Developed over many years, it provides an enormous range of services to the people of Yarrawonga and surrounding areas.

Mrs Heather Kelly is the chief executive officer, and she has been a dynamo in developing the services. They include: information and referral; a Centrelink agency; a tax help program; adult education; volunteer training; a range of visiting services; support groups; hobby and interest groups; internet public access; meeting venues; and community development. The Yarrawonga neighbourhood house has provided these services from its current setting in a former housing commission house. It has been extended on a number of occasions, but it is now not appropriate for the services being provided. It was lucky enough to be allocated an acre of land by the Gorman family following a subdivision in Yarrawonga.

I wrote to the minister to bring to his attention the fact that the Yarrawonga neighbourhood house had been given this land and that it wanted to develop a new facility on the site. It had even gone to the trouble of getting plans developed. The minister's reply to me in a letter of 18 April states:

I expect to announce the second round of the modernising neighbourhood houses program grants in the near future. The Yarrawonga neighbourhood house will be eligible to apply for funding ...

The minister went on to encourage the Yarrawonga neighbourhood house to continue to work with Moira Shire Council and to look at the links between the neighbourhood house and the council through the Yarrawonga Mulwala action plan. He also indicated that it should talk to the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) at Wangaratta.

I have passed the letter on to the Yarrawonga neighbourhood house, but I seek from the minister information as to where this particular development fits

into the program. I encourage the minister to support the development of a new facility on this acre of land that has been provided free of charge to the Yarrawonga neighbourhood house. People from the neighbourhood house have contacted the DVC with some briefing notes. I seek the support of the minister and hope he is able to give me some information on where we go from here in order to be successful in getting the funding provided.

Red-eared slider turtles: control

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I want to raise a very serious issue for the attention of the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change that relates to the notorious red-eared slider turtle, commonly referred to as a cane toad in a shell. I am raising this issue in the context of recent media reports about the discovery of red-eared slider turtles in Blackburn Lake in my electorate. I understand that they have also been discovered in a small lake in Doncaster in recent weeks.

I seek from the minister his arranging for his department to ensure that information sheets or fact sheets are circulated in the local area and particularly to residents who live in the vicinity of Blackburn Lake so that they might understand a bit more about this pest and know whom to call to report any sightings of the turtle.

It is fair to say that I had not heard much about the red-eared slider turtle until the media reports, but it is a notorious pest. I quote from a recent article that appeared in the *Age*:

Along with Queensland's other noted menace, the cane toad, the red-eared slider turtle is listed as one of the world's 100 most invasive species by the World Conservation Union.

According to Biosecurity Queensland's expert, some 150 of the reptiles have been captured in the wild since they were first discovered in Queensland dams about eight years ago. The officer is quoted in the same article as saying:

They are tough as old boots, they can live in poor water quality and they'll eat just about anything ... in terms of invasiveness, they are a threat like the cane toad.

Even though there are very severe penalties for people importing these sorts of turtles into Australia — I think the commonwealth penalties are up to \$110 000, or 10 years jail, or \$24 000 for releasing the pest into the wild — there seems to be a tendency for these reptiles to be offered on the internet as trendy additions to people's pet collections. I understand it is because they have red and yellow markings as young animals, which

later fade — and that seems to be the reason why the turtles are dispensed with.

This is quite a serious issue. We do not want notorious pests that in destructiveness resemble the cane toad getting a foothold in Victoria. It would be worthwhile for the department to look at putting together some information sheets or fact sheets for circulation around Blackburn Lake, and certainly around the local Doncaster area, where it is reported they have been discovered, so that people, if they do spot these reptiles, can report their sightings to the minister's department at the earliest opportunity.

Responses

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Local Government) — I am responding to the member for Murray Valley's request for advice in relation to neighbourhood houses, and in particular the Yarrowonga neighbourhood house. The member for Murray Valley is a great advocate not only for his electorate but also for the neighbourhood house network within his area. I was pleased to receive representations from him on 27 March when he pointed out some issues pertaining to the Yarrowonga neighbourhood house and its ambition to relocate to more appropriate premises within the area following the very kind philanthropic donation of a plot of land from one of the local families.

I responded, as the member kindly mentioned, on 18 April, indicating to him that I would be announcing opportunities for neighbourhood houses to get support in terms of relocation or co-location with other services. I advised him that he ought to direct his colleagues at the neighbourhood house to members of the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) local team, and I am sure they are in active engagement with the Yarrowonga neighbourhood house about that issue.

As the member for Murray Valley is aware, 350 neighbourhood houses receive state government funding under the neighbourhood house program. It is a huge program, and one that is very strongly supported by the government, with very significant increases in base funding over the last couple of years and of course major capital funding. My colleague the Minister for Victorian Communities is a big fan of neighbourhood houses as well, because they are part of community strengthening. We are very interested in a place-based response and in ensuring that open and accessible neighbourhood houses are one aspect of that neighbourhood strengthening program.

In that respect we celebrated Neighbourhood House Week a couple of weeks ago, and I was at the Louis

Joel Centre with the former Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Joan Kirner, during that celebration. That is an unfunded neighbourhood house, but it is a very interesting centre that has been established and supported by the local council with a significant amount of capital funding and some recurrent funding as well to provide excellent support to the local community.

At that function I announced that neighbourhood houses not currently funded are being invited to lodge expressions of interest in funding through a new program we have developed called the Neighbourhood House Foundation Grants program. These grants will fund works or projects that will help these houses gain recognition and funding through the government's neighbourhood house coordination program. A total of \$75 000 is available in one-off grants, and additionally 10 hours of coordination funding will be made available for at least eight unfunded houses. We will be developing further details in relation to that program shortly. The Department for Victorian Communities will obviously be working with neighbourhood houses like that at Yarrowonga to ensure that information is communicated very clearly.

The second aspect that goes to the heart of what the member for Murray Valley is requesting is a \$5 million boost to the Modernising Neighbourhood Houses program, which we announced in last week's state budget. Applications for round 2 of this grant will open in June and close in September. There will be further rounds in 2008, 2009 and 2010. This gives all neighbourhood houses and obviously their partners, particularly local government, about 14 weeks to prepare applications. Yarrowonga neighbourhood house should keep an eye out through the DVC process, and it will be able to make application there as well.

Mr Jasper — We sure will do that.

Mr WYNNE — Round 2 grant offers are in four categories and are open to all neighbourhood houses. The first category is co-location of an existing neighbourhood house, with grants of up to \$100 000 to support co-location of an existing neighbourhood house in a multipurpose facility. That is an area that the neighbourhood house at Yarrowonga in the electorate of the member for Murray Valley may wish to consider. Co-location is a very important opportunity that his neighbourhood house might want to think about.

Redevelopment of an existing neighbourhood house is the second category, with grants of up to \$50 000 to support that. The third category is funding for minor

capital works, which is to go to things like improving disability access in an existing neighbourhood house. Obviously they are much smaller grants of up to about \$10 000. We think they are quite important and strategic little grants that assist neighbourhood houses in becoming more accessible to a broader cross-section of the community.

The fourth category is modernising information and communications technology. In that area there are grants of up to \$25 000 to support information and communications technology infrastructure and services in neighbourhood houses. As all members who have neighbourhood houses in their areas know, they are important points of contact for people who are often isolated — and certainly disadvantaged, as the Leader of the House indicates. They are places of empowerment. They are places where people can gain knowledge.

They offer the University of the Third Age and opportunities for people to increase their training and educational attainment, and technology is a very important aspect of that. We know in our funding of libraries and in our funding of neighbourhood houses that the closing of the digital divide is really at the heart of fairness and accessibility. In that context we are well placed through this neighbourhood house program to ensure that we have got a really solid infrastructure in place. It builds on a record investment by this government in neighbourhood houses.

I am sure that Yarrowonga neighbourhood house, with the good work of the member for Murray Valley, will ensure its application is included in that grant process, which opens in June, and the merits of that application will be judged along with those of all the others. I thank the member for raising that issue with me.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Victorian Communities) — The member for Lara raised with me the need for better community infrastructure in his electorate — and what a hardworking local member he is. He is looking after disadvantaged areas, particularly Corio and North Geelong. I agree with him. Community centres and the community services that are provided there are integral to maintaining a strong and engaged community. They are an important tool in the promotion of social cohesion. We know that social cohesion makes communities more resilient to the impact of disadvantage, and that is what we are trying to address through our A Fairer Victoria strategy — an increase in fairness and a reduction in disadvantage.

The member for Lara will be pleased to know that the government will take action through a community

support grant of \$275 000 to go towards the renovation and expansion of the Northside Geelong community centre, a project the member has taken a great deal of interest in and been very supportive of. This facility will contain a number of meeting spaces and multipurpose rooms. It will provide areas suitable for playgroups and children's activities. It will provide counselling facilities and computer resources, and it also has a commercial kitchen. The kitchen will be able to be used for community lunches, community events and key community celebrations. It could also be used as a resource for employment and training programs to help people to get job ready and improve their employment prospects.

What is really wonderful about this project is that it has attracted enormous community support, with Geelong businesses contributing over \$700 000 for the refurbishment. The project is a product of the concept of partnership that is at the core of what the Bracks government is trying to do in communities — partnerships between local businesses, community organisations and the state government. Here we have that partnership: we have the state government, local businesses and the Salvation Army. As a community, what better organisation could you have working with you and for you in your area than the Salvation Army? These sorts of partnerships are exactly what the Department for Victorian Communities is all about. We are really surprised that at the last election the Liberal Party wanted to abolish this department.

The member for Lara also mentioned the Hendy Street hall, another great Bracks government success story. The government pledged \$340 000 to redevelop the hall, which was destroyed by fire. The new facility was planned by the community in the form of the Hendy Street hall redevelopment committee, which was made up of local residents, businesses and the City of Greater Geelong based on a partnership model. The initial planning stage involved a thorough process of consultation. It attracted large-scale community volunteer involvement which has, as a result of that partnership model, delivered enormous benefits including a strong sense of community ownership of the project.

Next week I will officially open, with the local member, of course — he will certainly be there — the finished product, which will be a larger and more dynamic community facility enabling increased participation in social, recreational, cultural, educational and civic activities for a diverse range of community groups and individuals. The hall will house playgroups, a toy library, a space for drama productions, parents group meetings and seminars, youth activities and

indoor sports. You name it, the Hendy Street hall will provide it. It is very close to primary schools, kindergartens, tennis courts, a scout hall, a soccer ground and a maternal and child health centre. What better co-location of activities and services have you ever heard of? The local community now has a truly flexible and convenient community hub. It will have something for everybody. I know the member for Lara shares my enthusiasm for this project because we have spoken often about it. I look forward to the upcoming opening.

The Bracks government is committed to continuing its activities to address disadvantage across the state. We will continue to be active in making our communities stronger and more resilient, and we will continue to facilitate the fruitful partnerships with the community that make these outcomes possible.

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Gaming) — I am pleased to respond to an important matter raised by the member for Geelong, and I acknowledge his longstanding interest in problem gambling. As you would know, Acting Speaker, this week is Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, and it is opportune that the member for Geelong has raised the issue of funding support to agencies in his community that have worked so hard to provide support and assistance to problem gamblers in Geelong and the broader Barwon South region.

It is important to note that when it comes to supporting those in our community who have a gambling problem this government has a proud record of providing substantial boosts to funding and achieving important results for what is often a disadvantaged and vulnerable section of the Victorian community. Since coming to office in 1999 we have invested some \$89 million in direct treatment services. Following on from that there has been a raft of other regulatory reforms.

We have imposed a ban on 24-hour gaming venues outside the casino. We have had two rounds of regional caps — one in 2002 and another that I announced just before Christmas last year that will see 949 electronic gaming machines removed from socioeconomically vulnerable communities across the state by the end of this year; changes in bet limits; changes in terms of natural light standards in gaming venues; the installation of clocks on all gaming machines; a ban on advertising; a ban on smoking; and limits on withdrawals from automatic teller machines, together with a raft of other things we have done from a regulatory point of view.

All of that — a consistent effort and a proud focus on these important matters — has seen the prevalence of problem gambling in our community drop from 2.1 per cent, as estimated by the Productivity Commission in 1999, to just over 1 per cent, as estimated by an independent study in 2003. But even at 1.1 per cent we understand as a government, and I think the community understands it more broadly, that there is more we can do and there is more that needs to be done. That is why in October last year we launched the most comprehensive response to problem gambling in Australian history.

Our fully funded, five-year, \$132.3 million plan, appropriately titled ‘Taking action on problem gambling’, is all about taking the next step. It is all about giving gamblers help services like the one the member for Geelong mentioned — Bethany Community Support — in his community. It is all about the resources those services need to provide problem gamblers in local communities with the support they need to build a better future for themselves. It is about pathways out of that addictive and very dangerous behaviour. It is about empowering them and giving them the tools, the support and the resources they need to control their addictions rather than their addictions controlling them.

That is why I am very pleased to inform the member for Geelong that the organisation he mentioned, Bethany Community Support, which does such a great job, will receive a 5 per cent increase in its 2007–08 base funding. That will take its total allocation for the 2007–08 financial year to around \$537 500. That is an important boost to enable it to extend its services and continue to provide first-class care and first-class support to problem gamblers in that local community. There is more to be done in this area, and there is more to be done to continue to assist problem gamblers right across Victoria. I say to you, Acting Speaker, be in no doubt that this is the government to do it.

The member for Scoresby raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports about Stud Road upgrades.

The Leader of The Nationals raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Ports about state funding for local government to deal with overhanging tree branches on country roads in his community.

The member for Northcote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in relation to funding support for the Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre and specifically for an outdoor pool.

The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health in relation to the Timboon ambulance station and the government's commitment as part of its record-breaking, more-than-doubled support for ambulance services across Victoria.

The member for Caulfield raised an important matter for the attention of the Minister for Health in relation to the administration of medication by division 2 nurses.

The member for Yuroke raised a matter for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in relation to funding for an important institution in her community, the Tullamarine Cricket Club, and the facilities at the club.

The member for Mitcham raised a very important matter for the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, that being the prevalence of red-eared slider turtles in his community and the great threat they pose to many other communities across Victoria.

I will refer those matters for the attention and action of the relevant ministers.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) —
Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 4.47 p.m. until Tuesday, 5 June.