

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

**Tuesday, 9 June 2009
(Extract from book 7)**

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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The Hon. R. J. HULLS

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Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

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

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Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP			

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 28 June 2008

⁵ Elected 15 September 2007

⁶ Resigned 6 August 2007

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 9 JUNE 2009

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>Minister for Planning: conduct</i>	1689, 1690
<i>Melbourne: livability</i>	1689
<i>Schools: building program</i>	1690
<i>Office of Police Integrity: documents</i>	1691
<i>Energy: carbon capture and storage</i>	1691
<i>Office of Police Integrity: telephone recordings</i>	1692, 1694
<i>Cancer: tobacco control strategy</i>	1693
<i>Water: supply</i>	1694

NATIONAL PARKS AMENDMENT (POINT NEPEAN) BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1695
---	------

FOOD AMENDMENT (REGULATION REFORM) BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1695
---	------

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1696
---	------

GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1696
---	------

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

<i>Notices of motion: removal</i>	1696
<i>Program</i>	1698

PETITIONS

<i>Students: youth allowance</i>	1696
<i>Water: north-south pipeline</i>	1696
<i>Police: Red Cliffs</i>	1696
<i>Rail: Mildura line</i>	1697
<i>Schools: Catholic sector</i>	1697

DOCUMENTS

GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT (LICENSING) BILL

<i>Council's amendments</i>	1697
-----------------------------------	------

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

<i>Reference</i>	1697
------------------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Maureen Corrigan</i>	1700
<i>Water: shower head exchange program</i>	1700
<i>Jack Ross</i>	1700
<i>Planning: Mildura</i>	1701
<i>Racing: Mildura Cup</i>	1701
<i>Schools: Spirit of Anzac tour</i>	1701
<i>Roads: green triangle region freight action plan</i>	1701
<i>Schools: building program</i>	1702
<i>Budget: government performance</i>	1702
<i>Royal College of Nursing Australia: expo</i>	1702
<i>Rail: Gippsland line</i>	1703, 1704
<i>Ukraine: President's visit</i>	1703
<i>Girgarre and Stanhope primary schools: merger</i>	1703
<i>City of Hobsons Bay: Sustainable Cities awards</i>	1703
<i>City of Casey: community library</i>	1704
<i>Hillsmeade Primary School: Parliament visit</i>	1704
<i>Water: Broken Valley irrigators</i>	1705
<i>Manor Lakes P-12 Specialist College: funding</i>	1705

<i>Water: Waterwise program</i>	1705
<i>John-Michael Howson</i>	1705
<i>Salvation Army</i>	1706
<i>Children: explicit material</i>	1706
<i>Information and communications technology: social connectedness</i>	1706
<i>Manningham Park Primary School: closure</i>	1706

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1707
<i>Third reading</i>	1715

CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES) (ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1715
-----------------------------	------

APPROPRIATION (2009/2010) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1722
-----------------------------	------

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Mornington Peninsula Freeway: noise barriers</i>	1751
<i>Greensborough Hockey Club: funding</i>	1751
<i>Bass Coast: jet skis</i>	1752
<i>Frankston: pier reconstruction</i>	1752
<i>Planning: South Gippsland</i>	1753
<i>Princes Highway, Beaconsfield: noise barriers</i>	1753
<i>Sandringham College: funding</i>	1754
<i>Rail: Gippsland line</i>	1754
<i>Hastings electorate: sports facilities</i>	1755
<i>Casey Fields: community support grant</i>	1756
<i>Responses</i>	1756

Tuesday, 9 June 2009

Melbourne: livability

The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 2.04 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Planning: conduct

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to a quote from the Minister for Planning last Thursday when he said on radio on the Jon Faine program in reference to the activities of Mr Hakki Suleyman:

... any of these matters that are alleged, alleged to have taken place, have taken place outside the electoral office and in this person's private time.

I further refer to a statutory declaration prepared by Ms Marilyn Canet and sworn at the Keilor Downs police station, which says:

... I attended the office of the Honourable Justin Madden, MLC ...

It states further:

On arrival I met with Cr Apap and Cr David in the reception area ... Mr Apap's response was immediately hostile ... Mr Apap called on Cr David and Mr Hakki Suleyman to stand by his side.

I ask: is it not a fact that Mr Hakki Suleyman sought to inappropriately influence the council from within the minister's office and that yet again the minister has been caught out deceiving Victorians?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Obviously I have not seen and am not aware of the statutory declaration to which he refers. I can only say, more generally, that the investigations that were undertaken by the Ombudsman — as all members who have bothered to read the report would know — were very detailed and very extensive. It is fair to say it went to every aspect, I would have thought, of the matters concerning Brimbank council and the relationships with members of Parliament and/or their staff. All of those matters were investigated. All of those matters were reported on by the Ombudsman. When we received the report here, as I announced to the house some weeks ago, the government accepted all of the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the government's commitment to making Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: could the Premier inform the house on how Melbourne's livability compares to other major cities in Australia and around the world?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I want to thank the honourable member for his question. Obviously livability is a very important focus of the government. We on this side of the house have often said that we want to make Victoria the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family. I believe the Economist Intelligence Unit's report out today, the livability survey which ranks Melbourne third in the world behind Vancouver and Vienna, confirms the extraordinary performance of our state and our city in terms of its livability. It is a good result. This survey looks at something like 30 different criteria for cities across the world. Obviously Melbourne is the top-ranking city in Australia and the top-ranking city in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is a good result, but we do not want to stop there; we want to be the very best. That is why our government has very clear plans for Victoria's future, particularly our plans to invest in infrastructure and particularly our plans too in the environment and for a fairer Victoria to ensure that we not only have a strong economy and a great sense of opportunity and quality of life but so that it is a very good, very fair place to live with a great environment and quality of life.

New population projections detailed in Melbourne @ 5 Million show that Victoria will grow by 2.3 million between now and 2036. Honourable members would be aware that last week's Australian Bureau of Statistics demographic statistics show that over the last year, Victoria had added more than 100 000 people in terms of population growth. To be precise, in 2008 Victoria grew by 102 406 people, just behind Queensland with 106 740. This was the first time ever that our state has broken the 100 000 people barrier.

It is a very big difference. Members who have been here for some time will recall the 1990s, when people were leaving Victoria in droves. There were some years there during the Kennett government when there were 30 000 and 40 000 people each year leaving our state. They could not get away fast enough. They have been returning in record numbers.

I might say the rate of population growth is 1.95 per cent, and by the way that is the fastest annual growth rate since records began to be kept in 1971. I am proud of the fact that people want to live in our state. Our housing is the most affordable anywhere on the eastern seaboard, and we aim to keep it that way. We have record levels of building approvals. We are the multicultural capital of Australia. Forty-four per cent of our people were either born overseas or have one parent who was born overseas. This great mix we have in Victoria makes for a great quality of life, a great sense of diversity and, as I said, a great test in terms of livability at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

We also very conscious of the need in the current environment to fast-track investment, to fast-track jobs. This morning I was at Chelsea Heights Primary School with the Deputy Prime Minister and you, Speaker, announcing with the federal government the second tranche of federal government funding for our primary schools. I was making the point that this is a very big investment. If you take into account what we are spending on schools and what the federal government is spending on schools, this year's spend in schools will be \$1.2 billion. It is just a huge spend. It is great for education and great for the quality of education.

I heard the principal of the Chelsea Heights school on the radio this morning saying that in our school system a lot has been done and a lot of improvements have been made, that we have a Rolls-Royce curriculum and that we are offering the best possible curriculum to our students but that we had always needed more in terms of capital infrastructure. We have been doubling and tripling our spending on schools, but we have never before had a federal government that has been prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with us and help us in that task. We have that with the Rudd government, and as a consequence we can spend more than \$1 billion this year.

It is all of these areas in terms of our quality of life, in terms of our economy, in terms of what is happening in our school system, in terms of the safety of our state — our crime rate is now 24.5 per cent lower than in 2001, so we are the safest state in Australia.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — It is not surprising. All these things coming together — the record population growth, the record number of people coming to our state, the fact that we are ranked third by the Economist Intelligence Unit, our A Fairer Victoria policy, our measures to support the environment and tackle climate change, our investment in education, our investment in

health, our \$38 billion transport plan — make our state a great place to live, and we want to make it even better in the future.

Minister for Planning: conduct

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the statutory declaration alluded to in the previous question and the statement that Minister for Planning made in the other place on 3 June, when he said:

I certainly have never had control or influence over what Mr Suleyman may do or has done in his own time or in his capacity as a private citizen.

I ask: is it not a fact that Mr Suleyman was conducting these activities from within the minister's office, not in his private time; that the minister knew it; that the minister has deliberately misled the Parliament yet again; and that under any true standards of ministerial accountability the minister would be sacked?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I can only reiterate what I said a few moments ago in answer to the question from the Leader of the Opposition — that is, that all these matters were investigated in great detail by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman, as members know, has unprecedented powers, sweeping powers, unfettered powers. All those powers were applied by the Ombudsman in his investigation of all the matters relating to Brimbank and related matters.

When the Ombudsman reported, I examined that report. I accepted and the government accepted all those recommendations. What the opposition is now doing is going further and questioning the very basis of the Ombudsman's report.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — That is what you are doing, you are second-guessing the Ombudsman's report.

The Ombudsman, as I said, has had completely unfettered powers and open terms of reference; has investigated all these matters and has made the recommendations. We have accepted all the recommendations and we will be implementing each and every one of them.

Schools: building program

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer to the government's commitment to education and to making Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister advise the house on how the Brumby

government is working with the Rudd government on the biggest school rebuilding program in Victoria's history?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Burwood for his question. I know the member for Burwood is delighted that many schools in his electorate received additional funding today so that they can continue to improve the quality of their buildings as part of our overall commitment to improve the quality of education for all young Victorians.

As the Premier said, I joined the Premier, the Deputy Prime Minister, you as the member for Carrum, Speaker, and the federal member for Isaacs at Chelsea Heights Primary School for the announcement today of round 2 of the Primary Schools of the 21st Century program, part of Building the Education Revolution. This was an absolutely wonderful announcement for Victoria. Round 2 sees \$1.4 billion in additional funding going to 776 schools right across Victoria, both government schools and schools in the non-government system. We are absolutely delighted that this additional funding is coming to Victoria. Certainly I know that members in the government will be very pleased to be visiting their schools and celebrating this additional funding, because this funding was provided by the federal Labor government but opposed by the Liberals, so I guess those opposite will not be paying many visits to schools.

Chelsea Heights Primary School is a terrific primary school, and in fact it has already received substantial investment from this government. Since 1999 the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments have provided \$3.3 billion in additional capital funding to our government schools. Just to put that into perspective, it is five times more than was spent in the seven years prior to 1999; this government has spent five times more. In 2002 Chelsea Heights Primary School received \$1.5 million from this government for an upgrade.

It was terrific to go there today to see the work that we had done, and then of course be a part of the announcement of the additional \$2.5 million that comes from the Rudd government. I know the principal at Chelsea Heights Primary School was excited — we read about it in the *Age* today — as of course are school communities right around this state. Right around the state they are excited, they are thrilled, and they see this as a wonderful opportunity. Of course they know that this has only come about because we work together with the federal government. We cooperate, we collaborate, we share common goals, we work together and we get the best outcome for our schools.

We know also that not only does this deliver great infrastructure for schools, but of course it creates jobs. We want to do everything we can, in partnership with the federal government, to make sure that our building sector is robust and that it continues to have a pipeline of work — and 2700 jobs is a conservative estimate for the additional employment that will be provided through this very important economic stimulus package.

When you combine this funding with the \$1.9 billion that we are providing in this term of government and that we are out there spending within our schools, it is a complete transformation of the education infrastructure right around our state. I am very proud to be part of a government that is investing, that is working with our federal counterparts, that is modernising the learning environments for our schools and that is making a huge difference to families right around this state.

Office of Police Integrity: documents

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to media reports last week that an investigator from the Office of Police Integrity shredded documents about the member for Albert Park, who was then chief of staff to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I ask: given that the destruction of documents likely to be required in a legal proceeding is a serious offence under the Crimes Act, what steps have been taken to investigate and ensure that those responsible are prosecuted?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — My understanding is that these are matters which are before the courts right now. I have not seen the allegations to which the honourable member has referred, but I do know that the matter is before the courts and the courts will deal with it appropriately.

Energy: carbon capture and storage

Mr CARLI (Brunswick) — My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. I refer to the government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister update the house on how the Brumby government is taking action to make carbon capture and storage a reality in Victoria?

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I thank the member for Brunswick for his question and for his ongoing interest in tackling the climate change challenges before this government and before all governments around the world. Here in Victoria the Brumby government has committed over

\$200 million to the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology. This technology is absolutely critical if we are to have a strong future for the Latrobe Valley and for the local coal industry. Early results from projects already under way indicate that Victoria's progress is very promising. Victoria is indeed leading the way.

Just last month I met with researchers involved in a trial of three pre-combustion carbon capture technologies. These technologies have the potential to provide great advances in simpler and more effective carbon capture. It was fascinating to be shown over the facilities here in Melbourne. The first of the technologies being trialled was solvent absorption. At the moment this is the global method of choice for separating CO₂ (carbon dioxide). Improvements need to be made — —

Dr Napthine interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast knows well enough not to behave in that manner. I ask for his cooperation.

Ms Marshall interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Forest Hill is warned.

Mr BATCHELOR — I was talking about the solvent absorption method. This is the method of global choice for separating CO₂, but improvements will be needed to increase its efficiency and to bring down its costs. The search is on for the best solvent. The second technology being trialled at the moment is membrane separation. It is a really promising, stand-alone technology. It uses thin barriers which allow one component of the gas stream to pass through faster than the others, enabling it to be separated and captured. It is already being used to separate CO₂ during natural gas production. It may also be possible to integrate these two forms of technology. The third form of technology is pressure swing absorption. This is a new technology that captures CO₂ using a fixed bed of solid material and releases the CO₂ by pressure.

This research team is being led by the Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies. It has received some \$2 million from the Brumby government through its ETIS (energy technology innovation strategy) program, which is designed to develop cutting-edge research technologies in this important area. This type of research is keeping Victoria at the international forefront. It is designed to take new technologies from the laboratory to an industrial setting. This research builds upon the earlier success in demonstrating CCS technology wherein last

year, for the first time in Australia, carbon dioxide was captured in Victoria from an operating coal-fired power station at Loy Yang in the Latrobe Valley.

There will be even more opportunities available here in Victoria, with \$110 million being provided through funding — again through the ETIS program — to identify potential industrial-scale demonstration uses of carbon capture and storage. We need this for Victoria, we need this for the Latrobe Valley and we need this for the environment. To stop this type of research, as The Nationals are trying to do, would set Victoria back and damage our international credentials. If you were to consider having a policy of irresponsibly slashing \$6 billion from government revenue by freezing taxes, these are the sorts of initiatives that would be thrown out.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — The Nationals know what is going on here, because it is their proposal to freeze taxes and slash revenue coming in to the order of some — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will address the question.

Mr BATCHELOR — We here in Victoria understand that research in these areas is important. We are putting our effort and bias towards carbon capture and storage not towards nuclear power stations. There are some who are still considering the nuclear option, and there are some here in Victoria who are still actively working on the nuclear option. Victoria is against it, but there are others who want to install nuclear power stations right across the Victorian landscape.

When it comes to wanting to build nuclear power stations, you just cannot trust the opposition, as it has been working on it, as seen at its recent conference.

The SPEAKER — Order! I was calling the minister to order. The minister has concluded his question.

Office of Police Integrity: telephone recordings

Mr BAILLIEU (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. When did the Premier first become aware that telephone conversations between government members of Parliament and Victoria Police, as well as government staff and Victoria Police, had been secretly recorded by the Office of Police Integrity?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — As I have said previously to the honourable member, the only people who get advised of any phone taps are the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Attorney-General in warrants that are then passed on to the federal government. The Premier is not advised of that matter.

Mr Baillieu — When were you advised?

Mr BRUMBY — I would have become aware upon reading the report.

Cancer: tobacco control strategy

Ms MARSHALL (Forest Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Brumby government's Victorian cancer action plan. Can the minister update the house on efforts to improve cancer survival rates by reducing the number of Victorians who smoke?

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I thank the honourable member for Forest Hill for her question and for her interest in better cancer control and better outcomes for cancer patients across Victoria. As honourable members know, last year we brought down a \$150 million Victorian cancer action plan, the first and most comprehensive plan of its nature in our state's history, a plan that has a target to increase five-year symptom-free cancer survival rates to 74 per cent by 2015. The difference between our expected outcome and that target equates to 2000 Victorian lives being saved — a worthy aim, and we plan to deliver that as we go forward.

Central to the Victorian cancer action plan is the Victorian tobacco control strategy. That also is an important strategy to drive down the daily smoking rates and the total number of Victorians who smoke, and in turn to reduce the total incidence of tobacco-related cancer and tobacco-related ill health and deaths as a result of smoking. These issues cost the broader Victorian community \$5 billion a year and 5000 lives.

This is important work, and that is why as a government we also announced late last year the Victorian tobacco control strategy. Across the board I am sure all honourable members would have to concur that we have a proud record of tobacco control reform over each of our years in office, whether it is in terms of strict laws on cigarette sales to minors, restrictions on tobacco advertising, banning smoking in pubs, clubs, restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, gaming venues, enclosed workplaces, covered areas of train station

platforms and tram and bus shelters, or whether it is providing record funding to the Quit campaign and other agencies to run what is undoubtedly this state's biggest ever social marketing campaign in order to bring about the behavioural change that is so important to hitting our targets in the Victorian tobacco control strategy and saving lives as part of the Victorian cancer action plan.

That is why just before Christmas we were very pleased to announce a further raft of reforms, a further wave of tobacco control reform in this state, in terms of banning smoking in cars carrying children under the age of 18 — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — They are very loud now. I will come back to members opposite in just a moment, but they are very loud now. We are removing tobacco point-of-sale displays and overhauling the current penalties for breaching various sections of the Tobacco Act. We are also banning the sale of tobacco at temporary outlets and giving the minister of the day important powers to ban youth-oriented tobacco products.

Despite the noise from those opposite, I would say that this government is very clear on where it stands in relation to cancer prevention, cancer control and, as an important part of that agenda, tobacco control and driving reforms. It is less certain where others stand. There was a time in this state's history when no reforms of these important measures were undertaken. There was just one amendment to the relevant act in seven long years, and that was to increase purchase age from 16 to 18 years. It is all very well to be loud now, but the key point is where people stand on these issues. There is no doubt about where the Brumby government stands. I think there is some doubt about those opposite, who continue to receive donations from big tobacco companies.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will confine his remarks to government business.

Mr ANDREWS — In terms of our record and the absolute consistency with which we have addressed these matters, I would draw the attention of the house to the Australian Medical Association, which just last week awarded Victoria for its outstanding leadership and clarity of purpose around these matters. I quote:

'Victorian authorities deserve praise for introducing a tobacco control policy which includes a ban on point-of-sale tobacco

displays and smoking in cars carrying children',
Dr Capolingua said.

'Victoria has a strong public education strategy and good services to assist people who are trying to quit smoking'.

We could not be clearer. Those opposite, as shown by the Australian Electoral Commission returns, are all over the place on this and should hang their heads in shame.

Office of Police Integrity: telephone recordings

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee that none of the telephone conversations between government members of Parliament and Victoria Police as well as government staff and Victoria Police secretly tape-recorded by the Office of Police Integrity have been destroyed?

Mr BRUMBY (Premier) — I am not sure whether the Leader of The Nationals understands the significance of what he has asked. He is suggesting that the Premier of the day should have the authority to interfere in the independent operations of the OPI (Office of Police Integrity). That is what he is saying. Let us be clear: as I said before, in relation to any investigations that involve phone tapping the process which is in place is that a warrant is issued. That warrant goes through the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and is passed on to the federal Attorney-General. I have been advised by the Attorney-General that the Attorney-General only gets notice of these when they are withdrawn — in other words, when they are complete. That is the process that applies there. Nobody else gets access to that information.

Once that information is collected, it is the property of the Office of Police Integrity. It is not my property or the property of members of this Parliament, or the property of the Leader of The Nationals; it is the property of the OPI and the courts. How they utilise that is a matter for them. In terms of how they protect that, as I recall there are acts of Parliament in place, including the Public Records Act, which aim to properly protect public property.

Water: supply

Mr CRUTCHFIELD (South Barwon) — My question is to the Minister for Water. I refer to the government's commitment to make Victoria the best place to live, work and raise a family, and I ask: can the minister please explain why the government is

diversifying Victoria's water supply rather than building further dams?

Mr HOLDING (Minister for Water) — I thank the member for South Barwon for his question. As a member whose electorate borders the Otway Forest Park, he understands, like all members on this side of the chamber understand, the challenges that arise in terms of diversifying Victoria's water supplies but also the importance of rejecting policies that would further entrench Victoria's dependence on surface water, rainwater collected in dams and storages to provide water security for Victorians. We reject this approach. Let us be clear that this government does not support the construction of further dams to provide water security for Melbourne, or for Geelong for that matter.

We believe the best projects for securing Victoria's water future are projects that enable us to use what we have more efficiently and effectively than we have in the past and projects which aim to diversify our water sources by providing new non-rainfall dependent sources of water. We support the food bowl modernisation project because it enables us to use the water that we have in our storages and reservoirs at the moment more effectively than we have in the past. We support desalination because it enables us — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask particularly the members of The Nationals to cease interjecting.

Mr HOLDING — We will come to members of The Nationals shortly. Let us be clear: we are supporting the projects which diversify Victoria's water sources by building Australia's largest desalination project, a non-rainfall dependent source of water. This government rejects dams because we recognise that new dams, relying as they do on inflows into streams and rivers, will continue to perpetuate our almost exclusive reliance on rainwater collected in dams and storages.

There are those who suggest we should build a dam on the Gellibrand River in the vicinity of the Otway Forest Park. The reasons this project is not superior to options selected by this government are, firstly, that inflows to the Gellibrand River have declined 25 per cent since 1997, and secondly, that this option has been rejected because the construction of a dam in that area would cost \$180 million and would yield 7 gigalitres of water per annum. This makes this option more expensive than the proposed Melbourne–Geelong pipeline, and it would yield less than half the water that would come down the Melbourne–Geelong pipeline. Why would we

embrace a dam which will cost more and yield less water, dependent as it would be on rainfall running into that system?

There are those who suggest that we should build a dam on the Mitchell River. Once again, the government has investigated that option. That project would rely on a river where inflows have declined 36 per cent since 1997. This project would have yielded over the last three years an average of 77 gigalitres per year. That is only about half the inflow we will receive from the desalination project when it is complete. That is to say nothing of the impact on the Gippsland Lakes of constructing such a storage on the Mitchell River, to say nothing of the loss of productive farmland and to say nothing of the impact on towns like Tabberabbera and Dargo that would be adversely affected by the construction of such a dam.

We reject damming the Gellibrand, and we reject damming the Mitchell. We also reject the proposal to build an Arundel dam. Members may remember that this was to be the storage on the Maribyrnong River. What would the yield of this have been over the last three years if it had been constructed? We would have received 6.4 gigalitres from this project — not per annum but in total. Over the last three years, if we had constructed this \$160 million monstrosity, we would have received 6.4 gigalitres. Instead this government proposes to diversify Victoria's water sources. We propose the construction of a large desalination plant. We propose to use the water that we collect more efficiently by modernising the food bowl.

Let us have another fact; let us have another number: 772. What is that, Speaker? That is the number of days since the Leader of The Nationals said building more dams was a terrific idea.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will confine his remarks to government business, and I ask once again for the member for Rodney and the member for Murray Valley to cease interjecting. I ask for some cooperation from government members. I ask the minister to conclude his answer.

Mr HOLDING — We do not support the construction of new dams. What we support are proposals to diversify Victoria's water sources and also to use the water that we have got more efficiently. After 772 days we still do not know where the dam is going to be. The opposition members are damned fools!

NATIONAL PARKS AMENDMENT (POINT NEPEAN) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Community Development) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the National Parks Act 1975 and for other purposes.

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I request a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Community Development) — As can be detected from its name, this bill has a very simple objective: to incorporate the quarantine station land into the Point Nepean National Park and provide appropriate leasing and licensing powers to realise the potential of that site.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

FOOD AMENDMENT (REGULATION REFORM) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Food Act 1984 to reform the regulatory framework under the act and for other purposes.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I ask the minister to give a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health) — The bill amends the Food Act 1984 and follows a comprehensive review of food regulation and statute conducted by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission some time ago. It is about better targeting our regulatory requirements for food safety based on risk and reducing the regulatory burden for business and others who ensure that high standards are maintained. It is also about improving the governance of our devolved food regulatory system and, importantly, enabling a proportionate response in terms of enforcement by providing a broader array of regulatory tools for local government and other agencies.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Casino Control Act 1991 and the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993 and for other purposes.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the content of the bill.

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — The bill will give effect to recently announced proposed changes to Crown Casino's tax rate and table arrangements.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and for other purposes.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the content of the bill.

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Gaming) — The bill proposes to make changes to the speculator taxation regime that was announced by the government some time ago as part of its landmark gaming reforms post-2012 and will provide the opportunity for an alignment of gaming licences up to 2012.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion: removal

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 183 and 205 to 211 will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who requires the notice standing in his or her name to be continued must advise the Clerk in writing before 6.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Students: youth allowance

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the proposal to change the independence test for youth allowance by the federal government.

The petitioners register their opposition to the changes on the basis that the youth allowance changes proposed in the federal budget place another barrier to university participation for students in regional areas; unfairly discriminates against students currently undertaking a 'gap' year; and contradict other efforts to increase university participation by students from rural and regional Australia.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria reject the proposal and calls on the state government to vigorously lobby the federal government to ensure that a tertiary education is accessible to regional students.

By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (105 signatures).

Water: north–south pipeline

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the proposal to develop a pipeline which would take water from the Goulburn Valley and pump it to Melbourne.

The petitioners register their opposition to the project on the basis that it will effectively transfer the region's wealth to Melbourne; have a negative impact on the local environment; and lead to further water being taken from the region in the future. The petitioners commit to the principle that water savings which are made in the Murray–Darling Basin should remain in the MDB.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria rejects the proposal and calls on the state government to address Melbourne's water supply needs by investing in recycling and capturing stormwater.

By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (24 signatures).

Police: Red Cliffs

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Red Cliffs and surrounding communities in Victoria draws to the attention of the house the need to increase police presence in our district.

The petitioners register their dismay after a weekend of vandalism with damage estimated to be in excess of \$60 000 to the local bowling club and private and public property.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria take action to increase staff levels at the

Red Cliffs police station as a proactive step in ensuring that this criminal activity is not repeated.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (22 signatures).

Rail: Mildura line

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of the citizens of the region known as Sunraysia, primarily in the state of Victoria but including cross-border citizens of New South Wales centred on the city of Mildura, brings to the attention of the house the many promises to return the Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, without delivery.

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to bring forward the reinstatement of the said Melbourne–Mildura passenger train, especially in view of:

1. the many undelivered promises;
2. the urgent need to promote public transport in a global warming context;
3. the pressing need to connect remote Mildura to both Melbourne and the national rail network; and
4. the geographic distance now requiring a rapid service (very fast train) to be competitive.

By Mr CRISP (Mildura) (89 signatures).

Schools: Catholic sector

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Victorian residents who choose Catholic education, or support this right of choice, draws to the attention of the house that the level of funding provided by the Victorian state government to Catholic schools is inadequate and discriminates against families who choose a Catholic education for their children.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria guarantee funding at 25 per cent of the average cost of educating a child in the Victorian government school system, indexed annually and to provide equal funding for children with disabilities who attend a Catholic school.

By Mr SCOTT (Preston) (1784 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Benalla be considered next day on motion of Dr SYKES (Benalla).

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

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Major Events (Crowd Management) Act 2003 — Order declaring a Managed Access Area under s 7.

The following proclamation fixing an operative date was tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the House dated 19 December 2006:

Liquor Control Reform Amendment (Enforcement) Act 2009 — Whole Act except s 8 — 2 June 2009 (*Gazette S163, 2 June 2009*).

GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT (LICENSING) BILL

Council's amendments

Returned from Council with message relating to amendments.

Ordered to be considered later this day.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Reference

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

That, under section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, an inquiry into manufacturing in Victoria be referred to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee for consideration and report no later than 30 June 2010 on the state of manufacturing in Victoria and, in particular, the committee is requested to:

- (1) Explore the necessary criteria used by businesses to transfer offshore manufacturing to Victoria.
- (2) Identify and report on the factors which influence businesses in determining whether to manufacture in Australia or overseas including the consideration of:
 - (a) the retention of intellectual property rights;
 - (b) maintaining consistent quality standards in line with both federal and state laws;
 - (c) probity matters;
 - (d) assistance and incentives provided by governments; and
 - (e) the impact that the global deterioration in economic conditions in recent months will have on future decisions regarding manufacturing locations.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Community Development) — I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 11 June 2009:

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill

Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill

In moving this motion I indicate to the house that these two bills are the only pieces of legislation required to be dealt with under standing order 94(2), the government business program. At first blush members may think this is a slim parliamentary program for this week, but it is the intent of the government to use the bulk of the remainder of the parliamentary week to enable contributions on the appropriation bill to take place.

Once we have dealt with these two bills, which I expect would be reasonably quickly, we will spend the bulk of this week on parliamentary appropriation. It is our desire to try to give members who would like to make a contribution to the debate on the bill the opportunity to do so this parliamentary week. In order to do that, the requirement to progress other legislation obviously is reduced during this week. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr McINTOSH (Kew) — The opposition does not oppose the government business program. There are, however, a number of points that I want to make. Firstly, in relation to the government business program, while a large amount of the week will be spent on the appropriation bill, as indicated by the Leader of the House, there will also have to be some time allocated to deal with the notice of motion relating to the primary industries legislation. Preliminary discussions I have had with the Leader of the House suggest that that motion will be dealt with on Thursday morning. As members would appreciate, considerable time may be spent on that; although it is a very simple matter, it will have to be part of the house's business this week.

In relation to the two bills on the government business program, while they are not significant bills in length nor will they probably attract a large number of speakers, as I see it they are both important bills.

I raise one matter that is of profound concern. It is the late notice we received from the government in relation to the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer

Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill. It may very well seem to be a simple matter. I have said before on a number of occasions that I would certainly like the house to adopt the English model, where the government business program is debated just before the adjournment debate on a Thursday and two weeks before that government business is dealt with. The fact that there has been this late substitution for no apparent reason whatsoever and without any apparent urgency would seem to be an indication that the government is lurching from one day to another. I do not think that is the appropriate way to run a government or a Parliament in relation to the government business program.

It is an enormous inconvenience both to the opposition parties and also the Independent member. I note that film classification falls within the ambit and portfolio responsibility of the member for Box Hill, who is the shadow Attorney-General. One-third of the bills that go through this chamber are matters for the shadow Attorney-General. He has the added responsibility of the energy portfolio as well as supervising other pieces of legislation on behalf of other shadow ministers.

It is, quite frankly, a disgrace to be told of the change to the government business program just 2 hours before the close of business on a Friday, just before a long weekend. It is a demonstration that this government cares little or nothing about the minor parties. The change is over something that does not appear to be that urgent or controversial, but to change that program requires an enormous amount of effort on the part of the opposition parties. The sooner we come to a point where the government must specify its government business program two weeks beforehand, the better. It is certainly not too much to ask of the government. If it cannot manage even these affairs, God help Victoria!

Mr LUPTON (Pahran) — I am glad to hear the opposition is not opposing the government business program. The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill and the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill are important pieces of legislation. Although they are not likely to take up a great amount of parliamentary time, they make important but nonetheless limited changes to two pieces of legislation.

The appropriation bill will be before the house this week as the major piece of legislation for debate, although it is not part of the government business program, which will enable members to give due consideration to budgetary matters. That obviously is the principal focus of the chamber's time allocation for

this week's debate; most of the time is going to be devoted to a particular piece of legislation.

It is important that members are given an opportunity to make significant contributions to debate on the appropriation bill. The house deals with the budget, given its significance to the people of Victoria and the state of Victoria, by allowing more time than is ordinarily allowed for debate on second-reading motions. The government devotes a number of sitting weeks to that process as the budget is an important piece of legislation.

I trust the house will give its overwhelming support to those two pieces of legislation on the government business program. While they are somewhat limited in their scope, the amendments that are going to be dealt with are very important. In that regard I commend the government business program, because it enables the house to deal with those bills in a timely manner. It also gives members the opportunity to spend most of their debating time this week on the appropriation bill, which is quite proper.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the government business program motion in lieu of my colleague the member for Lowan, who is not in the house today. As mentioned previously, two bills are listed on the business program. They are the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2009. Whilst not extensive in nature, a number of members from The Nationals would like to contribute and look forward to contributing to debate on them.

As members know, the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009 will take up most of the proceedings this week. I am sure all members will be grateful for the opportunity to display their sentiments about the budget. That is a very important part of this week's proceedings. The Nationals, the members for Rodney and Mildura and I in particular, are looking forward to contributing to that debate. Certainly The Nationals and the coalition are looking forward to the member for Benalla's contribution to debate on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill.

In the absence of the member for Lowan, it would be remiss of me not to mention that the annual statement of government intentions is still outstanding on the notice paper, which is quite curious given that this week the house is to debate the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill — that is, some members will debate the budget prior to having an opportunity to speak on the annual statement of government intentions. The member for

Lowan would also make light of the fact that the amendments of the Legislative Council to the Water Amendment (Critical Water Infrastructure Projects) Bill 2006 still sit on the notice paper. Despite that, we do not oppose the government business program for this week.

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution to debate on the government business program motion. The Leader of the House has outlined the government's intentions: two bills — the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill and the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill — will need to be passed. Though they are of a limited nature, they are important bills that the house needs to consider, and I am sure members will do so with full force.

The appropriation bill is the main item of business this week, and I commend the Leader of the House, because over the years that I have been his whip he has certainly allowed ample time for all members of all parties to speak on appropriation bills. This year is no different. I am aware that 28 members have already spoken. We have this week to go, and I am sure quite a few more members will want to contribute to the debate. I am not certain exactly how many will want to speak. I do not think I have ever seen the entire house do so, but that is because members have chosen not to speak, not because they have been forced not to. While the appropriation bill is not one of the bills that will be subject to the guillotine, I am sure most members will have the opportunity to speak on it this week; if not, a day may well be available later.

I commend the business program to the house. It is a sensible program. I know one amended bill from the upper house has come back here so far, and there will be time to deal with that as well. I commend the program to the house.

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak in support of the government business program — and I know you will be pleased, Speaker, that I have risen to speak on it! I will be brief.

As has been explained, the government business program has two items of business — the classification of films bill and a superannuation bill. These are important bills that can be dealt with fairly briefly, I would think. The important part of the sitting this week is to give every member who so wishes the opportunity to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill on behalf of their electorates and also in terms of the general appropriation for Victoria overall.

There has been some talk about the details of the government business program having been given to the opposition late last Friday and interrupting the long weekend. I think as members of Parliament we can do a little bit of work over a long weekend to be ready for the coming week of Parliament, so I do not see that as a legitimate concern. The opposition and The Nationals seem to support the government business program, as do I, so I am very pleased to be able to support the program for this sitting week.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Maureen Corrigan

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Community Development) — Congratulations to Maureen Corrigan for being awarded an Order of Australia in the national announcements made yesterday. Her Order of Australia was for service to the city of Whittlesea through the development of support groups and community facilities, and the award nomination was made from the local community.

Maureen Corrigan is a dedicated and tireless volunteer who is a very worthy recipient of this award. She came to community work through the Mill Park Community House, a perfect backdrop for years of community work. She used her valuable experience to play a pivotal role in the development of the Olive Tree Neighbourhood House in more recent times.

Maureen has also given her time to the Whittlesea Community Connections project to help improve the lives of others in her community, particularly the disadvantaged. In addition to her community building role, Maureen has campaigned to improve the plight of women in the area and is the convenor of the Whittlesea women's day committee. More recently she has worked to raise money for breast cancer research.

As if that were not enough, Maureen has also been very involved in the health of her community through her presidency of the Lalor District Community Health Centre and has worked tirelessly to raise funds for Northern Hospital. Maureen has performed these roles and volunteered herself not for any personal or political gain but because she wanted to help create a better place to live, work and raise a family. Maureen provides a wonderful example to all Victorians and reminds us how much one individual can improve the lives of others in their community. I congratulate her on this fantastic award.

Water: shower head exchange program

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — Prior to the 2006 state election the ALP announced a water policy of sorts. It was a shower head exchange program. So desperate was the ALP to announce a water policy, it rushed into this announcement, yet the trial scheme had only just been completed. More importantly the scheme was launched on 11 September 2006, and the government distributed thousands of shower heads without realising that plumbing regulations prohibited anyone but a plumber from exchanging these shower heads. The government in fact promoted illegality.

Under the Building Act, the fines for work not undertaken by a plumber would have been over \$5300, yet the government encouraged people to do the work themselves. The government had to rush through a change to the regulations, and the amendment to the regulations was not signed off by the now Deputy Premier until 17 October 2006. The government was so desperate to announce measures about water that it announced something that prompted people to act against the law and regulations.

The government also rushed the announcement of the shower head exchange program prior to the commencement of the tender for the shower heads, which was contrary to departmental advice. Labor cannot even manage a shower head exchange program — it initially requested people to act illegally. It is no wonder that this mob has no clue how to manage Melbourne's water.

Jack Ross

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — Last week, with the passing of Jack Ross at age 110, our nation lost its last living link to the First World War, and Bendigo and Central Victoria lost a man who will forever be part of the history of our city and region.

The Labor Party also lost a proud and loyal member. Jack's involvement with the Labor movement exemplified many men of his generation. He worked for the then Victorian Railways; additionally, he worked hard to advance the wages and conditions for workers and their families.

This commitment to the Labor movement was honoured by former Premier Steve Bracks, who visited Jack's home in November 2002 to present him with life membership of the great Australian Labor Party.

Jack's fame beyond Central Victoria in recent years came from his remarkable longevity. He served his

country in both of the great world wars. It was this service and that of his countrymen and women that Jack remembered every Anzac Day. It was only in recent years that Jack had to stop attending the Kangaroo Flat Anzac Day service, but he continued to commemorate 25 April with other residents of the Golden Oaks Nursing Home, including my grandfather who this week, sadly, lowered the Australian flag to half-mast in the home they shared, in honour of his mate. We thank you, Jack, for your service to your country and fellow workers.

Jack is survived by his children, Peggy and Robert, four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. My sympathies go to them at this sad time.

Planning: Mildura

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — The Minister for Planning has amended the Mildura planning scheme with his C58 sledgehammer. The minister has indicated C58 will be an interim measure and that Mildura Rural City councillors need to do some work — work that I expect the Mildura Rural City Council will do. I seek an assurance from the minister that when the MRCC has done the required work, his office will process the MRCC application promptly. The minister's office has held up the current amendment C30 for far too long; C30 contains the controversial house excision proposals for Mildura's smaller properties, and has been in the planning minister's office and process for too long.

Mildura needs changes to its planning scheme. The planning minister needs to commit in the interim by ensuring prompt action when the Mildura Rural City Council has completed its work, thus assuring all those in Mildura who have been adversely affected that their pain will be as little as possible. I call on those involved to do all that is necessary for Mildura's planning scheme and to work together for this scheme.

Racing: Mildura Cup

Mr CRISP — On another matter I had the pleasure of attending the Mildura Cup on Sunday, 23 May. It was a fine example of country racing at its best and provided an opportunity for Mildura to showcase its weather and its produce, and to play host to many visitors to the town. It was a wonderful and well-organised day, with the organisers showing responsibility by providing water and free breath testing. This has set the bar very high for the organisers of other functions held in the region.

Schools: Spirit of Anzac tour

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — Today I would like to speak about the wonderful experiences shared on the Premier's Spirit of Anzac prize study tours. As members know, this is the fifth year the Spirit of Anzac prize has been awarded, and again I would like to inform the house about its success. Ten places on the tour were awarded to high school students from across Victoria who submitted essays that reflected upon how values such as courage, initiative and mateship, displayed at Gallipoli and on other fields of battle where Australians have served, have helped unite and strengthen Victorian communities.

This year the winners of the Spirit of Anzac prize were: Matthew Caldwell, Catholic Regional College, Melton; Damian Coates, Assumption College, Kilmore; Hana Dalton, Mentone Girls' Secondary College; Larnie Hewat, Clonard College, Belmont; Philippa Jones, Horsham College; Morgan Lobe, Viewbank College; Cassandra Petkovski, MacRobertson Girls' High School; Jessica Pocklington, Charlton College; James Smith, Trinity Grammar School, Kew; and Georgie Van Der Staay, Lavalla Catholic College, Traralgon.

The study tour involved visits to significant sites of the Korean War and the Gallipoli campaign of World War I. The tour commenced in South Korea where students participated in the Anzac Day service at Seoul. This was followed by visits to significant sites including Kapyong, Maryang San and the war cemetery in Busan.

I would also like to thank Bob Evans, Felicity Williams, retired Major General Peter Haddad, Ian Simpkin, Bruce Scates, Chris Thompson and John Brownbill for their hard work.

Roads: green triangle region freight action plan

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — Why does the Brumby Labor government continually mislead the people of western Victoria about government plans to unleash larger, longer and heavier monster trucks onto our roads?

On 8 April the Minister for Roads and Ports, with much fanfare, launched the green triangle region freight action plan. This plan outlines 70 pages of Labor promises to improve local highways and roads before introducing these larger monster trucks into south-west Victoria, but since April both the federal and state budgets have contained no dollars for any of these upgrades or any of these road improvements. Yet the monster trucks are coming and will be unleashed later

this year. Labor promised highway upgrades to cope with these bigger, monster trucks but this promise has been broken, putting lives on our roads at very real risk.

In the freight action plan Labor said the longer, larger and heavier monster trucks would be permitted to operate on the Riddoch Highway in South Australia, and the Princes and Henty highways in Victoria. I recently wrote to the roads minister, seeking an assurance that these monster trucks would not be allowed on to the Portland-Nelson Road.

His reply was that the government would encourage these monster trucks to use the Princes Highway, but he clearly indicated that many of these large, monster trucks would actually be using the Portland-Nelson Road, which in recent times has been the site of many B-double truck accidents. This would be a dangerous situation. These trucks will create a real danger on our roads. It is time the minister put these plans on ice until the roads are upgraded.

Schools: building program

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — This morning I was delighted to hear of the announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Premier and the Minister for Education about the schools in Victoria that have been successful under round 2 of the Primary Schools for the 21st Century as part of the Australian government's Building the Education Revolution investment plan. It is really great that the Rudd and Brumby Labor governments have cooperated to deliver these improvements to schools in my electorate and nearby.

The successful primary schools in my electorate that have been included are: Arthurs Creek Primary School, that has done a great job post the fires; and it will be great to have some good new facilities in this great country school; Doreen Primary School, just up the road, for construction of new classrooms — both those schools will receive \$850 000; Kangaroo Ground Primary School will get \$2 million; the Lakes P-9 school will get \$1 million; Warrandyte Primary School, just over the river, will get \$2 million; Whittlesea Primary School will get \$2.5 million for a new library; and St Mary's Primary School in Whittlesea will get \$2 million.

Education is the Brumby government's no. 1 priority. We are really pleased to be working, for the first time, with a federal government that shares this view. Not only will it mean the quality of education and the quality of facilities will match the quality of the teaching in these schools but it will provide much-needed jobs in the Yan Yean electorate.

Budget: government performance

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — This statement condemns the Brumby government for continuing to deny economic reality and for putting its head in the sand when it comes to securing and growing jobs in this state. Recent economic indicators make the state budget, predicated on economic growth of 0.25 per cent in 2009-10, look even more like a house of cards which could come crumbling down at any moment.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) March quarter economic growth figures, which were released last week, reveal that Victoria's final demand for the year to March was stagnant with zero growth. That is the second lowest of any state and compares unfavourably to 0.5 per cent growth nationally. Things were even worse in the March quarter. Victoria's final demand went backwards by 2.1 per cent, which is more than double the national decline of 1 per cent. The ABS figures also blow the whistle on the dramatic decline in state government investment in infrastructure, which fell by 17.4 per cent in the March quarter. That is the greatest decline of any state and compares unfavourably to a decrease of just 2.5 per cent nationally. To make matters worse the commonwealth budget forecasts economic growth to decline by 0.5 per cent in 2009-10. These figures make the state budget's forecast of 0.25 per cent growth now look decidedly shaky and extremely optimistic. Given the commonwealth budget forecast, and given that Victoria's economic performance was more than twice as bad as the national performance in the March quarter, it is highly possible that Victoria could be looking at negative growth of over 1 per cent next financial year, or a turnaround of minus 1.5 per cent.

Royal College of Nursing Australia: expo

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — On 17 May it was my pleasure to welcome Australia's current and future nursing workforce to the 2009 Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) nursing and health expo in Melbourne. Nursing is an exciting and innovative area of health care. Becoming a nurse is not only about having a job but is also about having a career that offers a broad range of different roles and life opportunities. With attendees from across the nation, the annual RCNA expo provided an important forum for nurses, nursing students, health services providers and educational providers to share valuable information about future directions for the profession.

The Victorian government is addressing the future needs of the health system and the changing needs of nurses by promoting further skills acquisition and

practice development. Initiatives that include the Victorian nurse practitioner program, scholarships for postgraduate nurses, the registered nurses division 2 strategy and supporting the transition to a national registration and accreditation scheme are aimed at enhancing the working lives of nurses, supporting nursing through reform and developing professional practice. I commended the RCNA for providing this opportunity for collaboration and networking and wished the attendees and organisers of the expo every success.

Rail: Gippsland line

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I raise the issue of Gippsland V/Line services. There has been a fair amount of discussion and public statements recently about the management of Gippsland V/Line services and the potential for some services to terminate at Flinders Street station. The government must make it very clear what services, if any, will terminate at Flinders Street. The current Gippsland services are very important to my community. The way this issue has been raised has led to a great deal of concern being expressed by members of my community and regular travellers on Gippsland V/Line trains. I have raised the matter with the minister's office, with particular emphasis on the long-haul Gippsland services from Bairnsdale, Stratford and Sale which currently terminate at Southern Cross station. It is essential that these services continue to go all the way through to Southern Cross. Confirmation from the minister's office that that will continue to happen is essential because many passengers connect with other services — they go right into the city and connect with other metropolitan train or tram services or go on to the airport. They usually also have luggage. There is a great deal of concern about this among my constituents because the government has not made any statement about it. The government must come out and make very clear what is going on.

Ukraine: President's visit

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — This week we welcome the first official visit of the President of Ukraine to Australia. Australia has a quite significant population of people of Ukrainian descent — 14 000 people — following migration that began just after the Second World War.

His Excellency Mr Victor Yushchenko, and his wife, Mrs Kateryna Yushchenko, will be in Melbourne later this week. I think Ukrainians living here had considerable concerns about the state of democracy in Ukraine until President Yushchenko was elected in

2004 following an era which is now referred to as the Orange Revolution. Although Ukraine became an independent democratic state in 1991 it was really only in 2004 that Ukrainians felt more comfortable about the future progress of their nation.

Essendon is a significant base for Ukrainians in Victoria. I am constantly impressed by the hard work of members of the Ukrainian community in my area and in other places in Victoria, such as Geelong. The community has made considerable efforts to retain its culture and involve Australian children of Ukrainian descent to ensure that they are aware of their cultural background and the history of the state. Many members know Stefan Romaniw very well. Stefan has been very strongly involved with this movement. We welcome the president to Victoria.

Girgarre and Stanhope primary schools: merger

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — I rise today to highlight concerns over a worrying case in my electorate where it appears the Victorian government may be pressuring schools to merge to maximise commonwealth funding. The Girgarre and Stanhope primary schools in north-central Victoria are being encouraged to consider merging on the basis that a complete new building will be constructed to house the proposed new joint school. Whilst the Stanhope school council has voted to accept that the two schools begin community consultations and discussions on the proposal, I am aware that the Girgarre school community does not support the merger. That being the case, it is critical that the education minister tread very carefully with this matter.

If the Girgarre Primary School does not want to go down the merger track, that decision must be respected. It is completely unacceptable for the state government to use the federal stimulus package to force schools to merge. I would be extremely disappointed to see any school in my electorate having its hand forced and being pressured into making a decision it was not comfortable with. I call on the Minister for Education and the education department to work very closely with the schools involved in this matter and to deal fairly with the affected school communities.

City of Hobsons Bay: Sustainable Cities awards

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — I rise to congratulate the city of Hobsons Bay on being named Victoria's most sustainable city for 2009 at this year's Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria Sustainable Cities awards. Hobsons Bay also submitted 14 council and community projects in various categories of the awards.

Seven of those projects made the finals and a further three won in their respective categories.

Nineteen-year-old Lloyd Knight of Williamstown Swimming and Lifesaving Club won an award in the Young Leaders category for his work in improving the club's services for young members and for his roles as senior head coach, club management committee member and delegate to the Aquatic Sports Council of Life Saving Victoria.

Seaworks won the Heritage and Culture award for its role in preserving Williamstown's rich maritime history. Finally, the Newport substation won the Community Pride award. Over the past decade this magnificent and historic building has been transformed from a derelict, vandalised shell into a hub for art and performance in Melbourne's west. Funding from this Labor government has been integral to the success of the substation's development, with in excess of \$1.1 million being allocated to assist in different stages of the restoration.

I would like to make special mention of Williamstown ward councillor Angela Altair, who serves as chair of the council's sustainable environment advisory group. The ongoing efforts of her group, along with the efforts of the council and members of the community, have contributed to making Hobsons Bay a benchmark in sustainability for other local governments.

Rail: Gippsland line

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — Gippsland's train travellers are being treated like second-class citizens once again by the Minister for Public Transport. They are putting up with crowded trains and are constantly forced to stand from Melbourne to Pakenham while metropolitan commuters occupy their seats. Trains to Gippsland consistently run late and are often replaced by coaches at very little notice. The Gippsland platform at Southern Cross station is inconveniently located for elderly and disabled passengers, and it is miles away from the toilets. Now we find that Gippsland commuter trains are about to begin terminating at Flinders Street station rather than going all the way to Southern Cross station. This is outlined in the Victorian transport plan.

Apparently this change is designed to improve the train services for commuters from the west and north of Melbourne. Here we have a situation where train travellers from metropolitan Melbourne and from regional centres like Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo will have improved services at the expense of Gippsland commuters. How can the minister justify continually putting Gippsland train travellers at a

distinct disadvantage without a second thought just so other Victorians will be better off?

The minister quite obviously has no respect for Gippsland train travellers and no regard for their right to a fair go, because she intends to make it extremely difficult for them to access Etihad Stadium, Tullamarine Airport and the western and northern suburbs of Melbourne. I call on the minister to review this decision immediately. Minister Kosky has a responsibility to treat all Victorians equally. The decision to terminate the Gippsland service at Flinders Street station is robbing Gippslanders of a service they are entitled to expect and keep.

City of Casey: community library

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — In March the Casey City Council adopted the town centre development plan for the Casey Central precinct. This plan includes the construction of a community library as part of stage 2. I commend the council for having the vision to put forward a plan for the best use of the Casey Central town centre for the community's benefit. I have written to the mayor of the City of Casey, Geoff Ablett, expressing my support for this project. I am of the view that any plans for a new library should incorporate community meeting rooms, given the obvious shortage of such facilities in the local area. I would like to see time lines set for the delivery of this project, as members of the Narre Warren South community are most enthusiastic about it.

I am proud of our government's record in providing the best possible services and facilities for Narre Warren South. The city of Casey is a growing area, and a community library and a community meeting space will complement this great facility and provide an invaluable service to the families of the Casey municipality, especially to the young students in my electorate.

Hillsmeade Primary School: Parliament visit

Ms GRALEY — Talking about the great young people of my electorate, it was my pleasure to host a tour of Parliament for grade 6 children from Hillsmeade Primary School. The students were totally engaged during their visit. They loved our library. They asked good questions and really enjoyed taking a seat in the chambers and looking up at the beautiful gold features of the ceilings, because they knew all about Victoria's gold rush. Everyone was very well-behaved, and as one of the teachers observed, they showed real respect for their surroundings.

I hope they now have a better understanding of the workings of Parliament and will come to share my passion for our democracy. Maybe one of them will be an MP one day. Well done to Hillsmeade Primary School students, teachers and parents.

Water: Broken Valley irrigators

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — The Minister for Water stands condemned for sentencing to death by 1000 cuts the irrigators of the Broken Valley and surrounding communities. He has made a callous and calculated decision to close down the Broken Valley irrigation system without any regard for the social and economic impact that will have on affected irrigators in Broken Valley and the surrounding communities. His decision at the 11th hour to walk away from irrigators' proposals for a targeted water buyback scheme and to proceed with a non-targeted scheme means certain death for irrigation in the Broken Valley downstream of Lake Mokoan after the system is decommissioned.

The non-targeted approach will result in ongoing problems with the reliability of supply and timely delivery of water. There will also be massive increases in water costs, and water losses due to distribution inefficiencies will become an even bigger issue. Farming in the system will become unviable, and farmers will have no option but to sell their water. The Broken Valley irrigation system will close down over the next 10 years, and we will lose more of our young families from the area. It will be death by 1000 cuts.

What is most galling about this whole sordid affair is the way the minister has engaged the irrigators in protracted negotiations simply to buy time. Irrigators participated in good faith, attempting to achieve a win-win outcome for irrigation farming and for the environment, while all along the minister was simply buying time until the deal with the Rudd government was done. This callous, calculated action by the minister should leave people in no doubt about what lengths he and the Premier will go to — —

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

Manor Lakes P-12 Specialist College: funding

Mr EREN (Lara) — I am pleased to talk today about more great things happening in my electorate of Lara. As many members may know, the city of Wyndham is the fastest growing region not only in this state but one of the fastest growing in the nation. This government is supporting that growth by investing in major infrastructure to sustain the community.

As part of Education Week the Minister for Education and I recently had the pleasure of visiting Manor Lakes P-12 Specialist College to announce \$10 million in funding, which will see the school grow with the Wyndham Vale community and expand into stage 3 of its building program. The \$7 million stage 1 of the school development program is already providing students with contemporary open learning spaces, a library, a technology centre and staff and administration areas.

Construction of the \$7.2 million second stage started earlier this month. It will provide an integrated specialist school for children with special needs, a performing arts centre and more flexible learning spaces so the school can expand to accommodate year 8 next year. Along with the Wyndham Vale community, I am very excited and pleased with the Brumby Labor government's record investment in a growing community.

Water: Waterwise program

Mr EREN — I would also like to mention that recently, along with the Minister for Community Services, I met with a constituent in my electorate to see the positive results of the Waterwise program. This program, which was launched in January, will provide more assistance to struggling families in reducing their water consumption and the cost of their bills by fitting out homes with water-saving devices such as dual-flush toilets and water-saving showerheads and by fixing leaking taps. The Waterwise program provides for a plumber to carry out an audit at the home and to upgrade, repair or replace inefficient water fittings up to the value of \$500. This is a great program that not only helps save our environment but also saves residents money. I congratulate our government — —

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

John-Michael Howson

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — It is with the greatest pleasure that I rise today to congratulate a good friend and much-loved Victorian on his inclusion in the Queen's Birthday honours list. John-Michael Howson was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the entertainment industry as a writer and performer.

As a young child, there were very few programs suitable to watch on television, but I rarely missed an episode of *Adventure Island*. Who can forget the wonderful land of Diddley-Dum-Diddley and

characters like Clown, Lizzy, Miser Meanie and Captain Crook? This was fun, pantomime-style entertainment, and watching the old black-and-white episodes floods me with so many happy memories. It just goes to show that fancy bells and whistles are not always what attract kids: my daughter still sits, captivated, and watches the episodes.

Then of course came John's befitting title of Mr Hollywood. There was barely an actor, either young or from the golden era of film, that John had not met, interviewed and often befriended. But my greatest admiration for this man is in his role as a lyricist and writer of hit shows such as *Dusty* and *Shout*. As an avid lover of the arts, I am often overwhelmed by John's creativity. John-Michael Howson is a respected social commentator, creative genius and generous soul. Congratulations, John, you deserve this.

Salvation Army

Mrs VICTORIA — These days people are often too busy to give long-term commitments to volunteering, but the Salvation Army is encouraging us to 'Join the Army for a day', not just during the Red Shield Appeal but at any time of year. It is a great organisation, and I hope Victorians will embrace the concept.

Children: explicit material

Ms LOBATO (Gembrook) — A few weeks ago Cardinia resident Catherine Manning entered her general store with her children. As her children were about to choose their weekly treats, they were confronted with pornographic magazines, inappropriately placed near the ice-cream freezer.

Catherine complained to the proprietor about the location of this explicit material, and after commencing an awareness-raising campaign, Catherine and her family were banned from the general store. I congratulate Catherine and, as a parent, thank her for her efforts.

Catherine has informed us about the ongoing dilemma facing parents due to inappropriate sexual imagery to which children are constantly exposed. Even in the settings that should be the most innocent, such as a general store, supermarkets and petrol stations, our children are confronted by the most explicit sexual images. Personally I am sick to death of it, as we cannot even go for a drive and enjoy music together in the car without being rudely interrupted by advertisements discussing sexual difficulties. I promptly turn the station off before the unnecessary questions begin.

Then as our drive continues we are subjected to massive billboards, asking if adults 'Want it longer lasting'. Why on earth are children exposed to these messages, with their ever-inquiring minds desperate for answers to everything? This kind of information is totally unwarranted and harmful at their age.

Furthermore all advertising including clubs that exploit women are sending messages to our children that women are purely sexual beings. Boys become men expecting this imagery to be reality, and girls grow into women believing this is how women should behave in our society. Enforcement of censorship laws is woefully inadequate — —

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

Information and communications technology: social connectedness

Mr SCOTT (Preston) — I rise today to discuss shifts in social organisation. Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone*, highlighted the decline of traditional forms of social organisation such as social clubs, political parties and churches. However, in the literature he ignored the rise of more informal social networks outside of formalised community groups based on networks of friends — so-called tribes.

Such informal organisations are an important part of organising social activity, which is always provided for by the changes in communication technology; it allows people to interact and form social contacts without the requirement for standing, formal organisations with a secretary, president and treasurer.

These are things that parliaments must consider when providing funding — that is, expanding the contact that people have with information technology when considering how to expand social activity and social connectedness and the related social capital which is such a positive development for our society.

Manningham Park Primary School: closure

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I stand to condemn this lazy government for closing schools in my electorate. Manningham Park Primary School was forced to close by this uncaring government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The time allowed for members statements has expired.

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 7 May; motion of
Mr HOLDING (Minister for Finance, WorkCover
and the Transport Accident Commission).**

Mr WELLS (Scoresby) — I rise to join the debate on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill and say at the outset that the coalition will be supporting this bill. It is a very brief bill, but its main provisions are that it makes the following amendments to state-run superannuation schemes: firstly, it gives new protective service officers (PSOs) access to the emergency services superannuation scheme (ESSS) defined benefit scheme and gives current PSOs the option of joining the ESSS defined benefit scheme. Further, it allows the reinstatement of defined benefit spouse pensions that were cancelled upon remarriage of the recipient.

Further, it allows trustees of the Victorian public sector superannuation scheme to give effect to superannuation agreements and orders made under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 in respect of persons in de facto and same-sex relationships.

Further, it allows the Emergency Services Superannuation Board (ESSB) the option to offer insurance to spouse account holders; it further gives members of the former State Superannuation Fund the option to transfer the commonwealth government contribution payments into a superannuation product of their choice.

It further amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986 to ensure that the ESSB can comply with the commonwealth Bankruptcy Act reforms; further, it amends The Constitution Act 1975 to enable future governors to enter into salary sacrifice arrangements.

The bill largely continues the process of bringing Victorian government-run superannuation schemes into line with the commonwealth legislation, and new PSOs will be given the same entitlements as police members.

The 1993 amendment allows the reinstatement of defined benefits for spouse pensions. In 1993 the Kennett government allowed for recipients, when they remarried, to receive the pension but what it did not do at that point was allow for the time that was lost between the 1950s and 1993, and this bill will allow for those people affected — and we believe there are about 40 people — to receive the pension once this bill is enacted.

The PSOs around Parliament do an outstanding job, and we certainly appreciate the amount of work they do. The unit is under the command of the communications and internal security division, which in turn falls within the specialist support department of Victoria Police. This is a division with statewide responsibilities involving security, protection and support facilities to assist police.

The protective services unit (PSU) was established in 1986 after a long review, and was set up on 21 March 1988. The mission of this unit is to have PSOs provide protection for persons holding certain official or public offices, and of certain places of public importance. The PSOs perform general security at various official locations in the Melbourne city area. There are also deployments around the law courts, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Justice, Parliament House, the Shrine of Remembrance, the Victoria Police centre, the Victoria Police St Kilda Road complex and various suburban magistrates courts.

Using the PSOs makes so much more sense because there are a number of jobs that would previously have been done by police officers. Those roles can be filled by PSOs, which frees up more police to be on the front line of law enforcement on the streets.

In terms of the legal powers of the PSOs, they have specific arrest powers under the Shrine of Remembrance and Crown Lands acts, in addition to the legislated citizen's arrest authority. They also exercise powers under the Court Security Act. The PSU provides 24-hour-a-day security coverage by PSOs of all locations except for the law courts.

Of course the PSOs have their own pay structure. The ESSS also covers Victoria Police, the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Ambulance Victoria, the Country Fire Authority, the Police Association, Transfield, and Advanced Medical Transport. Members of the ESSS defined benefit fund comprise emergency services operational employees as well as non-operational employees who started service with the emergency service employers before 1 January 1994.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! If the Minister for Agriculture and the member for Murray Valley want to have a conversation, they should move back a little bit.

Mr WELLS — The ESSS fund pays benefits, other than some disability benefits, as a lump sum based on salary, period of membership, age and contribution rates during membership. The ESSS invests its money

according to its guidelines. The ESSS board has adopted a framework for managing the investment process which involves the use of an external adviser and implementation manager — the Victorian Funds Management Corporation. I note with interest that under ‘assets managed’ the VFMC sets out that of \$14 billion for superannuation, Emergency Services and State Super is \$13.8 billion. A significant amount of the VFMC’s funding comes from ESSS.

We note with interest the VFMC’s performance, which is directly related to ESSS and the benefits it provides for hardworking Victorians right across the state. On 30 June 2007 VFMC’s total managed investments were set at \$41.3 billion, and on 31 March 2009 the total amount invested was \$30.42 billion. That is a change of \$10.88 billion, or a reduction of 26.34 per cent. That is why we have grave concerns about the way the VFMC is being managed. We have noted with great interest a number of high-profile departures. The chief investment officer, Leo de Bever, left the VFMC, which was of great concern. One of the reasons he gave for leaving the VFMC was there was more interference than was desirable from the Victorian government. Mike Fitzpatrick has also left the VFMC. We are concerned about his departure as well.

On those short notes, we have said from the start that we will not be opposing this bill. In fact we are going to support this bill. We say the PSOs do an outstanding job. We believe this is an extension of what the Kennett government did in 1993 for those 40 or so people who will be affected and will be allowed to take on the pension after this bill is enacted. With that, we support the bill and wish it a speedy passage.

Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) — I am very pleased to rise in support of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. This bill amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, the County Court Act 1958, the Constitution Act 1975, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979, the State Superannuation Act 1988, the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 and the Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989.

The amendments to the Emergency Services Superannuation Act will give protective services officers access to the defined benefit section of the emergency services superannuation scheme. Currently the police commissioner may appoint up to 150 protective services officers. These officers protect public officials, public offices and places of significance. Protective services officers work here at Parliament House, at Victoria Police headquarters and

at the Shrine of Remembrance et cetera. They are to be commended for the work they do on behalf of all of us.

For superannuation purposes these officers are not considered operational staff, and as such since 1994 they have been unable to access the emergency services superannuation defined benefit scheme. At present there are 40 officers in the defined benefit scheme and 100 in the accumulation scheme. Changes proposed in the Police Regulation Amendment Bill will see an expanded role for protective services officers in line with the review by Victoria Police and the Police Association. This requires a change in the way protective services officers are defined from non-operational to operational. This will mean that these officers will be able to opt to move to the defined benefit scheme.

The bill also amends the State Superannuation Act 1988 and the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act to reinstate spouse superannuation provisions that were previously cancelled on remarriage. Other amendments comply with the changes made by the commonwealth government in respect of de facto and same-sex relationships. In short, Victoria’s superannuation laws will be consistent with Labor’s view that de facto and same-sex relationships shall be treated equally under the law.

The bill also provides that the Emergency Services Superannuation Board will be able to offer death or disability insurance to spouse account-holders. The bill also gives members of the former State Superannuation Fund the option to transfer their commonwealth government co-contribution payments to a superannuation product of their choice. It also clarifies the ability of beneficiary account-holders to join the ESSPLAN accumulation fund. Finally, it amends the Constitution Act 1975 to enable a future Governor to enter into salary sacrifice arrangements. This will bring the office of the Governor into line with judges and other statutory office-holders. I therefore commend the bill to the house.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — In joining the debate on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 I think we should remind ourselves right from the start that superannuation is a huge thing for those of us living in Australia and a huge benefit to the people who are involved in superannuation schemes. I am reminded, and I think I should remind the house, that members of Parliament who are involved in the superannuation scheme have 11.5 per cent of their total salary removed. What we find with the general public is wages are paid to a particular person within the workforce and then they receive 9 per cent on top of

that as a contribution to superannuation, and it is paid by the employer. I also remind the house that before the superannuation scheme was introduced, going back some years, as I understood it at the time it was to be a three-way contribution — a third from the employer, a third from the employee and a third from the government. But what the then Labor government successfully introduced at the federal level — at a much lower level, of course — was a superannuation contribution by employers.

I believe this became a huge impost on employers generally within the community. They are paying a salary, and they now pay 9 per cent on top of that. There are people within the federal government, and indeed probably within this government, who would like to see that increased to 10, 12 or even 15 per cent and paid by the employer. We need to understand the impost this is on the economy of the state of Victoria. I am not opposed to superannuation. I think it is a very good idea, but it should be a contribution being made by employees, employers and the government. We know that individual employees can add to that employer contribution with an amount taken from their salary. You and I might not see it, Acting Speaker, but in years to come less and less people will be involved with pensions because they will have superannuation payments.

We need to comment on some of the issues in the bill before the house. I wanted to make a contribution initially indicating the way that superannuation is operating and the way I think it has been to the detriment of employers. Just as a final comment on that, we now find that many employers have package deals. They offer the person whatever that might be — \$80 000 a year, \$100 000 a year or whatever their ability is for the particular job — and that is a total contribution and includes all the benefits. It might include a benefit for a car that is being provided and superannuation. The trend is to get package deals, and I support that scheme.

The bill before the house deals with a lot of smaller or minor issues, if you like to call them that, where corrections are being undertaken to the imposition of superannuation and its implications in the state of Victoria. Many people would call it an innocuous bill, but in relation to this superannuation legislation there are some issues which are important to correct or make more effective.

I noted the comments made by the member for Scoresby and some of the information he provided. An issue he particularly mentioned was the reinstatement of the allowance for defined benefit spouse pensions,

which were cancelled upon remarriage of the recipient. This allowance was removed in 1993. The secretary of the Emergency Services and State Super fund (ESSSuper) and secretary of the Parliamentary Trustee, Mr Brian Frazer, informed me that the reinstatement of this particular allowance would not affect any member of Parliament or other persons who remarried prior to 1993. Mr Frazer indicated to me that an investigation of their records showed that this would not be applicable to former members of Parliament or their spouses. This is an important move which will allow the reinstatement of reversionary spouse pensions to those who may be affected. In discussions with me Mr Frazer said, 'You could investigate it further. It may be that we have missed someone to whom the scheme was applicable'.

The member for Scoresby has mentioned a number of areas where the scheme has been extended. It provides protective service officers with access to the emergency services superannuation defined benefit scheme. The second-reading notes indicate where this would be applicable. Of course it includes those people who provide protective services to us here at Parliament House, and that is an important step. The Chief Commissioner of Police may appoint up to 150 protective services officers. We should support including these people within the emergency services superannuation defined benefit scheme. It should be recognised that they would be performing similar activities to those undertaken by people currently included within the scheme. This amendment will be applicable to 40 protective service officers.

I have mentioned the reinstatement of the spouse pensions which were cancelled upon remarriage. There are quite a few other issues within the bill before the house as it relates to falling into line with commonwealth provisions in the area of superannuation. We support this move on the basis of obtaining uniformity in superannuation legislation.

I want to bring to the attention of the house a letter which I received from a constituent of mine, Christine Sewell. Christine worked with Victoria Police over many years and was a very fine police officer at Wangaratta. After finishing her work with the police she joined Ambulance Victoria — formerly Rural Ambulance Victoria — as a call taker. In her letter she stated:

In this role there are 33 chief complaints where instructions are given to callers and patients.

I quote from Christine's list:

These include childbirth, haemorrhage control, cardiac issues including the aspirin protocol, motor vehicle accidents and CPR —

cardiopulmonary resuscitation —

in cases of cardiac arrest, to name just a few.

Christine indicates that her training involves giving medical advice to people when they ring in on 000. She claims this work is equal to the work of paramedic dispatchers. In her discussions with me Christine said many people were appreciative of call takers and their ability to provide information when there is an emergency. I guess you would be like me, Acting Speaker, in that if something happened you would immediately say, 'What do I do to assist the person who has a particular medical problem?'. Christine believes that to be able to obtain information and keep a person alive until paramedics arrive is important work.

She went on to say:

I am also a qualified dispatcher, and I am used on a regular basis to fill the gaps when there is a staff shortage.

Jeff Kennett abolished defined benefits for call takers in 1994. Our role has changed dramatically since then, as explained above.

I am asking that ESSS defined benefits for call takers be reintroduced. It seems to me that there is an anomaly that some call takers have defined benefits and others who work under the same conditions and do exactly the same work do not have this benefit.

Christine believes that call takers like herself are discriminated against and that this anomaly in the system should be addressed. I ask the minister at the table, the Minister for Agriculture, to take this issue up with the Minister for Health and ask him to consider making changes to the act that would enable call takers within the state of Victoria — not a large group of people — to obtain equivalent services.

The bill picks up on a lot of small but important anomalies within the superannuation system and seeks to provide uniformity where there are discrepancies between the state legislation and the federal system. This is a move in the right direction.

In closing, I indicate again my strong support for superannuation schemes and benefits being provided to a range of people. If there are anomalies in the legislation as it relates to de facto marriages and de facto couples, for instance, they should be removed. I believe governments have a responsibility to match contributions made by a range of people to

superannuation schemes. The government should look at doing that to ensure that employers are not fully responsible for superannuation contributions. I support the bill before the house, and I believe it will be important.

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — It is always a delight to follow the member for Murray Valley. I note his support, and indeed the support of the member for Scoresby, for the bill which the government has brought forward. Of course I also support the bill. I do take issue, though, with some views of the member for Murray Valley on superannuation. When he is talking about the imposition on employers, I really should remind him of accords 1 and 2, under which workers salary sacrifice in order to have superannuation.

He calls it an imposition on employers, but it was an accord. Well might he duck his head in shame, because it is an accord between everybody. It is not an imposition on employers; it was arranged with all parties, and I remind the member for Murray Valley of that.

Mr Jasper interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! The member for Murray Valley!

Mr Jasper interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr K. Smith) — Order! It is under control.

Mr STENSHOLT — Along with the member for Murray Valley I support the many measures in this bill. It is a rare bill, and I am sure the member for Murray Valley would appreciate that it is a bill which changes the Constitution Act. It is not very often that we in this chamber attempt to change that act, and it is something we need to take quite seriously. I am very appreciative that there is support for this bill on all sides of the house. Members have talked about the expanded role for PSOs (protective services officers). I see it as a good thing that they have been provided with more responsibility. This bill provides them with the opportunity to join the emergency services superannuation scheme, a defined benefit scheme, in line with that expanded role.

I also note, as others have, that the reinstatement of reversionary spouse pensions is fully in line with changes made by the commonwealth. The Police Association Victoria wrote to the minister requesting that change, as I understand, and it is good to see it has been brought forward. The loss of reversionary pensions has been the cause of some injustices in the

past. Many years ago a friend of mine was very badly injured and her husband and child were killed. She got quite a large pension but lost it when she remarried. She subsequently divorced and was left very badly off and in a kind of no-man's land. I am very appreciative that we will have sensible legislation in this regard.

A whole range of acts are affected by the family law amendments, including the State Superannuation Act, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act, the Transport Superannuation Act, the Emergency Services Superannuation Act, the Superannuation (Portability) Act, the County Court Act and, as I have already mentioned, the Constitution Act. There is also a change to the Constitution Act to ensure that the Governor can salary sacrifice, so the Governor or governors in future may take account of that. With changes at the federal level next year, I am sure the opportunities to salary sacrifice will be less. This is offered to other statutory office-holders and should therefore be available to the Governor.

There is a range of other amendments recommended by the Emergency Services Superannuation Board, and I want to publicly commend the board in Parliament for the good work it has done to bring these amendments forward and for the work it does generally. People in these public bodies do a lot of work. They are required to carry out their mandates with care and responsibility, and in this case the board is doing so. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am delighted to join the debate on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill, which amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986; the Constitution Act 1975, as the member for Burwood indicated a few moments ago; the County Court Act 1958; the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968; the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979; the State Superannuation Act 1988; the Transport Superannuation Act 1988; and the Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989. That is quite a laundry list of bills being amended, and it includes the reference to the Constitution Act. The principal impact from my perspective is that protective service officers, or PSOs as they are known around here and more widely, will be able to take part in the emergency services superannuation scheme defined benefit scheme.

There are some other measures in this bill: the reinstatement of spouse pensions, or perhaps more correctly the ability to allow reinstatement of reversionary pensions cancelled as a result of marriage; and the ability to enable future governors — and I understand it is indeed future governors — to salary

sacrifice, which brings that office into line with other office-holders, judges, magistrates and so on. It provides consistency with the provisions of the commonwealth's relationship laws, clarifies the ability of beneficiary account-holders to join the ESSPLAN accumulation fund and makes a number of other amendments, including allowing the Emergency Services Superannuation Board to offer death or disability insurance to the spouses of account-holders. There are a number of other changes, including making our legislation compliant with recent amendments to the commonwealth Bankruptcy Act.

They are all changes that are worthy of support, perhaps some more than others, but of principal interest to me are the changes as far as the PSOs are concerned. At present many officers are excluded from the defined benefit scheme. I think the figures show that the majority of officers are excluded. The distinction upon which that exclusion is based goes back to the old distinction drawn between operational and non-operational officers. PSOs undertake protective services functions not only at Parliament House but at police headquarters, at the shrine, at Treasury Place and at Victorian courts. There is no doubt that on September 11 the climate changed in many ways right across the world, and I remember similar changes following the Hilton Hotel bombing in the 1970s. Before that, you could walk straight through the front door of Parliament House in Canberra without any problem. Things have changed, and on September 11 things changed even more. The importance of the security of our public institutions, our legislative bodies, our courts and our government was greatly underlined by those events, and indeed the ability of this house to function independently and in the interests of all its citizens free of duress is inextricably bound up in our physical security.

It is true that PSOs have a more limited power of arrest than Victoria Police officers generally, and they certainly operate in a more confined area, but like their colleagues in Victoria Police, they do not have the opportunity to pick and choose the time and the manner in which they come into contact with the public, the manner in which they engage with the public and the approach of the public to them. Implicit in the job, and I guess implicit in their title, is protective security, and along with that is recognition that in an emergency they are going to be at the forefront of the initial response. Whether it is a response to an incident in the parliamentary precinct, the courts or any other place, they are going to be at the forefront of the initial response. Dealing with those issues, to me at least, certainly makes them all operational members.

I want to make a few comments about defined benefit schemes. Defined benefit schemes are essentially a recognition of special circumstances for particular employment. They are almost all special cases and are certainly not the norm. They may have been the norm in the public sector — they are generally not now — but they have certainly not been the norm in the private sector. For defined benefit schemes there are almost always different circumstances of employment and the nature of the specific jobs is different. They may reflect predominantly antisocial hours, harsh conditions of employment or perhaps inherent dangers to the individual; they may reflect a situation where the level of immediate remuneration is insufficient, given the precarious nature of the job. All those things are factors that need to be taken into consideration, amongst many other s, whenever we talk about defined benefit schemes.

Equally I think it is important that equity considerations are not overlooked either. As long as there is equity in wages but a separate method of providing for retirement, then there is a clear inequity in remuneration. Protective services officers are effectively being rewarded on two different pay scales. The history of the difference between those pay scales and the distinction between operational and non-operational has become an artificial device to exclude some officers from the defined benefit scheme. I do not think that is an acceptable practice in 21st century employment and it was not an acceptable practice last century. I for one am very happy to support its abolition.

As I outlined at the commencement of my speech, this bill makes a number of other important and essential changes. They are all worthy of further comment or expansion on the comments I have already made, but as widespread, if not unanimous, support for the legislation exists, obviously it is not my intention to make further demands on the time of the house except to say that I commend the bill and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill. The objectives of this bill have been outlined in some detail by other members. The objectives are fourfold. Firstly, the bill seeks to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act to give protective services officers (PSOs) access to the defined benefit section of the emergency services superannuation scheme. Secondly, the bill provides for the reinstatement of spouse superannuation pensions that were previously cancelled on remarriage. Thirdly, the bill amends the acts

governing Victorian public sector superannuation schemes to enable the trustees of these schemes to give effect to superannuation agreements and orders made under the Family Law Act in respect of persons in de facto relationships. Finally, the bill amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act to ensure that the Emergency Services Superannuation Board can comply with the commonwealth Bankruptcy Act reforms.

I think the fundamental objective of this bill is to allow PSOs to have access to the defined benefit aspects of the emergency services superannuation scheme. As we have come to understand in this debate, the defined benefit scheme is currently available to other emergency services workers, including police officers, firefighters and ambulance officers, but not to PSOs, who were struck off the list of those eligible for defined benefits in 1994.

The justification for this decision was that PSOs were considered to be non-operational staff and as such were only eligible to join the ESSPLAN accumulation scheme. The role of PSOs has recently been reviewed by Victoria Police and the Police Association, which have recommended an expanded role for PSOs that would see them regain their operational status, thereby making them eligible to belong to the defined benefit part of the emergency services superannuation scheme.

I understand from reading the minister's second-reading speech that there are about 140 PSOs currently employed in Victoria. As other members have said, they are stationed right across a range of public offices and places of importance including our very own Parliament House, the courts, police headquarters, the Shrine of Remembrance and Treasury Place government offices. This change is likely to give up to 100 PSOs who are currently receiving superannuation through an accumulation scheme access to the defined benefit scheme.

Given the significance of this change and the significance of superannuation as part of an individual's lifelong earnings, I am pleased to learn that ESSPLAN will offer free financial advice or a cash grant of up to \$900 to receive independent advice regarding this important matter. With the passage of this bill through the Parliament, protective services officers who choose to remain in the accumulation fund will be free to do so.

In seeking to give PSOs access to the defined benefit scheme, this bill highlights the importance of the role carried out by those employed across Victoria's emergency services sector. These are highly trained individuals whose job is to protect the safety of

ordinary citizens, often at great risk to themselves. I think it would be fair to say that those entering emergency services often do so with the intention of serving their community for many years. The change of accessibility to the defined benefit scheme for PSOs simply reflects the change in their status from non-operational to operational security personnel. I thank our PSOs for their service in protecting this great building and those who work in it.

This bill also reminds us of the important role that superannuation plays in terms of an individual's lifetime earnings, as I have mentioned. The advent of institutionalised employer-funded superannuation only began in 1985 under the leadership of Bill Kelty, the then secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The trade union movement sought a 3 per cent employer-funded superannuation contribution as part of its national wage case claim.

The then federal Labor government, which was led by Prime Minister Bob Hawke, supported the claim in pursuit of its inflation control objectives, and in February 1986 the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission announced that it would approve industrial agreements that provided for contributions of up to 3 per cent to approved superannuation funds. It took a further six years before the government adopted the commission's recommendations and introduced the superannuation guarantee for the first time.

The superannuation guarantee, enforceable through the commonwealth's taxation powers, provided for a major extension of superannuation coverage to employees right across the country. Higher levels of contributions were then phased in over a 10-year period and reached the maximum of 9 per cent, which is the current level, in 2002-03. Today superannuation in Australia is a real success story, with Australian superannuation schemes holding assets of \$1 trillion; but back in 1983 it was a different story altogether, with total assets equalling just \$50 billion.

In those days superannuation was an exclusive benefit to only one-third of the workforce. It was an elite system, steeped in inequality, available only to public servants and those working at the top of their professions. In 1985 less than one-quarter of all women had access to superannuation; contractors, part-time, and blue-collar workers were far less likely to have superannuation. Today, thanks to the efforts of Kelty, Hawke and the then Treasurer, Paul Keating, superannuation is an entitlement for almost every Australian worker.

They viewed superannuation as an answer to future challenges associated with an ageing society. Research at the time showed that due to changing demographics there would be an insufficient number of taxpayers to sustainably meet the cost of pensions, particularly for baby boomers as they neared retirement age. It was Kelty, Hawke and Keating who collectively negotiated the introduction of a universal system of superannuation.

They foresaw a system of industry funds that belonged to workers, not employers, which accumulated workers' funds for their benefit upon retirement. The accumulated funds belonged to them so that they retained their entitlements even if they left their job before retirement. They would be flexible, allowing workers to move between jobs within the industry.

The ACTU also pressed for the right of employees to act as trustees of their superannuation funds so that those who owned the funds would have equal representation on trustee boards. For his contributions to establishing Australia's national superannuation scheme while secretary of the ACTU, Bill Kelty was awarded a Companion in the Order of Australia last year.

I took the opportunity to write to Bill Kelty after he received his award, to congratulate him. To my delight he wrote back to me and typically deflected the praise by indicating that individual honour is invariably the outcome of collective effort. I very much appreciated his response. Bill Kelty is recognised as the architect of universal superannuation in this country. There are not too many who can boast such an achievement.

The Australian superannuation system is one of this nation's great success stories. Today it is worth in excess of \$1 trillion with a minimum of 9 per cent of all workers' earnings being invested into the system. This ranks as the fourth largest fund management business in the world.

The quality of the system championed by Kelty and Keating was recognised by the World Bank in 1993 when it endorsed Australia's three pillars system for the provision of retirement income as world best practice. Indeed Australia's superannuation is the envy of most countries, from the United States, China and many others.

The most effective legislative change to happen in recent times to the Australian superannuation industry was choice. From 1 July 2005 changes to the law meant that many Australian employees were able to choose which fund their employer's future superannuation

guarantee contributions were paid into. As we now understand, this is a very positive way for workers to have some ownership over what can become their biggest asset. We also understand with such large numbers of dollars under investment the Australian superannuation industry is extremely competitive. Today there are six main types of superannuation funds: industry funds, wholesale master trusts, retail master trusts, employers' stand-alone funds, do-it-yourself funds and public sector employee funds.

On that basis I am more than happy to support any bill that assists workers with their retirement savings. I make the point that our friends opposite were slow to embrace the value of universal super, opposing compulsory super until 1996, when they changed their position for the federal election that year. Fortunately, they have moved on, seen the light and are now supporting this bill; I commend it to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I wish to make a contribution on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The Nationals in coalition support the bill, the purpose of which is to make various changes to specified superannuation acts. The main provisions of the bill are to provide new protective services officers (PSOs) access to the emergency services superannuation defined benefit scheme and giving current PSOs the option of joining the emergency services superannuation scheme (ESSS) defined benefit scheme.

The PSOs were established in 1986. The unit now has about 140 members protecting various public places, including Parliament House and the courts. They will now have access to a defined benefit scheme — something I will talk about later.

The bill will allow reinstatement of defined benefit spouse pensions that were cancelled on the remarriage of the recipient. This fixes up something that fell through the legislation in 1993 when there were some reforms going on. I think members realise this is a just reinstatement. It will not be retrospective but will occur from the assent of this bill; then affected spouses will be able to make application to have benefits reinstated. We have heard much on that issue from the member for Scoresby whose comments on this bill I am happy to support.

The bill will allow the trustee of the Victorian public service superannuation schemes to give effect to the superannuation agreement and orders made under the Family Law Act 1975 in respect of persons in de facto and same-sex relationships. This washes through from some bills that have already passed this house last year

and will take account of some changes in our social and family structures.

It will allow the Emergency Services Superannuation Board the option to offer insurance to spouse account-holders — something that is widely available in many other superannuation schemes and being taken up by a great number of people. It allows members of the former State Superannuation Fund the option of transferring the commonwealth government co-contribution payments to the superannuation scheme of their choice. This again follows what the commonwealth has done — namely, giving people the opportunity to choose the superannuation fund they so wish.

The bill amends the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986 to ensure that the Emergency Services Superannuation Board complies with commonwealth bankruptcy reforms — something that relates to the not so pleasant side of life, but which is an unfortunate fact. It also amends the Constitution Act 1975 to enable future governments to enter into salary sacrifice arrangements should they so wish.

This prompts some comments in support of the statements made by the member for Mornington about the various treatments of superannuation, particularly the access to defined benefit schemes. This benefit is different to other forms of superannuation and is currently only available to people like our serving officers, who have a degree of risk within their employment. Defined benefits are certainly enjoying some popularity in people's minds, given the impact of the current financial crisis on everyone's superannuation statements at this time. Diminishing superannuation entitlements are causing particular difficulty for many of our retirees at the moment.

This bill brings Victoria into line with commonwealth legislation, and I presume this is one of the main purposes of the bill. I understand that we will be required to pass this bill with a special majority because of its implications. It is largely a bill to offer our protective services officers, who do a wonderful job at Parliament House, access to a superannuation scheme commensurate with their positions. With those comments, The Nationals in coalition support this bill and wish it a speedy passage.

Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to support the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I am also delighted to see that the bill is being supported by both the Liberals and The Nationals. We do not see many of these types of bills in the house.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, the County Court Act 1958, the Constitution Act 1975, the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968, the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979, the State Superannuation Act 1988, the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 and the Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989.

It is the provision that amends the constitution which is most unusual. However, it is very necessary in this case because, as many speakers have previously alluded to, the overall objective of the bill is to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act to give protective services officers access to the defined benefit section of the emergency services superannuation scheme so they will be able to go into that defined benefit scheme.

I, too, must join the chorus of members here today who have praised the work of the protective services officers (PSOs). Not only do they protect the courts, Treasury Place and the Shrine of Remembrance but they also protect Parliament House. Members here will know that from time to time objects that may cause some distress are brought into courts in particular and into this Parliament. People have attempted to smuggle in knives and different sorts of things, but the PSOs have been on the job and none of those objects have made it through the system.

A couple of other speakers to the debate talked about the 3 per cent superannuation guarantee. I well remember as a young union official trying to explain to girls who were about 17 years old that this 3 per cent superannuation formed part of their wage claim. Instead of getting another 3 per cent on their wages, it would be going into superannuation.

If you tried to tell that to an 18-year-old, their eyes would just glaze over, because, like many people, they never thought of themselves as reaching an age where they would ever need superannuation. But there are many of those young men and women now who would applaud the work of Bill Kelty, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating in pushing those changes through. The employer superannuation contribution is up to 9 per cent. Possibly some of the causes that are helping to see Australia through this global financial crisis are that we have a very healthy framework in the banking system and large amounts of cash in some of the superannuation funds.

There is a part about the superannuation funds that disturbed me too — that is, the underfunding of females. Many mature-age females did not have access

to superannuation when they were young, so they will be caught short when they retire. That is of great concern to me.

This legislation will allow the reinstatement of revisionary spouse pensions that were cancelled upon remarriage of the recipients. This was not such a big issue back in the 1950s and 1960s, but, as we have seen with various trends and the need to rely on our own superannuation these days, it surely is now an issue. I am very pleased that that has also been corrected.

It brings it into line with the Family Law Act. It also enables same-sex partners to enjoy the benefits of superannuation. I do not think there is really much to talk about now, because there has been agreement with the Liberals and The Nationals. It is not often that I get to say this, but on this bill we seem to be like one big happy family in this chamber.

Mr Helper — That is a gross exaggeration!

Ms BEATTIE — My colleagues say that I am stretching the truth too far. I will conclude by wishing the bill a speedy passage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram) — Order! I advise the house that I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority and a special majority. As there is not a special majority of the members of the house present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority and special majority.

Read third time.

**CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS,
FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES)
(ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 7 May; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The principal objective of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill is to give effect to recent changes to commonwealth law. Those changes are to allow the advertising of unclassified films and computer games prior to classification subject to various conditions.

The commonwealth act concerned is the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Assessments and Advertising) Act 2008, which made arrangements to allow the advertising of unclassified films and computer games in accordance with a legislative instrument to be made by the commonwealth. The intention is that that legislative instrument will provide for industry self-assessment of the intended advertisements together with a ‘commensurate audience rule’ and monitoring of industry assessors while also continuing existing prohibitions on the advertising of material that is likely to be classified as X 18+ or RC (refused classification).

The bill contains other provisions to remove existing reverse legal onus defences in order, as the government says, to comply with the right to be presumed innocent contained in section 25(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act.

The bill also extends the commensurate audience provisions to cover cross-product advertising, and it ensures that refused classification material is covered by existing restrictions on advertising material classified MA 15+ and above.

As the debate in the commonwealth Parliament on its legislation indicates, the commonwealth legislation was supported by both the Liberal Party and the Labor Party. As Senator Brandis, the commonwealth shadow Attorney-General, pointed out during the debate, the bill had in fact been prepared under and introduced into Parliament by the previous commonwealth government, but it had not passed through the Parliament when the Parliament was prorogued in October 2007. The bill was then taken up by the incoming Labor government and introduced in identical format, subject to one small drafting change in schedule 2.

As I said, there was support across the chamber for the bill at a commonwealth level. The objective of the bill, as a number of speakers in that debate indicated, was to streamline the classification process and reduce the regulatory burden on industry. In doing that the bill sought to strike an appropriate balance between the industry regulation of this aspect and the necessary safeguards for protection of the community. The bill

does not provide in the usual sense for industry self-regulation in that the assessors within the industry that will do the provisional classification of proposed advertisements will be subject to monitoring, and furthermore the final decisions about classification will continue to be made by the Classification Board and that will flow through to any relevant advertising.

One of the main drivers of the commonwealth legislation, and hence of the Victorian bill that we are now considering, is that it seems, because of piracy within the industry, that films and computer games are being submitted for classification as late in the piece as possible and this is causing difficulties with the submission of material for classification in sufficient time to allow advertisements to be authorised to go ahead prior to release of the film or the game itself. At the moment there is only a limited public exhibition exception to the restriction on the advertising of unclassified films and computer games. Beyond that public exhibition exception, it is not permitted, so the intention of the commonwealth legislation and of the bill we are now considering is to free this up to remove unnecessary restrictions and complications for the industry while still having in place protections that are intended to ensure that material that should not be advertised does not get advertised, or that it does not get advertised in a way that it should not be advertised.

A lot of the operation of the scheme will depend on the precise terms of the commonwealth legislative instrument that is made, and that is something over which this Parliament does not have control. From the opposition’s point of view, we do not oppose this legislation, but because we do not know exactly what is going to be in the commonwealth legislative instrument we are not in a position to wholeheartedly support the scheme as it is going to be introduced, albeit we hope it will be introduced in a way that will work successfully.

I will mention briefly some of the other provisions that are in the bill. Outside of giving effect to the recent commonwealth legislation, as I referred to earlier, the bill removes reverse legal onus defences and replaces them with a burden on the prosecution to prove the relevant offences. That is intended to comply with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. This issue was considered by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee in its *Alert Digest No. 5*, and in discussing these matters the committee has on various occasions supported the removal of reverse onus while also referring to some circumstances where a reverse onus may be retained. SARC is relatively consistent in the way in which it supports and assesses proposals for a reverse onus and is inclined to regard reverse onus as acceptable only where there is a relatively low-level

regulatory matter and where it is far more practical to expect the accused to prove a matter than to expect the prosecution to disprove that matter.

However, the government's approach to reverse onus offences is a lot harder to ascertain, and I contrast the government's decision to remove the reverse onus in relation to this legislation with the position it adopted, for example, on the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Employee Protection) Bill. In that case it required that in proceedings for a criminal offence the defendant bear the onus of proving that the reason alleged in the charge was not the dominant reason for engaging in the conduct. SARC raised concerns about that in relation to that bill, saying that it may limit the charter right of defendants charged with an offence to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. In relation to that bill the committee felt that the government had not provided adequate justification, and it has written to the government seeking further information, which as far as I am aware the government has not provided.

We are seeing strange and inconsistent behaviour by the government in relation to reverse onus offences, removing it here and not removing it in other legislation. There is supposed to have been a general review of reverse onus provisions across all legislation, and some results of that have turned up in another bill which is before the house at the moment.

However, this house and the public have not been given any consistent or coherent explanation of the outcome of that review; under what circumstances the government has decided to retain reverse onus offences, and under what circumstances it has decided to remove them. This is going to be an ongoing issue that we need to address consistently, not just item by item in bills like this with no coherent underlying policy rationale.

As I said, the remaining provisions relate, firstly, to extending the commensurate audience provisions to cover cross-product advertising, and that seems to be a worthwhile change. Currently the commensurate audience provisions only apply in relation to films advertised together with other films or computer games advertised together with other computer games. As the Attorney-General pointed out in his second-reading speech this bill will extend the provisions to cover matters such as trailers on DVDs and trailers or demonstrations on computer games, and that seems worthwhile. It also seems worthwhile to ensure that refused classification material is captured by offences relating to the screening of advertisements for higher level material.

With the exception of the reverse onus matter, the bill is relatively straightforward. As with other bills we have considered previously relating to classifications, the issue which we need to turn our minds to is not just what is in the bill but what is not in the bill and should be in it. As I pointed out to the house on a previous occasion, Victoria is suffering very serious problems from a proliferation of unclassified, refused classification and X-rated material across the state undermining our classification regime and meaning that some material which is very nasty indeed is apparently readily available, including material that relates to violence against women, be it simulated or actual, and actual or simulated abuse of children.

I am sure this is material that no-one in this house would condone or would like to see proliferate. Yet that seems to be happening here in Victoria, and it is squarely the responsibility of the state government to enforce and uphold the law. In this Parliament we have rightly given a lot of attention to issues of family violence and violence against women and children in particular, yet the effort which is being put in is undermined if this sort of material that promotes and perpetuates violence and abuse is being distributed in Victoria.

As well as the measures in the bill, it seems to us on this side of the house that the government needs to do a lot more, be it by way of legislation, by way of administrative arrangements and responsibilities or by way of enforcement, to crack down on what is happening in the state. It is all very well for us to make laws in this house, but making laws is of little benefit if those laws are not properly enforced, and it is pretty clear that the existing classification laws are not being enforced in Victoria.

In conclusion, the opposition does not oppose the bill. We will all need to see how the commonwealth's legislative instrument is framed and how the regime under that instrument operates and, if necessary, make any corrections, adjustments or changes that are needed. More importantly, we need more action from the government to enforce and uphold the existing laws on classification of publications, films and computer games that exist in Victoria.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2009. The overall focus of the bill is to improve the operation of the national classification scheme and to respond effectively to the changing technological environment for entertainment media.

Specifically the objectives of the bill are to implement the consequential amendments to the Victorian Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995 to ensure consistency with a new commonwealth scheme that has been agreed to by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. That scheme allows unclassified films and unclassified computer games to be advertised pending their classification subject to prescribed safeguards.

Currently Australian state and territory enforcement legislation makes it an offence to advertise an unclassified film or unclassified computer game. As many of us who are cinemagoers would know, there are limited exceptions for cinema releases, and the industry has raised some concerns about this being quite cumbersome and outdated. The growing risk of piracy means that products are often available for classification only very close to their release date, and it is considered that the current prohibition on advertising films and computer games prior to their classification, with limited exceptions only for public exhibition films, places unnecessary regulatory limitations on marketing classifiable products.

I think we would all agree — and I am pleased to see that the opposition is supporting this bill — that with a classification regime there needs to be a balance between the appropriate protection of the community, particularly children, while also ensuring that women in are not objectified. As legislators in a democracy we must ensure there is a balance between the ability to have free speech and the need for some protections.

Further, the bill makes some necessary technical amendments to Victoria's act. It removes the existing reverse legal onus defences in Victoria's act to ensure compatibility with the right to be presumed innocent in section 25(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act.

As I mentioned earlier, the national classification scheme is a cooperative arrangement between the commonwealth and the states and territories, and I think the community prefers it when various jurisdictions act together. It ensures that there is understanding between communities across jurisdictions, and it also makes business easier for national distributors and for industry. The bill implements the consequential amendments to Victoria's act based on that commonwealth scheme. The commonwealth scheme will now allow unclassified films and computer games to be advertised prior to their classification subject to a range of safeguards, which is what the community feels is appropriate. The commonwealth scheme has been the

subject of discussion with industry and is supported by industry, which had expressed concerns. It aims to reduce the regulatory burden on and costs to industry and to respond effectively to the media's changing technological environment.

The bill is important because it will mean Victoria is in step with the rest of Australia. Thus far, Western Australia is the only jurisdiction not to have amended its relevant legislation. Almost every other jurisdiction in the country has passed equivalent bills to ensure that they are in step with the commonwealth scheme. The community would not want to see Victoria left behind. More than 25 per cent of the population of this state has said it is important that Victoria be part of the national scheme.

In conclusion, the bill makes amendments to Victoria's act to ensure consistency with the national classification scheme. It will enable advertising for films and computer games to occur prior to their classification, which is what industry wanted. It will ensure compatibility with the right of presumption of innocence in the human rights charter. It also makes other technical amendments. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It gives me pleasure to make a contribution to debate on the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2009. The main purpose of the bill is to make the consequential amendments required as a result of the commonwealth's Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Assessments and Advertising) Act 2008. Essentially, the main provision of the bill allows for advertising of unclassified films and computer games in accordance with the commonwealth legislative instrument, which provides for industry self-assessment, a commensurate audience rule and monitoring of industry assessors, while continuing existing prohibitions on advertising material that is likely to be classified as X18+ or refused classification. On that last point, it is important to ensure that we have prohibitions on that type of material and literature.

This bill came about through the industry raising concerns about the current advertising arrangements under the national classification scheme. In some quarters the industry has suggested that the current arrangements have not caught up with new technologies, which was mentioned by the previous speaker. The industry's concerns about piracy have grown over the years as technology has grown, and hopefully through this type of legislation instances of

piracy will be reduced. It is a major concern for industry, as I have said.

The bill introduces a new scheme whereby the advertising of films and computer games will be permitted prior to classification, although that will be subject to certain conditions. I think this is a very important point. The industry will be able to provide self-assessment in certain cases, and authorised industry assessors will be able to assess the likely classification of an unclassified film or computer game for the purpose of advertising only. It will still be up to the Classification Board to determine how a film or computer game will be classified, but I think self-assessment is an important part of making sure that the industry has some involvement in that. Overall, if this bill reduces bureaucracy in the industry — which it will — then I think it is important that we on this side of the house support it.

Other provisions in this legislation will ensure the removal of existing reverse legal onus defences in order to comply with the right to be presumed innocent under section 25(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. That provision was outlined by the member for Box Hill in his contribution. I have mentioned the extension of commensurate audience rule provisions to cut across product advertising. In the past it was basically films with film advertising and computer games with computer game advertising, but now we will see the crossover in the advertising of different forms of computer games and films, which is a sensible approach. The bill will also ensure that refused classification material is covered by existing restrictions on advertising material classified MA15+ and above. I mentioned that earlier; it is an important part of the legislation which we retain through this bill.

Being a parent of three boys aged 17, 14 and 9, as they have grown and as they do their school work I have taken and continue to take genuine notice of what is available not only in shops but on websites and in other forms of media outlets. It is a concern for a parent to see some of the information my children can access; while this legislation might not necessarily deal with that, I think it raises the awareness. I heard a member earlier today, in a contribution not on this bill, raising concerns about a child walking into a shop and being able to access and view inappropriate material. It is incumbent upon all members to support legislation that ensures regulations are in place to protect our children from that type of literature. This is a step in the right direction, and as the member for Box Hill clearly outlined, opposition members do not oppose the bill; we wish it well.

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I find myself agreeing with much of what the member for Morwell said in his contribution. I am very pleased to speak in support of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2009. This bill has come about as a result of commonwealth legislation, and I am informed that most of the states have passed consequential legislation to bring them into line with that commonwealth legislation, as Victoria is doing here today.

Under the national classification scheme the commonwealth establishes the Classification Board and the Classification Review Board, which are responsible for providing a classification rating and consumer information for certain publications, films — including videos and DVDs — and computer games. The states and territories are responsible for the enforcement of the classification decisions.

The Victorian Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995 provides for the enforcement of classification decisions made by the Classification Board and the Classification Review Board. This bill has become necessary because of the changing nature of media and multimedia in modern Australia and Victoria. An objective of this bill is to implement consequential amendments to Victoria's act to ensure consistency with the new commonwealth scheme, which allows unclassified films and unclassified computer games to be advertised pending their classification subject to prescribed safeguards under the advertising scheme.

The bill also makes other necessary technical amendments to Victoria's act and removes existing reverse legal onus defences in Victoria's act to ensure compatibility with the right to be presumed innocent in section 25(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act. Under the new advertising scheme some of the key safeguards will include retaining the prohibition on advertising material that is likely to be classified X18 + or RC (refused classification), which is comforting.

It also includes monitoring of authorised industry assessors, including giving the Classification Board director power to revoke or suspend an authorised assessor's status, and mandatory training for authorised assessors under the new advertising scheme.

It also provides limitations on the advertising of unclassified material together with classified material like trailers on DVDs, so that the material is appropriate to the audience. This is known as the commensurate audience rule. Under the rule advertisements of a higher

classification or likely high classification should not be advertised together with a material of a lower classification. It is important for all parents of small children, as I have been, to be able to take their children to the movies and just hope that the trailers that are screened before the movie are commensurate with the age of the children who are there to watch the main movie. I hope that this self-regulation works. It seems that it is necessary to streamline the operation of the commonwealth act, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill. The main provisions of the bill allow advertising of unclassified films and computer games in accordance with a commonwealth legislative instrument, which will provide for industry self-assessment, a commensurate audience rule and monitoring of industry assessors, while continuing existing prohibitions on advertising of material likely to be classified as X18+ or to have a listing of refused classification (RC).

It also removes existing reverse legal onus defences in order to comply with the right to be presumed innocent in section 25(1) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, and extends the commensurate audience provisions to cover cross-product advertising. It also ensures that refused classification material is covered by existing restrictions on advertising material classified MA15+ and above.

In my electorate of Evelyn we have just the one cinema — the Reading Cinema in Chirnside Park. It is a wonderful venue for people of all ages to go and watch the latest movie release, whether it be a light-hearted film for the girls such as *He's Just Not That Into You*, a cult classic for Trekkies like *Star Trek*, a blockbuster for the boys such as *X-Men Origins — Wolverine*, or a fast-paced kids movie like *Night at the Museum — Battle of the Smithsonian*. Of all the films I have just listed, not one of them is G-rated. *Night at the Museum* is PG-rated, and the rest have an M-rating.

The rating given is very important because it informs the audience about the nature of the material which will be played while the title of the film may not. I am therefore pleased to read that this bill will prevent films likely to be classified M from being advertised to an audience paying to view a PG-rated film. This gives parents peace of mind knowing that they have some control over what their children are being exposed to both in their presence and when the children are out with their friends.

Likewise I am pleased that a computer game or movie cannot be screened in public if it has a rating of RC, X, 18+, R18+ or MA15+, or any material that is likely to be rated with one of the listed ratings. While I have always been a defender of freedom of speech and artistic expression, I believe that this principle cannot be universally applied to children who do not always understand the consequences of the behaviour they are watching and cannot always tell the difference between fact and fiction.

When reflecting on censorship, I was reading a speech given in 2007 by Donald McDonald. He was the serving director of the Classification Board, and he touched on censorship and its evolution. When I read that transcript I was reminded that many things that were once considered outrageous have now been accepted into the mainstream and normalised. For instance, a number of us here are old enough to remember the controversy surrounding the opening of the musical *Hair*, which breached numerous societal conventions of the day. Free love, public nudity, swearing and depictions of drug use were enough to make a crow blush, and certainly offended many people's notions of morality in the late 1960s.

The interesting challenge for any government in formulating classification legislation is that it must appropriately reflect community standards. As many of us have extremely divergent views of what is offensive versus what is simply thought provoking, it is very difficult for a government to replicate community standards through law. It must be a broad enough notion to be truly representative of the population and always constructed in the knowledge that ultimately people can self-censor.

In the US they have recently decided to consider the inclusion of smoking as a factor influencing the classification of a film. Accordingly, films that glamorise smoking may attract higher ratings. A higher rating will exclude many younger people from a potential audience and reduce the earning potential of a film, especially as teenagers are some of the most frequent moviegoers. With such high stakes involved with movie takings it is easy to understand why directors and producers rally against their movies being given restrictive adult ratings.

One of the problems I am most concerned with is the way in which children are bypassing the classification structure altogether through the release of violent and pornographic material over the internet. There can be little doubt that the main purpose of this bill and any legislation relating to classifications is to protect young people by preventing them from viewing material or

behaviour that they may be influenced by or try to replicate in an inappropriate or unsafe setting, posing a danger to themselves and others. While many adult websites will advise that the material is not suitable for people under the age of 18 years, it is not a strong enough line of defence to keep out impressionable and curious eyes. It would make much more sense if adult-only internet sites were required to have PIN access or some other form of restriction, as some Foxtel channels do, as a means of providing some control over what our kids see on the internet.

The internet is not just a concern for parents, it is also a concern for industry. For instance, the latest X-Men movie was leaked over the internet, enabling millions of kids under the age of 15 to view the M-rated film and distribute it to their friends. With illegal downloading of leaked movies there is currently no protection for young people who may find the material they have downloaded upsetting or traumatising.

While I can accept that movies, publications and music all make some form of contribution to the arts, I am not as convinced about the merits of horrendously violent video games. Video games are interactive and for all intents and purposes serve as how-to guides for kids. I would like to read some excerpts from an *Australian PC Authority* article headed 'Five games — five reasons why you shouldn't let the youngsters near them' as an example of the video games available out there. I hope sincerely that no young person is listening to what I am saying.

A video game called *Night Trap* was brought out in 1992. It was classified M15+ in 1995. The article states:

Night Trap caused controversy not only in Australia, but even in the US, where much sterner material isn't even required to be classified. It's a clichéd horror movie staple — a house, several scantily clad girls and a group of killers that only you can defeat.

It is a game which requires the player to trap and kill young women at a slumber party in an ultra violent and sick attack.

Carmageddon was brought out in 1997. It has a MA15+ rating. It is an interactive take on *Death Race 2000* and according to the article it:

... raised more than a few eyebrows back in 1997, due largely to the fact that you could win races either by getting to the finish line first — or by wiping out every pedestrian on the course first. It's notable in the Australian context because while there was a certain amount of public and political outcry, the OFLC passed it uncut with an MA15+ rating.

Then there was a game called *Thrill Kill* in 1998. It has no classification because the publisher abandoned it as

too violent, but I am told it is available over the internet. It is a four-player PlayStation 1 game that, as I said, was scrapped by the publisher. The game consists of a closed three-dimensional room where up to four opponents fight to the death and proceed to finish each other off with thrill kills, much like the fatalities in *Mortal Kombat*. However, because the characters are already dead they cannot be physically injured, although they audibly feel the pain of attacks and blood is still present. Every attack made will result in a character's bloodlust rising. Instead of the usual life bar, characters build up a 'kill meter'. They are electrocuted and kicked and hit and everything else. It is absolutely appalling.

Then there was *Manhunt* in 2003. The article describes it as:

... a dark, gritty murder-voyeur simulation. The first game was passed by the OFLC in October 2003, but then refused classification in September 2004, essentially due to political pressure and when arguably anyone who wanted a copy of the game already had one.

Over the course of the game players use a wide variety of weapons ranging from plastic bags, baseball bats and crowbars to all sorts of bladed items and firearms. If a player is running out of health — that is, if they are injured — they can take painkillers to replenish their health. A player can strike walls or throw items such as bottles, cans, bricks and severed heads to make noise to distract hunters.

I am told that all of these things are available to download from the internet. As much as I support classification, we cannot stop this. Parents have to take care with what it is their young people are downloading. I would like to conclude by reiterating that classification controls on what minors are able to watch, read or play are entirely appropriate for their own protection. Freedom of speech and artistic expression are principles that only make sense when it is certain that the audience has an adequate grasp of consequence, law, society and morality. These are gifts that come with age and guidance from those with the wisdom of experience. I will not be opposing this bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

APPROPRIATION (2009/2010) BILL*Second reading***Debate resumed from 4 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Premier).**

Mr WELLER (Rodney) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009. When he made his address the Treasurer spoke about jobs and this being a budget for jobs. Unfortunately there are parts of this budget that are no good for jobs, particularly in northern Victoria. The budget makes commitments to continue the food bowl modernisation and the north–south pipeline. The unfortunate thing about the north–south pipeline and the food bowl modernisation is when it comes to the savings, the figures just do not stack up, and that will cost us jobs in northern Victoria.

Figures for this year were released last Friday. They showed that the losses in the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district were 343 000 megalitres. If we take it that the losses were 343 000 megalitres and this year they took 921 000 megalitres to deliver the 578 000 megalitres, if the system ran at 85 per cent, as the government proposes to get it to, it would have still lost 139 000 megalitres. That means we would have saved 204 000 megalitres — well worth doing.

The problem is the government has promised 225 000 megalitres from the first stage of food bowl modernisation and 200 000 megalitres from the second stage of the food bowl modernisation. It has also committed 25 000 megalitres for reconfiguration, 17 600 megalitres from the Central Goulburn 1, 2, 3 and 4 projects, and 52 000 megalitres from the Shepparton upgrade. That comes to a total of 519 600 megalitres.

Then of course there is the way the water will be split: Melbourne gets 75 000 megalitres, the environment gets 269 600 megalitres and the irrigators are to get 175 000 megalitres. What concerns communities in northern Victoria is that if the environment got its 269 600 megalitres and Melbourne got its 75 000 megalitres — and the Premier is on record as saying Melbourne will get at least that every year — last year, with only 204 000 megalitres saved, there would have been 140 600 megalitres less in the irrigators' pool.

Given this scenario, it would be better for us to pursue stormwater capture in Melbourne. Some 400 000 to 500 000 megalitres of stormwater runs off in Melbourne each year. It would be far better to pursue

reuse at the eastern and western treatment plants. Currently 300 000 megalitres from those two plants runs out to sea each year. We have over 700 000 megalitres that we could obtain from stormwater and reuse, when Melbourne uses only 450 000 megalitres when it is not on restrictions.

One of the measures to capture stormwater is more rainwater tanks. The Minister for Water is on record as saying that rainwater does not come all year round. Indeed, he is correct: it does not come all year round. But if we could have rainwater supplied from tanks for 75 per cent of the year, would it not be worth saving 75 per cent of the water in those tanks?

The Treasurer says this budget is about jobs. Last week the Premier agreed to let the federal government buy water outside the 4 per cent cap on trade of gravity irrigation districts. The federal government has a fund of \$3.4 billion to buy water, and at current prices this equates to about 1.4 million megalitres. If Victoria were to supply 30 per cent of 1.4 million megalitres, in the vicinity of 420 000 megalitres would be lost from northern Victoria. That amount would be equivalent to the Rochester and Shepparton irrigation districts put together.

That loss would be very detrimental to the towns of northern Victoria because they rely on their farmers for business. A lot of manufacturing businesses and service industries in those towns will not exist if the equivalent of about 1000 farms dry up. It is well known that for each farm, eight jobs are created on that farm and in the community. The Premier's decision last week could well and truly cost northern Victoria some 8000 jobs.

Moving on to the issue of the Murray River national parks, the government should hold off on these until the Royal Commission into the Victorian Bushfires is completed. The fire danger was so intense in the Barmah area this year that the Barmah Kindergarten and Occasional Child-Care Centre was closed. The Barmah community is quite concerned that the fire danger threat in the area has not been taken seriously.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) was made aware of its concerns. Cool burns in the red gum forest do not work. We have seen the effects of the so-called cool burn at Browns Camp, which the DSE organised in October. October is obviously the wrong time to have a cool burn, because you are coming into hotter times; a fire can burn under the ground for many weeks, but then flare up on a windy day. Obviously it was the wrong time of year to have a cool burn, but even in autumn you can cause extensive damage.

One of the reasons for protecting the Barmah forest is to protect the habitat trees. At Browns Camp, 38 habitat trees — some of which were 500 years old — were burnt to the ground. They had lived through 150 years of timber harvesting and 150 years of cattle grazing in the area, yet one action by the DSE, its so-called cool burn, led to 38 habitat trees being burnt.

The best way to manage fuel layers in the Barmah forest is to retain cattle grazing and to have ecological thinnings, as we have had for the last 150 years. If we were to go into the forests, the foresters would say that when they come around about every 25 to 30 years they only take the trees that have reached their potential. They do not take the old trees with the hollows and so on, because they are not suitable for milling timber; they are left there as habitat trees.

I have a letter from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who says that the focus will be on tourism when the red gum forests become parks. He claims that there will be an extra 48 000 visitors to the region and he also claims that some 24 jobs will be created. The problem is that there is no money in the budget committed specifically to promoting the Murray region, which will need to be promoted quite heavily to attract more visitors.

There will also have to be a considerable amount of investment in infrastructure to accommodate the tourists when they arrive. The budget contains nothing along those lines, but those issues need to be addressed immediately so that the people up there are assured if we are going to go down the track of making a national park in that area.

The government has a lot of work to do hopefully before they bring it into this house. I hope it listens to community concerns and does not introduce those measures until the royal commission concludes sometime next year.

If northern Victoria is to rely heavily on tourism, there are no guarantees of firewood being available for the paddle steamers at Echuca, which are an icon tourist attraction in the state. If there is no red gum firewood available, they will not be able to operate on that fuel as they have done for many years. The port of Echuca also needs to be rebuilt. About a quarter of it is now being rebuilt, but the other three-quarters needs to be tackled. The port has always been of a red gum construction; to be authentic it needs to be rebuilt from red gum, to ensure it continues as an icon heritage tourist attraction for the area.

The prediction of extra tourists visiting the region are hard to follow sometimes, when only last year DSE was telling the Barmah community it was quite concerned about the fire danger on Barmah Island. One of the responses from the DSE manager was along the lines of, 'We will not be reducing grass and fuel loads on Barmah Island because it might attract too many tourists'. On one hand the government says tourism will be an answer for the community once the park is closed to cattle grazing and timber, yet on the other hand it says through DSE that tourists are not wanted there. I think the government needs to have all its departments come in with the one story.

Another issue about the budget is schooling. Some of the smaller schools in my electorate that successfully achieved new funding were Merrigum, Leitchville, Welton and Redesdale primary schools.

Two police stations are receiving money for maintenance. Echuca police station will receive some \$250 000, but I believe a total rebuild would be appropriate. I have mentioned many times in this Parliament that the white ants are running rampant through the Echuca police station. The floorboards in the entry have been redone many times because the white ants with their voracious appetites have been undermining the station. The station is not in an appropriate location. It needs to be more central to town, so a rebuild would have been best.

On the subject of jobs, the government's decision to close the Department of Primary Industries research farm at Kyabram has taken 33 jobs away from the Kyabram district, and the farmers and the community are most upset about that. Taking 33 jobs out of a town the size of Kyabram puts quite a hole in its ability to survive as a town. We were working with the government and encouraging it to find other businesses to go in there, but it has now put the farm up for sale to the highest bidder.

The budget speaks about extra funding for the Country Fire Authority. We would all welcome extra funding for the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. However, the government has raised the fire services levy from 63 cents in the dollar to 68 cents in the dollar, which is a further disincentive for people to insure against fire. We have to find a more equitable way of funding our fire brigades than the inequitable fire services levy we have at the moment.

This government has had rivers of gold available to it for the last 10 years. While I have pointed out that there is little in this budget for my electorate, a mountain of debt is growing; the prediction of \$31 billion in this

budget is on the optimistic side. The budget uses a figure for growth of up to 4.5 per cent in the years from now. That is a very optimistic rate of growth; if it is not achieved, that \$31 billion will blow out to an astronomical amount for our children and their grandchildren to pay. What have we got to show for the rivers of gold that have been available to the government over the last 10 years? We have nothing but broken-down roads and water pipes, inefficient electricity supplies, and it goes on and on.

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

Mr HERBERT (Eltham) — I am absolutely delighted to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. There is no doubt that this is a great budget, and I want to personally put on the record my congratulations to the Treasurer, his staff and particularly his department on the enormous amount of work which has gone into this budget and which is changing the economic climate of the state from one of adversity because of the worldwide financial crisis to one of continued prosperity.

It is clear that this has been a difficult budget to draft. Our state is still rebuilding from the tragic devastation of the Black Saturday bushfires, our prosperity has been challenged by the effects of the worst global financial crisis the world has experienced since the Second World War and our farms are still struggling from the effects of the ongoing drought. Yet amidst these difficulties the people of Victoria have shown great strength in adversity. In challenging times it is the responsibility of governments to demonstrate leadership and take decisive action, and that is what we see in this budget.

This is a recovery-ready budget that secures local jobs, invests in world-class infrastructure and services, stimulates the economy with real jobs now and rebuilds bushfire-affected communities, all the while maintaining the state's AAA credit rating. That is not a bad effort on any judgement. Those opposite hate that AAA rating. Whilst the rest of the world is struggling in financial crisis, we still have a AAA rating. They whinge, whine, carp, moan and complain. They say Victoria had that rating 10 years ago, but we have strengthened this state. Given we are in the world's worst financial crisis we have seen for many a decade, it is good that we are maintaining the state's AAA credit rating. The opposition can talk the state down as much as it wants — it can talk down our economy, it can talk down our efforts at recovery — but it cannot change the fact that the world acknowledges this government's achievements in the

economy through good financial management. We are maintaining our AAA credit rating, which is a good thing for Victoria.

This budget is about creating great opportunities for Victorian workers through retraining and reskilling — through ensuring they have the skills for the jobs of tomorrow. It is about stimulating the economy in a period of diminished private sector spending to assist Victorians like the hardworking members of Eltham families. I might point out that Eltham has the lowest unemployment rate and one of the highest workforce participation rates in the state. That is a great thing. It is something the people of Eltham are proud of and work hard to retain. We need to ensure that people in Eltham can plan their futures and have a sense of certainty and optimism in their lives. Above all, this budget is about investing in our future by investing in capital works projects that will enhance the state's infrastructure and services and boost the long-term economic capacity and productivity of Victoria.

We can all talk about jobs, and jobs are important. We can talk about buildings, and buildings are important. But it is those jobs and those buildings — that infrastructure — that essentially secure how competitive we will be against other trading nations in the future that are crucial. This budget gives us the opportunity to put that infrastructure in place and ensures that we will be competitive down the track in a very competitive world.

The impact of the devastating bushfires on both our economy and the psyche of the state should not be underestimated. This budget is about demonstrating a strong commitment to rebuilding all fire-affected communities, which incidentally are on the doorstep of the very green and hilly Eltham area. We were lucky the fires did not come our way. However, we were on the edge of them and our fate was in the hands of the gods, because but for the winds they could have come our way. People in Eltham have a strong affinity with the bushfire-affected communities and a strong desire to make sure they are rebuilt. This budget provides almost \$1 billion to rebuild those communities and deal with the worst of the devastation. That is an excellent thing. The members of the Eltham Country Fire Authority brigade did a great job, tirelessly putting in hour after hour and day after day fighting the fires. I am pleased this budget will strengthen the brigade's future efforts by providing \$650 000 for a new heavy pumper, which will have a greater capacity to hit the hills in a shorter response time and pump more water on the fires when and where it is needed.

I have said that this budget is about the economy and infrastructure projects that stimulate jobs to build for the future. This is a key part of the budget. The budget provides for \$11.5 billion to be allocated in the next financial year through the state in cooperation with the commonwealth to fast-track infrastructure projects. Let me say again that there will be \$11.5 billion in funding for essential infrastructure for this state which will provide jobs and secure our economic future. It is interesting to look at a breakdown of that funding, because it is right across the board. There is over \$3 billion in the first four years of the Brumby Labor government's \$38 billion transport plan. There is over \$3 billion for public transport, \$650 million of which is for the South Morang line, which is very close to Eltham and will be a spur line off the Hurstbridge line. We are all very pleased that spending is happening.

The budget contains funding of \$2.6 billion for hospital and health services. I congratulate the health minister on the excellent job he is doing, particularly in relation to swine flu and the Victorian government's response to that epidemic. In regard to the budget, there is an excellent emphasis on fighting cancer. We know cancer is a blight on people and communities worldwide. The money we are putting into research and specialist centres in this budget is a long overdue effort and is part of our continued plan to rebuild the state's ageing hospital infrastructure. We are way down the track on that rebuilding. What we are doing in relation to cancer is important in that regard.

The health minister came to my electorate a few weeks ago to hold a health forum, which was heavily attended. There is no doubt that among the areas of concern that people had in terms of health, most people were quite happy with the services they got at hospital — there were a lot of older people there who were quite happy with the level of those services — but there was a bit of concern about cancer services. The people who attended were incredibly pleased to see that the state is boosting our efforts in tackling cancer and in cancer research.

We can talk about infrastructure, we can talk about jobs, we can talk about health, but one of the great things about our future is the young people of today. They are our future. We can put in the infrastructure and do all the rest of it, but it is making sure that we skill up and educate young people that will really take this state forward in the next few decades. This has been a budget that has once again highlighted the government's absolute commitment to education as the no. 1 priority of this state's agenda. It is a budget that has seen something like \$1.7 billion invested in the state's education system. This includes something like

\$402 million of state funds for capital on top of the commonwealth's effort to rebuild and modernise government schools.

Let me put that number in context. When this government took over in the late 1990s the capital spend on education in this state was between \$70 million and \$90 million a year. Last year state funding of education capital reached the record high of about \$600 million. This year it is \$400 million. We are seeing massive increases in funding. It was needed because, frankly, state schools were quite frankly run down and desperately in need of a major injection of funds. What we are seeing — despite the criticism, carping and whining by those opposite — is a massive increase in spending on schools in this state. The government is not just building schools for the sake of it but focusing clearly on education and making sure those new schools are built in such a way that they position our state and our education system for the next generation, the next decade and the next 20, 30, 40 or 50 years.

The Minister for Education is in the house, and I would like to personally congratulate her on the effort she has put into this agenda and this massive rebuild in terms of not just the buildings but also the education system, to ensure that Victoria is at the top of the world ladder when it comes to reading, writing and the whole variety of skills that young people need in order to thrive today. I know that the agenda for the minister is just starting and that there is a long way to go on that, and I look forward to being part of that agenda as it goes forward.

This budget does not just provide for capital works on education. It has seen \$58 million over three years for 200 teaching and learning coaches to focus on maths and science and 50 ultranet coaches. Maths and science are two things we have targeted quite strongly. There has been a decline right around the world, but particularly in Australia, in young people wanting to go to university and become engineers and get involved in maths and science at a senior level. We are determined to tackle that.

We are putting 200 coaches in schools to help teachers work through new agendas and work to encourage young people to take on maths and science, lift their proficiency and then go on further to university to become the engineers and scientists that this state needs in the future to make sure that we have a good, balanced economy. Acting Speaker, I know that you personally had a great interest in this during the Education and Training Committee's inquiry into the promotion of maths and science education. I know you

have a passion for this and will be absolutely delighted by these 200 teaching and learning coaches.

There is also \$15 million over two years to meet the increasing demand for places in vocational education and training in schools programs, which provide young people with pathways from school to jobs. We have gone a long way since the choice was between doing the Victorian certificate of education and leaving school early. We are a long way from that. Whilst we now have vocational studies in schools, this budget increases that capacity by providing extra funds so that young people can have other pathways into schooling.

There is \$25 million available to expand the apprenticeship and traineeship completion bonus scheme for another 12 months. This is a program where employers are paid \$3500 for each eligible apprentice and \$1300 for each eligible trainee they take on. It is an important program. In hard economic times the first person to go is often the apprentice. We saw that in Ireland, which was hit by the effects of the global financial crisis a year or so ago; literally thousands of its apprentices ended up looking for work right across Europe. We want to make sure that our employers do not jettison their apprentices and that we keep those skills coming through for the economy down the track. We are providing that incentive and bonus to make sure that we keep apprentices in work during these harder economic times.

There is \$7 million in this budget for 7000 new or replacement computers in government schools. We have seen a transformation in the use of computers in schools, but it is not just about computers. These computers are essential because they are a key part of more individualised learning strategies whereby students can have their own individualised learning plan and be proactive in their own research, and whereby they do not have to be in a teacher-focused learning environment but can be engaged in a whole range of issues and learn for themselves with the help of a teacher.

In summing up, there are many things I could talk about in relation to this budget. Whether it be health, roads, public transport or education — the whole range of community services — this budget has it all. It is balanced and measured, and it provides the stimulus we need at a time when we need it. Importantly it is a budget that builds on this state's prosperity now by putting in the infrastructure we need for the future. I highly commend this bill to the Parliament.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. The previous

speaker said this budget has it all. It is with a sickening feeling that I listened to the contributions to the budget debate. As I read the budget bills it took me back to 1991 and 1992, when the Kennett government came to power and was faced with debt, lack of maintenance in schools, lack of maintenance in hospitals and lack of service delivery.

For seven years the Kennett government worked very hard to restore the state's balance sheet. In 1999, when this government came into office, it found it had money in the bank. The Kennett government had left \$1.7 billion in the bank for the new government.

What have we got now? It is anticipated that the level of debt will blow out to more than \$31.3 billion by 2013 and that the government's interest repayments will soar to \$2.2 billion by 2013 — an increase of \$800 million in just four years. One year's servicing of this debt — \$1.8 billion — would pay for the annual cost of Victoria's police force. The annual cost of running the police force would be paid by interest payments! This surplus has only been created after a huge injection of capital grants from the federal government, up from an estimated \$459 million in the most recent budget update to \$2.8 billion in 2009–10.

As I said, this is just a rerun of what the state faced in 1991–92. The Kennett government had to work so hard to bring that bottom line into the black. It had to make difficult decisions and do difficult things, and now we have a government that is closing schools; they say it is leaving the decisions to the community, but it is closing schools, and schools are feeling pressured.

Public transport commuters are facing a constant barrage of cancellations and delays. The Lilydale line consistently ranks as one of the premier lines for train cancellations: in February this year it had 150 cancellations; in March it had 72 cancellations; and in April it had 37 cancellations. Hot weather was a convenient excuse made by the Minister for Public Transport for the January and February delays, but now that we are in the cooler months, commuters still face a great deal of uncertainty when travelling. They are not sure from one moment to the next if they will be getting to work on time or coming home at a reasonable hour.

Despite a 46 per cent increase in the number of trips on Melbourne's trains in the past four years, the government has delivered just 1 new train of the 18 ordered last year. After paying \$398 million a year for metropolitan train services for the past two years, the price of running the city's trains will increase by \$35 million in the coming financial year. The big increase has been attributed to a new private contract to

operate the trains, with more services and better maintenance, but because the contract is said to be commercial-in-confidence, we will never know the exact details.

With regard to spending on roads, I have an issue in my electorate that is really important for the people who live in Chirnside Park. A solution would not require a lot of money; I am told it would probably cost \$30 000 to \$40 000. The residents of Chirnside Park have been very vocal in their concerns, because all they want is a right-turn arrow for the Kimberley Drive–Fletcher Road–Maroondah Highway intersection. No funding was set aside in the budget to allow for the installation of the right-turn arrow. Locals know that the intersection is notorious; many have written to me detailing stories of near misses when turning right onto Maroondah Highway. A minimal outlay of, as I said, about \$30 000 to install a right-turn arrow on the existing traffic lights would vastly improve motorist safety and make the flow of traffic safer and fairer. Motorists waiting at Kimberley Drive and Fletcher Road would not have to wait for successive light changes before they could turn right.

On law and order, an unspecified amount of the Brumby government's \$1.9 billion funding for Victoria Police is slated to go towards putting additional police on the beat. Hopefully this will go far enough to provide our overstretched police force with the support they need. It would be wonderful if Lilydale, Mooroolbark and Mount Evelyn police stations benefited from an increase in police numbers, to improve the feeling of community safety, but I doubt very much that that will happen. Often the whole Yarra Valley does not have any police coverage at night and weekends. Just one divisional van is expected to cover the whole Yarra Valley, stretching right down to Emerald and in some cases to the electorate of the member for Eltham.

I know a family in Hereford Road, Mount Evelyn, who are planning to move away from the area because they have had enough of the graffiti, vandalism and harassment. They have suffered at the hands of a group of young people who frequent the area. The family does not blame the police but feels sorry for them. The police take their calls but cannot react because there are no officers to turn out and no divisional van is available.

The lack of police numbers means that police stations that were supposed to be 24-hour stations now are not. Police officers are being borrowed from the Olinda police station and sent down to Belgrave. The Mount Evelyn police station does not have much in the way of

manning; now it is planned that the mobile transport group will be moved from Mount Evelyn and put into the new Lilydale police station when it is ready. Then a visible police presence in Mount Evelyn will have been taken away from that community. Members can imagine what the young hooligans will think about that!

This year \$15.1 million less is to be spent on public health. No funding has been allocated to rebuild the neglected Box Hill Hospital or the Royal Eye and Ear Hospital, which were key election promises made by this Labor government. Victoria has the fewest number of hospital beds per capita in the nation; as a result, patients are suffering extended delays in receiving treatment and are spending much longer on surgery waiting lists.

It was disappointing that despite past promises by the Brumby government, the budget did not extend the Yarra Ranges health services at the Lilydale super-clinic to provide treatment for lymphedema sufferers, when the wage of a suitably trained nurse or physiotherapist is just \$62 000. It seems bizarre that the government would boost funding to improve diagnostic facilities through breast screening at Lilydale private hospital as part of a \$2.6 billion overall health funding package but then leave breast cancer sufferers who have developed lymphedema to languish. This applies to male and female patients.

It was horrifying to read in the *Herald Sun* of 26 May about dying children who were spending their final months unable to move or obtain vital services because government red tape stops them getting equipment as simple as a wheelchair. The families are asking the government to set up a single aid and equipment program specifically for terminally ill children, rather than placing them on a long and complex waiting list which they are often still on when they die.

An example was given in a *Herald Sun* article about one parent who sent 617 emails asking for a wheelchair and a shower chair, which arrived just two months before her child died at the age of seven. When you have a terminally ill child, there is no time to be wasted in sitting on waiting lists and being hampered by red tape.

The government has put an extra \$150 million into mental health, but it is certainly not reaching out to those on the ground in the Yarra Valley in the electorate of Evelyn, where there is just one psychiatrist. People cannot get help when they need it. A very high number of people with mental health problems live in the area, but because of the lack of transport and the fact that

some of them are socially disadvantaged, they cannot get treatment.

The electorate has a shortage of GPs, yet much time is being spent by GPs dealing with mental health issues when there should be people available to look after them. I dread the day when someone visiting my office actually has an episode and I cannot get a crisis assessment and treatment team to come out. I am referring to emails that are directed to the Maroondah mental health unit, who are finding it difficult to even spend time with a person, much less to have the time to counsel them.

In the area of education, schools in my electorate do not seem to do very well in funding. Wandin Yallock Primary school, which has rotting boards and holes in the wall, has not received any budget funding. Pembroke Secondary College has finally been funded but only because of the campaign carried out by parents and teachers.

Despite substantially increased funds from the federal government for computers in schools under the digital education revolution, the computer-to-student ratio of one computer for every five students remains unchanged in the forward estimates. The Brumby government is relying on the federal government to replace outdated computers in schools when this is and always has been a state responsibility.

So much could be said on planning matters. The Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, will preside over a new multimillion dollar unit in his department that is designed to tell him how to do his job. Taxpayers are funding this multimillion dollar splurge to tell the minister which 50 projects he should call in. The new development facilitation unit to be created within the Department of Planning and Community Development will cost taxpayers \$3.2 million at a time of soaring state debt and a decline in state revenues.

Residents in Chirnside Park are very concerned, as I am, about the disregard of due process to ensure that parties with special interests do not exert undue influence over the outcomes of planning applications. In the *Yarra Ranges Journal* of 26 May this year it was reported that the government's decision to call in the Chirnside Park Country Club development has been questioned after it was revealed that the developer had close links to the ALP.

Of even greater concern is the fact that in a media release of 4 February the Premier told residents of Chirnside Park that 1500 jobs would be created by fast-tracking the Chirnside Park Country Club

application. Yet on 1 May the Minister for Planning told residents that 2640 jobs would be created by fast-tracking the applications — an amazing discrepancy, with no explanation from either the Premier or the Minister for Planning.

We cannot have planning decisions being fast-tracked on the promise of jobs that may not really exist and which may just be a figment of the minister's imagination. What did the government do on 1 May when it was writing that press release? Did it just look at it and think, 'Fifteen hundred jobs? No, Mate, that's not enough. Let's go a bit higher; it'll sound better. Let's go up to 2000. No, let's go up to 2400'. It makes you think of a TV show.

Mr Wells — *The Hollowmen*.

Mrs FYFFE — That is right; the Minister for Planning could definitely star on *The Hollowmen*. He could take a starring role sitting around that table while thinking of something sexy, something that would catch the imagination of the public. I have to tell members that the public knows what is going on.

Then there was the letter that went out to residents in Chirnside Park; I had 40 of them delivered to my office. The letter was from the upper house members whose region covers my electorate. On the front of the envelope is written 'Building Jobs, Building Victoria', which is repeated and repeated. Quite a few people living in Chirnside Park are saying, 'Hang on, how many jobs are there going to be? Are there going to be any jobs?'. It makes you wonder. Are they figments of the imagination? There is much more in that letter that I could point out, but I might save it for another time.

I only have limited time left and I really cannot go into too much detail about the water crisis, but 10 long years have been wasted. Everybody knew there was going to be a drought. Former Premier Kennett warned that water was going to be the biggest issue facing Victoria, yet 10 years have been wasted and still nothing has been done to provide extra water.

On the issue of bushfires, the fire services levy — which is essentially a tax on insurance premiums to fund fire services — is going to be increased by a further 5 per cent, meaning that fewer people will insure their homes. It is reported that 30 per cent of houses lost in the recent bushfires were not insured. We know that in about another 20 weeks the state will enter another bushfire season. How many houses will be uninsured? One business owner in my electorate says the new levy will add an additional \$15 000 per annum to his insurance bill.

Although I welcome the increase in this year's budget for fuel reduction burns — \$52.7 million over five years or \$10.5 million a year, according to the Premier's media release of 5 May — it has been bitterly disappointing to see that fuel reduction spending has not been accompanied by increases in the fuel reduction target, from 130 000 hectares to 385 000 hectares as recommended in the all-party parliamentary report.

Vast sums are being spent on spin and public relations. There is very little news in this budget for my electorate. We have just had the reannouncement of projects that had been previously announced, even ones that were funded under previous budgets. We had a reannouncement of the York Road pedestrian bridge over the Maroondah Highway.

Money is going like water out of the coffers of Treasury, but the results are not there to be seen on the ground. I do not know where it is being spent, and I do not know where it is going, but there is certainly no thrift or good management by this government.

Mr LANGUILLER (Derrimut) — It gives me pleasure to rise today in support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. It provides the authority for the appropriation of payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of the government for the 2009–10 financial year. This is a very good budget. It is an exemplary budget in light of the difficult times that Victoria, Australia and the world are facing.

Not surprisingly a Labor government determined that this budget would be about delivering jobs for Victorians in the middle of the worst global financial and economic downturn since the Second World War. I can assure you, Acting Speaker, that in my electorate jobs are priority no. 1. What everyone comes into my electorate office and talks about is jobs first and then health, education and opportunities for the next generation.

This budget and this appropriation bill provide the basis for securing in the order of 35 000 jobs over the next 12 months by investing in infrastructure and stimulating the economy and economic activity in the state. In passing, I concurrently commend the Rudd Labor government, because it is doing something similar. It is just and right — and lucky for Australians and Victorians — that we now have a genuine partnership between the state government and the federal government and a situation where everyone is working in the same direction and understands what the priorities are for Australians and for Australia as a nation.

This budget is also about leadership. It is about the investment a responsible government must deliver during tough economic times. The budget and the appropriation bill confirm in the eyes of people in my electorate of Derrimut that this government has its priorities right. It is about creating more opportunities for Victorian workers to skill up and retrain, protecting their livelihoods and making sure that our industries have the skilled workforce they will need to employ in the future. It has always been about this. It has always been about making sure that people can train and meet the demands and challenges of the times they are going through. The times Australia and Victoria are going through require a very serious commitment to skilling up and to retraining to protect jobs in a highly competitive world and highly competitive market.

Residents in the electorate I represent in the western suburbs understand, confirm and support wholeheartedly the many measures the budget delivers, because this budget and these measures are about setting the right foundations so that when we start recovering and when we start coming out of the global financial crisis we are completely ready to meet the demands of industry and of the world — as I said, once the economies get up and go.

When I talk to young people in the western suburbs and in my electorate they recognise that this is exactly what is required. It is about maintaining a strong safety net through core services such as education, health and transport — the services that Victorian families rely upon and that will see them through the economic downturn. It is about staying the course in supporting disadvantaged Victorians and their communities, recognising that a strong economy relies upon a fair society.

I commend the many initiatives we have undertaken in the budget and this appropriation bill, because they are about making Victoria recovery ready. As I said earlier, when the economy takes off again, the measures this government, the Treasurer and the Premier have put in place will help us to quickly gain momentum and pace and be able to rebuild and build stronger foundations and a stronger economy for everybody to share.

In relation to health, this budget is about health for all Victorians, for every postcode and for all of the regions, recognising where the priorities are and where we should be investing insofar as health is concerned. The budget invests in excess of \$2.6 billion to ensure that Victorians continue to have access to world-class health care and the latest advances in medical treatment. There is another example of that in my electorate. How proud we were when the Minister for Health came to the

Sunshine Hospital to launch what I understand to be the best magnetic resonance imaging machine in Victoria.

People in the west dreamt a long time ago about having a proper hospital in Sunshine and in the west. It was the Whitlam government minister Jim Cairns who set the foundation for the establishment of the Sunshine Hospital, and it took the Bracks Labor government and a number of ministers — including the minister sitting at the table, the Minister for Education, who was the former health minister — to turn the Sunshine Hospital into a proper generalist hospital that provided an emergency department and all the care that was required in the community.

Prior to this Labor government's term in office we did not have a full and proper hospital in Sunshine and in the west. We had gynaecologists and we had psychiatrists, but we did not have a generalist hospital, nor did we have an emergency department or a teaching hospital for doctors and nurses — let alone the partnership we now have with Victoria University through which we are setting the foundation of ensuring that in the future doctors will be educated in the west, will be committed to the west and will wish to continue to service the hospitals in the west.

In this budget we are providing in the order of \$350 million to create greater capacity in the health system to meet the growing demand for hospital services and to treat in the order of 39 500 patients — that is, 39 500 extra patients — each year. This is record funding, and indeed as the minister correctly says, a record number of patients are being treated in Victoria under this Brumby Labor government and a very able Minister for Health.

We are allocating in the order of \$66 million to meet the growing demand for medical services such as renal dialysis, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. At this point I take the opportunity to commend the Sunshine Hospital for the program of services it provides. When I visited the hospital a couple of weeks ago I met with members of the staff and scientists working there, as well as patients, and there were a couple I knew personally. Everyone talked about how well they were looked after, what good services were being provided by the renal and dialysis centre and how great the staff were. I sincerely congratulate the chair, the chief executive officer and the staff of Western Health for providing a terrific service. From my discussions with patients and from other private discussions I have had it is a service the patients are extremely happy about.

The budget will provide major upgrades for regional hospitals in Ballarat, Alexandra and Geelong and will

deliver the next stages of the Warrnambool hospital redevelopment and the new Sunbury Day Hospital. We will undertake upgrade works at Bendigo Hospital to enable future development.

This is a terrific budget given the circumstances — the global financial crisis and the bushfires. Many colleagues on both sides of the Parliament have spoken about the horrific bushfires and their toll of, firstly, human loss, and secondly, other types of loss. Congratulations go to everyone involved, because it was extraordinary to travel around both Victoria and Australia and hear that people from all quarters were putting in for the purpose of rebuilding and reconstruction. What we saw in the aftermath of the worst nature could throw up was without question the best in human nature coming out when it was needed. I commend everyone everywhere who has been involved for their efforts.

I was pleased and privileged, together with the member for Yan Yean, to represent the Premier and the Minister for Health at a function. The function was interesting and had been well organised by members of the Sunshine community, members of RSLs and members of a couple of other communities. The organisers provided buses to transport people from I proudly represent to a fire-affected region near Kinglake, where we held a multicultural function. It was terrific to have locals turn up, and I am sure they appreciated the support provided by members of the Sunshine community and many others for the purpose of reconstruction.

As we know, Victoria has a good, solid revenue base — it has grown since we came to government in 1999 — notwithstanding the global financial crisis, other difficulties we are faced with and, as I have already indicated, the effect of the bushfires. As I understand it, government sector revenue comprising both state-sourced revenue and commonwealth grants is estimated to have grown by 8.3 per cent to \$42.4 billion. As we know, our state revenue is made up of commonwealth grants, state taxes, GST revenue and other income. One important thing that I have noticed in checking the budget since we came to office is that the Labor government has consistently determined where its priorities should be. For example, I am very happy to confirm that of the \$44 billion in state revenue, in the order of 27 per cent is allocated for health services and infrastructure, as I said earlier, providing record funding and record treatment of patients; in the order of 26 per cent is devoted to funding education; and about 11 per cent is applied to transport and communications.

When you look into the state revenue position, checking the facts and going through it carefully, you see that gross state product has grown right through the period of the Labor government. My recollection is that the figure in 1999 was around \$180 billion, whereas it is now \$260 billion or thereabouts — and there has been a concurrent growth in state revenue, which is made up of commonwealth grants, state taxes and GST. I encourage members, including members of the opposition, to check the facts, because when you do that you see that this government very responsibly allocates about 27 per cent of state revenue to health services. That is absolutely the right thing to do, because I am confident Victorians in all regions would concur that health is indeed a priority. Thereafter about 26 per cent is devoted to education.

If a nation wants to have a future, if it wants to be sustainable, if it wants to continue to grow its economy, as a member indicated earlier, if it wants to give everybody a future, if it wants to continue to grow its gross state product, if it wants to continue to grow its revenue and if it wants to be able to devote significant funding to health and other services, what else can it do but properly educate the members of its younger generations to prepare them to meet the demands of the 21st century and to compete in a highly competitive world.

This is a good bill. This was a terrific budget in the light of how tough things are in the world as well as in Australia. I take this opportunity to commend the Treasurer, the Premier and all the ministers who were involved in its preparation. This is the right budget for the tough times we have faced and are facing. This sets the foundation for us to recover quickly once the economy moves forward and begins to grow again. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I will put the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill into a bit of historical context. The Premier, who is the member for Broadmeadows, fell or stumbled into the Treasury portfolio in 1999. He was bequeathed low debt and massive budget surpluses. He received rivers of gold from the federal government's GST and massive land tax and stamp duty from the booming property market. What did he do with the windfall? He frittered it away on featherbedding.

As Treasurer, the member for Broadmeadows hired 60 000 extra public servants, the overwhelming majority of whom are not involved in front-line service delivery, but he could not build one new dam. As Treasurer the member for Broadmeadows could return uncashed a federal government cheque for \$90 million

that was sent towards the MCG redevelopment, all because he refused to stand up to the demands of the Victorian Trades Hall Council for a closed shop on site. In fact the Premier reminds me of one of those Tattsлото winners you sometimes read about: after a few years they look back and wonder where all the money has gone and why they have nothing to show for it.

Mrs Victoria — They can't handle money.

Mr O'BRIEN — As the member for Bayswater says, it is because they can't handle money. Now times are tough, the party is over and the proof is in this year's budget papers, which tell a sorry tale.

Here are the headlines: 'Victoria's state debt ballooning out to \$31 billion', 'Unemployment projected to leap by 2 full percentage points to 7 per cent', which would mean an extra 70 000 Victorians would be out of work. there is also 'Real gross state product growth of just 0.25 per cent' — that is regarded as a courageous projection in the *Yes, Minister* sense — 'and an operating surplus of just \$165 million out of a budget of \$42.4 billion'.

It is worth pausing there to look at the so-called surplus, which is less than 0.4 of 1 per cent of the budget. Given the sensitivity of the forecasts to changes and the assumptions that underpin them, it is fair to say that we are just as likely to be in deficit as we are to be in surplus. To put it in more accessible terms, can you imagine turning up to your bank to seek a home loan and the manager asking you, 'Can you afford the repayments?'. You reply, 'Sure, I have done my calculations and yes, I can afford the repayments just so long as my annual expenditure does not increase and my income does not deteriorate by more than half of 1 per cent, because then I could not afford the repayments'.

This is where the Brumby government has taken Victoria with a budget of ballooning debt, major unemployment and stalled economic growth; a budget that is just as likely to be in deficit as it is to be in surplus. Yet the Premier has the gall to stand up and say, 'This budget contains no bad news'. He should tell that to the 70 000 families who will suffer the financial and social devastation of unemployment under this budget. He should tell them there is no bad news in this Brumby budget.

If anyone believed the government, they would think all of Victoria's problems — be they in transport, water, crime, the economy or the health system — just fell on us from out of a clear blue sky. But the reality is that

these problems have been developing step by step and day by day during Labor's decade in office. Each one has been ignored, underestimated or mishandled. That is why the Brumby government prefers to ignore reality in favour of media manipulation. But all the spin will not get Victoria's economy growing again, and it will not keep Victorians in jobs.

Sitting suspended 6.29 p.m. until 8.02 p.m.

Mr O'BRIEN — Before I was so rudely interrupted by the dinner break I was saying that all the government's spin will not get Victoria's economy growing again, and it will not keep Victorians in jobs. When economic times start to get tough, Labor governments revert to type. What do they do? Labor's economic creed is to tax, borrow, regulate and spend. It is what they do because it is all they know. But what Labor does not realise is that you cannot tax jobs into existence, and you cannot regulate jobs into existence — but you can tax and regulate jobs out of existence easily, which is what the record shows.

If this government is serious about creating more employment, it should get the experts to do it — and the experts are in the private sector. I know it is anathema to members opposite to think it is the private sector which creates jobs, but that is what it does — and what it does best. Getting the private sector to create jobs means reducing the tax burdens on companies which hire; it means reducing the regulatory burdens on companies which employ.

The last thing governments should be doing is increasing the tax burdens on companies, as the Brumby government is doing with land tax, or making it more expensive to hire staff, as the Rudd government is doing with the reintroduction of union-friendly unfair dismissal laws. Yet the last thing that should be happening is exactly what is happening. That is why, at a macro level, this is the wrong budget for the times. Victorians will suffer for this government's poor choices, wrong priorities and bad management.

As the member for Malvern I would like to turn to some of my local issues. I have to say that there was no celebration in the streets of my electorate, no street parties in Glenferrie Road and no fiestas in Burke Road, on the handing down of this budget. Not one of the state schools in my electorate was selected for rebuilding or modernisation. Again this pathetic government is playing politics with children's education. This is a government which allocates money based on electoral margins, not on educational merit, which is a disgrace and an indictment of a government

that plays politics with children's education based on postcodes, not on merit.

There is nothing in the budget for public transport in my electorate. It has funded not one lick of paint for a bus shelter, not one renovated train station and not one new service. There is nothing for grade separation for any of the five major level crossings across arterial roads in my electorate. I ask rhetorically: what is the point of widening the Monash Freeway — and I am delighted the Minister for Roads and Ports is at the table — if level crossings prevent motorists from getting on or off the road because the government has done nothing to remove these congestion magnets?

I acknowledge that the government has done something on Springvale Road, and that is welcomed, but the government has said there will be a number of other level crossings identified for removal. I urge the government to listen to the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, which studies level crossings across Victoria to assess their safety and levels of congestion and identifies which ones should be prioritised for removal, because it would find that the five level crossings in my electorate all feature prominently on that list.

I am sure we can trust this government to make decisions based on the needs of Victorians instead of on political margins. I would hope that the member for Burwood would encourage the government to identify the level crossing on Toorak Road near the Monash Freeway, which affects his constituents about as much as it does mine, and urge the roads minister to prioritise that level crossing for removal at the next available opportunity.

I should add that there is nothing for local police in this budget. There is no funding for additional numbers and nothing to improve facilities. In fact, but for the exception of a Hino vehicle for the Malvern State Emergency Service and a small grant for Lloyd Street Primary School — both of which are very modest but welcome — the budget contains nothing by way of better services or infrastructure for the people of Malvern.

But when it comes to paying for this budget's tax-and-spend policies it seems the Brumby government believes my constituents are only useful for the first part of the equation. They think Malvern residents are great when it comes to tax but no good when it comes to spend. So my constituents get stuck with a bill for this government's spending without seeing any of the benefits.

To take one example of how the government's taxation policies are bleeding my constituents dry, let us examine land tax. The government forecasts land tax collections in 2009–10 of \$1.217 billion — a record. There has never been a higher level of land tax collections. How can the government take \$168 million extra in land tax in just 12 months and not accept that this is a major tax grab, and one that hits small businesses either through direct taxes if they own their premises or through higher rents if they do not? It is a tax grab that hits self-funded retirees, whose only income-producing asset may be a single investment property. Labor's land taxes make these properties increasingly unviable and put the financial security of retired people in jeopardy. It is a tax grab that hits tenants who face higher rents at a time when the rental market is already tight and landlords are forced to try to claim back some of the Brumby government's tax increases.

Let me refer to just one example from my electorate. There are many I could have selected, but I admire the courage of Mr Lewis Jack for giving me permission to use his name in bringing this scandalous situation to light. For many years a self-funded retiree, Mr Jack, has had his family's principal place of residence in a family trust. I note that where a business is exposed to significant bank loans it is both a common and appropriate practice for the family home to be placed in a trust. Mr Jack's family home has therefore been subject to land tax, and that is not unreasonable. Mr Jack's land tax assessment for 2008 on his family home was \$800. This, one may say, is not unreasonable. However, Mr Jack's land tax assessment for 2009 on his family home was \$3375 — a 420 per cent increase in just one year. That is not unreasonable — that is outrageous. This is the effect of the Brumby government's land tax policies.

How do members opposite dare to justify the equity of a tax regime where the land tax on a family home which has seen no capital improvements increases by 420 per cent in just one year? There can be no justification for such a massive tax increase. It is unfair, it is parasitic, and it is an attack on those who have dared to work hard over the course of their working lives. It is a slap in the face to those who thought they might be able to provide for themselves in their retirement without being bled dry by a Labor government. This budget has nothing for my constituents and nothing for Victorians.

In the very brief time available to me I will turn to some gaming matters as shadow Minister for Gaming. This area has seen record gaming taxes in the budget. It also saw, very interestingly, the Crown Casino deal. I am

sure much more will be said about this in coming days and weeks, but the government slid into the budget papers increases in the tax revenue from Crown Casino. The amount was \$131.3 million in 2008–09 as per the update, but for 2009–10 the Crown revenue was to be \$144.4 million — a 10 per cent tax increase. Nowhere in the budget paper has the government actually explained why this increase is coming about. We found out the next week, when the government slid out an announcement on federal budget day, that the government has done a deal with Crown to increase the number of gaming tables by over 40 per cent.

A lot more will be said about this in coming days, but given that government members vehemently opposed a previous expansion of Crown's gaming tables by a similar number, their hypocrisy is extraordinary. I wait with great earnestness to see the members who joined this Parliament in 1999 — and who were campaigning against the nasty Kennett government which had too close a relationship with Crown — queuing up and condemning this secret deal that the government has entered into with Crown Casino. Somehow I think I will be left waiting.

I also note that in relation to gaming the government appears to have been asleep at the wheel in relation to obtaining some significant sources of revenue that are available to it. I am aware that there are sub judice issues, so I will not trouble you with that, Acting Speaker, but in a case before the Supreme Court questions have been raised in terms of whether rules have been obeyed, and up to \$700 million of revenue is potentially at risk, based on some suggestions made in that case. Once that case concludes the government will have very serious questions to answer about its ability to enforce law and whether taxpayers have been duded, because this government has been asleep at the wheel.

In conclusion, this is a bad budget. It has nothing for Malvern and nothing for Victoria, and the government has messed it up.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North) — It is an honour tonight to speak on the 2009–10 appropriation bill. The budget continues the Brumby government's themes of focusing on population growth, productivity and participation. If one looks at the recent figures the Premier was quoting today of population growth of 102 000 in the last 12 months, one sees that that is only about 3000 below Queensland and that it is the best we have had since the 1970s when figures were first collated. These are very much the themes that federal Treasury secretary Ken Henry indicated were required when he was talking at the time

of the last budget — privately, but I think it got released — warning against the pork-barrelling policies of the last federal government.

Recent figures in Victoria in terms of state final demand in the December quarter show 1.2 per cent, which is very positive. Looking forward, the budget predicts growth of about 0.25 per cent, which in relative terms in the current environment is good, moving forward to about 2.5 per cent thereafter.

Productivity growth will continue in Victoria with the incredibly strong infrastructure program the government has going forward with about \$12 billion in partnership with the federal government for upgrades in education and transport. We are also looking at an expected increase in employment of about 35 000 people through that infrastructure spending. The state and federal governments have had an incredible focus on education. A well-skilled workforce, in the long run, will bring monstrous dividends in terms of productivity, and we are looking at a budget surplus, which is the best of all the states in Australia, of about \$160 million-plus.

What I also want to focus on partly is the response of the opposition. I will quote from an *Age* article of 6 May headed 'Opposition lambasts Labor's wasted years', written by Sarah-Jane Collins. The article states on that general theme:

Labor has spent 10 years squandering budget surpluses and, as a result of yesterday's budget, Victorians will pay the price with higher unemployment and debt, the state opposition says.

'More than 200 000 Victorians will be unemployed', shadow Treasurer Kim Wells said. 'And because of Labor's addiction to debt we will risk losing our triple-A credit rating'.

Obviously that has proven incorrect, because we have not lost the AAA credit rating. The article goes on to say:

Mr Wells said that years of mismanaged spending had left the state vulnerable in the face of the economic downturn.

'They've had more than \$300 billion in revenue and taxes.

That is just stating the obvious. It continues:

What they should have done is use that money to build the infrastructure and the quality services to cushion us against the downturn in the economy'.

Interesting.

I have looked around to see whether any of the major commentators actually backed up those sentiments, and there is not a commentator in town who backed that up.

But that is all right; we will leave that there. What I did find when I was searching was an incredible amount of information and commentary on the Howard-Costello government in terms of the amount of money it wasted over many, many years. I will go through various newspaper articles from senior commentators who actually took up the theme of the member for Scoresby but applied it to the Howard-Costello government.

The last federal education minister, Julie Bishop, believed that tax cuts automatically lead to greater productivity. That is a rather strange presumption she has made. At the end of the day you will only get greater productivity through using greater skills and less resources to produce the outcome. But I want to look at what some of the commentators said about what the federal Howard-Costello government did with its rivers of gold, its bucketloads of money.

If you look at the *Australian* of 15–16 November 2008 and what Peter van Onselen said about —

Mr Stensholt — He wrote a biography.

Mr DONNELLAN — Yes, he wrote a biography about the Howard government. In this article he put together some comments about the former federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop. He said:

Public education in our universities declined by nearly 7 per cent during the past 13 years. During that same time the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development average increase in education spending was nearly 50 per cent.

We very much fell behind there. He went on:

In the past 10 years the slack caused by government spending cuts has been partly picked up by a tripling in higher education contribution scheme bills for students, from \$4.5 billion to \$13 billion. But this windfall has not been enough to cover the funding slide.

While the Howard federal government had bucketloads of money, it certainly did not invest in education. Let us look at what other commentators have said about what it did do with the money, and there was not a lot done to be honest. If you look at an article by Paul Cleary that appeared in the *Weekend Australian Financial Review* of 3–4 May 2008, halfway through the article it states:

The fiscal profligacy of John Howard, Peter Costello, Alexander Downer, Brendan Nelson, Tony Abbott and other senior ministers in recent years has now been documented in a recent paper by Treasury economists Kirsty Laurie and Jason McDonald, from the department's budget policy division. Of the rise in tax revenue since 2004–05 of

\$334 billion, new spending decisions and income tax cuts reduced the surplus by \$314 billion.

'Effectively, the additional revenue from the commodity boom has been spent, or provided as tax cuts' ...

The article goes on to say:

There you have it officially — 94 per cent of the windfall revenue from the resources boom was spent. Over the life of the Howard government the Australian people became hooked on an ever-increasing amount of fiscal largesse. Real federal payments increased by an astonishing 50 per cent over the decade ... at a time when the economy was booming.

It is amazing how you can spend so much money when there is no need for it. The article continues:

Australia is now suffering from the resources curse because it lacks a mechanism to manage swings in income from commodities.

In other words, they are saying the money was effectively thrown away. Never has so much money been given to a government, never has so little been done with it. The Howard federal government never planned for tomorrow. It never planned for education. All we had was many thousands of dollars worth of silly bribes — a bribe if you are alive, a bribe if you are dead, a bribe for everything. There were \$1000 bribes to everybody along the way. This created an incredible culture of middle-class welfare.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DONNELLAN — No, it is looking at what the opposition has suggested the Labor government has done here, when it has actually invested incredibly wisely.

An article by Fleur Anderson that appeared in the *Weekend Australian Financial Review* of 31 March–1 April 2007 states:

Analysis by leading economic consultancy Access Economics found the government has spent 5 per cent of gross domestic product, or about \$48 billion a year, on discretionary spending.

In other words, it spent it on bribes. Never has so much money been given to a federal government and never has so little been done with it. It is very hard to identify anything former federal Treasurer Peter Costello can point his finger at apart from a surplus, which, it is indicated here, Jimbo the Village Idiot could have returned.

At the end of the day the Howard-Costello federal government created middle-class welfare. No-one has been able to create middle-class welfare like the former federal government. Compare this to what we have

done, which is invest in productivity, invest in population and invest in growth. We have looked at doing things for the long term, not a short-term outlook of what to do with silly bribes every time. The Howard government always did that.

Access Economics director Chris Richardson is quoted as saying:

The government pointed to a gap between tax and revenue 'that would be so huge it would be 5 per cent of national income in four decades time ...

The government has in a handful of years handed that away, it is 5 per cent of national income that they've thrown around with abandon, on tax cuts, family benefits —

and this is the good bit —

Slim Dusty museums and the whole shebang.

The federal government threw around all this money and Richardson is quoted as also saying:

If it's not a permanent windfall, then our arse is hanging in the breeze.

That is pretty nasty commentary on the spending habits of the Howard-Costello government. What the shadow Treasurer was accusing this government of doing was very much what these senior economic commentators were accusing the Howard-Costello government of doing. I looked around to see whether anyone backed up the shadow Treasurer, but no-one else did. He was a man in the dark by himself making ridiculous, outrageous statements.

However, I found examples of people who backed up what the shadow Treasurer was saying about some governments having wasted an enormous amount of money. Let me go to 5–6 May 2007 and what Rory Robertson from Macquarie Bank was reported as saying in the *Weekend Australian Financial Review*. He pointed out that the strongly rising tax base in recent years meant:

Costello almost certainly now holds the record as Australia's biggest taxing Treasurer ...

Not the smallest but the biggest taxing Treasurer:

Canberra's revenue/GDP ratio appears to be at or around multi-decade highs on any credible measure.

In other words, every time he got too much money he just handed it back, because he knew his record would be very ordinary. The article finishes by saying:

... Costello's legacy will not be the surpluses that he maintained — any reasonable Treasurer given today's economic prosperity should have done as much. Instead it will be the ongoing scrutiny of how he spent the nation's

bounty — history will not be kind if it's found to have been largely squandered.

That is the conclusion, that never has a federal government had so much money and done so little. This is pretty much what the shadow Treasurer accused this government of doing, of wasting the money, but no-one backed him up. Here we have a federal conservative government, the do-nothing specialists, who did nothing. This is what the commentators were saying — they did nothing. What happened to all this money? It just disappeared. They were like a pack of drunken sailors — they were out on leave, they got drunk, they came home and they found their wallet had no money in it, because they had got too excited. That is a major problem.

Let us look at what Saul Eslake said in the *Australian Financial Review*. We are not going to call Saul Eslake a Laborite, so let me see what he said. He was quoted as saying:

Bear in mind, though, that the government's income tax collections have been going through the roof in part because of the strength in capital gains, the strength of the economy ... The government is wallowing in revenue and they've had upward revisions of \$280 billion over four budgets.

In other words, the federal government had so much money but I am still trying to work out what it did with it. That is what Kim Wells accused us of — of doing nothing with it. No-one backs that up but everybody backs up the idea that Howard and Costello —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is the custom of the house to refer to members by their titles.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes) — Order! The member for Narre Warren North should continue within the normal processes of Parliament.

Mr DONNELLAN — We now go on to a more recent article, from the *Weekend Australian Financial Review* in November 2008. The subheading is 'The dirty work of reform should have been done when the sun was shining'. The article goes through a history of profligate spending and bribes for elections but nothing was done. What does John Freebairn from Melbourne University say? He is quoted as saying:

We squandered it [the boom] and had a Treasurer who said, 'I'm doing tax reform and it's called fiddling with the tax rate' ...

There was no tax reform. The only person I have ever heard talk about tax reform is the current federal Leader

of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, to give him his credit.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I appreciate that the debate on the appropriation bill is a fairly wide-ranging debate, but for the last 15 minutes the member has been talking mostly about the former federal government's economic management. Perhaps he is unable to find anything positive to say about this particular budget.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes) — Order! I have noticed that aspect of the member for Narre Warren North's presentation. Perhaps in the 40 seconds remaining to him he will come back to the state budget.

Mr DONNELLAN — Appropriation bills are about putting forward the economic settings, and that is what we are talking about here. There were many positive things said about our budget, including in my local area, where the Timbarra Secondary College site was allocated funding of \$4 million. It was very positive. The problem is that you can be accused of doing certain things when the accusation is not backed up by anybody else and is effectively fraudulent. The only people who had a lot of money available and who did nothing were members of the Howard-Costello government. The papers are all here, and they say clearly: frauds.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I am pleased to rise to talk about the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009. For the benefit of those opposite, this is a debate about the state budget, not a debate about the former Howard government's federal budget. I think it is important that those opposite understand what we are debating today. Their contributions demonstrate how embarrassed they are about the state of the economy led by the Premier. This government is sending us back to the dark old days of the Cain and Kirner governments. Let us be reminded that the day prior to the budget being handed down the Premier told Victorians there was no bad news in this budget, that there were no losers in the budget, only winners.

The Premier should go out and tell the people in my electorate of Ferntree Gully that there was no bad news, go out and tell the people waiting for trains that there was no bad news, go out and tell the people waiting in traffic congestion that there was no bad news, go out and tell people on dental waiting lists, or on hospital waiting lists, that there was no bad news, go out and tell somebody waiting for public housing that there was no bad news in this budget. I challenge the Premier to come to my electorate office to a meeting I will organise. I am sure not one member opposite would be

willing to go out and talk to people in my community and the communities of other members on this side of the house to find out whether or not there was any bad news for them in this budget.

With our state debt projected to skyrocket to \$31 billion, we are heading back to debt levels rivalled only by those experienced under former Premier Joan Kirner. When the Kennett government left office it handed this government \$1.7 billion, ready in the bank at its disposal. What have we been left with? The well is dry, and we have plunged ourselves back into debt that is estimated to reach \$31.3 billion by 2013. That is a debt of \$6000 for every man, woman and child in this state. The Premier should go out and talk to residents in Ferntree Gully, Rowville, Lysterfield and Boronia and say there is no bad news, when every one of them is left with a debt of \$6000.

By 2013 Victorians will be forced to repay interest of \$2.2 billion per year, which is equivalent to the annual budget of Victoria Police. It is hard enough to get police on the beat at the moment, but we are going to be spending \$2.2 billion just to pay off this government's debt. Those opposite have talked about the fact that this is a government that is focusing on jobs. In March 2009 Victoria lost 34 000 full-time jobs, which represented 48 per cent of the full-time jobs lost nationally. Across this country 48 per cent of those jobs were lost on the watch of this government, according to statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Turning to the way in which our health system has been funded, those opposite do not know what their no. 1 priority is. One day it is health, one day it is education, the next day it is water, then it is jobs and then it is growth. We do not know exactly where they are coming from. One thing I can tell you is that on a national basis, in the years 2006–07 Victoria had the lowest number of available hospital waiting beds per thousand people.

Those opposite talk about infrastructure, but in 2007–08 Victoria had the lowest spending rate for construction work completed per capita. It was behind South Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, which was streets ahead of any other state. Victoria's investment in infrastructure was less than investments made in South Australia and Tasmania — so much for the so-called investment in infrastructure.

Turning to the area of police and law and order, police patrol hours have dropped while violent crime and incidents have increased significantly.

One thing this government knows how to do well is collect tax. You need only look at the land and payroll tax and stamp duty figures to see that this is a government that knows how to take but does not know how to deliver. One need only look at the way this government has treated my own electorate, where not 1 cent is being spent on new major infrastructure for roads, public transport, health or education by this government in this budget. With respect to policing, back in 1999 this government promised my community it would deliver a 24-hour police station. That station currently closes at best after 16 hours. Criminals operate 24-hours a day, and I know my police station in Rowville should — as this government promised — also do so. There is nothing in this budget to deliver that. The member for Hastings, who is in the chamber, is well aware that this is a government wedded to reducing the hours of operation of police stations. There is nothing in this budget to fix that problem.

Also in 1999, this government when in opposition, promised my community it would deliver a Rowville rail feasibility study. Just prior to the budget, a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council, Mr Leane, was reported in the local paper as praising people for their advocacy of this important issue. People in my community thought, 'Fantastic! This issue is going to be delivered. We have been waiting for 10 years and finally we are going to have some resolution of the matter'. Even Mr Leane, a government member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place, recognised the significance of this issue. But, alas, did we see 1 cent allocated to it? No. We are not asking for \$600 million, we are not asking for even \$100 million — we have asked for \$2 million to be allocated to a feasibility study, but 10 years later not 1 cent has been allocated.

Traffic movement and traffic issues in my electorate are certainly something this government has done little to deal with. Residents in my electorate, as well as those in the electorate of the member for Bayswater, are well aware of the situation on the Tormore Road–Narcissus Avenue–Boronia Road intersection, yet the budget provided nothing for that intersection despite the government providing the necessary funding to deliver much-needed detector loops. Nor was there anything in this budget to provide relief for Rowville residents who, as they try to exit Bergins Road, are forced to deal with a congestion of traffic from the southern region of the city of Casey.

There was absolutely nothing in the budget with which to develop a long-term strategy for the future construction of Dorset Road south of Burwood Highway and its eventual linking to Lysterfield Road.

My constituents were not expecting all these projects to be delivered in this budget, but they were expecting at least some forward planning and an outline of plans that showed that the government had an intention to fix the problem.

If I may deal with bus stops, the lack of a proper bus stop on Burwood Highway near Manna Gum Road has meant that nearby residents, including the elderly, people in wheelchairs and young mothers with prams, have difficulty accessing bus services at that bus stop. The issue was raised by me in this house nearly two years ago, but we have still not seen anything delivered by the government on this important issue.

I am talking about a bus stop, I am not asking for a freeway to be built. However, nothing has been done about delivering on this important issue, so I have had to go back to the government and raise the issue on behalf of concerned residents.

There is nothing in the budget to deal with Rowville residents' concerns about the current school crossing facility on Wellington Road near Westminster Drive, despite the fact that Knox City Council, through its discussions with VicRoads, has identified this as a major issue that needs to be addressed.

Nothing has been done by the government in this budget about the future of the former primary and secondary school sites on Dorset Road, Ferntree Gully, which have been closed for up to four years. My constituents are waiting for an answer on what is going to happen to both sites. At present they are in a state of disrepair behind cyclone fencing. My community believes that to be a reflection of how this government treats education services in that part of Melbourne. It expected an announcement; it thought this government would be making an announcement about the future of those sites, but the budget contained nothing in that regard.

Specialist education for children with additional needs, be they children with autism spectrum disorder or mild intellectual disability and the associated issues that flow from that, is a concern for many residents. This government had the Saratoga organisation prepare a report for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's eastern region, which was handed down early last year. Prior to the budget there was no discussion on this despite the efforts of coalition members to get an answer as to the future delivery of services in light of the number of recommendations from that report. Nothing was forthcoming.

We have been advised that \$600 000 has been allocated in the budget for a feasibility study to look at relocation within the Knox municipality of the Wantirna Heights school for autism spectrum disorder. That is a welcome step for parents, and I applaud the parents who have been pushing for that move. I have worked with Rowville and Ferntree Gully parents who have deep concerns about this issue, but I stress that more is to be done. This was one of a series of recommendations in the report, and I call upon the government to spell out its future plans with respect to the full range of recommendations that were handed down in the Saratoga report.

There was nothing in the budget to improve the traffic lights at Lysterfield Road. I emphasise that point because at the 2006 election the state government announced it would be committing \$1.3 million towards the construction of traffic lights at the corner of Lysterfield and Wellington roads. The then transport minister, the Minister for Community Development, intimated traffic lights were needed at that intersection.

No subsequent announcements have been made on installing the lights, and the current Minister for Roads and Ports, in response to questions I put to him, said the works were under way. Subsequent to that, a press release by the minister announced that this was part of a series of traffic light installations that would be done in the near future and that the allocation figure had increased from \$1.3 million to \$2.6 million.

Now, two and a half years later, the traffic flow at the intersection has not been improved or become any easier. Only a sign has been erected by the government. In two and a half years not 1 cent has been spent on traffic lights at that intersection. I call upon the government to tell my community when these traffic lights, which the government has said are necessary, are going to be delivered.

This budget is forcing every Victorian man, woman and child to inherit a debt of \$6000. This budget will see Victorians repay \$2.2 billion in interest, which is the equivalent of the total expenditure of Victoria Police. Despite all that expenditure, there has been not 1 cent spent on major innovation, major infrastructure or major services for the people in my community.

Ms MUNT (Mordialloc) — I am very pleased to rise this evening to speak in support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009. I would like to refer to the annual statement of government intentions from February 2009, where the Premier's message states:

The 2009 statement of government intentions sets out the Victorian government's agenda for the future of our state over the year ahead.

It is an agenda of action and delivery.

Action to accelerate the biggest investment in infrastructure in two generations. This will transform Victoria and deliver targeted economic stimulus while securing Victorian jobs in the face of the global financial crisis.

Action to deliver further improvements to vital services that Victorians depend on. We will make the most of the opportunities that have arisen from the national reform agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), including commitments for new funding for housing, health and education.

Our goal is to make Victoria the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

This budget carries through on the annual statement of government intentions from February 2009. The budget overall is about \$44 billion of expenditure that is invested in Victoria in a variety of ways, from infrastructure through to the payment of wages for all the teachers, nurses, policemen and other public servants who work for the Victorian people.

I would like to give an overview of what is contained in the 2009–10 budget. It includes nearly \$1 billion for Victoria's recovery from the bushfires, and we all know how vital that spending is. In Parliament this evening there have been visitors who are victims of the bushfires, and that brings back to us the enormity of that tragedy and the needs of those people.

The budget also includes funding for the largest public infrastructure program in Victoria's history, which will secure up to 35 000 jobs in 2009–10 and invest \$8 billion in major projects across the state. It will deliver 172 000 additional training places from 1 July to help Victorians acquire new skills, and as we go into the future we know how very important it is to train and retrain for a lifetime of learning and working.

The budget also contains a \$4.9 billion investment in transport in cooperation with the commonwealth government, including the first stages of the \$38 billion Victorian transport plan; 20 new metropolitan trains, and I will talk a little bit more about those later when I talk about my own electorate; the extension of the Epping line to South Morang; and the electrification of the Sydenham line to Sunbury. Those projects are very important for those communities.

The budget funds the Doncaster area rapid transit project and major metropolitan road projects such as Peninsula Link — which will be fabulous down my way in the south-east — and of course the Dingley

arterial that I am particularly proud about. I would like to thank the Minister for Roads and Ports, who is in the chamber with us this evening, for funding these wonderful road projects for the south-east.

The budget also includes an additional \$1.1 billion for world-class health care, including major hospital rebuilding programs at Bendigo, Ballarat, Dandenong, Sunbury, Geelong, Warrnambool and Alexandra; \$350 million to treat an additional 39 500 patients; and \$45 million to treat an extra 9000 elective surgery patients, which is wonderful. Quite a few of those patients come through my doors, and I know how important it is for them to have their operations so that they can lead productive and very often pain-free lives.

The budget includes an extra \$4.1 billion for a high-performing education system, including \$402 million for the Victorian schools plan, which is rebuilding or modernising every government school in Victoria — and I will talk briefly about what is happening in my electorate in that regard — 250 new teaching coaches in maths, science and the ultranet — once again, I know how important those extra maths and science teachers are because I was on the Education and Training Committee in the last Parliament, and we identified that as a major need in our education system going forward — and an extra 4000 places in kindergartens.

There is also a major boost of \$135 million for out-of-home care, an extra \$182 million for mental health services, and \$87 million to create new opportunities for people with a disability. I know most members of Parliament who are in this chamber also have constituents who come through their doors who need that extra help when they have a disability themselves or children with disabilities or mental health issues.

There is support for regional Victoria, including more than \$200 million to upgrade regional road, rail and bus connections; funding to reduce waiting lists for dental services; greater support for small towns, farmers and farming communities affected by drought — and I know the Acting Speaker is very interested in those initiatives — and four new national parks on the Murray River to protect Victoria's red gum forests.

There is also a substantial package of support from the commonwealth as part of its Nation Building economic stimulus plan, which will stimulate the economy and fast-track investment in health, education, housing and transport infrastructure. I think the partnership between the state and federal governments is very important in delivering a lot of these initiatives, particularly in

infrastructure and the provision of social housing in Victoria. I know there are a lot of social housing projects that are shortly to come online.

Despite the current downturn, Victoria's longer term economic prospects are strong. The economy remains resilient and is expected to grow by 0.25 per cent in 2009–10 and 2.25 per cent in 2010–11. It was pleasing for me to see in the last quarterly figures for the federal government that there was actually a small growth recorded in the face of the global financial crisis. While the GFC is having a negative impact on Victoria's budget position, we still have surplus in our own budget while boosting investment in infrastructure and stimulating economic activity.

The government still received a AAA credit rating from Standard and Poor's in November 2008 and Moody's Investors Service in January 2009. I think it is quite an achievement to deliver a budget that remains in surplus while delivering the huge infrastructure build-up we are currently seeing in Victoria.

I would just like to quote an article from the *Australian* of 9 May this year. The article talks about the New South Wales Treasurer:

This week, Roozendaal got a different set of signals from his Victorian counterpart, John Lenders. In the Victorian budget, Lenders performed an impressive three-card trick: he increased capital spending, cut costs and preserved the AAA. All this in the face of a collapse in state revenues, courtesy of their reliance on the business cycle.

Further down, the article quotes NSW shadow Treasurer Mike Baird, who is reported as saying:

The Victorian budget is the benchmark that other Australian governments should follow ... It's not perfect, but they have been able to deliver infrastructure, cut lead times and control expenses growth in trying circumstances.

That is not a bad endorsement of the Victorian budget or the Victorian budget position from the NSW shadow Treasurer.

I will now speak about my own electorate and how it is affected by the budget. The two standouts in my electorate are the rebuilding of Dingley Primary School and the Dingley arterial. When the 20 new trains come online next year it will be fantastic if we get some on the Frankston line, because I know they are needed on that line and my constituents point that out to me.

Dingley Primary School will have a \$5 million rebuild, and in its long history I do not think it has ever had a capital investment of this size. It is heartening to see with the federal government's stimulus package that community-use facilities will be included in the school

rebuild. There will be a full-size gymnasium. The school is located across the road from the Marcus Road neighbourhood centre where the neighbourhood house and other community facilities are located, and they will be integrated to provide a community hub for Dingley Village. I know the members of the Dingley Primary School community are so excited about this rebuild. I have been to the school, spoken with them and looked at the plans, and they have done a wonderful job putting it together. It really is an opportunity to build the school of the type that comes along only once in two or three generations for Dingley Village. I am looking forward to seeing it grow from the ground up and reinvigorate Dingley Village. I thank the federal government for its investment in local schools in my electorate.

I will also touch briefly on the Dingley arterial, which has had a long history. When I was a child growing up in Highett 40 years ago we spoke of it as the South Road extension. It was talked about being built all those years ago. Both sides of politics, Liberal and Labor, promised to build the Dingley arterial, but it is the Bracks and Brumby governments that have delivered on those promises since I have been the member for Mordialloc. This will be the third stage of the Dingley arterial. There is the Dandenong bypass and the South Road extension, both built by this government, and now this further stage will be built by the government. I give notice to the Minister for Public Transport that I will be working very hard to complete the final link of the Dingley arterial. It is a vital piece of road infrastructure for our community. I note that \$74.5 million has been allocated in this budget to build the third stage of the Dingley arterial. It will be wonderful to see that project start and come to completion. All of those stages will be completed by Labor governments, all while I have been the member for Mordialloc. I will work to see the project fully completed. That is very exciting for our local area.

I want to speak about my work on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. The Acting Speaker, Dr Sykes, is also a member of the committee. In the estimates process we put a lot of work into the budget with our public hearings. It gives us a chance to look at the items line by line, page by page. You really learn how a budget operates, what goes into the budget and how the dollars flow down to the departments which use their budget allocations in so many ways to benefit the people of Victoria. The budget process is a huge effort, from the government forming its policy to the Treasurer putting the budget together, the public servants working on the enormous process and then the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee overseeing it through the budget hearings in May, when it speaks

to all ministers about what they intend to do with the money allocated to their departments. We strive for openness and accountability in all these processes.

The committee tabled a report on the Financial Management Act which highlights that the budget is a little dense for most people to read and comprehend. It is heavy bedtime reading. The committee has recommended that a précis of the budget be put together to give a comprehensive but easy-to-understand budget review so it is more accessible to members of Parliament and the people of Victoria.

This is a budget for jobs and growth, even with the global financial crisis. We want to keep Victoria growing, and we want to keep working for the people of Victoria within the financially responsible framework of a budget surplus. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs VICTORIA (Bayswater) — In speaking on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill 2009 I want to set the scene of what is occurring in Victoria. This is the third budget that I have endured, and I detect some alarming trends. I have picked a couple of them to set the scene for those who come after us in the years to come so that they can read the speeches and understand what was going on at this time in Victoria.

I will be talking about the economy and business, because this budget was supposed to be mostly about jobs, jobs and jobs. In 1999 Victoria's total private capital expenditure was 25.2 per cent of Australia's total private capital expenditure. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that this year to the end of March private capital expenditure in Victoria fell by 1.1 per cent compared to a national increase of 6.8 per cent. That was not 1.1 per cent off the 25.2 per cent I referred to earlier; that was off the appalling figure last year of 17.7 per cent — a near record low. Victoria is well down on whatever is going on in Australia. While Australia is achieving positive growth, Victoria is not. I repeat that Victoria had 25.2 per cent of Australia's total private capital expenditure in 1999 compared with 17.7 per cent in 2009. That is fairly dismal.

Victoria's total manufacturing investment of 18.5 per cent of Australia's total manufacturing investment is the lowest on record. That is appalling. Compare that with the December quarter of 1999 figure, which was 37.8 per cent. I know that is a year our opponents in the chamber like to quote so often. I am here to give them the figures: 37.8 per cent in 1999 versus 18.5 per cent now. That is less than half. In anybody's terms this is

not a good government, and this is certainly not a good budget.

There was the grand statement about this budget being about jobs. Let us have a look at what is happening here in Victoria with jobs. Since January more than 20 000 Victorians have lost their positions. That is more than in any other state. Last year Victoria was the only state that lost jobs. This is a jobs, jobs, jobs budget, but there is nothing on which to base that assertion. It is projected there will be 200 000 unemployed people here in Victoria at some time during next year.

To go from the 20 000 people who have already lost their jobs this year and keep perpetuating that to a stage where 200 000 people in total do not have jobs in Victoria is a disgrace. Why is the government not investing in helping businesses to maintain their workforces and to create new positions? Something is very wrong here in Victoria and it starts at the very top.

Let us have a look at policing, because this is something that is near and dear to my heart and something that I have often spoken about in the chamber. Labor has allowed crimes against the person to increase from 31 372 in 2000 to 42 949 last year, which is an increase of 36.9 per cent. This is hardly in line with population growth, so there is certainly no argument to be had there. Between 1999–2000 and 2007–08 the number of assaults increased from nearly 20 000 to over 31 000, which is an increase of 57.6 per cent.

Police patrols are something that we as an opposition talk about constantly. Police patrols representing over 1.9 million hours in the 2002–03 year have been reduced to a mere 1.5 million hours in 2007–08. This is incredible. This is a cut of over 20 per cent in patrol hours — that is, active, front-line policing. We all know the old equation of 'more police on the streets equals less crime' — nobody can dispute that.

The Ombudsman reports that serious crimes like assault are actually underreported. The fact that the government is not spending any money to correct this is a travesty. It is not spending more money to get more officers back on the beat in my area. In the Knox and Maroondah areas we have had our fair share of the increase in violent and other crime. It is simply appalling not to have as many police rostered at police stations as there were previously.

I am sorry to see that the transport minister is no longer at the table. I would have liked to bring to his attention the fact that since 2006 there have only been two additional train services from Flinders Street to

Lilydale. They are leaving at 12.30 a.m. and just after 1 o'clock on a Saturday night or Sunday morning. That connects at Ringwood with a train to Belgrave on each service. Our line has had only two new services since 2006.

Other rail lines have had lots of service increases, especially during the peak period, which is when most people are travelling. Most people are saying they are packed in like sardines. Last year I took a trip on that rail line with the news editor of one of the local newspapers. Travelling from Belgrave through to the city, she said she finally understood exactly what it was that I had been writing press releases about for so long. She said, 'I cannot believe there are so many people standing up — and we are at Belgrave!'. From the very first stop there were people standing up. Every seat was occupied. It is not a safe way to travel. Services are not getting any better on those trains that are running, with approximately 10 per cent of all services running late, but I am sympathetic and say, 'At least they have got trains running'.

What will be next as far as transport is concerned? I have been saying for quite some time that I anticipate this government will allow the introduction of parking fees at rail stations, so I wait with bated breath to see whether that comes true. There are fabulous, grandiose plans in transport by this government. Some of them are due way past 2020. It does not matter how arrogant you are or how fabulous you think you are, everybody knows this Premier will not be Premier in 2020. He will not be in power. By promising these plans way in advance, the government is trying to pull the wool over the eyes of Victorians. I do not think we can put up with that, and I do not think we are going to fall for it.

To get on to some local transport issues in my electorate of Bayswater, there was no allocated funding in the budget for a grade separation at Mountain Highway or Scoresby Road for the two rail lines there. This is a major problem in the electorate. Certainly it was flagged by the opposition in the lead-up to the 2006 election. The problem is that we have had multiple fatalities at those two sites. You cannot do one without the other because of the geography involved. There is not a very large distance between the two level crossings, but they need to be grade separated. Whether it goes up or whether it goes down will be up to the planning people to decide, but something needs to be done. There was no hint of funding for that.

I hope the budget for VicRoads is sufficient to extend the type of planning we have been asking for in this chamber for what feels like many years. The member for Ferntree Gully and I have been calling for a

controlled intersection at the corner of Tormore and Boronia roads, where there is a mixture of the football club, the aquatic centre, the level crossings leading to St Joseph's Primary School and a very busy four-lane road with a 70-kilometre-an-hour speed limit. We desperately need a controlled intersection at Tormore Road instead of the cheap option of putting a loop into the side street, which is what has happened for the time being.

We also need a controlled intersection at Armstrong Road in Heathmont. There have been fatalities there; I have absolutely no idea why the government appears to be waiting to see if any more people die there. The work is not an option, it is a must — and this government should have allocated the funding for it.

I wonder if there is any money in the VicRoads budget for a right-turn arrow for traffic turning from Coleman Road and travelling north along Stud Road in Wantirna South, because there have been many accidents there too. On one occasion a woman was pushing her baby in a pram and they were both skittled. On several occasions people have been hit. These incidents have not resulted in fatalities; but do there need to be fatalities before action is taken? That is a question I think most MPs would ask regarding intersections in their electorates. This is certainly a very dangerous one. Because of the lie of the land, it is very difficult to see oncoming traffic, and people are so worried about the oncoming traffic that they are not looking at the pedestrians over to the right. This should have been fixed.

I am still waiting for the pedestrian crossing outside Waldreas Lodge to be constructed. How are our elderly citizens supposed to cross that road? We want them to keep active and busy and be independent because we know that activity is fabulous for keeping Alzheimer's and such diseases at bay and that the more activity people have the less likely such diseases are to progress, but how do we keep them active and out in the community if they cannot even get to their bus stop? We desperately need a pedestrian crossing outside Waldreas Lodge.

On education, the federal government is having to cover for the Premier's funding gaps via the stimulus package. I find this hysterical and quite alarming. State Labor has claimed ownership for basically everything that has been allocated and paid for by its federal counterpart. I am not quite sure how this works. I had a look at the Premier's own website when the budget was released and saw little blue triangles — the little blue Victoria symbol with the stars — and I saw one at Boronia. I thought, 'Ha-hee! I don't know what this is

at Boronia West! It can't be! Boronia West Primary School has received some federal funding, maybe it is getting more funding'.

I clicked on the little icon and, sure enough, it was Boronia West Primary School. On the Premier's own website there was a big blue V sitting on top of the school that had been allocated money by the federal government. Here was state Labor claiming that the government had allocated funds to that school when in fact it had not given a cent. There are just so many oversights when it comes to this government; it is incredible.

Mr Burgess — 'Oversight' is being a bit kind.

Mrs VICTORIA — 'Oversight' is being very kind. In fact, the government is claiming a spend of over \$4.1 billion, but \$3.4 billion of that represents federal initiatives. Sometimes we just need to take a bit of a reality check. The 2009–10 budget allocates only \$290 million, not the \$402 million the government claims, for renewing, modernising or replacing Victorian schools. The remainder of that money is being spent on other asset-related programs, not on the modernisation of Victorian schools.

What can I say about Bayswater Secondary College? It again missed out on funding. According to the 2006 election budget, stage 2 of the government's building program should have been in place. It was written; I have it in writing from the Labor government, saying, 'You will get stage 2', but we are still waiting, and it certainly was not a line item in this budget. But I wait and wait; I am a patient woman. Contrary to the education department view, this is not about what I want. This is about what the Bayswater community needs, and the education department should get a reality check on that.

There has been no commitment to education services for children with learning difficulties, specifically autism spectrum disorder. Children in the area desperately need a high school instead of having to go all the way to Bulleen, which can be a trip of up to 2 hours each way.

There are failings in Victoria in literacy and numeracy; the Auditor-General's report said so. We have a progressing decline in standards as students approach Victorian certificate of education and in all sorts of other respects.

No additional benefits have been provided in health; in fact all the government has been doing has been fudging figures. This is a high-taxing, high-spending budget that is getting our state back into the old

doldrums that occur every time Victoria has a Labor government. If the federal government had not injected nearly \$3 billion, this state would be in debt yet again. After 10 years of Labor, which has had more than \$300 billion to invest, there is still no sign of this destructive government injecting suitable amounts into the infrastructure or basic services that we need. There is something very wrong here in Victoria.

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — It is a pleasure to rise in support of the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. Victorians are experiencing the worst global financial and economic downturn and recession since the Great Depression. Since September 2008 we have seen the Reserve Bank reduce the cash rate by 4.25 percentage points, bringing the official interest rate to 3 per cent, its lowest level in almost 50 years. We have seen the unemployment rate increase to 5.7 per cent, and we have seen large falls in financial asset prices, reduced household wealth and reduced consumer confidence.

Every Victorian deserves to know that their government will not abandon them to face the challenges alone, particularly during these tough economic times. Victorians have the right to know about the risks and challenges facing the Victorian economy and what their government will do about it.

We are in good hands, because a Labor government can steer and direct Victoria's economic and fiscal strategies in the right direction. The 2009 budget confirms Victoria's strong fiscal position. The Brumby government has maintained this strong fiscal position despite the significant economic and fiscal challenges that have arisen in the last year. I take the opportunity to congratulate the Treasurer on delivering a strong operating statement and balance sheet, while at the same time maintaining Victoria's AAA rating despite the impact of the global financial crisis.

Unlike those opposite, the government has a plan and it is responding to the current economic downturn by investing for the future and by securing jobs — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! The level of interjection is too high.

Ms KAIROUZ — It is working actively with the commonwealth government through the Nation Building economic stimulus plan and the Building the Education Revolution program. Net infrastructure is projected to be a record high with \$7 billion in the state budget for 2009. The investment will provide quality transport, education, health and housing services and will improve the productivity of the economy. This

historic investment will also cushion Victoria from the worst effects of the global financial crisis by securing up to 35 000 jobs and maintaining business and consumer confidence.

The budget contains projects which are critical to my electorate of Kororoit, situated west of Melbourne. It includes the suburbs of St Albans, Deer Park, Albanvale, Kings Park, Truganina, Rockbank, Burnside and Caroline Springs. The electorate is vibrant, diverse and multicultural, and it is experiencing significant rates of residential, industrial and commercial development. Kororoit has a growing middle class, yet contains areas of social disadvantage.

Suburbs like Caroline Springs, Taylors Hill and Burnside have seen enormous growth over the past decade, and dwelling investment will continue to thrive with the extension of the first home buyers scheme. These high rates of growth require investments in key community services such as health, education, community safety and infrastructure. I support this budget because it invests in world-class infrastructure and services that people in my electorate need, particularly during these tough economic times. This budget proves that the Brumby government is taking action to deliver more jobs, and it gives Victorian families the security they need and long for.

Under the Brumby government Victorians will see \$8 billion being spent on major capital works projects, including the initial stages of the Victorian transport plan. For people in my electorate, I refer to the \$152.6 million of funding to build four new railway stations in Melbourne's growth areas, including a new train station in Caroline Springs.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms KAIROUZ — The member opposite asked, 'When are they going to do it?'. If the member read his papers, he would know when they are going to do it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! Members on the opposition side of the chamber will get their turn to speak. Members should do the member for Kororoit the courtesy of listening to her contribution.

Ms KAIROUZ — The government will also provide some \$55 million for the metropolitan bus improvement program as well as funding for 20 new metropolitan trains and the electrification of the Sydenham line, which will bring many benefits to my electorate — all funded from the 2009 budget.

I am pleased to see that education continues to be the government's no. 1 priority. Victorians will also see the \$1.9 billion Victorian schools plan, where Victoria is partnering with the commonwealth government to deliver the Building the Education Revolution program that will provide Albanvale Primary School in my electorate with a 21st century library and a learning neighbourhood and Caroline Springs College, which is also in my electorate, with a 21st century multipurpose centre.

I welcome the 6400 new training places in the Skills to Transition program and the government assistance to help more than 1150 disadvantaged job seekers gain skills needed by Victorian industries through the New Workforce Partnerships project.

It is heartening to see that the government recognises the importance of supporting Victorian industries and maintaining a competitive business environment, particularly during the global economic downturn. The Brumby government is building on the investment of the last decade by providing funding for a new export clusters program, funding for boosting a highly innovative small and medium enterprises program and funding to assist strategically important firms that are struggling to cope in the economic downturn, and by maintaining a competitive business environment by reducing red tape by 25 per cent over five years and upgrading the State Revenue Office's electronic management systems, reducing costs for Victorian businesses. These initiatives and investments will boost the economy and help deliver jobs across the state.

Health is another important area, and access to a range of health services is critically important to support all people and all communities. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to delivering accessible and high-quality community services. The 2009 budget delivers a major boost for Victoria's health system, providing a \$1.1 billion increase in funding to improve hospital and community health services, increase the number of doctors and nurses, and continue to lead the way in tackling chronic disease. People from low socioeconomic backgrounds, such as those in my electorate, will benefit from funding allocated to provide support for public hospitals, from funding for clinical practice improvements and reforms and from funding for an extra 9000 elective surgery procedures.

The government's commitment to improving dental health for all Victorians is evident in the 2009 budget by providing \$21 million over four years for new dental chairs in regional Victoria, which will help alleviate the dental waiting lists in Melbourne. I was also glad to see

that the 2009 budget reinforces Victoria's position in disease prevention and the tackling of chronic disease.

Community safety continues to be a priority for the Brumby government. The budget delivers \$19 million over the next four years for an additional 50 transit police to patrol the public transport network, enabling more patrols on public transport at night.

Let us not forget the devastating effects the February bushfires had on our communities. The government has the task of helping Victoria recover from the worst bushfires in history, when 173 people lost their lives, 2029 homes and 57 businesses were destroyed and communities were left tired and traumatised. This budget provides \$986 million over five years for services and infrastructure that will help Victoria to rebuild and recover from the horrific February 2009 fires.

This budget contains \$344 million for fire suppression activities to be undertaken during Department of Sustainability and Environment, Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Country Fire Authority operations, including interjurisdictional assistance, aerial measures and containment line restoration. I am pleased to see funding allocations for the additional police resources required to respond to the fires, including support for Victoria Police and other jurisdictions.

The budget supports bushfire-affected people and their families. It allocates \$70 million over two years for case managers to work with Victorians affected by the bushfires to ensure that they receive the financial assistance, services and personal support they need to make decisions about their future with regard to their lives and their homes.

The budget allocates \$36 million for compassionate assistance, including temporary housing assistance, funeral expenses, emergency health and medical expenses, counselling services and emergency hardship grants. Bushfire-affected businesses are also supported through this budget by the provision of \$51 million for a business assistance package to assist small businesses and primary producers, including subsidised low-interest loans, business assistance grants and business restart mentors.

A tourism package to encourage tourists to visit regions economically affected by the bushfires through a cooperative marketing and branding program will also be funded in this budget.

The 2009–10 budget also provides millions of dollars for rebuilding communities devastated by the bushfires and for preparing for the future. It allocates

\$241 million over five years to maintain and improve emergency services communications, to improve fire fighting equipment and to provide additional operational staff.

The Brumby government is securing the livelihoods of all Victorians by delivering a \$7 billion infrastructure program — the largest in Victoria's history. It is supporting construction activity by partnering with the commonwealth to build a new 3000 home suburb in Melbourne's west, by fast-tracking major metropolitan developments, by supporting Victorian industries, and by delivering and securing more jobs.

Members opposite talk about income, but just let me remind them about their policy of cutting and freezing taxes. Let me remind them about the \$6 billion black hole that they are planning for Victorians. The \$6 billion black hole will cut services that are critical for all Victorians — —

Mr Weller interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Munt) — Order! The member for Rodney constantly interrupted during my contribution earlier and he is now interrupting the contribution of the member for Kororoit. He has had his turn to speak. I ask him to be polite and allow the member for Kororoit to finish her contribution.

Ms KAIROUZ — I think I need to remind the members for Warrandyte and Rodney about the \$6 billion black hole that the opposition is planning for Victoria. Let me remind them that the \$6 billion black hole will mean that teachers, doctors, nurses and police will be sacked. Services will not be delivered; they will be taken away from all Victorians.

Mr Weller interjected.

Ms KAIROUZ — I know it is very difficult for you to accept, but that is what you are planning for all Victorians.

This is a wonderful budget. It provides wonderful services that every Victorian needs and is entitled to. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Dr SYKES (Benalla) — I rise to contribute to the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. As I understand it the theme of the budget is A Fairer Victoria. But coming from northern Victoria, and in particular from the electorate of Benalla, I am not so sure this budget delivers a fairer Victoria or that this government has delivered a fairer Victoria in its 10 years of office.

I would like to concentrate on five aspects of life in country Victoria: drought, water, social disadvantage, education and leadership in crisis. Looking at the drought, we have had 12 tough years in country Victoria. Yes, it is raining at the moment, but it does not rain grass and it does not rain money. It raises our hopes, but we have been teased two or three times before with rains that were encouraging, only to have our hearts broken time and again over the last three or four years. People in country Victoria are at their wits' end in terms of their financial and emotional resilience. We need a lot more rain for this drought to be broken. Even after the physical drought has broken we will need at least two good years for people to recover financially and at least two years for people to recover emotionally.

What has been the role of the government in the drought? You would hope that a role of government would be to show leadership and to provide timely and appropriate support. In the case of leadership, over the last three years we have seen budgets that assumed the drought would break in each of the three years. That is not good leadership. That sort of management or that sort of approach would result in people failing in a business college or failing out there in the real world where you have to manage. The reality is that in any situation you have to do your sums regularly, and in the case of drought you have to continue to review them in January, February, March and all the way through.

But according to the Premier and others this government says, 'We will monitor the situation, and if we have a failed spring, we will advise you in mid-October of what assistance measures we may choose to continue'. It is too bad about the drought coordinators, whose funding runs out on 30 June; too bad about the local government rate rebate, which will finish on 30 June; too bad about the productivity grants, which will finish on 30 June; and too bad about the farmer apprenticeship support systems, which will finish on 30 June.

We have just had a two-year battle to ensure that drought counsellors such as Ivan Lister and Allannah Jenkins come off the drip feed and now go on to two years funding. But we have ongoing problems with a lack of continuity of funding for drought counsellors at Wangaratta and in other parts of Victoria. We also have a lack of continuity in funding for drought coordinators. Kim Scanlon at Benalla is wondering what her future holds. Her money runs out on 30 June. Caroline Harlow at the Shire of Strathbogie had to take up the option of another job because she could not wait for the government to decide in mid-October whether her funding, which runs out on 30 June, would continue.

Alana Brennan at the Shire of Campaspe is looking down the same barrel. This is not a good effort on the part of government; it is not what I would consider to be a fairer Victoria.

I would like to look at two aspects of managing the water crisis. I think one thing we would all agree on is that there is a water crisis. One aspect is the need to reduce demand and the other is the need to reduce losses. Looking at reducing demand, we have Target 155 in Melbourne. As the Environment and Natural Resources Committee has identified, there is also a need to ramp up the use of substitute water — that is, collecting and recycling stormwater, preventing over 300 gigalitres of water from flowing into the ocean and recycling it through our system for non-potable use and, as has been flagged, the possibility of some form of desalination. However, we do not want a massive desalination plant such as the one proposed at Wonthaggi, which has so many negatives. Incidentally, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the upper house, Peter Hall, identified an opportunity to have recyclable water targets based on renewable energy targets. However, members of the government dismissed that idea because they did not think of it themselves. We also have an important way of reducing demand — that is, by improving irrigation efficiency on farms.

Turning to the option of reducing losses, we have seen efforts, many of which have been commendable, to reduce losses in the northern irrigation system by the upgrading of channels and by reconfiguration. But we need to think a little about the fairer Victoria aspect of reconfiguration. If you are on the backbone of the channel irrigation system it is okay, because the new regime will supply water to properties on the backbone. However, if you are not on the backbone, you have a problem. This problem was identified when the draft report was first released — it must have been 18 months ago — but the government denied there would be any social engineering going on with those people not on the backbone. But now, as we saw from reports in the *Age* this weekend, people whose farms are not on the backbone are among those being identified for a departure from irrigated farming. That entails some significant social issues.

When that approach is linked with the removal of the 4 per cent cap, we find ourselves looking down the barrel at over half of the water in the northern irrigation area disappearing in the foreseeable future. Has the government considered the impact of that massive removal of water on productive farming? Has the government considered the impact of that on the dairy industry, which is a major industry in Victoria? Has the

government considered what might happen if the Murray Goulburn Co-operative at Stanhope or Rochester scales back its operations substantially? We will have communities collapsing, football and netball clubs disappearing, local stores disappearing and local schools closing. Has the government considered that?

Mr Dixon — Or merging.

Dr SYKES — No, local schools will not merge, they will just collapse because the government has pulled the pin on the water and on the economic basis of the area. Significant social change is about to occur, but there is no recognition of that through an adjustment package and no plan for alternative industries to keep our young people and families in country Victoria. The government is going to take the easy option; it will take the water and run. We are going to have more country communities dying. Who will be left to produce the food and fibre for people in Victoria and for exports, which generate income and jobs for Victorians? Who will be left?

If anyone doubts what I am saying, they need only look at the Lake Mokoan experience — and I notice that the Minister for Water is at the table. Only one or two weeks ago the minister terminated negotiations involving the irrigators which would have delivered a targeted buyback system while leaving a viable smaller irrigation district and delivering water savings and availability to meet the needs of the overall project. The minister walked away from that and gone with a non-targeted approach, which is going to leave an unviable system. That unviable system will collapse in the next decade, and as a consequence of that we will have lose communities in the Broken Valley. We will have a loss of our football and netball clubs and the departure of our young families from country Victoria. Of course I could not speak in the presence of the minister without mentioning the north-south pipeline. That pipeline is not a good idea. The sooner the minister plugs the pipe, the sooner we can move on and make Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Let us move on to social disadvantage. North-eastern Victoria is a wonderful place. It has many wonderful assets, such as the ski fields and the source of much of the water for the Murray-Darling Basin, but it also has serious social disadvantage. We have retirees on low incomes and many social housing residents — some from the local area, but a lot from elsewhere — many of whom have complex needs. We also have social disadvantage and climate change refugees created by the drought. For example, it has been identified independently by the Vinson report entitled *Dropping*

Off the Edge — The Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia that there is serious local disadvantage in Benalla.

Our community is trying to do something about that by addressing the educational needs and opportunities of our young people, starting at the nought to two-year-old age group and also looking at year 9 and year 10 students, who can be somewhat restless. We have people like Margot Sherwill and Heather Leary doing their bit, and we have people like Liz Chapman at the Tomorrow: Today Foundation identifying what needs to be done.

Interestingly Liz Chapman and others have identified that a lot of young people from farming families are seriously socially disadvantaged because of the drought. What we need is a state government to, firstly, acknowledge the fact that there is a problem, that there is a reduction in the self-esteem of our young people, that there is an increase in the violence levels among our young people, that there is an increase in the drug and alcohol abuse among our young people, and that there is an increase in early teenage pregnancy. The facts are there; we now need the government to provide assistance.

We need services that match the needs. We need coordination between government agencies, particularly between the Office of Housing and those who provide social support services, so that our people who have complex needs in particular have their needs met and do not contribute to the social issues and social disadvantage I am talking about.

Education is what is needed to avoid falling into social disadvantage and also to help those people who are disadvantaged climb out of that situation; but regrettably, the year 12 completion rate in country Victoria is 69 per cent compared with the state average of 89 per cent. The government will not acknowledge that fact; not only does it not acknowledge it but it goes into active denial. The government will not set targets to overcome that appalling situation.

Equally, with tertiary education the uptake rate for country students is 33 per cent and falling, whereas for metropolitan students it is 55 per cent. The government is in denial once again. Not only is it in denial but we have this ludicrous situation of the youth allowance changes being proposed by the Rudd government that will see country students even further disadvantaged. But the state government will not acknowledge and act on it.

We have had denials in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings and in question time. It is time the state government stood up for our young people — young people such as Andrew and Paul Kovacs, Lizzie and James Morrow, Peter Schneider, David Schwartzman, Alex Robb and Trent Milligan — and incidentally, those last two boys won national scholarships to help them complete their tertiary education.

What do they all have in common? They are outstanding young people, and they are the young people we need to provide with an education to help country Victoria get on its feet. But what is the federal government doing? It is ripping away the financial support with which they could get their education. What is the state government doing? Nothing!

I welcome funding for school upgrades at Murchison, Merrijig, Harrietville, Avenel, and Glenrowan. That funding is fantastic, but issues with the funding include a lack of flexibility, the funding being rushed, poor value for money being obtained and local contractors missing out. Some schools can be upgraded but downsized, even though their student numbers will increase over the next 10 years. Also we have that hallmark of the Brumby government — bullying. I am not allowed to mention any of the particular problems of the particular schools because the principals and those associated with the schools are dead scared of being denied their rightful access to money because of this standover government.

There are two undeniable facts about a Labor government. The first is: Labor cannot manage money. With \$300 billion of income, we have gone from a debt when the conservatives came to power of \$31 billion down to \$2 billion, and now it is blowing back out to \$31 billion because Labor cannot manage money.

The other thing about Labor is that there is something smelly about a Labor government. There is a stench rising in this house, wafting up from the government benches, because of what is going on in Brimbank and the links between the members of the Labor Party and Brimbank council, and many other corrupt activities. In closing, I remind members that it is time everyone had a fair go, including country Victorians.

Mr LIM (Clayton) — It is very interesting to hear the previous speaker, and I will respond to his remarks about the state consciously going into deficit. In the end it is the opposition that publicly applauds the attention. I cannot respond in any better way than did our Premier when it was suggested to him that we might be jeopardising our AAA rating by going into the red by

something like \$16 billion. He said that we have to look at the budget as one which is about jobs, jobs and jobs. That is what the Premier and our illustrious Treasurer have said many times over.

It is significant to bear in mind that this government takes on the challenge of having to respond to the full impact of this global downturn of the economy by consciously going into debt to fund infrastructure investments which are essential in order to create and protect as many Victorian jobs as possible. We should never forget that nor let ourselves be belittled by the previous speakers in this regard. It is even more remarkable that this budget has been criticised by the ANZ Bank, which has suggested that the extent of the debt, which is \$16 billion or 5 per cent of the economy, is indeed putting our AAA rating in a precarious position.

I quote the Premier in response to this alarmist attitude. He said, 'The budget this government is bringing down is a AAA budget — full stop'. They are the Premier's words, and if I had to choose between the Premier — who has brought down eight excellent budgets in Victoria, and who is known and respected as the best Treasurer this state has ever had — and the ANZ Bank, I would choose our Premier any time. Without doubt we know deep down in our hearts that this is a very good budget.

The one very important thing that I need to mention about this budget is that it is indeed a bushfire recovery budget, and many people tend to overlook how much devastation the bushfires on Black Saturday inflicted on our community, our economy and on Victoria. There is no doubt that this 2009 budget provides something like \$989 million over five years for services and infrastructure that will help Victoria recover from the worst bushfires in this country's history.

We can never forget the scale and breadth of the destruction of property and the loss of life that Black Saturday caused. We know that, tragically, 173 people lost their lives and some 57 businesses were completely obliterated, not to mention the whole range of destroyed or damaged social infrastructure like schools, hospitals and the like in those affected areas.

The immense response to the bushfire appeal, which raised more than \$330 million from this state, interstate and overseas donations would indeed go a long way towards assisting those affected by the disaster, but we should not overlook the Victorian government's commitment to contribute significant resources to assist individuals, businesses and the community.

Therefore in this budget we should acknowledge, for example, that something like \$344 million is to be injected into the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the CFA (Country Fire Authority) operations for fire suppression activities. Another \$24 million has been provided to better equip our police to respond to future bushfires; something like \$70 million has been provided for victims of fire for personal support; there is \$36 million for compassionate assistance; \$51 million for assisting small business and primary producers who were badly affected by the fires, another \$10 million for a tourism package to revise tourism in those areas, and the list goes on and on.

The other significant feature of this budget is that it is a Fairer Victoria budget. Representing an electorate which is largely made up of the disadvantaged, migrants and the working poor, this is very welcome news. If you look at the figures, you see that something like \$925 million has been budgeted to protect the vulnerable in our community, particularly, as I mentioned, those who are going to be hardest hit by this global recession — namely, the migrant community, the Aboriginal community, families with disabled children and people with a mental illness. They will be badly hit by the slowing down of the economy and rising unemployment. This will have an effect on their lives.

We will see something like \$150 million from the A Fairer Victoria program going to recruiting an extra 280 mental health workers to assist the mentally ill and their families. There will be another \$8 million for people with autism. This news has been welcomed by the community. The poorer suburbs in regional Victoria will get a further \$26 million for their neighbourhood renewal centres. As someone who has been quite closely associated with the A Fairer Victoria program in previous budgets under the leadership of the immediate past Deputy Premier, John Thwaites, I can understand the extent of the good that this budget will do in those demonstrably needy communities.

A most important element in this A Fairer Victoria centrepiece is the allocation of \$402 million to rebuild and renovate something like 113 government schools. This is not a mean feat, it is not a small undertaking. This will be very significant in improving those buildings. Most of the primary schools in my electorate, for example, were built in the 1950s. They are more than 40 years old, and many of them are dilapidated. It is high time the government responded, and the government has responded appropriately. I am very pleased. I have visited some of the schools. Some of them have also received Building the Education

Revolution program allocations from the federal government. Combined with the state funds, this will go a long way to improving facilities, improving buildings and improving infrastructure in those schools.

This is very welcome news for my local school communities. I was very fortunate to be taken around one of the local schools — Westall Primary School — by the chair of the school council. She took me through the school and explained what needed to be done in terms of the new money allocated. I could see the smiles, the happiness and the positive response from her and, through her, her committee members. I could understand what this new funding allocation will do for this needy community.

I must also mention in passing that \$4 billion of the \$38 billion in this budget is going toward the 12-year transport plan for the whole state. I do not plan on going into the details.

One allocation I am very pleased about, as a migrant and very much a multicultural person, is the increase of something like 16 per cent in funding for the Victorian Multicultural Commission. That will go a long way to assisting needy migrant community organisations. We tend to take things for granted, but a 16 per cent increase in one year is a very big number. The funding has gone from \$4 million to \$4.7 million. That is another \$700 000 for the different community organisations in our migrant community. I congratulate the government and the minister involved in making sure that allocation came to pass.

Closer to home in my electorate is the allocation of an extra \$1.4 million — the number might be small compared to the figures of billions we have heard — to build a new beam in the synchrotron. Most members in the chamber are probably not aware that our Premier has now been dubbed ‘the father of the Australian synchrotron’. It is almost like a subtitle throughout Australia — ‘John Brumby, the father of the Australian synchrotron’. I do not think anybody is more passionate about or more into the Australian synchrotron than the Premier. The allocation of \$1.4 million, which comes to about \$50 million with funding from other sources, will give the Australian synchrotron a cutting edge. It will leap ahead of other synchrotrons around the world. We will have the biggest and longest light beam. This will go a long way to putting the Australian synchrotron at the forefront of scientific breakthrough in terms of analysing a whole range of elements, diseases and foods.

This announcement was welcomed by the scientific community and was much appreciated by the scientists

who were worried about having to pack their suitcases and go to Japan or North America to do their work. Our Australian synchrotron users — our own scientists — can now proudly use this facility in my electorate of Clayton. No doubt the extra funding allocated to the Australian synchrotron in this budget is most welcome. Again I commend the government for taking the lead, for being at the forefront of this frontier of science and for providing an example to the whole world. We must again congratulate the father of the Australian synchrotron, the Premier of Victoria. I conclude my contribution accordingly.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2009/2010) Bill. The 2009–10 Victorian state budget, delivered by the Labor government, has been a major disappointment to many in Narracan as once again the Labor government has focused on maintaining and building Melbourne rather than giving true support and investment to the Gippsland region when now more than ever it is desperately needed.

Before I comment on the shortfalls of the budget I would like to touch on a few positive initiatives my electorate received funding for in this budget. The schools modernisation project across the state is long overdue, particularly for the Gippsland region. The commitment to modernise the Lardner and Newborough primary schools is part of the \$7.6 million statewide program. I am sure it is a welcome investment for those school communities. Education was made a priority for this budget. However, although the government delivered in some areas of Narracan, it did not do all that had previously been promised. It has left many disappointed with the funding shortfalls across the region.

Trafalgar High School received \$4.8 million for improved facilities. Although this investment is very welcome, it falls well short of the Labor government's 2006 election promise to provide \$8 million for the school's long-awaited redevelopment. The 2006 election promise gave Trafalgar High School great hope, but funding did not arrive in 2007 or 2008, and now in the 2009–10 budget the funding commitment is just over half the original promise. The school community has been very patient in putting up with substandard conditions across many parts of its campus. It now faces a real concern about just what it will get and whether it will address all of the infrastructure upgrades that are essential to cater for a current school population almost four times that which the original school was expected to handle.

Other schools right across Narracan have been short-changed by the Brumby government's investment in education. For example, Warragul Regional College students still use the same toilet facilities that were part of the school in 1969, when I was a student there. These schools are left to do the best with minimal investment under increasing pressure from the government to provide first class education with deteriorating facilities.

A \$52 million commitment over five years to ensure that fuel-reduction burns meet prescribed levels across regional Victoria is certainly welcome. Areas throughout Narracan, including Walhalla, Rawson and Erica, as well as Nudgee and Neerim, will benefit from this commitment. Unfortunately for many, it is too little, too late. Despite the recommendations of the 2003 and 2006 bushfire inquiries to increase fuel reduction burning, they are only now being taken seriously. We had to have devastation on a huge scale before the Brumby government would act.

When is the government going to act on other recommendations from these inquiries, such as sharing the cost of boundary fencing? Put simply, when is it going to become a good neighbour? Other Victorians are expected to be responsible and accept responsibility for sharing the cost of fencing.

In the recent bushfires, many farmers in the Labertouche area suffered a massive loss of boundary fencing that they shared with government agencies, the full replacement cost of which they have had to wear. In one extreme case Mark and Lee McGuffie have had to replace 29 kilometres of boundary fencing they currently share with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and the Baw Baw shire. The work has cost them nearly \$300 000 and is on top of all the other costs of around \$400 000 for reinstating their property to its pre-fire condition. There is absolutely nothing in this budget for these hardworking farming families who suffered terribly as a result of the Black Saturday fires.

Infrastructure investment in Narracan has again been left out in the cold under this budget in favour of the Labor government's city-centric development policy. According to the 1997 VicRoads corridor strategy for the Princes Highway east, the Sand Road–Princes Freeway intersection should have been completed before the completion of the Pakenham bypass. An ad hoc upgrade to the intersection has resulted in frequent accidents at the intersection as vehicles attempt to merge onto the freeway or cross to travel in the opposite direction. With fuel stations flanking each side of the freeway, this intersection receives major use from both motorists and commercial operators.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**ADJOURNMENT**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Mornington Peninsula Freeway: noise barriers

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — I wish to raise with the Minister for Roads and Ports a matter regarding noise barriers on the Mornington Peninsula Freeway between Dromana and Rosebud. I am asking the minister to come down to the Mornington Peninsula and announce funding to construct these barriers.

The Mornington Peninsula Freeway has been operating since the 1970s, but, as members can imagine, since that time there has been a massive build-up of the permanent population and also an incredible increase in the number of holiday-makers, not just in January but throughout the year. In fact during the recent long weekend we saw massive traffic jams and the Point Nepean Road traffic was almost at a standstill. On Monday evening, when I was driving up to Melbourne, the freeway traffic was moving at only about 75 kilometres to 80 kilometres per hour due to the congestion.

There are houses literally adjacent to the freeway and only metres from the road surface. This road surface is a very rough road mix, and the noise from the traffic is quite incredible for most hours of the day. There is also a safety issue because the freeway is fenced off by a chain wire fence that is easily cut and often is cut. People, especially children, come through there and cut through to the freeway. The fence collects rubbish and weeds and is an absolute mess. In January there was quite a large fire on the Mornington Peninsula Freeway in the Rosebud area, which unfortunately cleaned up that section of the freeway. It also meant a lot of the trees that absorbed a lot of the freeway noise were destroyed and noise levels in that section of the freeway have now increased.

VicRoads has recognised the need for noise barriers, and I have mentioned that before in this place. A freedom of information document about sound barriers on the Mornington Peninsula Freeway states that, according to VicRoads, the barriers are a top priority. As I have mentioned in this place before, noise barriers of a lower priority, but located in Labor electorates, have actually been funded. The people of the Mornington Peninsula have missed out.

Construction of the Frankston bypass — if it happens this year and if, as claimed, it is toll-free — will bring even more traffic to the Mornington Peninsula. More people will live on the peninsula and commute to many of the suburbs of Melbourne, and it will bring a lot more visitors to the peninsula. So it will make what is a bad situation even worse.

I do not want another letter — I have received about five letters from the minister — saying, ‘Yes, it is an important issue and you will receive funding at some stage’. I want the minister to respond to this adjournment matter and tell me when the funding will be announced and when we will get the noise barriers we have been waiting for. The people of the Mornington Peninsula have been very patient for 30 years while waiting for the sound barriers. It is more than our turn. We deserve it now, especially with the advent of the Frankston bypass, which will bring a lot more traffic.

Greensborough Hockey Club: funding

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. As I have advocated many other times in this place for sporting clubs in my electorate, the action I seek is for him to urgently meet with the Greensborough Hockey Club to discuss plans to improve club facilities. Before the last election the Labor team committed to providing \$500 000 for a new development at the Greensborough Hockey Club, but there is a need for additional funds there because of the amount of usage. It is a regional facility, and club members would like to not only redevelop their clubrooms but also provide a second pitch because community demand exceeds what they can provide at the moment.

The Greensborough Hockey Club is a very influential club in the north-east and indeed across Victoria. In a regional area in any week they manage to put about 500 players onto the hockey pitch. Those players range from 6 to 7-year-olds to 60-plus-year-olds who play in the veterans competition. The mighty Boroughs have been very successful over the years with senior teams playing in men’s and women’s state league 1 — the pinnacle of hockey competition in Victoria for many years — and in recent years winning at both those levels.

The mighty Boroughs have produced many fantastic male and female Victorian state players across all age groups, and they are proud to say that a number of players have gone on to represent Australia. They currently have representatives in the Hockeyroos, the

Kookaburras and the Australian junior squads. There are many exciting aspects of the proposal to build a second pitch, which will mean that excellence can continue.

Being the only hockey club in the north-east of Melbourne, many players come from the fire-devastated areas including Yarra Glen, Whittlesea, St Andrews, Kinglake, Strathewen and Kangaroo Ground. Sadly, the club lost an 18-year-old player and both his parents in the fires. Many other Greensborough Hockey Club members were extremely lucky, the fires coming within metres of their homes. The prospect of the new pitch and all it will deliver for the members is a real positive for many. I urge the minister to meet with the club at an early stage and discuss the exciting prospect of a new pitch for the mighty Boroughs.

Bass Coast: jet skis

Mr K. SMITH (Bass) — I address my adjournment matter to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and ask him to intervene in the boating zone review that is currently being undertaken by Parks Victoria to ensure that the ratepayers of the shire of Bass Coast are supported in their concerns about the dangerous use of personal watercraft.

I have been approached by the council and particularly Phillip Island councillor Jane Dore Daly whose concerns regarding these jet skis are very genuine. They are asking for a 5-knot speed limit for all vessels from the channel marker east of the north-south channel entering Rhyll to the easternmost tip of Churchill Island, taking in all the mudflat area. The major reasons include ensuring the safety of all vessels entering the area by enabling safe negotiation of the channels in lower tides and shallow, sometimes exposed, mudflat areas.

Personal watercraft can be a huge problem for people with young children who venture into the water to swim and enjoy themselves when some of the ratbag element race these craft amongst swimmers. Not all of them are ratbags, but some people do not seem to care, and there appears to be a lack of water police around when action needs to be taken to control these personal watercraft close to shore and in the mudflat areas around Rhyll and Churchill Island.

I have no concerns about people who use these watercraft responsibly, but we make laws to control the minority of people who do not abide by the rules or care about themselves or the environment. The minister would be aware that professional fishermen have been banned from Western Port so as to protect the fishing

for the recreational fishers. Some consideration has to be given to protecting the biodiversity of Western Port and the breeding grounds and areas that are often devastated by jet skis racing over the mudflats.

As the minister would be aware, the tides in Western Port can rise and fall some metres, exposing the mudflats and seagrass areas that fish breed in. Jet skis do not support that type of biodiversity, particularly when used by some of the ratbags who race them around at high speed in a very dangerous manner.

I again ask the minister to intervene in this review to ensure the council's concerns are fully examined and that the review that is being undertaken includes the concerns of the people in that area. A lot of people are concerned about these watercraft.

Frankston: pier reconstruction

Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change regarding the reconstruction of the historic Frankston pier. The action that I seek is that the minister consult with Parks Victoria to ensure that this much-needed work is completed by November this year, at the latest, to ensure the pier is operational again for the busy 2009–10 summer season.

The Brumby government has committed \$2 million for the reconstruction of the pier, and this major reconstruction will enhance Frankston's vibrant foreshore. The works will revitalise the historic pier, which was first built in 1857 and is now 152 years old. Work commenced on 25 May and will include replacing timber piles, crossheads, beams and all decking and capping on the main pier and outer landings. It is very important and much-needed work.

The reconstruction of the pier is part of the Brumby government's investment in maintaining important and popular maritime facilities to ensure they are there for future generations of Victorians, and in this case for many generations of Frankston families. Frankston pier is a much-loved icon in the local community and has been a key part of Frankston's popular waterfront for over 150 years. This reconstruction will ensure that the pier will continue to be enjoyed well into the future. A number of the pier's timber bollard pile tops will be salvaged and, I am pleased to say, provided to the Frankston City Council for installation on the foreshore to provide an ongoing symbol of the pier's important heritage.

For public safety reasons the pier will be completely closed while the work is done. As it is extremely popular, particularly with recreational anglers, during the reconstruction they will need to fish at alternative locations such as the recently refurbished Mordialloc pier or Mornington pier.

Given the enormous popularity of Frankston pier, particularly over the summer months when it is used by a large number of Frankston families, anglers from across Melbourne and right across the state, and community organisations such as the Greek community that uses it for its annual blessing of the waters on 6 January each year, it is crucial that the pier is reopened at the earliest opportunity.

It was a great pleasure for me to visit the pier recently with Rick Lloyd and ranger Phil Fowler from Parks Victoria and the contractor who is carrying out the works, Greg Koski, and his hardworking team to inspect the start of the works. Notwithstanding the huge amount of work involved in rebuilding the pier, I again urge the minister to consult with Parks Victoria to ensure that the work is completed by November, in time for the busy peak summer season. My family enjoys the pier. My daughter, Kirsten, although only two-and-a-half years old, is a keen visitor and I know many other families are too.

Planning: South Gippsland

Mr RYAN (Leader of The Nationals) — I raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Planning with regard to the gazettal on 28 May of amendment C46 in the South Gippsland planning scheme. It is said by the minister that the gazettal is an interim measure. However, the practical effect of it is that as from the date of that gazettal the South Gippsland planning scheme has been amended to prevent permits for houses being granted on areas of land less than 40 hectares in the farming zone.

The initiative taken by the minister has many impacts upon the shire of South Gippsland and the communities within it. Amongst those is the fact that there are people who have committed an enormous amount of money by way of investments in relation to the development of parcels of land within the farm zone that will be directly affected by what the minister has done. My request of the minister for that and other reasons is that he should delay the implementation of the planning scheme amendment in the way that he has now contemplated and he should not have it given any effect until such time as certain events occur.

Among those there should be the opportunity for the shire to complete a land-use planning study with regard to the impact of this proposal upon the shire and its lands. It is said by Beveridge Williams, a planning group with which I have had some consultation thus far, that something of the order of 1100 lots of land are directly affected by this interim measure. It is said by Mr David Harris from Beveridge Williams that in real terms the estimate made by his organisation is that this probably affects one-third of all dwelling construction in South Gippsland.

The implications, as I say, in relation to what the minister has done are vast. As I have mentioned, there is not only the question of the investment which has been made to date by many people who are looking to develop their land and for whom this is effectively retrospective legislation which will preclude them from being able to develop their land in the manner intended, but it is also an issue which will have a significant financial impact upon the shire at large.

No-one knows what will be the effect upon rates. All this is happening at a time when the shire is struggling with the downturn associated with the dairy industry. It is also happening in an environment where the actual land-use planning is such that it will probably delay the capacity for the development of further housing lots for something of the order of 16 to 20 months.

I appreciate that the preservation of productive land is important, but ambushing people in the way that the minister has done is certainly not the way to go about it. I ask the minister to stay his hand.

Princes Highway, Beaconsfield: noise barriers

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — The matter that I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports, and it concerns the construction of the Beaconsfield noise barriers. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Beaconsfield soon to commence the work on the noise walls.

At the outset I would like to thank the minister for the record investment in roads in the city of Casey. Casey is a growing area, and this government is committed to providing important infrastructure for residents. This investment includes, among other things, the \$12.3 million boost for noise barriers at Beaconsfield. This has been really well received by my electorate because freeway noise is a problem that my constituents have been experiencing for quite some time.

The funding boost for the noise barriers is something that the community has wanted and that this government is delivering. It was therefore with great concern that I read some misleading claims in the *Berwick and District Journal* that the work has been delayed by six months. This is not true. Construction of the noise barriers will begin shortly.

Freeway noise has negatively impacted on the amenity of the local residents and caused them a lot of distress. When the developers walked away, Casey council threw its hands in the air while the Liberal Party made sure that its members posed for photographs but promised nothing. In fact the member for Nepean said that it was disgraceful that the Beaconsfield noise barriers were funded.

Mr Robinson — What has that got to do with him?

Ms GRALEY — He is obviously interested in noise barriers. Those opposite are clearly not really interested in the people of my electorate and in helping them address the issue of freeway noise. The construction of the noise barriers is very much wanted. The Brumby government has found a solution to this problem. Those opposite are not interested in solutions, they are just interested in fearmongering in my electorate. I ask the minister to come to Beaconsfield to turn the first sod for the Beaconsfield noise walls.

Sandringham College: funding

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I seek the opportunity to lead a delegation to meet with the Minister for Education on behalf of a range of Sandringham College community members. Following the recent state budget, Wayne Perkins, the principal of Sandringham College, wrote to the *Age* as follows:

As the principal of a government secondary school acknowledged for the quality of its programs and commitment to providing pathways for all students, and which has been identified twice in three years as a school with one of the highest levels of unfunded maintenance needs, but did not receive any additional funding in the state budget, I find the comments attributed to Michelle Green of the Association of Independent Schools Victoria ... incredible, to say the least.

...

... Ms Green's comments are an insult to my school's students and staff, who are achieving great things in buildings where, for example, windows cannot be opened because they are so rotten.

Despite the public commitment of the state and federal governments to education, the continuing facilities gap indicates that our priorities are still not right.

A press release from the Minister for Education entitled 'Budget windfall for McKinnon Secondary College' and dated 7 May 2008 states:

McKinnon Secondary College will undergo a \$6 million upgrade after the Brumby government announced funding for the project in this year's state budget.

Visiting the school today, education minister Bronwyn Pike said education remains the government's no. 1 priority, that's why the Brumby Labor government is taking action — rebuilding every school in every community across Victoria.

I repeat 'rebuilding every school in every community across Victoria'.

Further in the press release the local member, the member for Bentleigh, is quoted as saying in relation to the \$6 million upgrade:

This is a fantastic result for the local community and demonstrates the Brumby government's commitment to set a standard of excellence across the education system ...

I repeat 'across the education system'.

Then we have the example of the electorate of Mordialloc. The local member notes on her website that:

Parkdale Secondary College now has \$8 913 000 to spend on modernisation — classrooms, science, staff administration, arts and technology buildings.

Educational research suggests that there is a correlation between student learning outcomes and the calibre of building facilities. In the last 12 months some \$15 million or more has been allocated to two major secondary colleges in the area. Sandringham College has not received any upgrade funding in the last few budgets, and the school community is confronting major maintenance issues. I would like the opportunity to lead a delegation to meet with the minister to discuss the concerns of the local community so that Sandringham College gets its much-needed upgrade funding in the next budget.

Rail: Gippsland line

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the government to ensure that all V/Line passenger rail services from East Gippsland rail stations, including stations at Sale, Stratford and Bairnsdale, terminate at and embark from Southern Cross station and not Flinders Street station.

Public passenger rail transport is incredibly important to East Gippsland, as seen by the campaign to return passenger trains to Bairnsdale five years ago, the

continuing interest in and success of the patronage of passenger trains to East Gippsland and the recent celebration of the fifth anniversary of the resumption of those services.

The recent public scaremongering by a number of MPs based on limited, vague and spurious information, combined with the lack of comment from the state government, has left many East Gippsland rail passengers seriously concerned about the future of V/Line services to Southern Cross station from Gippsland.

I call on the government to put to rest the negative anti-public transport sentiment that has been perpetrated in recent weeks in the local media and to give a clear and solid commitment to the future of our public transport services in Gippsland. For many Gippsland V/Line passengers the termination destination of choice is Southern Cross station because of the connecting services, support for passengers, luggage arrangements and access to metropolitan and other V/Line passenger services. Termination at and embarkation from Flinders Street is not viable for many Gippsland passengers. I call on the minister to guarantee that Gippsland public transport services will not be stopped short of the optimal destination, particularly those long-haul passenger services that are so essential to our region's public transport connections. The government must outline what, if any, services will terminate at Flinders Street in the future.

I understand that there will be some capacity constraints in the future as stations 15 and 16 are rebuilt, but it must be recognised that the passenger rail services in East Gippsland are essential to the future connectivity of our region, and we must maintain the highest possible service to all Gippsland passengers, no matter where they disembark from.

The return of East Gippsland passenger rail services has been a great outcome. We have seen an increase in patronage on that network, with a 107 per cent increase in five years to 81 000 passenger movements from Bairnsdale and Stratford. That really highlights how important these services are. Many of those passengers choose to travel to Southern Cross station because of the connecting services and other opportunities that are there. I call on the minister to make sure that those commitments are guaranteed.

Hastings electorate: sports facilities

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The action I seek is for the minister to come to my electorate and meet with

a group of sporting bodies that desperately need his help.

Time precludes me from going into the detail that I would like to about the dire circumstances facing many sporting clubs throughout my electorate. Instead I will refer to a very small cross-section of the clubs and their circumstances and look forward to the opportunity of fully briefing the minister when he visits the Hastings electorate to meet with these clubs.

Balnarring junior football, cricket and netball clubs share facilities. The junior club has been operating for just four years and already has more than 200 active playing members, supported by their families. The netball club has been operating for 12 years and has 180 active playing members ranging from 5 years to 50 years of age. The netball courts are overgrown; the players have no clubroom, storage, meeting or social rooms. The cricket club has a very proud 100-year history but it has to share its clubrooms with the junior football club and receives inadequate assistance from council. This locality could provide a sporting precinct that would be home to over 30 teams with a minimum of 500 local team members, junior and senior, but currently they have next to nothing.

These three clubs urgently need new clubrooms, toilets, additional and safe parking, six netball courts, new cricket practice wickets, training lighting, playground equipment and ground maintenance and resurfacing.

The Somerville Football Club was founded in 1892 and its current inadequate facilities are shared with the Somerville Cricket Club. The junior club supports nine teams and there are three senior teams and 100 Auskick kids. The existing clubrooms, toilets, seating, lighting, water reuse, playing surface and other facilities are inadequate to support the more than 500 members.

The Somerville netball club has 240 members with 26 teams. It is the largest club on the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula. It is run by volunteers and has 20 coaches, yet it is required to share its courts with the tennis club. The sporting facility in Somerville is at crisis point. The existing clubhouse is little more than a portable container and needs to be improved urgently. At least one new court is required immediately, with two more being a reasonable outcome. The existing courts need resurfacing, new lighting and a permanent clubhouse with kitchen and toilet facilities.

The Lloyd Park recreation facility services Langwarrin, which has over 20 000 people but no swimming pool, library and terribly inadequate sporting facilities. Lloyd Park is home to one of the largest sporting groups in

Victoria, with 20 football teams, 20 cricket teams and one grossly antiquated clubroom that caters for more than 500 football and 200 cricket club members and their families. The small change room and tiny canteen would be too small for one club a quarter of its size. The lighting is also inadequate. These clubs urgently require new club rooms and change rooms, new toilets and showers. They need upgrading of equipment as well as cricket kits.

Crib Point Football Club is a combined sporting body with seven junior teams, three senior teams and 250-plus members. It is the home ground for Warriors Football Club. The club rooms were built in the 1950s and the facilities are unable to accommodate the current needs of visiting clubs. I would welcome the minister to the electorate and hope he is able to meet the clubs as soon as possible.

Casey Fields: community support grant

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Community Development. I call on the minister to support a Victorian community support grant application made by the Casey City Council for the Casey Fields development.

As reported, the Melbourne Football Club is moving to Cranbourne as a result of the City of Casey signing a partnership deal that will make Casey Fields the Demons official home base for the next 30 years. This is wonderful news for the people of Cranbourne and highlights the fact that the area is a great place to live, work, invest, play sport and raise a family. I know people in my electorate are very proud to have the Melbourne Football Club training in Cranbourne and join me in wishing it all the very best this season and next season, with the potential to play in a grand final with Cranbourne spirit.

The development of Casey Fields is being supported by a huge \$8.9 million grant from the Rudd Labor government. This support will focus on the sporting elements of the development. It will include new playing spaces for competitors as well as improved access and facilities for spectators.

I understand that the council has also made an application through the community support grants program for the non-sporting components of this development. These components include a comprehensive outdoor area and village green, a regional playground, a lake and wetlands and a new multipurpose meeting room in the proposed sporting pavilion. Community areas such as these are very important to bring people together and keep locals fit

and healthy. They will also help residents be proud of the community they live in.

I am proud to support this grant application, and I call on the minister to help develop Casey Fields so that it can become one of Victoria's great sporting and community activity centres.

Responses

Mr ROBINSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — The member for Nepean raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports pertaining to the Mornington Peninsula Freeway and noise barriers. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs requesting that the minister meet with the Greensborough Hockey Club regarding a facility upgrade for the mighty Boroughs. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Bass has raised a serious issue for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change regarding a boating review and the concern of Bass Coast residents, particularly regarding the use of boats and other vessels in the vicinity of Rhyll. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Frankston raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change regarding Frankston Pier and the Parks Victoria upgrade works. I will pass that matter on.

The Leader of The Nationals raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Planning regarding his desire to seek a delay of the implementation of the gazetted amendment C46 to the South Gippsland shire planning scheme. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Narre Warren South raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports regarding the Beaconsfield noise barriers and asked whether she could get an earlier commencement for that project. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Sandringham raised for the attention of the Minister for Education his request that he lead a deputation from Sandringham College to the minister. I will pass that matter on.

The member for Hastings raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs regarding a request that the minister meet with local club representatives. I will pass that matter on.

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Gippsland East raised with me a matter in relation to Gippsland rail services. He, along with members of the upper house in Eastern Metropolitan Region, has raised the concern about rail services terminating at Flinders Street station rather than Southern Cross station. Can I make it very clear to the member for Gippsland East that rail services from Sale and Bairnsdale will continue to run through to Southern Cross station, as they currently do. There will be no change at all to the services that are provided. I understand that people within his electorate have been somewhat concerned about some of the scaremongering that has occurred by those opposite, which is a bit rich, given that they closed the services to Bairnsdale and we reopened them.

I give a guarantee to the member for Gippsland East and to his constituents that we will continue to run services through to Southern Cross station. There are some capacity constraints within the regional and metropolitan rail network, as I think everyone knows. We are doing the best we can to make sure there is a choice for passengers who want to travel from regional centres and terminate their journey at either Flinders Street station or Southern Cross station. I am also working with members from the upper house to find a solution that I think will work for local residents so that those who have long-haul passenger needs, as the member for Gippsland East rightly referred to, can be accommodated appropriately whether they wish to terminate at Flinders Street station or at Southern Cross station.

We will be working to ensure that we provide those services, that we deal with the capacity constraints and that we also deal with the needs of the people from regional Victoria, which this side of the house is very much committed to doing.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Community Development) — Once again the member for Cranbourne has supported worthy community initiatives in his electorate. The people of Cranbourne have been the beneficiaries of this type of action on a number of significant occasions in the past. I have visited a number of these initiatives with the member for Cranbourne, including the Frankston North community renewal project. It is a terrific project and he is a great supporter of it. He supported the extension of funding for community renewals and was successful in that. On this occasion he has asked that the development at Casey Fields, which is a very important project for the people of Cranbourne and the entire south-eastern region — —

Mr Robinson — Get to the Demons!

Mr BATCHELOR — I will get to the Demons in a moment. I understand that was the team that was thrashed on the weekend by the good old Collingwood team. You cannot have everything; you might be able to get the infrastructure, but you have the poor old Demons. The Demons need the help of Casey to lift — —

Mr McIntosh — I draw the Deputy Speaker's attention to the state of the house.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Quorum not formed.

House adjourned 10.43 p.m.

