

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Tuesday, 30 October 2007**

**(Extract from book 15)**

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<sup>1</sup> Resigned 6 August 2007

<sup>2</sup> Elected 15 September 2007

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 6 August 2007

<sup>4</sup> Elected 15 September 2007



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## Tuesday, 30 October 2007

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Jenny Lindell) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.**

### RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

#### Questions without notice: answers

**The SPEAKER** — Order! A point of order was raised at the conclusion of question time on Wednesday, 10 October 2007, by the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Kew, the Leader of the House and the member for Kororoit also made contributions on the point of order, which referred to the manner in which questions should be answered.

As requested by members, I have considered the questions and answers given that day against a number of rulings from the Chair. In particular I have drawn on rulings by former Speaker Delzoppo, on 7 September 1993; former Speaker Plowman, on 10 October 1996; and former Speaker Maddigan, on 26 August 2003.

Speaker Delzoppo clearly stated that ministers may answer questions as they see fit, provided they are relevant.

Speaker Plowman noted that the actual text of the answer is for the minister or Premier himself or herself and that the Chair is not in a position to direct a minister to answer in a specific way. Speaker Plowman continued to remark that raising the same point of order each day simply wasted the time of the house.

Speaker Maddigan ruled that an answer was far too general and sought for the minister to address the question. Once the minister referred her answer to the specific health network budget mentioned in the question, rather than the health budget generally, the Speaker ruled that the minister was being relevant to the question.

As further noted by Speaker Delzoppo on 26 October 1995, a minister may choose to answer or not answer a question, or to answer it in any fashion that he or she sees fit.

I do not uphold the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

#### ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling for questions without notice I wish to advise the house that

Minister Allan will be absent from question time today. Questions on the skills and workforce participation portfolio should be directed to Minister Pike, and questions on the regional and rural development portfolio should be directed to Minister Helper.

I also advise the house that Minister Holding will be absent from Parliament this week. The Premier will take questions on the water portfolio, and Minister Cameron will take questions on finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, as well as tourism and major events.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Western Health: investments

**Mr WELLS (Scoresby)** — My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I draw the minister's attention to media reports of the substantial financial losses incurred by Western Health on the United States subprime market, and I ask: now that the minister has had several weeks to consider his answer and seek advice, will he now inform the house of the details of the investment, the full potential exposure and details of any negotiations with representatives of either Lehman Brothers or Grange Securities, and when the minister and the secretary of the department were first informed of Western Health's investments?

**Mr ANDREWS (Minister for Health)** — I thank the honourable member for Scoresby for his question. I think I answered this question in the last sitting week. Under section 29 of the Health Services Act health services such as Western Health, as independent statutory authorities, are empowered to make investments and to make financial decisions with the reserves they hold. That is an appropriate power.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — It is very curious. We have the federal health minister, who wants to see more boards, and we have this mob over here, who seem to think that boards do not have the power to make independent decisions.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister should come back to the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — To be absolutely clear about this, Speaker, section 29 of the Health Services Act empowers Western Health and other boards across our health system to make the sorts of investment decisions that the

member for Scoresby speaks about. On from that, those decisions need to be made against a well-established framework, whether it be the Trustee Act or on from that the Financial Management Act or indeed guidelines issued by the Treasurer in relation to the management of risk. It remains my absolute expectation that decisions made by Western Health, indeed decisions made by all of our health services — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — I can simply say again — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The level of interjection is far too high.

**Mr ANDREWS** — There is a well-established framework for these matters, and it remains my absolute expectation that Western Health — —

**Mr K. Smith** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I think the member for Bass was in the chamber when I read my ruling. The minister is being relevant to the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — It is my absolute expectation that Western Health — indeed every health service across the state — would follow each and every step in the well-established framework in relation to investments they make in relation to resources they hold.

**Mrs Shardey** — On a point of order, Speaker, in your advice to the house you used the word ‘relevance’. The minister so far in his answer has failed to be relevant. All he has done is tell us about his expectations. We are not interested in that. We want to know the answer to the question that was actually asked.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Rulings from previous Speakers are quite clear, as long as the minister is relevant to the question. He is being relevant to the question. The minister, to continue.

**Mr ANDREWS** — I have concluded.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister has completed his answer.

### **Water: Wimmera–Mallee pipeline**

**Mr CRUTCHFIELD** (South Barwon) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the

house on recent government initiatives to help fast-track the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline?

**Mr BRUMBY** (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for South Barwon for his question. Earlier this morning, with the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, I visited Glenorchy Road just near Stawell to inspect progress on the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. This pipeline is a great project for the region and a great project for our state. It is a project which had its origins in this Parliament in the 2003 budget.

When we were elected to government in 1999 I remember very clearly meeting with the councils from the north-west and hearing their despair at never being able to obtain funding from the former Kennett government to assess the feasibility of piping the Wimmera–Mallee system. We provided the funding for that feasibility study, and as a result of that it is the leadership of the Labor government in Victoria which has seen this great project go forward. Of course since then we have seen funding contributed from the commonwealth, and we thank it for its contribution to what is a great project.

This is the biggest water project in Australia. It is the biggest project in terms of savings. This project will save 100 000 megalitres of water a year, or 100 billion litres of water a year. If you built a canal from Melbourne to Darwin, that is the amount of water which is saved in this single project. What this project is doing is replacing 17 500 kilometres of open channel. If you went around Australia you would find the perimeter of Australia is 17 500 kilometres, and what we are doing is replacing that with 8800 kilometres of sealed pipe. As I have said, this project will save 100 000 megalitres of water.

Today I announced that the state government will provide additional funding of \$99 million towards this project. What this additional funding means, along with the reconfiguration of asset funding in our forward estimates, is that the completion date for this project — this great leadership project, this great water project — can now be brought forward to 2009–10. When this project was first announced it was a 10-year project that was going to go out to 2016. The funding that has been announced today, the improvements in the work program and the fact that we can run tenders for stages 3 and 4 together now means that the completion date of this project can be brought forward by five years — to 2009–10.

I made it very clear today that we were providing this funding and we were wanting the federal government and the federal opposition to match our commitment.

This is genuinely a national project. It is the biggest water-saving project in Australia. We have gone through an extraordinarily dry period of 10 years, and now is the time to be investing in water projects. Now is the time to be bringing forward those water savings.

This project is about the future. It is about securing the future for this region. It will bring and is bringing significant additional investment to the region, generating hundreds of additional jobs. The announcement today is a significant vote of confidence in this project. It means that the water savings can now be secured from 2009–10. These are water savings which will be available for both irrigators and the environment and which were previously not factored in until 2016. The key issue now is to get both sides of politics at a federal level fully committed to this project.

Finally, in relation to the commonwealth contribution, there are significant unspent funds in the national water initiative, the existing program. There are billions of dollars of uncommitted funds under future water programs announced by the commonwealth, and the commonwealth is able, therefore, to match the state's funding in this regard without a single dollar of cost to the budget surplus going forward.

### Floods: Gippsland

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of The Nationals) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I refer to the government's \$60 million flood recovery package for Gippsland, \$30 million of which was to rebuild damaged roads and bridges. I further refer to the minister's responsibilities in relation to the timber industry, and I ask: is it not the fact that the government diverted timber road funding from other parts of regional Victoria to assist in repairs to roads and bridges damaged in the Gippsland floods while perpetuating the myth that all the money in the \$60 million package was new funding?

**Mr HELPER** (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. I thank him because it gives me the opportunity to remind the house how promptly and how effectively the state government responded to the drought that occurred in Gippsland.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr HELPER** — I am sorry, the floods. The member for South-West Coast jokes about this.

**Mr Burgess** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Hastings should not interject in that manner.

**Mr HELPER** — As the Leader of The Nationals correctly pointed out, a significant amount of resources was committed to the rebuilding of road infrastructure, a significant amount of resources was part of the package to rebuild community infrastructure and a significant part of the resources was allocated to assist individual farmers and land-holders to get through the difficult circumstances they faced as a consequence of the floods in Gippsland. The package also addressed an enormous amount of environmental works that needed to be undertaken, such as works on stream flows, on stream sides and on erosion control et cetera. All these allocations, if I remember correctly, not only were welcomed by the Leader of The Nationals but also were very much welcomed by the community of Gippsland.

I conclude by saying that the state government is extremely proud of having stood by the community of Gippsland during those floods.

**Mr Ryan** — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to have him address the issue that I asked of him. I will not repeat the question, because I am sure the minister heard it.

**Mr Batchelor** — On the point of order, Speaker, the Leader of The Nationals asked the Minister for Agriculture a question in relation to road funding, in particular timber industry road funding, which in either category is the responsibility of the Minister for Roads and Ports.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of The Nationals knows not to enter into conversation across the table, and the Minister for Community Development knows to ignore the Leader of The Nationals.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Batchelor** — You make it difficult to make a point of order when you say that, Speaker! The issue simply is that the Leader of The Nationals once again has misdirected his question. The Minister for Agriculture has answered and provided relevant information, but if he wants to know specific details about road funding from that particular package, he should direct that question to the Minister for Roads and Ports.

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

**Drought: government assistance**

**Mr HARDMAN** (Seymour) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I ask the minister to outline the government's response — —

**Mr Hodgett** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Kilsyth will stop interjecting in that manner.

**Mr HARDMAN** — I ask the Minister for Agriculture to outline the government's response to the ongoing drought in Victoria.

**Mr HELPER** (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for Seymour for his question and his diligent and hard work as the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture in support of farming communities and farmers in Victoria. As honourable members would be aware, the outlook for the October–December quarter this year is for a drier and hotter season than average. Irrigation allocations from the Goulburn system are 23 per cent and from the Murray system, 16 per cent, and more than 7900 farmers have been approved for exceptional circumstances interest rate subsidies. It is a very serious situation across rural Victoria.

On Wednesday last week the Premier and I were on Kim Byron's property at Warracknabeal to announce a \$100 million drought support package which addresses community drought support and individual farmer drought support. Some 17 initiatives make up that \$100 million package. I do not have time to highlight all those initiatives, but I will dwell on two of them. One is the fixed water charge rebate for irrigators, a total package worth some \$55 million. I would like to quote to the house some of the responses we have had to that particular initiative:

The VFF congratulates the government on a rebate system that is more equitable, particularly in assisting large water users who are facing the highest cost increases.

That is contained in a VFF (Victorian Farmers Federation) media release of 24 October. Put very succinctly from across the border came a comment by the New South Wales Irrigators Council chairman, Col Thomson. Just very simply, 'We'd love it', came the echo from across the border.

The other initiative I want to highlight is the on-farm productivity improvement grants, with up to \$3000 for farmers in the worst-hit drought-affected areas. I want to present the house with a quote:

Grants for \$3000 for property infrastructure upgrades including water-piping systems and stock containment areas —

read for that the previous program —

will also be welcome.

That quote comes from the member for Benalla in a Nationals media release. I thank the member for Benalla for his generous comments about the package and his recognition when measures are put forward by this government that genuinely support farming communities.

The package overall has been received very well, and I want to add some further comments on how the package has been received:

Today's drought package is a genuine and intelligent attempt to come to grips with the consequences of our worst drought on record ...

That was a comment by Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive officer, Wayne Kayler-Thomson, on 24 October.

I quote Mildura mayor, Cr John Arnold:

'I was on my way to Bendigo to meet with regional development minister Jacinta Allan when I heard the Premier was to be in Warracknabeal', Cr Arnold said, 'so I thought I'd divert there on the way to say thanks'.

We thank Cr Arnold for his recognition of a good package when he sees it. In conclusion, can I just say, in the serious situation facing Victoria, that all farmers know that at the end of a drought there is rain — and a very prosperous future for Victorian agriculture.

**Public sector: investments**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Now that the Premier has had several weeks to consider his answer, seek advice and accept public accountability, will he now report to Parliament on all Victorian government investments, local councils, statutory authorities and other bodies which have exposure to the United States subprime market, and the details of that exposure, including all potential or existing losses, or will he too continue to hide?

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Health!

**Mr BRUMBY** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, but the answer to this

question is the same as the answer was three weeks ago, when he first asked it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will not have that level of interjection. I ask the Minister for Health and the member for Scoresby to help with the smooth running of question time by not interjecting across the table.

**Mr BRUMBY** — If my memory is correct, I pointed out — —

**Mr Baillieu** interjected.

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

**Mr BRUMBY** — I pointed out to the Leader of the Opposition last time when he asked the same question that there are steps, processes, laws — —

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Warrandyte!

**Mr BRUMBY** — There are steps, processes, laws and other regulatory requirements in place in relation to the investment behaviour of financial institutions in Victoria.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I seek the cooperation of all members to allow question time to continue.

**Mr BRUMBY** — If my memory is correct, as I indicated last time there is a range of requirements in place, including the Financial Management Act. There are the financial reports of hospitals and departments. There are also the fiduciary guidelines, which are issued by the Treasurer to — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I warn the member for South-West Coast, the member for Scoresby and the member for Bulleen. I will not warn them again.

**Mr BRUMBY** — Many of these arrangements are long established, but many of course have been further improved since the election of the Labor government in 1999, particularly the requirements in relation to the reporting of the Auditor-General, particularly in relation to the annual financial report and particularly in relation to the financial reports of departments. And I certainly know that in the period when I was Treasurer the

fiduciary requirements that were put in place were also tightened.

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Speaker, the standing orders require answers to be direct, factual and succinct. I cannot think of a more fundamental question than the one that has been asked of the Premier as to accounting to the Parliament and the people of Victoria about taxpayers funds. That is what has been asked of him. I ask you to rule that he be direct, factual and succinct in reporting to the Parliament in answer to the question about what funds are at risk and how much has been lost.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question, which is all that standing orders require.

**Mr BRUMBY** — I want to thank the member for South-West Coast for jogging my memory, because — —

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Health is warned and will not be warned again.

**Mr BRUMBY** — One of the other elements of accountability and reporting that our government has improved is, of course, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. To hear this little homily from the opposition about openness and accountability — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order!

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Warrandyte must learn respect for the Chair. When the Chair stands, it is not a time for conversation to continue.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not need the advice of the Minister for Health or the member for Narre Warren North.

The Premier has strayed into debating the question. I ask him to come back to the question.

**Mr BRUMBY** — As I have said, there is a whole range of measures, steps, processes, regulations and requirements in place, many of them long established, but most of them substantially strengthened and improved under our government — including, of course, the fact that the Premier and the Treasurer now

appear regularly each year before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, which the former government just could not be bothered with.

**Sport: drought support**

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — My question is for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. Can the minister update the house on what additional support the Brumby government is providing to ensure grassroots sport continues to thrive throughout the drought?

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs) — I thank the member for Geelong for his question. Speaker, you may recall that back in May I spoke about a vital drought relief project for the Geelong region as part of the government’s \$6.7 million drought assistance program. The member for Geelong strongly advocated for that project along with other Geelong members, and he continues to support local sport.

Since that announcement I have travelled extensively through Victoria, and the response from both councils and local sporting clubs to that \$6.7 million program has been overwhelming. Right across Victoria the drought proofing of grounds is occurring through projects such as water harvesting, the sinking of bores and the laying of drought-resistant turf, amongst many other projects. Our package was so well received that councils and communities wanted it expanded.

The drought clearly has not abated, and further action is required. On Friday the member for South Barwon and I joined the Premier as he committed the Brumby government to a record \$12.9 million additional drought relief assistance funding, \$9.3 million of which will be shared by every council in Victoria on stage 3 or higher water restrictions. Metropolitan councils will be offered grants of up to \$75 000, and rural, regional and interface councils will be offered grants of up to \$100 000. Importantly the remaining \$3.6 million will go towards a synthetic surfaces program, which will establish artificial synthetic surfaces in strategic locations right across the state. State sporting associations will be key partners in this process.

We have committed these funds because we know the vitally important role that sport plays during this period of drought and the need for new and innovative ways to keep our sportsgrounds alive. Many communities are leading the way. As the member for Ballarat East knows, for example, the government recently invested \$50 000 in a water recycling project at one of Ballarat’s most popular sportsgrounds, the Marty Busch Reserve.

That project will save 55 000 litres a day and 20 million litres every year, thanks to the Brumby government’s investment. That is just one project.

Only the Brumby government can be trusted to ensure that this happens. The other side of the house has been deathly silent. While this government has poured in close to \$20 million in drought assistance funding over the last 12 months, we have seen one solitary press release from The Nationals and one solitary adjournment matter from the Liberal Party. I take this silence to mean both The Nationals and the Liberals strongly support the Brumby government’s work, and they are not alone, with VicSport, Cricket Victoria, AFL Victoria, Tennis Victoria, Football Federation Victoria, the Victorian bowls associations, Hockey Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria strongly backing this project. I will finish with a quote from the MAV as reported in today’s *Northern Times*:

This new state program provides a much-needed boost to help meet the growing cost of managing Victoria’s 2000 grassed sports surfaces and gives councils a greater capacity to invest in essential long-term drought-proofing measures.

The Brumby government will never let its commitment to community sport waver. We will continue to proudly invest in drought proofing and upgrading Victoria’s sporting infrastructure, keeping our state the best place to live, work, raise a family and play sport.

**Questions interrupted.**

**DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Benambra, Tony Plowman.

**Questions resumed.**

**Anticorruption commission: establishment**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the address by the New South Wales Labor Premier, Morris Iemma, during last week’s anticorruption conference in Sydney, where he said that any state government that did not have an independent crime and misconduct commission was ‘crazy’, and further, ‘If you don’t have one, you are kidding yourselves’, and I ask: given that Morris Iemma is the second senior Labor figure this month to support calls for an anticorruption commission, will the Premier now establish an independent, broadbased anticorruption commission in Victoria?

**Mr BRUMBY** (Premier) — Again, this is a question which the Leader of the Opposition has asked previously, and the government's position on this is quite clear. We will not be establishing an independent commission against corruption.

### **Drought: mental health**

**Ms OVERINGTON** (Ballarat West) — My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Can the minister update the house on new initiatives for families facing mental illness in drought-affected areas?

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Mental Health) — I thank the member for Ballarat West for her question. The Brumby government knows that it is tough in the bush at the moment. It is tough for rural families, tough for communities and townships and tough for primary producers because of this drought. The ongoing dry conditions throughout much of the state continue to exacerbate ongoing financial and social challenges.

As we have heard today, the \$100 million drought package announced last week by the Premier tackles structural issues and workforce issues as well as community issues. Importantly it also addresses the mental health issues that are continuing to emerge in our rural communities. The package includes extending and expanding our counselling programs throughout the state. It means extra counsellors in Mildura, Kerang and Campaspe. It means extra counsellors in the Goulburn Valley, in Gippsland and also in the south-west.

These counsellors have become trusted figures in many rural communities, providing immediate access to help for farmers and rural families in recognising the early signs of depression and preventing the escalation of mental health issues on farms and in communities. They are working alongside the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Bouverie Centre to develop local workshops and local strategies to assist local communities. They are supporting valuable programs like Looking after Your Neighbour, the No Bull support program and mental health first-aid training.

It is important to recognise the size and the scale of this drought. The duration of the drought has meant that mental illness and depression are escalating. In addition to counselling we need clinically trained medical experts on hand to bolster our area mental health services. That is why the government is also creating eight new specialist mental health early intervention teams to work across the state. The teams will be made up of highly specialised mental health professionals such as clinical psychologists and psychiatric nurses.

They will have a specific drought focus and will work with front-line drought counsellors to provide specialised support for farming families experiencing stress and depression. They will be regionally based services to serve wider catchment areas and will assist communities from their bases in Shepparton, Warragul, Traralgon, Sale, Bendigo, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Geelong, Wangaratta, Wodonga and Mildura.

This comes on top of our recent initiative, announced at the community cabinet in Birchip, of \$1.16 million for VicRelief + Foodbank for the provision of emergency relief through agencies across rural and regional Victoria. That money will allow for the purchase of food relief and better drought coordination, and will also support families at Christmas time and when kids go back to school next year. The extra costs and expectations at Christmas time, and kids needing new books and uniforms, can stretch the family budget to breaking point.

We know these programs and the package of initiatives announced by the Premier last week will make a real difference to the lives of those Victorians doing it tough during the drought.

### **Anticorruption commission: establishment**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I draw the Premier's attention to an article in the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* by the leader of the federal opposition, Kevin Rudd, in which he said, 'The very existence of a credible criminal justice commission is, of itself, a significant deterrent against corruption'. Further he said, 'Part of holding that line is a properly funded and properly empowered criminal justice commission'. Consistent with the advice of Mr Rudd, will the Premier think again and establish a broadbased, independent anticorruption commission to combat corruption in the Victorian public sector, or is Mr Rudd also wrong?

**Mr BRUMBY** (Premier) — I again thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He has asked the same question on a number of occasions, and the answer remains the same.

### **Equine influenza: control**

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — My question is to the Minister for Racing. Will the minister update the house on the equine influenza outbreak in New South Wales and Queensland and its likely impact on Victoria and in particular on the much-awaited Spring Racing Carnival?

**Mr HULLS** (Minister for Racing) — I thank the honourable member for his question and acknowledge his interest in the racing industry. We are all well aware of the outbreak of EI (equine influenza) in both New South Wales and Queensland. It has had a devastating impact on the racing industry in those states.

The Australian Racing Board (ARB) recently gave in-principle approval to the adoption of new Australian rules of racing. It has renewed its commitment to the containment and eradication of equine influenza. It believes, and we believe in this state, that that is the best policy. However, it has also approved the adoption of new rules of racing that make it mandatory for all horses involved in the racing and breeding industries to be vaccinated as a condition of being able to participate in the industry. In fact in a recent media statement the ARB chairman restated his commitment to the current containment and eradication efforts but said that going down the path of vaccination would be an added form of insurance.

We have to remember that vaccination is not the panacea for equine influenza. As Victoria's chief veterinary officer, Dr Hugh Millar, has said, as with human influenza, vaccination against equine influenza is no guarantee that individual animals will not get sick. It is absolutely crucial that we continue to remain vigilant in relation to equine influenza. That is why the government has invested an extra \$2.2 million in relation to security at our borders and an awareness campaign at Melbourne Airport, as well as \$500 000 in grants for not-for-profit recreational horse organisations and a whole range of other measures.

I note that the federal government has announced a compensation package in relation to the effects of equine influenza and has actually added to that compensation package. However, I am concerned that none of that compensation seems to be flowing to Victoria. I have written to the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, about this.

It has to be remembered that, even though racing is continuing in Victoria, the way the industry is structured means that we are putting on the show here in this state, we are putting in place the biosecurity measures to keep EI out of this state and we are putting up the prize money to ensure racing can continue in Victoria. If you are in New South Wales or Queensland, you can bet into Victoria, but the returns go back to those states, so of course Victoria is entitled to assistance and to part of that compensation package. I urge Peter McGauran to come to the party and

understand that he is a Victorian and to assist the industry in this state.

We are extremely hopeful of having a very successful Spring Racing Carnival. We have already had the Cox Plate. It was a great day, and I know many members of this house were at the Cox Plate. We had the Geelong Cup last week, and we have the Victoria Derby on Saturday.

There has been some debate about the current policy of eradication and containment. I hope all members of this house support that policy, because it is the only way we will ultimately eradicate EI from this state. However, there have been calls from some politicians, including Mr McGauran, to make exceptions to the rule about the non-movement of horses from one state to another.

I personally have received letters from people in relation to, for instance, Leica Falcon. I have to say in relation to Leica Falcon and horses like Takeover Target that of course I feel very sorry for the connections of those horses. But the fact is you cannot have politicians deciding which horses can and cannot break the rules. You just cannot. You have to base it on the science and the advice of the vets. The fact is that the vets have decided what protocols ought to be put in place. I would expect that all of us as members of Parliament, and all of us who believe in a successful spring carnival, would also want to adhere to the protocols that have been put in place by the experts.

The fact is that the racing industry is worth more than \$2 billion annually to this state. There are more than 70 000 jobs that depend on this very important industry. The last thing we want is to allow politicians to decide which horses can and cannot come into this state and break the rules. We have got it right so far. The Victorian Brumby government has absolutely supported the industry. We will continue to do what we can to keep EI out of this state. Let us hope that we have a sensational spring carnival.

## NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (VICTORIA) AMENDMENT BILL

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 and for other purposes.

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — I request a brief explanation of the bill.

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — This is a bill that further implements the ongoing reform of the national energy market, a program that is under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments. This reform process has been under way for some time and has seen a gradual transformation. This is the next phase of this program of reforms to the national energy market.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

### ROAD LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Mr PALLAS** (Minister for Roads and Ports) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Road Safety Act 1986, the Chattel Securities Act 1987, the EastLink Project Act 2004, the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, the Road Management Act 2004 and the Transport Act 1983 and for other purposes.

**Mr MULDER** (Polwarth) — I seek a brief explanation of the bill from the minister.

**Mr PALLAS** (Minister for Roads and Ports) — The bill attempts to deal with the reduction of the risk posed by heavy vehicle driver fatigue. It also seeks to create an offence for deliberate or reckless breach of level crossing signalling. It seeks to clarify the legal effect of road management standards as they relate to the performance of road management functions. It establishes a new set of arrangements for the funding and management of street lighting on arterial roads, with the cost being shared by the state and local governments.

It expands the purposes for which VicRoads records may be used and disclosed. It extends to operator-owner systems recent reforms, which were made in relation to traffic offences, to the tolling system which applies on both CityLink and EastLink. It provides greater consistency in terms of the tolling provisions which apply both on CityLink and EastLink. It amends the Chattel Securities Act in relation to the registration of security interests in motor vehicles.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ANAPHYLAXIS MANAGEMENT) BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Ms MORAND** (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Children's Services Act 1996 to require the proprietor of a children's service to have an anaphylaxis management policy and to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to require certain schools to have an anaphylaxis management policy and for other purposes.

**Read first time.**

### STATE TAXATION AND ACCIDENT COMPENSATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Ms MORAND** (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Accident Compensation Act 1985, the Congestion Levy Act 2005 and the Land Tax Act 2005 and for other purposes.

**Mr WELLS** (Scoresby) — I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

**Ms MORAND** (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — The bill will provide a new exemption into the Congestion Levy Act to exempt from the levy parking spaces owned by consulates, consulate officials, employees and members of their families forming part of their households. This will fulfil the government's obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Also the Land Tax Act will be amended regarding land tax imposed on land held on trust, and these changes seek to rectify issues that have arisen during the administration of trust provisions. Finally, in relation to the Accident Compensation Act, the changes will ensure flexibility in the provision of support to catastrophically injured workers who need suitably modified houses and/or motor vehicles.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PROBLEM GAMBLING AND OTHER MEASURES) 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, the Casino Control Act 1991 and the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 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 the government's commitment at the last election on its Taking Action on Problem Gambling strategy. In brief the measures in the bill will limit the availability of cash at gaming venues, require gaming venue operators to have self-exclusion programs, require a range of industry participants to have responsible gambling codes of conduct, prohibit the outdoor placement of gaming machines and prohibit the venue operators, the wagering operator and the casino operator from permitting intoxicated persons to gamble, and other minor matters.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## MOTOR CAR TRADERS AMENDMENT BILL

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Mr ROBINSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Motor Car Traders Act 1986, the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 and other acts and for other purposes.

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

**Mr ROBINSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — The bill will implement legislative recommendations from the Pullen report, which the government has indicated it would support. These include proposals to restrict the persons who may claim on the Motor Car Traders Guarantee Fund; to introduce extended cooling-off periods for all new car sales; to improve the effectiveness of regulations allowing a licensing authority to consider certain associates when assessing licence applications; to require traders to

check that potential employees are not prohibited prior to employing them; and finally, to improve the efficiency of the operation and protect the viability of the Motor Car Traders Guarantee Fund.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## FAIR TRADING AND CONSUMER ACTS FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Mr ROBINSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Fair Trading Act 1999, the Owners Corporations Act 2006, the Partnership Act 1958, the Shop Trading Reform Act 1996, the Subdivision Act 1988, the Trade Measurement Act 1995, the Trade Measurement (Administration) Act 1995 and other acts and to repeal the Frustrated Contracts Act 1959 and the Hire Purchase Act 1959 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 Consumer Affairs) — The bill will amend the Fair Trading Act in a number of ways, including to ensure that consumers documents are made clearer; to support the enforcement of the act and its cognate national legislation by empowering the director of consumer affairs to conduct proceedings under the Trade Practices Act 1974 in the Federal Court; to allow the director or an inspector to seek a court order enforcing notices requiring information or documents under the act; and to provide qualified privilege for complainants under the act. It amends the Partnership Act 1958 to recognise and allow the registration in Victoria of a new form of investment vehicle, and finally it allows the modernisation of the statute book by repealing a number of spent acts.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## LIQUOR CONTROL REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Mr ROBINSON** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 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 Consumer Affairs)** — The bill fulfils a number of commitments made by the Labor government in relation to community safety prior to the election by tackling community safety issues around entertainment precincts. It does this in a number of ways — by doubling the penalties for licensees serving persons affected by alcohol; expanding the definition of 'associate' so it will capture family members and others with an interest in an applicant's business; adding a condition to a restaurant licence with respect to the hours and conditions in which music can be played at background noise levels; banning the supply of liquor on party buses without licences or permits; and introducing a scheme of enforceable undertakings that may be arranged by the director, and other matters.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of motion: removal

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I wish to advise the house that under standing order 144 notices of motion 44 to 53 inclusive 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:

#### Water: desalination plant

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria points out to the house that, given the lack of information and consultation with the public, we are totally opposed to the proposed desalination plant on the following grounds:

Desalination is an energy intensive and unnecessarily costly means of addressing water shortages. Any renewable energy offsets need first to be directed to reducing the impact of current levels of energy use.

The construction of the plant poses potential risks to marine and marine park environments. Aboriginal heritage sites are also at risk. Detailed environmental effects studies have not been undertaken.

Inappropriate siting of the plant has potential detrimental effects on coastal space, with the likelihood of destroying the very values which attract visitors and residents to Bass Coast.

The development is at conflict with state and local government policies, especially marine protection, Victorian coastal strategy, Victorian coastal spaces study and Bass Coast strategic coastal framework.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria directs immediate consultation between government and the local community's representative committee to address the issues as listed above.

**By Mr K. SMITH (Bass) (173 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 desalination, recycling and capturing stormwater.

**By Dr SYKES (Benalla) (367 signatures)**

#### Nuclear energy: federal policy

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the commonwealth government's promotion of a nuclear industry in Australia and the strong likelihood that Victoria will be selected as a site for the construction of a nuclear power facility.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria reaffirm the opposition of the Victorian government to the creation of a nuclear industry in Victoria, including the construction of a nuclear power plant.

**By Dr HARKNESS (Frankston) (15 signatures)**

**South Gippsland Highway: flood inundation**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the citizens of Sale and region draws to the attention of the house the unacceptable imposition cast upon Gippsland communities particularly at Sale and Longford and surrounds arising from the intermittent closure of the South Gippsland Highway south of Sale because of flood inundation.

The petitioners therefore request the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls upon the Victorian government to immediately undertake the required roadworks so as to establish an all-weather road, designed to be free of flood inundation between Sale and Longford.

**By Mr RYAN (Gippsland South) (46 signatures)**

**Peninsula Community Health Service: future**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the Mornington Peninsula draws to the attention of the house: as a separately incorporated community health service, Mornington Peninsula Community Health Service has a long and highly regarded history that has actively engaged the peninsula community in service planning and delivery.

We request that Peninsula Community Health Service remains as a declared community health centre under the Health Services Act.

For Peninsula Community Health Service to continue as a separately incorporated community health centre, and re-establish a board of management consisting of community members.

The petitions therefore request the Legislative Assembly of Victoria that the Peninsula Community Health service should stand alone and are able to:

ensure the delivery of high-quality clinical services to consumers within a comprehensive clinical governance framework;

achieve the delivery of integrated community-based services within the context of current government health policy;

support the workforce by providing appropriate work environments, professional training and support, career development etc.;

achieve sound financial management of government funding;

actively pursue the growth of community health services to the Mornington Peninsula community

**By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (8 signatures)**

**Crib Point: bitumen plant**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the electorate of Hastings draws the attention of the house to an application lodged with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council for the construction of a bitumen storage facility at Crib Point.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure that the government in office abides by the written undertaking given to the residents, before the 2006 election by the then member, that a bitumen storage facility would not be built at Crib Point.

The petitioners are opposed to the proposal. Should such a project proceed, the detrimental impact on the environment and future development of Crib Point and adjoining townships would be enormous. The community focus for the area is that of tourism and associated businesses not as an industrial zone. The current zonings of the area were put in place over 30 years ago when the area had few houses. The make-up and expectations of the community have changed.

**By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (1036 signatures)**

**Casey: special charges scheme**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

We the undersigned citizens of Victoria draw the attention of the house to a decision by the City of Casey to impose a 'special charges scheme' to residents of Devon Road and Browns Road in Devon Meadows. This scheme will result in residents paying a contribution towards the cost of sealing unmade roads in the municipality. We feel this decision is unfair and will put residents in financial hardship.

We the undersigned concerned citizens of Victoria ask the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to request the City of Casey to review its decision to charge affected residents for road sealing.

**By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (24 signatures)**

**Sandringham: beach renourishment**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Sandringham, the City of Bayside and Victoria draws to the attention of the government the serious erosion of the Royal Avenue-Southey Street, Sandringham, beaches and abutting beaches to the immediate north caused by a recently constructed rock groyne as part of the Royal Avenue beach remedial works project.

Prayer

The petitioners therefore request that the government in conjunction with the City of Bayside adopt the following proposals to ensure the maintenance of the natural beauty of the beachscape both now and as our legacy to future Australians and:

- (a) immediately halt work on the renourishment project, remove the recently constructed Southey Street beach stone groyne and review the role of the old Royal Avenue beach stone groyne to prevent further rapid erosion;
- (b) consider and implement a more effective, less costly and more aesthetically pleasing method of renourishment (as

used for other parts of the Australian coastline) such as geo-bags, wooden groynes, sand and other options; and

- (c) ensure the projection of the bayside beaches as a whole rather than an ad hoc, beach-by-beach approach, which is causing a negative environmental, financial and aesthetic outcome.

**By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (209 signatures)**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Bass be considered next day on motion of Mr SMITH (Bass).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Sandringham be considered next day on motion of Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham).**

## SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

### *Alert Digest No. 14*

**Mr CARLI (Brunswick) presented *Alert Digest No. 14 of 2007* on:**

**Agent-General and Commissioners for Victoria Bill**

**Animals Legislation Amendment (Animal Care) Bill**

**Crimes Amendment (Rape) Bill**

**Electricity Safety Amendment Bill**

**Energy Legislation Further Amendment Bill**

**Equal Opportunity Amendment (Family Responsibilities) Bill**

**Justice Legislation Amendment Bill**

**Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill**

**Port Services Amendment Bill**

**Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill**

**together with appendices.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered to be printed.**

### **Legislation Reform (Repeals No. 1) Bill**

**Mr CARLI (Brunswick) presented report, together with appendices.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered to be printed.**

## DOCUMENTS

### **Tabled by Clerk:**

Accident Compensation Conciliation Service — Report 2006–07

Adult, Community and Further Education Board — Report 2006–07

Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security, Office of — Report 2006–07

*Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* — Order under s 17D granting a lease over Mordialloc-Mentone Beach Park

Energy Safe Victoria — Report 2006–07

Essential Services Commission — Report 2006–07

*Financial Management Act 1994:*

Reports from the Minister for Agriculture that he had received the 2006–07 reports of:

Northern Victorian Fresh Tomato Industry Development Committee

Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria

Reports from the Minister for Planning that he had received the 2006–07 reports of:

Architects Registration Board of Victoria

Dandenong Development Board

Justice, Department of — Report 2006–07

Melbourne Market Authority — Report 2006–07 (two documents)

*Planning and Environment Act 1987* — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Ballarat — C113, C120

Baw Baw — C50

Buloke — C15, C16

Casey — C98

Central Goldfields — C17

Darebin — C10 Part 4, C72

Gannawarra — C16, C18

Glen Eira — C50

Golden Plains — C43

Hepburn — C44, C45

Loddon — C17

Melton — C33

Mildura — C45

Monash — C68

Moorabool — C44

Mornington Peninsula — C78

Mount Alexander — C42

Northern Grampians — C23

Swan Hill — C21, C25, C26, C28

Wellington — C49

Whitehorse — C67

Whittlesea — C81 Part 2

Wodonga — C34, C52

Yarriambiack — C11, C12

Primary Industries, Department of — Report 2006–07 (two documents)

Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust — Report 2006–07

*Racing Act 1958* — Notification under s 3B Modifying the Constitution of Racing Victoria Ltd

Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria — Report 2006–07

Shrine of Remembrance Trustees — Report 2006–07

State Electricity Commission of Victoria — Report 2006–07

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Building Act 1993* — SR 115

*Gas Safety Act 1997* — SR 113

*Legal Profession Act 2004* — SR 112

*Magistrates' Court Act 1989* — SR 118

*Melbourne City Link Act 1995* — SR 116

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — SR 114, 117

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*

Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rules 110, 114, 117, 118

Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rules 106, 107, 112, 116

Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation — Report 2006–07

Victorian Funds Management Corporation — Report 2006–07

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority — Report 2006–07

Victorian Small Business Commissioner — Report 2006–07

Victorian Veterans Council — Report 2006–07

*Water Act 1989* — Plenty River Stream Flow Management Plan under s 32A

Young Farmers' Financial Council — Report 2006–07.

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

*Gene Technology Amendment Act 2007* — Whole Act, other than Part 3 and section 43 — 1 November 2007 (*Gazette G43*, 25 October 2007)

*Justice Legislation Amendment Act 2007* — Section 14 — 18 October 2007 (*Gazette G42*, 18 October 2007).

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Message read advising royal assent on 17 October to:**

**Firearms Amendment Bill**

**Fisheries Amendment Bill**

**Justice and Road Legislation Amendment (Law Enforcement) Bill**

**Justice Legislation Amendment Bill.**

## APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

**Messages read recommending appropriations for:**

**Agent-General and Commissioners for Victoria Bill**

**Animals Legislation Amendments (Animal Care) Bill**

**Electricity Safety Amendment Bill**

**Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill.**

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

### Membership

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The Speaker has received the resignations of Ms Beattie from the Family and Community Development Committee and Mrs Maddigan from the Law Reform Committee, effective from today.

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

That Mr Noonan be appointed a member of the Family and Community Development Committee, and Mr Foley be appointed a member of the Law Reform Committee.

**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 pm on Thursday, 1 November 2007:

Agent-General and Commissioners for Victoria Bill  
 Animals Legislation Amendment (Animal Care) Bill  
 Electricity Safety Amendment Bill  
 Equal Opportunity Amendment (Family Responsibilities) Bill  
 Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill  
 Port Services Amendment Bill  
 Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill.

Bringing forward this government business program motion today identifies the government's intention to complete these seven pieces of legislation by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday. In the context of the workload we believe this is achievable, but for the assistance of members who undoubtedly will be interested in the Port Services Amendment Bill, it is my proposal to deal with that bill on Thursday of this coming week, which will enable people to have sufficient time to prepare for it. We would seek to organise the completion or participation in the debates on other legislation so that the bulk of Thursday can be made available for the debate on that important piece of legislation.

As I indicated, it is the view of the government that this work program is achievable, and I think it is important for members to know when the Port Services Amendment Bill will be brought forward so they can undertake their appropriate preparation for that debate.

**Mr McINTOSH (Kew)** — The opposition will be opposing the government business program, certainly in relation to the Senate Elections Amendment Bill. Any issue in relation to that matter is now gone and finished, so that does not necessarily cause us concern, save and except that I note that Victoria was the only state that did not introduce legislation commensurate with the commonwealth in relation to the issuing and return of writs and enabling people to have their names entered on the roll. However, that matter has now passed.

In relation to the water amendment bill, that matter has also been the subject of debate and still causes the opposition concern. It is now almost 12 months since the bill was introduced by the previous Premier as a matter of some urgency at the end of last year. Apparently it was so urgent that we had to come back before Christmas, yet it remains languishing on the notice paper at a time when everybody in this house is aware of the increasing difficulties in relation to the drought. But apparently that is not a sufficiently

meritorious reason to have the bill debated in this chamber and ultimately passed into law.

Our concern relates to the extent of the government business program, on which there are seven bills, similar to the last sitting week. On the last occasion the Leader of the House indicated that it was his expectation that there would be ample time to debate those bills. Quite the opposite was the fact. There was not ample time to debate those bills, and some of them had to go to the guillotine. A number of members of the opposition parties were therefore unable to make an adequate contribution in relation to important legislation. For example, debate on the Graffiti Prevention Bill remained incomplete. I foreshadowed in my contribution that the opposition proposed to make a crucial amendment to that bill, but it was unable to be debated at that time.

Again, we have seven bills before the house. I note that four of those seven bills have been the subject of media controversy, so one anticipates that there will be a large number of speakers on both sides of the house who might want to expand and elaborate on the issues that many of us have been contacted and lobbied on by both constituents and interested parties. Those matters will now not easily be raised in this chamber because of the breadth of the government business program.

A matter of profound concern in the last sitting week — it was eventually the subject of a division in this house — was the second reading of a number of bills on the Thursday, notwithstanding that the Leader of the House had indicated that there would be adequate time to debate all the bills on the business program. It happened at a time when a number of bills were still to be debated and it was quite clear that there were still a large number of members who wished to make contributions on those bills. Even though my amendments had been circulated, they were unable to be properly debated in this chamber. Notwithstanding all those things, the government saw fit to bring on a number of second readings, wasting almost an hour and a half of debating time.

If we are to debate these seven bills, I ask for an assurance from the government that, notwithstanding our opposition, there will be adequate time. I also ask that there will not be any stunts pulled such as the provision of time for second readings, because they can be deferred until after 4 o'clock on Thursday afternoon. Secondly, I ask that there be ample time for all opposition members to make full contributions in relation to these bills. Going down the list, I saw that two bills have 10 members listed to speak on them. I was speaking to the Opposition Whip this morning, and

he told me that members of the opposition wish to make contributions on these bills to elaborate on matters that they feel are of concern and to raise matters that their constituents and other interested parties have contacted them about.

It is a matter of profound concern that again we have seven bills on the business program, but unlike the last sitting week, these seven bills are a matter of some public controversy. I anticipate that we will not have adequate time to complete the debate on these seven bills. Certainly I ask the government to assure us that we will not have the same arrangement with second-reading speeches.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Lowan) — On behalf of The Nationals I rise to make a few comments on the government business program for this week. It was not until late on Thursday night that we got the business program — a little later than anticipated and a little later than ideal. Again we see that there are seven bills to be debated this week. As the member for Kew said, there are some controversial bills on the legislative program this week. Obviously we will be supporting some, we will be opposing some and we will not be opposing others, but we want to have the opportunity to debate them all.

The Nationals travel long distances to come here to represent their large electorates, and they want to be given the opportunity to speak on these bills, just as they were promised in the last sitting week. There were seven bills to be debated. Some of them were vitally important for country Victoria — for example, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill. We have heard the discussions about rail gauge standardisation, promised by this government but not delivered. We need new technology in rail. There is also the state of country roads. As we all know, if we spend money on country roads, we save country lives, but many members of The Nationals did not get the opportunity to speak on that legislation.

The other important bill was the Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill. We put forward a very worthwhile proposal in relation to that. We have seen some media comment in the papers and on the TV, but we still have not seen the government respond to those proposals, particularly in relation to the replacement of water. Again, many members of The Nationals, including the member for Morwell, the member for Swan Hill, the member for Benalla, the member for Gippsland South and me, would have liked to comment on that important bill. We would have won the government over, I am sure, and the bill would not have had to go to the upper house for us to change the

government's opinion. Again, although we were promised it last week, we were denied the opportunity to speak on many bills because of a lack of time. As the member for Kew said, we are again concerned that there is not adequate time for us to debate the very important bills on the legislative program for this week.

However, I must be consistent. For the past three parliamentary sitting weeks we have been concerned that the government has been ducking debate on the very important bill it brought into this house, the Water Amendment (Critical Water Infrastructure Projects) Bill. As the member for Kew said, it was important enough for it to bring in this bill, but again the government is ducking the issue. Ministers fly around Victoria announcing water projects, some of which we welcome but some of which we do not, particularly the north-south pipeline, but again the government is not prepared to debate this issue in the Parliament.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — The reality is that the government is not prepared to debate these issues, which are critical to Victoria, and particularly country Victoria.

We still have not heard whether there is going to be an environment effects statement (EES) on the desalination plant, and we also want to debate the taxation of water. This government is notorious for taxing motorists, and we are now seeing it taxing water authorities to the tune of many billions of dollars. Those are the issues on which this government is not open and accountable.

In the few moments I have left I want to say that we need to make sure we have adequate time to debate these seven important bills. There are seven or eight second readings proposed for this week. If they are put into the government business program before 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, obviously they will take away a lot of the speaking time available for members. As I said, it is a very extensive program. There is a lot of opposition to some of these bills and I know members are preparing speeches for them. With those few words I indicate that The Nationals will also be opposing the government business program.

**Mr STENSHOLT** (Burwood) — Unlike the member for Lowan, I will try to concentrate on the processes rather than debating some issues. We have seven bills on the government business program which has been put forward today. There is obviously a range of issues there. I am sure that many members will be able to speak on them — speak succinctly and very

much to the point — so that they can have their views recorded in *Hansard*. I note that the member for Kew talked about second-reading speeches, as did the member for Lowan. I remember that members of the government were quite happy to have them incorporated in *Hansard*, and I remind them of that. I am happy to support the government business program.

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — I rise to speak on the motion before the house. Like the spokesmen for the opposition, I will be opposing the government business program. I thank the Leader of the Government for indicating that the Port Services Amendment Bill will be debated on Thursday. That allows about 4 hours debate on that piece of legislation. If members look at the other bills, they will realise that, even if there are just the two lead speakers and the government spokesman, at the most there will be about 6 hours for debate. I indicate also that at the very least this week I intend to speak on a number of those pieces of legislation, including the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill and the Port Services Amendment Bill. I know that the Animals Legislation Amendment (Animal Care) Bill has generated a lot of debate within the community. I am sure all members have received correspondence and representation on that and I am sure the merits of that bill will be debated in this place.

Basically that leaves fairly minimal time for other speakers, about 4 hours, if we do no other business other than what is set down. Already a number of second-reading speeches are proposed. If they are presented within that time frame they will chew up pretty well the entire amount of time we have left.

One of the purposes of this place is to be able to debate the issues involved in legislation. Some of this legislation may be contentious for the parties. It deserves members of this place having the opportunity to debate it. The number of bills on the government business program will mean that some of that legislation will hit the guillotine after minimal debate. That is not the purpose of this place and that is why I am opposing the motion put forward and supporting the spokesmen for the opposition parties in their comments.

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — I support the government business program. I was going to get the violin out when the honourable member for Lowan got up to speak before. It is really hard for members of The Nationals to come all this way to Parliament to actually do some work — he was bemoaning the fact that he has to do a little bit of work! All too often we have members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals not contributing or putting in — because they are lazy. Here they are, opposing the government business

program. They just want to string out this debate rather than deal with the issues. On that basis, I support the government business program.

#### House divided on motion:

*Ayes, 47*

Andrews, Mr	Languiller, Mr
Barker, Ms	Lim, Mr
Batchelor, Mr	Lobato, Ms
Beattie, Ms	Maddigan, Mrs
Brooks, Mr	Marshall, Ms
Brumby, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Cameron, Mr	Morand, Ms
Campbell, Ms	Munt, Ms
Carli, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Crutchfield, Mr	Neville, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Noonan, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Overington, Ms
Eren, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Foley, Mr	Pandazopoulos, Mr
Graley, Ms	Pike, Ms
Haermeyer, Mr	Richardson, Ms
Hardman, Mr	Robinson, Mr
Harkness, Dr	Scott, Mr
Helper, Mr	Seitz, Mr
Herbert, Mr	Stensholt, Mr
Hudson, Mr	Thomson, Ms
Hulls, Mr	Treize, Mr
Kosky, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Langdon, Mr	

*Noes, 33*

Asher, Ms	Northe, Mr
Baillieu, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Blackwood, Mr	Powell, Mrs
Burgess, Mr	Ryan, Mr
Clark, Mr	Shardey, Mrs
Crisp, Mr	Smith, Mr K.
Delahunty, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Dixon, Mr	Sykes, Dr
Fyffe, Mrs	Thompson, Mr
Hodgett, Mr	Tilley, Mr
Ingram, Mr	Victoria, Mrs
Jasper, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
Kotsiras, Mr	Walsh, Mr
McIntosh, Mr	Weller, Mr
Morris, Mr	Wells, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wooldridge, Ms
Napthine, Dr	

**Motion agreed to.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Blampied Stampede

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Community Development) — I rise to congratulate a team of people from the small town of Blampied, which is located between Ballarat and Daylesford along the Midland Highway. In 2004 this team of dedicated, hardworking

and friendly people established a wonderful community project called the Blampied Stampede, a project designed to encourage the local community to work together to develop solutions to common issues in their township — a project designed to strengthen their community.

The Blampied community has teamed up with a number of partners — including Powercor, the University of Ballarat and Landcare — to remove roadside noxious weeds, to establish test sites for windbreaks and weed management, and to provide local students with training opportunities. They are also in the process of planting an indigenous roadside avenue in dedication to pioneering families of Blampied and to trial indigenous drought-resistant species of flora.

The team has set out to put Blampied on the map with a planned tourism spot on the goldfields trail, which will include an information bay displaying information about the project as well as maps, and historical and environmental information. The Blampied Stampede project sets a great example for all Victorian communities and should be an inspiration to rural communities in particular. This community has successfully harnessed the enthusiasm of their small town and community to drive some amazing improvements in the township and strengthen the bonds between their community members. I commend the actions of this community to all others in Victoria.

#### **Arthurs Seat chairlift: lease**

**Mr DIXON** (Nepean) — The operators of the Arthurs Seat chairlift, having paid the fine imposed by the courts, are ready to begin operating again — hopefully by Christmas. There are elements within this government that seem to have something against the chairlift. The incident that has currently stopped the chairlift operating occurred back in 2005. WorkSafe closed the chairlift pending an investigation. This investigation has dragged on now for nearly two years, with WorkSafe constantly changing the goal posts, making demands and changing the rules without ever concluding the investigation and/or laying any charges.

Sick of this shoddy treatment the operators took WorkSafe to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal recently, basically for restraint of trade, which led WorkSafe to do the only thing it has ever done quickly: it dropped the investigation and bailed out. Having the okay to reopen was something that quickly became complicated. Parks Victoria is still sitting on the new lease of the land on which the chairlift is standing, even though all parties have agreed to the

lease conditions. Even though there has been no lease for years, Parks Victoria is still demanding rent.

Why does everything take so long with this government? The lease must be finalised immediately so the chairlift can commence operating before Christmas to make up for the two years of lost business due to WorkSafe's obstruction and incompetence. WorkSafe's attitude has hurt all tourism businesses around Dromana and Arthurs Seat. The ball is now in Parks Victoria's court to quickly right this wrong.

#### **Peninsula Community Health Service: future**

**Mr DIXON** — On another matter I call upon the Minister for Health to rule out any merger of the Frankston Hillview and Frankston maternity wards, as has been mentioned in today's papers.

#### **Cheltenham Bowls Club: centenary**

**Ms MUNT** (Mordialloc) — On 10 October I was honoured to be invited to attend the celebration of the centenary of the Cheltenham Bowls Club at the Brighton International. A very large number of people were in attendance to celebrate the event. I was privileged to learn something of the rich history of the club and meet some of the members now associated with the club. I congratulate the committee of the club and the organising committee on their great work in organising a wonderful evening of food, company and entertainment.

The Cheltenham Bowls Club is thriving, with a large membership and a well-maintained and comfortable premises which is a credit to the club and a great community facility. The Cheltenham Bowls Club was founded 100 years ago when our area was in its infancy. The Cheltenham community hub had a school, a train station and a cemetery. There has been a great deal of growth since that time. While I was at the dinner I was very privileged to speak with Jack Barker, father of Trevor Barker, and he told me that his family was involved in the founding of the bowls club, but also in the founding of the Cheltenham Football Club. His family has a great tradition of community and sport involvement, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them for their great contribution to the Cheltenham and wider community.

It is a tribute to the Cheltenham Bowls Club that it has prospered for 100 years providing a great service and facility to our local community. I thank the club for allowing me the opportunity to share in its celebrations and send best wishes for the future 100 years of bowls.

### **Economy: interest rates**

**Mr JASPER** (Murray Valley) — I want to remind the house of the desperate situation facing most country Victorians. The damage to the farming community of the continuing drought and lack of rain is now also affecting business viability in country cities and towns. Whilst the federal and state governments are moving to provide relief for country Victorians, I am extremely concerned about the further adverse effect the predicted Reserve Bank interest rate rise will have on farmers and the general community. Surely the Reserve Bank must take account of this situation and hold off any rate rise at this time. I am calling on the Premier to urgently make representations and advocate against any rise in the current interest rates next week.

### **Agricultural shows: grants**

**Mr JASPER** — October is show month in my electorate of Murray Valley, with annual shows being conducted at Wangaratta, Yarrawonga, Rutherglen, Cobram and Numurkah. In attending all of these shows I continue to be in admiration of the volunteers who make community events such a success and their resilience in the face of adversity. The fun, entertainment and competition provided are a fillip for these communities, which show typical tenacity and perseverance, remembering that there are no horse events as part of the programs.

I have asked the Minister for Agriculture to consider that one-off grants, without any strings attached and complicated forms to be returned, be given to all country shows as a gesture of goodwill by the state government and as a recognition of the efforts of the volunteers of all of these show societies across country Victoria.

### **Chilean and Latin American September Festival**

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — On behalf of the government I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Chilean and Latin American September Festival 2007 held at the Sandown Racecourse and Entertainment Centre. It was a two-day, not-for-profit event jam packed with adventure for the whole family. I commend the 600 volunteers who worked to make this event a major success. It was indeed a great national day held in that wonderful venue, with Chilean cowboys and cowgirls on horseback and a wagon full of typical Chilean musicians. I commend especially the organiser, Fonda La Clinica, and all of its supporters and volunteers.

### **MonashLink Community Health Service: early intervention and chronic disease program**

**Mr LANGUILLER** — On another matter, I was privileged to launch the MonashLink Early intervention and chronic disease program. This initiative is focused on providing planned, managed, proactive care with the client being an active partner in their care. The initiative requires providers to work as a multidisciplinary team which may be across a variety of services and includes general practice as a key to providing high-quality, evidence-based care. The primary health branch has endorsed the Wagner chronic care model as the framework for developing a service system responsive to the needs of clients with chronic and complex care needs. I wish them good luck.

### **Multicultural affairs: drug prevention seminar**

**Mr LANGUILLER** — Today I was privileged to have spoken at the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Australian Drug Foundation and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. I commend the organisers and their commitment to tackling this issue.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Powell)** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### **Questions without notice: answers**

**Mr R. SMITH** (Warrandyte) — Since the beginning of this Parliament we have seen more and more contempt shown by this government during question time. Questions asked of the government by opposition members are frequently ignored by ministers, with their answers having little if any relevance to the question. In contrast, ministers drone on at length in answer to Dorothy Dixers while the government backbenchers who ask them grin foolishly at being given the opportunity to add to their parliamentary contributions with a 10-second question that was written for them by ministerial staff.

This disregard for scrutiny seems to have migrated to the questions on notice that are being asked by opposition members. As at 10 October this year, some 331 questions of the 530 asked have not been answered. Despite the ever-growing number of ministerial and departmental staff, these unanswered questions sit on the questions paper from as far back as this Parliament's very first issue in December last year.

This government needs to understand that in many cases opposition members are asking these questions on behalf of their constituents. By ignoring them the

government is ignoring the questions of the Victorians members are supposed to be serving. The irony is that arrogant government ministers seem not to understand that a failure to answer a question is electoral gold for an opposition member. The government certainly does not win support by ignoring the public's concerns and issues.

The Speaker has informed me that she is unable to compel a minister to reply to a question on notice. It seems to be at the minister's whim whether or not a question is answered. There is no accountability to Victorians at all.

On their constituents' behalf, opposition members are merely asking the government what is going on. The lack of answers clearly indicates that the government simply does not know.

### **Ron Palmer**

**Ms THOMSON** (Footscray) — It was a pleasure and an honour to attend the award at Government House for the Senior Victorian of the Year. The award was presented by the Premier to Mr Ronald Palmer, who is an institution in Footscray.

At the young age of 82, Ron is still very active in the Footscray community. For those who know him and know him well, he is just commonly called 'Mr Footscray'. There is not a thing that happens in Footscray that does not have Ron's mark on it. He is now a life member of the Western Bulldogs Football Club, the Footscray-Yarraville City Band and the Footscray Community Arts Centre. His range of interests and activities varies from the arts through to welfare organisations and sporting institutions. He helped set up the breakfast club at Gilmore College for Girls — an opportunity for disadvantaged girls to have breakfast before they attend classes to ensure that they can put their best efforts into their studies.

He is, as I said, 82 years young and very much an active member of the community. If I were to list all the community groups that Ron Palmer is a member of I would be taking up every single member's members statement time to demonstrate his commitment to the local area. He is a local member, a local man through and through, an icon to Footscray, and it is a pleasure — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Powell)** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### **Children: anaphylactic shock**

**Mrs SHARDEY** (Caulfield) — I note from a government press release its announcement of a commitment to introduce a law to ensure that, where there are children attending a school or children's service who suffer severe allergic reactions and can go into anaphylactic shock, it will be compulsory for training programs to be put in place.

What is unclear from the government press release is whether every school and children's service will have to have an anaphylactic plan and staff training or only those where children who suffer such reactions attend. This could emerge as a severe problem, given that many children change school, kinder and child care during any given year.

I note that while it is important to have trained people and an anaphylaxis plan to ensure children with an allergy risk can receive urgent treatment, it is equally important that an ambulance be called immediately as a priority zero. This is the most urgent call-out to get a child to hospital as soon as possible. I call on the Brumby government to reintroduce the 13-minute target for code 1 to ensure children who have a life-threatening allergic reaction can be assessed as to the cardiac effect of the EpiPen and receive further urgent treatment in hospital.

For five years the Bracks and Brumby governments have failed to meet the 13-minute code 1 response time. Instead of adding more resources to the ambulance service, the Brumby government disgracefully increased the time of the target and lowered the standard to 15 minutes. This is too long and unacceptable.

### **Matthew MacKrell**

**Mr LANGDON** (Ivanhoe) — I wish to pay tribute to the life of Matthew Richard MacKrell. Matthew was found dead eight days short of his 13th birthday on 13 October at 6.55 in the morning by his mother, Julie.

Matthew was born on 21 October 1994 and was immediately taken to the special care nursery due to severe complications at birth. Matthew's short life was a constant struggle, being diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy, global development delay and a failure to thrive. The cause of these problems was never discovered. Matthew was in and out of hospital all his life suffering one problem after another.

At the age of five, Matthew started attending the special school in Balwyn. Within his first week of school there were improvements: he was more sociable and

physically active and even saying his own name. Apparently he was very proud of his achievements during this period of his life. At the age of seven, Matthew's health again deteriorated. Scans showed that half of his brain was swollen, causing brain damage.

The doctors eventually told his parents that there was nothing more that they could do. A few months later he developed scoliosis of the spine and from that point onward required full-time care and a special wheelchair to support his body. In order to look after Matthew, his father, John, had to stop working and the family came under significant financial strain. Eventually the Office of Housing supplied the family with a brand-new home to support Matthew's special needs.

Matthew was supported throughout his life by his two loving and caring parents, John and Julie. His mother said that he was the strongest little boy that she had ever had the pleasure to meet and she was proud to call him 'my son'.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Powell)** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### **Nicholson River Winery: achievements**

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — Gippsland is on top of the world in the production of fine food and wine. Gippsland has always been well known for its cheese, dairy, beef, seafood and other products.

I would like to add my congratulations to Ken and Juliet Eckersley from the Nicholson River Winery. Ken entered a wine in the London international wine and spirit competition and was successful in winning a silver medal for one of the world's best shirazes. The 2004 syrah shiraz was only pipped by a South African shiraz for the top award.

Gippsland is very proud of this achievement, which puts our food and wine on the international stage. Ken has done a very good job in developing his winery, as have a number of other owners of excellent wineries throughout Gippsland. Historically Gippsland has not been recognised as one of the better wine regions, but good work by people like Ken is achieving real results. A number of other things have been going on, like Feast on East and other food and wine events that promote the best from our region. We have higher rainfall than many other areas and can produce top-quality food and wine.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Powell)** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### **Emergency services: Emerald**

**Ms LOBATO** (Gembrook) — I wish to thank St Mark's Church in Emerald for inviting me to participate in its special service on Sunday organised to acknowledge and express gratitude for the selfless work performed by our local emergency services workers.

I had the pleasure of addressing the congregation and later presenting certificates of appreciation to the emergency services workers from the Emerald, Clematis and Macclesfield CFA (Country Fire Authority) brigades, the Emerald SES (State Emergency Service) unit, the Emerald police and the Emerald ambulance service.

As members would recall, Sunday was an extremely windy day, and in my address I predicted the early exit of the SES to attend to call-outs for wind damage. Sure enough there were four call-outs, and even the church band was cut short by the power in the church going out, fortunately at the end of the service. On behalf of the church I thanked the emergency service organisations for always demonstrating passion in what they do and for their commitment to best practice and continually working to find a better way to do things, despite the many challenging conditions they face.

The demands on emergency service workers, given the topography of the land and distances between townships, can prove extremely challenging. With the continuation of the drought and with summer encroaching upon us, the prospect of another bushfire season is worrying for many communities, particularly in the high-fire-risk area of the Dandenong Ranges. Families and friends also worry for the safety of their loved ones involved in emergency service responses. I likened St Mark's Church to an emergency service organisation and thanked it for its enormous contribution to communities in and around Emerald. Its care for families in the village in times of trouble is inspirational.

### **WorkChoices: benefits**

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — The September edition of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's *ACCI Review* highlights the benefits to Australians of the federal coalition government's workplace reforms. Since March 2006 employment has risen by 417 000 — a growth rate of 2.8 per cent per annum, well above the long-term average. Full-time employment has grown by 3.3 per cent. Real wages are also continuing to grow, and grow affordably. Investment is at an all-time high of 29.4 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) and it

is growing in most sectors of the economy, not just mining.

Labour productivity growth is also running well above the long-term average, at a trend of 2.1 per cent per annum, even though productivity usually falls in times of strong employment growth. Productivity has been boosted both by the unfair dismissal reforms and the crackdown on illegal and coercive activity in the building industry. Industrial disputes are at their lowest level since records began in 1913, even though Victoria has the worst strike record in the nation, with 54 per cent of all disputes nationwide in the year to June. It was therefore very disturbing to hear media reports this morning that Victorian construction industry union officials are planning a GST, or 'Get square time', campaign after 24 November, should federal Labor win office. That is exactly what happened in Western Australia in 2001. The Labor government was elected on the Saturday, and on the Monday the unions were going around to building sites inflicting retribution on employers.

It is clear that the Brumby government cannot manage industrial relations, with half the government willing to pander to the unions and inflict huge costs on private employers and the other half seeking to impose centralised, rigid and inflexible wages policies on public sector unions.

### **Australasian Masters Games: Geelong**

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — It was with great pride and pleasure that on Saturday, 13 October, I had the opportunity to represent the City of Greater Geelong, along with our mayor, Cr Bruce Harwood, at the closing ceremony of the Australasian Masters Games in Adelaide. For the information of the house, Geelong is staging the next Australasian Masters Games in February 2009. Hence the flag was passed to Geelong at the closing ceremony in Adelaide. The Australasian Masters Games is a massive event. In Adelaide, for example, nearly 10 000 competitors, supported by 2500 volunteers, participated in approximately 60 sports, injecting millions of dollars into the local economy during the period of the games.

I can assure members that Geelong is looking forward to hosting the 2009 Australasian games, where similar numbers of events, participants and volunteers are expected. Geelong, with its beautiful bay, beaches and surrounding areas such as the Bellarine Peninsula and the Surf Coast, will ensure that visitors have a magnificent experience. Currently the masters games have full-time staff working with local and state sporting organisations to ensure that all is in readiness

for 2009. The Australasian Masters Games is a great event, and I look forward to working with the likes of Ross Synot, Dan Fingerhut, Michael Deer, Cushla McGuigan and Kim Neilson as we prepare Geelong for 2009.

### **Consumer affairs: unlicensed brothels**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Malvern) — In typical Labor style it was reported with great fanfare in last Friday's *Herald Sun* that the Minister for Consumer Affairs is going to crack down on illegal brothels. As I told the house on 20 September this year, illegal brothels are closely linked to organised crime, tax evasion and illegal immigration and pose threats to the health of brothel workers and their clients. But there is no crackdown, just the mere suggestion that the minister is 'considering numerous reforms' in relation to illegal brothels.

After eight years in government, the best that Labor can do is to say yet again, 'We will look into it'. The government's failure to decisively tackle illegal brothels shows that the spectre of the former member for Williamstown, the longest caretaker Premier in Victoria's history, continues to haunt the government's front bench.

### **Rail: Armadale station**

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Last Friday a tragedy was narrowly averted at Armadale station, when a pram became jammed between the train and platform 4 as a mother and her young daughter were disembarking. This incident occurred due to an excessive gap between the train and the curved platform. It was only due to the quick thinking and assistance of Mr Trevor Armstrong and another passenger that serious injury or worse was avoided.

Armadale is but one station in the Malvern electorate at which the safety of passengers is being compromised by the government's failure to properly maintain public transport infrastructure. The Brumby government must take urgent action to investigate this problem and fix it. Commuters, especially parents with young children, should not have to risk their personal safety to catch public transport.

### **Marriott Support Services: achievements**

**Mr HUDSON** (Bentleigh) — Recently Marriott Support Services held its annual general meeting. Marriott provides a wide range of services to people with a disability in my electorate and beyond. Marriott aims to ensure that people with a disability achieve their

full potential and become self-confident, independent and inclusive members of our community. Marriott Support Services has a great history, having begun life in the early 1970s as the Moorabbin Association for the Intellectually Handicapped to support a group of parents of children with an intellectual disability.

With the generous support of Allan Marriott, who operated vast market gardens in the area, Marriott Support Services has grown to include Marriott House, a personal support centre, Highett House and Lewis Industries. In recent years the organisation has undergone significant cultural change with a strong focus on empowerment and facilitating choices for people with a disability. The philosophy is exemplified, for example, in the vocational training centre at Highett, where participants develop the confidence to travel on public transport, improve their computer skills, cook meals, speak publicly and gain experience in office, retail and factory work.

At Lewis Industries the introduction of productivity-based wages has ensured that workers enjoy employment and working conditions comparable to those of other Victorians. Marriott House's day services encourage people to try new activities, whilst the personal support centre has seen the introduction of programs such as rock'n'roll dancing at the McKinnon Public Hall with the community. Marriott Support Services is ably led by its chief executive officer, Lloma Shaw, and the board, consisting of the chair, Yaron Kozminski, and other board members.

### **Heartbeat Sunraysia: achievements**

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I wish to bring to the house's attention the wonderful work and public service carried out by Heartbeat Sunraysia. I was recently honoured by a request from the local branch to launch its latest fundraiser. Heartbeat has over 20 branches and 10 000 members in Victoria. It is a voluntary organisation of ex-cardiac patients, their relatives and friends. The Mildura branch was started in 1985 by Mac Hudson.

Heartbeat aims to inform, assist and counsel people suffering from various cardiac diseases and offers support and encourages their recovery. Additionally Heartbeat raises funds to assist cardiac units in hospitals. Over the past 22 years \$440 000 has been donated by the Sunraysia branch. This fundraising is done all year round, through community benefits tags, gold coin donations and the like. This is a wonderful organisation that does much good and supports many individuals and families. I urge my colleagues, if they

do not already actively support this outstanding community organisation, to do so.

### **Magdalene Foundation: annual ball**

**Ms MARSHALL** (Forest Hill) — Last Saturday night, 27 October, I attended and spoke at the Magdalene Foundation's annual ball held at the San Remo Ballroom in Carlton North. Magdalene, known to her friends as Maggie, contracted a rare autoimmune disease that attacked her kidneys and was slowly killing off her vital organs. Following six long years of hospitalisation, Maggie, just 16, was given a lifesaving kidney transplant at the Royal Children's Hospital, and she considered that it was from that time that her life truly began.

Her dream of becoming an international model was well on track, having been signed to a famous fashion magazine in Italy, when tragedy struck. Maggie, then only 18, was killed in a car accident. Maggie wanted to raise funds for research. Whilst she is not here, her dream remains alive, and much-needed funds can now be provided to ensure that other children can have lives filled with hope, health and happiness as a result of the ball. It was a beautiful night. My deepest thanks to Maggie's parents, Rosemary and Andrew, for all the work they continue to do to change so many lives.

### **Kathleen Fenton**

**Ms MARSHALL** — I would like to pay homage to Mrs Kathleen Fenton, a Forest Hill constituent who was recently presented with a senior citizens award at Government House for her volunteer work at local schools. Mrs Fenton volunteers at Parkmore Primary School and Burwood Primary School, providing invaluable assistance to students with her literacy skills — and she is only 83 years old! The staff and teachers informed me not only of the high regard they have for her work but that theirs is an opinion that is shared by the students. On behalf of the Forest Hill community I would like to place on the record my great appreciation of and deepest thanks for the work Mrs Fenton does. Congratulations, Mrs Fenton!

### **Ambulance services: response times**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — On 8 August during the adjournment debate I raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding delays in ambulances responding to emergency calls — including over 30 minutes to Yarra Glen and 40 minutes to Lilydale. The minister has written to me in response, saying:

... I am advised that in both instances to which you refer the MAS responded appropriately and within acceptable time frames.

The Yarra Glen case resulted in the death of a little boy from an asthma attack, the Lilydale case was a young footballer with suspected spinal injuries, and the minister says this is acceptable.

On Monday, 1 October, an emergency call from Yarra Junction for an ambulance was made at 11.15 a.m. The ambulance finally arrived at 1.10 p.m. after three further calls — 1 hour and 55 minutes after the first emergency call. This is not acceptable. We live on the fringes of Melbourne, not in a Third World country.

### Members: debating opportunities

**Mrs FYFFE** — I have lived and worked in the Yarra Valley for over 30 years, and I am proud to be here representing my community and its broad range of businesses, family interests and lifestyles. How disappointed must my constituents be that, because of this government's mismanagement of its legislative program, I am stopped from speaking on their behalf on legislation that impacts on them, their businesses and their families.

This government continually guillotines debate. Week after week it gags democracy and scrutiny. It is arrogant and lazy. Government members are clock-watchers. This year we have sat for only 17 weeks. Next year we will sit for only 16 weeks. Where is the scrutiny, the openness and the transparency that this government boasts of?

### Moonee Valley Racing Club: Cox Plate

**Mrs MADDIGAN** (Essendon) — I would like to congratulate the Moonee Valley Racing Club for its presentation of the Cox Plate last Saturday. It was a great occasion, and 38 000 people were pleased to participate. We know from statements made by the member for South-West Coast that the Liberal Party does not support the Cox Plate at Moonee Valley, but I think the 38 000 Victorians who attended on Saturday would strongly disagree.

### Ian McEwen

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — In discussing the Cox Plate, I would also like to pay tribute to Ian McEwen, the former chief executive officer of the Moonee Valley Racing Club. Ian McEwen died two weeks ago, but he will always be remembered fondly at Moonee Valley Racing Club as the one who brought the Cox Plate from a minor race to the significant weight-for-age race

in Australia. The various activities associated with the Moonee Valley Racing Club and the Cox Plate now bring many international visitors. Many of them were there for the Cox Plate on Saturday as well as some of the functions in the preceding week.

Ian McEwen, who lived in Essendon, was buried on the Friday week before the Cox Plate. Many people spoke at his funeral of his great contribution to racing, not only in Victoria but also in New Zealand prior to his moving to Victoria. There were certainly many tributes both from his family and from the community. He will be well remembered in Essendon for many years to come.

### Telstra: employee agreement

**Mr STENSHOLT** (Burwood) — I voice my concern over the staffing policies of Telstra and how it is seeking to reduce the wages and conditions of ordinary men and women at its Burwood call centre. A few weeks ago Telstra got rid of all temporary workers, and yesterday it announced it had shed 300 technical and support staff. I was in Burwood this morning with Anna Burke, the federal MP for Chisholm, and various Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union officials — state secretary Len Cooper, assistant state secretary John Ellery, Sue Riley and Val Butler.

Via WorkChoices, Telstra, having failed to introduce Australian workplace agreements, is now attempting to impose a non-union employee agreement at short notice before the federal election. It is seeking to isolate these workers, as it wants them not to be part of a negotiation of a new enterprise bargaining agreement next year. This agreement is due to expire in September next year. There is no need for this agreement, given that there are so many months to go of the current agreement. Workers will lose money, with the base rate of a customer service officer to go from \$36 000 to \$29 000, and a larger reduction for coordinators. More than this, there is the threat of a massive change to the redundancy provisions at the site, which is due for relocation in the next year or so.

This is a bad deal predicated on WorkChoices. I urge workers to vote no this weekend. I urge all Victorians on 24 November to vote no to WorkChoices and take the smirk off federal Treasurer Peter Costello's face. I note that just a couple of days ago Peter Costello put out a pamphlet about his policies on climate change. When you open it up, it is upside down. It shows what the federal government's policies are on climate change — they are upside down.

**Berwick: super-clinic**

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) —  
 Congratulations to the Rudd Labor opposition for its election commitment of more than \$2 million for a GP super-clinic — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Powell)** — Order!  
 The time for members statements has expired.

**ELECTRICITY SAFETY AMENDMENT  
 BILL**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 11 October; motion of  
 Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Energy and  
 Resources).**

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — The Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007 amends the Electricity Safety Act 1998 in five respects. Firstly, it mandates submission of and compliance with electrical safety management schemes by major electricity transmission and distribution owners or operators. Secondly, it harmonises the electricity safety management regime with the gas safety case regime in the gas safety legislation. Thirdly, it enables enforcement officers appointed by Energy Safe Victoria to serve notices requiring registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers to rectify defective electrical work that is unsafe. It improves the representation of the railway and tramway industries on the Victorian Electrolysis Committee. Finally, it repeals redundant provisions, including provisions relating to the approval of electrical safety managers.

This bill is one of a number of bills introduced into the Parliament by the current government that build on and carry forward the major reforms to the energy and gas sectors in Victoria that were undertaken by the Kennett government. As I have pointed out on a number of previous occasions, it is ironic that those reforms were opposed tooth and nail by the Labor Party when it was in opposition. Now it is in government, it is extolling the virtues of the Kennett government reforms and continuing and extending those reforms. In particular in relation to electrical safety, there were all sorts of dire warnings in the 1990s about the threats to safety posed by privatisation and how the measures that were put in place by the Kennett government to ensure safety in the electricity and gas sectors were inadequate. Now we find that the legislation for both electricity and gas safety that was introduced by the Kennett government

has been carried forward by the current government with only relatively minor amendments.

As I indicated, the bill before the house will mandate major electricity companies, which are defined as being distribution companies or transmission companies that are licensed or exempted from holding a licence under the Electricity Industry Act, to submit, have approved and then comply with electricity safety management schemes. To date these companies have had a choice of whether to comply with a voluntary regime for submission of electricity safety management schemes. If they voluntarily submit a scheme and it is approved and they then comply with that scheme, that amounts to compliance with their legal obligations. Alternatively, if they do not submit a scheme, they are required to comply with traditional prescriptive regulations as to how they are to achieve safety within their operations.

The opposition understands from the very helpful briefing with which it was provided by officers of the department that around 6 out of 10 distribution or transmission companies to which these new requirements will apply already voluntarily comply with the submission of and operation under electricity safety management schemes. It is worth making the point that these voluntary management schemes can also be submitted by other participants in the electricity industry, and if those other participants choose to submit a scheme, have it approved and operate under it, that fulfils their legal obligations — compliance with an electricity safety management scheme is an alternative to compliance with the traditional prescriptive regulation. The option of voluntarily submitting and operating under an electricity safety management scheme will continue for those participants that are not caught by these mandatory provisions.

The requirement for major electricity companies to submit and comply with an electricity safety management scheme as proposed by this bill is consistent with the requirement that has existed since the inception of the Gas Safety Act 1997 for gas companies to submit a safety case to Energy Safe Victoria for each of their facilities and to have that case approved and to comply with it. In other words, for the gas sector it has always been mandatory for a gas safety case to be submitted and complied with, and this bill will bring the electricity sector into line with that for major electricity companies.

The arguments in favour of it, particularly as time has passed and experience has shed further light on it, have led to the conclusion by the department that making the submission of and compliance with electricity safety management schemes compulsory will achieve both

better and less costly regulation than leaving the option to operate under traditional prescriptive regulation. The view is that experience has shown that the safety management scheme regime provides better outcomes and better safety, hence the reason for it being made mandatory. Assuming the assessment of the department is well founded, this seems a reasonable approach and one which the opposition is happy to accept and support.

However, it is worth making a number of points about the change. Firstly, it is potentially possible that the new regime will not come into operation until 1 January 2010. Delay up to that point is provided for in clause 2(3) of the bill. The opposition understands that this lead time is to provide for regulations to be made that will put in place the new compulsory regime. The opposition also understands that these regulations are to be developed in consultation with the industry and that consultation is about to commence. It is certainly worthwhile for the government to ensure that these regulations are developed with proper consultation with the industry and that reasonable regard is paid to the points the industry makes.

A possible downside to the new regime is whether it will remove a potential discipline on regulators to operate the electricity safety management scheme regime efficiently and effectively if major electricity companies do not in future have the option to comply with traditional regulations instead. As I said earlier, the opposition understands that 4 out of 10 companies do not currently comply with the regime. If the regime is mandatory, there will not be an option for companies to vote with their feet if the regulatory regime is unsatisfactory. However, it is perhaps worth making the point that the mandatory requirement in the gas industry does not appear to have led to major problems. Hopefully Energy Safe Victoria will keep on its toes and make sure it operates the electricity safety management scheme regime efficiently and effectively, both to ensure safety and to avoid unnecessary costs and impositions on the electricity sector.

It is also worth making the somewhat broader point that the changes being made by this bill are only a subset of what is important for effective safety regulation. I was given some observations on this point by a person well experienced in industrial matters. He told me that he had been involved in the implementation of offshore oil industry production safety cases — a regime that has now been extended to onshore facilities as well as refineries and petrochemical plants. He said that that regime was a bureaucratic nightmare that did little to enhance the already rigorous risk and safety management regime in that industry. This gentleman

made what seem to be sensible points: the critical elements of a safe workplace are the imposition of a safety culture, which requires leadership from the top, and the maintenance of good statistics of accidents and near accidents assessed against national and international benchmarks.

It requires a process of analysing reported accidents and near misses using best practice methodology and a process for immediate feedback of the recommendations into the organisation, starting at the board level, which may then include additional retraining, new capital expenditure, redesign of equipment and processes et cetera. In other words, the sensible point that is being made is that safety best comes from within an organisation through the culture, arrangements and procedures that an organisation has in place rather than being imposed externally. But of course we need external regulation in order to ensure that people do comply with their obligations. If it is well run, hopefully it may also provide an educative benefit for all concerned.

As I indicated earlier, in conjunction with the introduction of the mandatory requirements for major electricity companies a number of other changes are being made to the safety management regime to bring that regime into line with the gas safety case regime. The change being made by the bill to enable enforcement officers to serve rectification notices for unsafe electrical work seems a worthwhile innovation for both safety and consumer protection.

Again it is worth making the point, however, that there are a range of other safety issues on the agenda at the moment which need to be resolved and which are not addressed by this bill. In particular the opposition understands the government is considering a proposal to change the current regime where a number of firms across the state are authorised to fulfil the role of inspectors subject to an audit of their inspection work and to replace that with a regime under which a large volume of safety inspection work is let out under large contracts to a limited number of inspection firms. This has major implications for the industry. It is not something that should be done lightly.

If change is to be made, there needs to be a strong case developed and argued for it, because subject to ensuring appropriate safety levels the prima facie case is that Victoria would best be served by a system that provides a competitive and responsive inspection service. The opposition will certainly look forward, if the government is intending to make changes in that area, to those proposals being put out in the public arena and to adequate time being allowed for those proposals to

be scrutinised and commented on and for feedback to be taken into account by the government.

An additional point that is worth making in relation to the role of enforcement officers is that, if the regime for the serving of notices to rectify defective, unsafe work is to work, then clearly out in the field there have to be adequate arrangements for enforcement officers to carry out inspections, to be alerted to possible risks and to be diligent in undertaking the work they do. We certainly hope Energy Safe Victoria will ensure that the powers it is being given by this bill are exercised.

The next area to which I make reference that is being amended by this bill is in relation to the Victorian Electrolysis Committee. The bill provides that whereas at present the railway and tramway industries, as they are described, have simply one representative between them on the committee, in future there will be a separate representative of railways and of tramways. Given the divergence there and the potentially different interests of those two sectors, that seems a reasonable amendment.

The last of the changes being made by the bill is the repeal of various redundant provisions including provisions for the improvement of electricity safety managers. Members of the opposition understand from the briefing with which we were provided that the provisions in the legislation for application for approval of electricity safety managers have not been used since inception. Therefore it seems reasonable that they be repealed.

Subject to the comments and views I have expressed in relation to the manner in which the provisions of this bill are to be given effect, as I indicated, the opposition considers the provisions of the bill are sensible, and the bill has the support of the opposition.

**Mr CRISP (Mildura)** — I rise to talk on the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007, and The Nationals are not opposing this bill. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998. The 17 amendments in the bill deal with changing the definitions, obligations and powers in relation to major companies and their relationship with electricity safety management. There are also a number of miscellaneous amendments, some of which concern the rectification of unsatisfactory electrical work.

Regarding major electricity companies, the insertion of a new section into the Electricity Safety Act 1998 gives the Governor in Council the power to declare a distribution or transmission company, or classes of such companies, as not major companies. The bill also

inserts a definition of the term ‘major electricity company’ that means a distribution company or transmission company licensed or exempted from holding a licence under the Electricity Industry Act 2001 but does not include companies, or classes of companies, declared by an order under section 3A not to be a major electricity company.

A major electricity company is no longer obliged to comply with section 75 of the principal act, only part 10. Section 75 relates to the general duties of a network operator and says that a network operator must take reasonable care to ensure that all parts of an upstream network or the supply network of a railway or tramway system that it owns or operates are designed, constructed, operated and maintained in accordance with the regulations and are safe and operated safely.

Electricity safety management systems are the second feature of the bill. A new definition of the term ‘accepted ESMS’ (electricity safety management scheme) is inserted in a new section 3. It now means a scheme that has been accepted or provisionally accepted by Energy Safe Victoria. It must still adhere to the competency requirements prescribed in part 10 of the Electricity Safety Act 1998. Previously the definition referred to an electricity safety management scheme in respect of which an order of the Governor in Council under part 10 is in force.

Part 10 of the act is replaced by a provision that includes three new divisions. These new parts deal with the general duties of major electricity companies and their duties concerning mandatory and voluntary ESMSs. The bill requires the major electrical distribution and transmission companies to have an electricity safety management scheme (ESMS) approved by Energy Safe Victoria. It also allows employers of electrical workers to submit an ESMS in respect of electrical work carried out by those workers, but any plan must be passed by Energy Safe Victoria. Electricity safety management schemes give the electricity industry an alternative to complying with specific regulations in the act, but as I said, each ESMS is approved by Energy Safe Victoria and becomes the binding regulation in each particular case. In some cases an operator has a choice to either comply with the regulations in the act or apply for an ESMS. However there are some costs associated with ESMSs which will add some expense both in initial fees and in ongoing fees.

We are moving from a voluntary or regulated environment to a legislative environment, and there will be an increased cost as a result. There is a positive to the schemes, in that they will allow distributors to

manage ageing equipment and line standards within the network. The cost involved in upgrading country powerlines to higher heights is significant, and this means that work can be carried out over time, provided the system is safe, and it avoids the impost involved in country people having to upgrade their electrical network.

The third part is non-compliant electrical work. If electrical work is being carried out and is unsatisfactory, the person responsible can be given a written rectification notice. The amendment makes it clear that the said person must not seek money in respect of complying with that notice, and it also makes it possible for a person to apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of the rectification notice. It means that orders can be made to require electrical contractors to rectify non-compliant electrical work on installation.

Some issues arising out of this bill need a little work. For example, does having different ESMSs make it hard to regulate with different rules for different companies or different people? A person inspecting a company must now be aware of the specific ESMS, not just the legislation. The minister has the power to exclude companies from being formally defined as major companies, without any measure as to what constitutes 'major'. I have yet to see the benefit of this outlined in the legislation.

Sections 47B and 47C of the Electricity Safety Act says that the Governor in Council has rights that come into effect if:

... the available supply of electricity is, or is likely to become, less than is sufficient for the reasonable requirements of the community ...

... while a proclamation is in force, the Minister may give any directions that the Minister thinks necessary to —

- (a) protect any undertaken of an electricity corporation or an electricity supplier; or
- (b) ensure the safe, economical or effective supply of electricity; or
- (c) ensure that the available electricity is fairly distributed to the community; or
- (d) increase the available supply of electricity.

What situations will warrant the use of these powers, and what will be the consequences? Something we have great concern about in country Victoria is that, in times of pressure, supplying electricity to country Victoria involves long-line losses. When push comes to shove we know who will get turned off first — it will be the bush — and consequently we are concerned

about what will happen when you are the lone man on the totem pole and the minister exercises these powers. We need to look at the future reliability of the energy system. We do not want the minister to have to use these powers to shut off parts of the system to ensure its safety.

There are a number of actions that I think will ensure that this does not happen. First, we need to establish a few facts. I think Victoria will face an energy shortage in the future. By 2010 or 2011 the spare baseload capacity in the Australian grid will be used up. We have in Australia passed the time by which we needed to start the next power station to ensure the reliability and safety of our future. With country people being low on the totem pole, we now have country consumers of electricity at risk. Therefore, we need to take action now to build a better energy system.

The second-reading speech talks about safe and efficient systems, and efficiency also means reliability. We need to look at what we can do now to improve the reliability of what has been done. The federal government has recognised that this issue is approaching us and will be a problem. It is promoting the use of domestic photovoltaic technology, particularly in country areas. I will talk about those incentives later. There is some support for community generation in community areas such as Hepburn Springs, and in the small town of Hopetoun in my electorate the University of Ballarat is doing some excellent work on the community becoming self-sustaining in electricity.

Country communities want to be more electrically sustainable, and they know where they stand, particularly with this legislation. We need to support those communities, and we also need to address in some way the baseload crisis. Victoria will need to actively expand the gas grid network and use more gas appliances. The gas grid needs to be actively extended in country Victoria, and as you extend the gas grid you can interchange electricity and gas as a base measure of energy for country people, thus extending the life of our baseload electrical generation capacity.

There are a number of areas that can work with solar energy. To set the scene, world consumption of energy is around half a zettajoule a year. The prefix 'zetta' represents 10 to the power of 21, which is a very large number. A joule is related to a watt: a joule is a unit of energy, but once it is used in an appliance it becomes a watt. The worldwide available solar energy is 3850 zettajoules a year. The oceans absorb 285 zettajoules a year; the biomass, which is our trees and grasses, absorbs 1.8 zettajoules a year; and the

wind can supply around 6 zettajoules a year. Clearly we have enormous solar resources available to augment our energy system.

Photovoltaic cells are being actively promoted. These cells are dropping in price between 3 per cent and 5 per cent a year, so they are becoming an affordable source of electricity. Approximately 20 per cent of the energy used is in lighting. Australia is promoting better and more efficient lighting, and we need to do more of that both at the state and the federal level.

Again, solar hot water is actively being promoted, but we are lagging behind. Ninety per cent of homes in Israel now use solar systems. Australia is way back at the start. Therefore, we need to do more work in that area. Most domestic technologies will pay for themselves in 15 to 20 years. Victoria needs to join the federal government in promoting some of those energy-efficient uses. In particular, I believe in the area of photovoltaic systems the Victorian government could partner the federal government to make that 15 to 20-year payback period far closer to 10 years, which makes it a sound business investment. Countries leading the photovoltaic race in the world include Japan, Germany and the United States of America. They have 90 per cent of the total worldwide installations in photovoltaic technology. Australia needs to rank with these countries; we should be up there with them. These are the countries we like to model ourselves and our economies on, and we are clearly not in the race.

There are some basic types of solar energy, and this technology will be the language of the future. If we are going to have a safe and reliable system for energy in Australia and in Victoria, then solar energy processes are going to become common language. There are active solar systems, which convert sunlight into electricity; passive solar systems, which are about how you build your house; direct solar technology is used for single-step conversions; and indirect solar technology is used for multi-step conversions.

We need to be promoting those technologies in our domestic applications to save vital energy from our grid. We need to concentrate on better architecture and better systems and facilities, such as hot-water systems, lighting and air-conditioning. I have also mentioned photovoltaic systems.

In the industrial areas there are a number of proposals out there that I think could cope with near baseload capacity for the future. We have been concentrating on solar thermal systems, which is the system proposed for northern Victoria at the moment by Solar Systems. We

have solar updraft towers, which is the EnviroMission tower that is also proposed for south-western New South Wales or northern Victoria. There are solar chemical systems which are solar ponds. There are many, many things which we can and should be doing, particularly if we are going to have a reliable system into the future.

There are some grants available for residential and community purposes. However, a number of them are limited to 2 kilowatts in their generating capacity, and I think that is something we need to look at into the future. Community organisations are eligible for grants as well, which means small communities can get involved with local solutions to local problems. That will provide our energy security for the future. To be eligible community organisations must be non-profit or government-owned organisations. We can get community organisations involved. We know the federal government has made up to \$8000 available for residential photovoltaic systems. If Victoria were to match just half of that amount, we would have a commercially viable photovoltaic generation system going onto people's roofs.

To conclude, the government continues to amend energy legislation. I urge the minister to further address the coming energy shortage by actively promoting investment in securing Victoria's energy future. The future reliability of our systems is not yet secure. Because of the long lead times we need to take action now to make our energy sector secure.

**Mr HARDMAN** (Seymour) — I rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007. I note the opposition's support for the bill and appreciate the description of the amendments as 'sensible' by the opposition lead speaker. I note also The Nationals are not opposing the bill. The member for Mildura mentioned the need for improvement in infrastructure and renewable energy, particularly solar energy. I am pleased to hear that The Nationals are progressive in some areas with these kinds of policies. It is great to see that the member knows the Victorian government is leading the way in renewable energy.

Recently the federal government has taken on some of our particular initiatives, which is good. There will be a mandatory renewable energy target, which is a bit like Victoria's renewable energy target, I suppose. In the future I hope to see The Nationals supporting the government's initiatives, and I will be taking note. I notice that some of their suggestions were a bit narrowly focused. It is a bit like picking a particular winner when we need to have a great range of different ideas about what renewable energy source suits best

and which is going to be the most efficient and cost effective.

This bill makes amendments to the Electricity Safety Act 1998. It mandates the submission of and compliance with electricity safety management schemes, or ESMSs, by major electricity companies — namely, electricity transmission and distribution businesses. It will harmonise the safety management scheme in the Electricity Safety Act 1998 with the Gas Safety Act 1997. The bill will require registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers to rectify defective electrical work that is unsafe, and I will spend a bit of time on that point later because it is certainly one that is dear to my heart as a local representative in Parliament. It will improve the representation of the railway and tramway industries on the Victorian Electrolysis Committee, and it repeals some redundant provisions.

The bill's key initiative is to adopt best practice safety management and regulation that facilitates better hazard identification and risk management activities. It is aimed at preventing incidents and at mitigating the consequences if they occur. It is an important bill from that point of view. It also has other key initiatives which will require compliance with the ESMSs by electricity transmission and major distribution businesses.

An ESMS for a major electricity company will specify the assets or operations to which it applies and the hazards and risks to persons and property arising from those assets and operations. The rectification of defective and unsafe electrical work is a key initiative on which I have made representations to government in the past. That was as a result of complaints from a constituent of mine who built a new house and had problems with a number of contractors, one of whom was an electrical contractor who had not done a very good job of wiring the house.

As a result of there not being good enough legislation in place, getting that contractor to come back to rectify the defective and unsafe electrical work was quite difficult. My constituent wrote to me about the situation with the building and plumbing industry. There did not seem to be anything to keep a contractor honest. Obviously when someone is building a house it is their major asset. They put their resources into it and some people go into a great deal of debt, and of course they are very worried at the moment about interest rates and their costs increasing.

The issuing of a notice by Energy Safe Victoria will require a person who carried out electrical work to rectify it if it does not comply with the Electricity

Safety Act 1998 and the appropriate regulations. That is when the work has to be done by the electrical contractor or worker. The rectification of work is to be done at no additional expense to the customer. The works that might be included are the labelling of switchboards, securing and protection in the positioning of cables, the secure installation of equipment and recording the route of underground lines. Again, I like that amendment because around 2003 the Rural and Regional Services Development Committee was given a reference to inquire into farm safety.

One of the people who made a submission to us while we were travelling around the state listening to different communities about farm safety was a farmer who was most concerned about electrical cables going all around the farm and there being no record of where they went. If he was digging or doing any works or putting in new fencing or sheds, as farmers are constantly doing, there was no record of those cables. I hope the mapping of cables, either in that situation or in many other situations we can think of, will be addressed in the future.

The bill delivers on the government's commitments to ensure an efficient and secure energy system as well as the reliable and safe delivery of energy services. It also provides for the improved safety and reliability of electricity assets. The harmonisation of the electricity and gas safety acts will also reduce the burden on those operating in both the electricity industry and the gas industry. Again a key government commitment is to reduce the burden on industry by harmonising regulations. The Seymour electorate will benefit from this legislation. The southern part of the electorate is growing quickly, and that means a lot of electrical work is happening. Having good electricity regulations in place will enable a safe, secure and reliable supply. That has been made difficult because of the pressure on the existing infrastructure, which needs to be improved into the future. I support this bill, and I wish it a speedy passage.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill. As the member for Box Hill has pointed out, the Liberal Party will be supporting this legislation. The main purpose of the bill is to make a range of amendments to the Electricity Safety Act 1998. These include mandating the submission of and compliance with electrical safety management schemes, known as ESMSs, by electricity transmission and distribution owners or operators.

The bill seeks to harmonise the electricity safety management scheme regime with the gas safety case

regime. It will enable enforcement officers appointed by Energy Safe Victoria to serve notices requiring registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers to rectify electrical work that is defective and unsafe. It will improve the representation of the railway and tramway industries on the Victorian Electrolysis Committee and will repeal redundant provisions in the act, including that providing for the approval of electrical safety managers.

As has been stated, the Liberal Party will be supporting this legislation because importantly it builds on the great work that was undertaken by energy ministers in the Kennett government, who implemented the deregulation of the electricity market in this state. This has proved to be a boon for consumers, and it has been endorsed and supported by this Labor government. I am pleased to see this government supporting and endorsing good Liberal Party policy. The policy has stood the test of time, and what this state government is trying to do is build on the hard work that was undertaken in the last decade. So the first point I want to make is that I am pleased to see that this government is seeking to improve on the work that was undertaken by the former Kennett government.

The second point relates to the rectification work undertaken by electrical contractors. I have spoken to a number of electrical contractors in my electorate and throughout the region, and they tell me they are extremely busy at the moment. Of course they are busy because we have a very buoyant economy in this country, which is the result of the efforts of a good, hardworking federal government that has created an environment in which people have the opportunity to invest in new housing, which in turn provides work for tradespeople on not only new but also existing houses. One thing to have come out of all that is that, with the increase in the work undertaken by electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers, from time to time there may be defects, and it is pleasing to see that this legislation will ensure that any defects are rectified.

As I said, the Liberal Party will be supporting this bill because it builds on the strong work that was done by the Kennett government. I commend the bill and trust that it will have a speedy passage through this house.

**Mr BROOKS (Bundoora)** — It is a pleasure to rise in support of the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill. I want to focus briefly on two things this bill does, the first being to insert new divisions 1 and 2 in part 10 of the Electricity Safety Act 1998. Part 10 of the principal act deals with electricity safety management.

The new divisions to be inserted into the act relate to the new electricity safety management scheme (ESMS) regime. This regime will provide a more flexible and cost-efficient alternative to the current prescriptive regulatory approach. This is of course an advantage when you have often complex supply and distribution networks that are best understood by the companies and operators who run them. They therefore obviously have a very sound knowledge of the best ways to improve safety and remove hazards. The mandatory electricity safety management scheme regimes will obviously require major electricity companies to focus on the high-risk and the high-danger parts of their networks rather than allocating significant resources to lower risk areas or prescriptive regulations that may not lead to greater safety outcomes.

The only concern you could have about this shift would normally be about the motivation for these operators to produce rigorous electricity safety management schemes if they are going to be the ones that have to resource and fund the compliance with those schemes. That is why it is pleasing to see that clause 100 in division 2 of new part 10 in the bill, which carries the heading ‘Validation of electricity safety management scheme for a supply network’, reads:

- (1) If an electricity safety management scheme has been submitted for a supply network, Energy Safe Victoria may require the major electricity company to obtain an independent validation of that electricity safety management scheme or any part of that electricity safety management scheme.

So there is an independent process. Subsection (2) provides:

Energy Safe Victoria may require the validation to assess the design, construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the supply network or any part of the supply network or all or any of those matters to determine if the supply network or part of the supply network will be fit for the purpose.

So there is a very broad range of things that will be looked at in that independent validation. Subsection (3) provides:

The major electricity company must establish to the satisfaction of Energy Safe Victoria that each person undertaking the validation of a matter has the necessary competence and ability and access to information —

that they need —

... to arrive at an independent opinion on the matter.

Subsection (4) deals with the independent validation of an electricity safety management scheme or part of an ESMS and provides for the costs of that validation to be

borne by the electricity company. Subsection (5) provides:

Energy Safe Victoria is not required to proceed with the consideration of an electricity safety management scheme until the independent validation is provided.

So section 100 of new division 2 will give comfort to those people who have concerns about the motivation, if you like, for companies to follow through with rigorous electricity safety management schemes.

The other part of the bill that I will focus on quickly deals with the rectification of defective electrical work. Clause 14 says that that electrical contractors or licensed electrical workers will be required to rectify any work that they have performed that is non-compliant. Given that it is estimated that every year about 1500 electrical jobs that are found to be non-compliant are not rectified, this is a very important change. I would argue that we have seen the success of the system operating in the plumbing industry, where plumbers have to go back and fix work that is non-compliant. That has worked well, and there is no reason why this would not work well in the electrical industry.

As someone who has worked as a licensed electrician I have seen the dangers that electricity can pose and the hazards it can create for people who work in the electrical industry and for the general public. It is very important that governments keep driving these legislative agendas to improve the safety regimes of our electrical industry.

**Mrs VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — I rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007. The objective of the bill, to amend various sections of energy legislation, is very good. Its five main provisions seem to make a lot of sense, but one in particular is certainly something that should be applauded. It enables enforcement officers appointed by Energy Safe Victoria to serve notices requiring registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers to rectify electrical work that is unsafe. That is something that has been missing for an awfully long time. Certainly a finding could be made that work was unsafe, but the worker or contractor was not obliged to go back and rectify that work.

I am delighted that we have the chance to speak to amendments such as this and to note that the Howard government has only just announced that it will fund another 75 new technical colleges, given that there is a deficiency in that area at the moment. They will be in addition to the 25 that the federal government has already funded, including one in Ringwood in my

electorate. It certainly has stood out as a shining light in technical excellence in the local area. It is interesting that a Liberal-led coalition government is introducing this, when it is generally Labor that pats itself on the back for being the master of the trades and that sort of thing. We certainly need to congratulate the Howard government on that. Investing in high-quality trades training is something that all governments, regardless of their background, should do. Who could forget the Cain and Kirner era, when dozens upon dozens of technical schools, including several in my electorate — —

**Mr Trezise** — On a point of order on relevance, Acting Speaker, I do not know what the Howard government's Australian technical colleges have to do with the bill that we have before us at the present time.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Stensholt)** — Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Bayswater, on the bill.

**Mrs VICTORIA** — The relevance, of course, is that we are looking at the quality of tradespeople and their accountability. Certainly the higher the training they get, the less this bill will be able to bite them on their backsides, if you like. If we look at previous days during the era of the Cain and Kirner governments, when technical schools were closed, we see that we have ended up in a situation where we lack people trained in the trades, such as electricians, plumbers and that type of thing.

One suggestion that I will make is something that has not yet been looked at. My electrician brought it to my attention when I was renovating my daughter's playroom. There was a very strange smell in the playroom, which I could not get rid of. Members may well laugh, but I could not track it down. I washed the floors and cleaned the carpets — the whole kit and caboodle. It was not until I was changing the light shade for one more appropriate to the playroom that I found out what the problem was. One of those do-it-yourself, batten-mounted globe covers, for want of a better word, was stopping the air flow to the light bulb and it had melted, which was the cause of the odd smell. When my electrician came around to change the batten and the wiring, at great expense, he said this was a common occurrence and that there was absolutely no doubt in his mind that house fires had been caused by that type of electrical fitting.

While we talk about electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers doing great jobs, or not, and while by this legislation we will require them to rectify non-complying work, we also need to look at the types of fixtures and fittings available to the Australian

market. Perhaps we need to regulate in favour of those that are safe. A lot of consultation on that needs to be undertaken with electrical contractors. It is something that is missing in this type of legislation. I would be delighted if it were added to the next discussion on bills amending electricity legislation of any type. On that note, I indicate that I support the consumer protection that is provided by the amendments in the bill, but I consider that it could have gone just that one step further.

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — I am also happy to be speaking in support of the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill. The Brumby government is of course committed to safety in industry and, as we have heard from previous speakers, especially to safety in industries such as the industry delivering electricity. As we have also heard from previous government speakers, the Brumby government is committed to ensuring that Victorians have an efficient, effective and, very importantly, safe energy delivery service. I dare say I could probably state that on behalf of all members of the house, not just those on the government side — although in saying that I note that back in 1992 the Kennett government flogged off the electricity supply companies to the highest bidders.

The bill is important because it takes a number of important steps in improving the safety of our state's electricity supply. As you are well aware, Acting Speaker, and as we have heard from previous speakers, the basis of the legislation is the establishment of electricity safety management schemes, or ESMSs. As the name implies, ESMSs are all about ensuring that power is delivered to Victoria and all Victorians in a safe, efficient and effective manner. To this end, as is noted in the second-reading speech, the legislation requires the submission of and, once approved, compliance with ESMSs by electricity operators in delivering their services to the state. Importantly an ESMS will set out the infrastructure or operation to which it is applicable, the hazards identified by the operator and, just as importantly and intrinsically, the management practice to be put in place to minimise any risk or hazard that has been identified in a scheme.

This is very sensible legislation. I must say, Acting Speaker, that I am surprised that this has not been done prior to this legislation, although in saying that I note that most companies were already working with ESMSs in an informal manner before the introduction of this legislation. Importantly this legislation, as I understand it, will ensure that all companies manage their risk in this manner and do so in the prescribed way.

Introducing ESMSs for electricity supply will mean that the electricity industry will now be in line with the scheme that is applicable to gas delivery services, and this in turn will reduce red tape and regulation for companies operating in both industries. For myself and no doubt for the state government, it is appropriate that Energy Safe Victoria will be able to conduct independent audits to ensure companies are complying with this important legislation. I note the support of both the conservative parties and the government for this bill, and I therefore wish this vital legislation a speedy passage through the house.

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — I rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007 and would like to raise a number of issues in relation to electricity safety management schemes, particularly in relation to the distribution supply grids in East Gippsland. These grids have always been a major problem, and that has been particularly so since the privatisation of the electricity industry. It is an issue that I have raised a number of times in this place.

Due to the nature of my electorate there is a fairly dispersed population, particularly up long river valleys. At the end of those valleys there are small communities, so the electricity distribution grids, which have long interconnectors, supply a small number of people. As a result of privatisation there has been a reduction in maintenance in those areas which has led to some of the worst quality of supply performance in the state. That has been seen quite recently in a number of the reports that have come out. My region is the worst — and the member for Lowan's the second worst — performing region.

In my view there was a mistake in the way the electricity companies were privatised. We ended up with two very large companies supplying basically half the state each, with the balance having some fairly profitable areas close to metropolitan Melbourne. Basically the cost of maintaining the infrastructure in regional areas has been left to the consumers in those regions, and because of the drive for profitability in those companies we have ended up with a decline in the quality of service, particularly in small, remote and isolated communities.

How does this relate to the bill? The companies will now have to submit electricity safety management schemes in relation to the protection of the safety of electricity assets showing how they are going to deal with things like the operation of maintenance crews in those areas and how they are going to reduce the risk of fire getting away from the poles. In East Gippsland we have seen a decline in the standard of clearance under

those lines which has meant that when we experience storm events there is more likelihood of blackouts in those long valleys. If the vegetation is allowed to grow under grids such as the one that goes from Orbost through to Mallacoota — and Mallacoota has always been one of the worst performing areas — you find that regrowth is fairly quick because wet rainforests surround them.

Basically they have halved the level of maintenance of those line clearances. What that means is that even if you do not get a shorting out between the vegetation and the lines, when a storm comes through on those dreadful nights where you have gale force winds and driving rain and brings a line down, it takes a long time for the crews to find where the faults occur. You end up with prolonged and extensive delays in reconnecting the electricity service. Under the provisions of the Essential Services Act consumers are compensated for that, but it does not help when you have a freezer full of food that goes off or businesses lose power.

**Mr Delahunty** interjected.

**Mr INGRAM** — That can be addressed. But one of the things the current regulatory system does not do is protect against the brownouts and the fluctuations in power. We have more electronic equipment in our houses and businesses these days, and whilst we are increasingly trying to address the fluctuations in the supply of power, it is not considered compensatable. However, that costs businesses and residential people because of the impact it has on their electronic equipment. In places like Mallacoota a lot of people have trouble with not being able to leave their computers on overnight. I suppose we are not supposed to do that now, given that we are trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but because of failures in the quality of power we have that problem.

One of the other issues that privatisation has given rise to in striving for increased profitability is the scaling back of crews to repair lines and attend to emergency responses. They have been put back into the larger regional centres. Historically there were more people available on the ground, so they could get out there more quickly. A lot of that process has been tendered out. I have raised this and other issues with the government before; they are very important and should be addressed. When the companies put together their safety plans they should include how they are going to deal with those issues.

I have also raised this with the electricity company in my electorate, SP Ausnet, which has undergone a number of ownership changes. Its view is that it is not

its job to provide the firebreaks that were once there. Historically the long connection and distribution lines in my electorate were kept very clean by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, and there was a benefit in that for firefighting and other activities. As I understand it, the electricity companies believe it is not their role to provide that community service. Their job is just to make sure that the vegetation does not touch the wires. That is fine until, as I indicated earlier, you get crews out in the middle of the night having difficulty finding outages.

The other issue I have had discussions with some of my contractors about is the increase in work on live powerlines. Because of the nature of the business now, there is a real push to work live on those hot wires, if you like, but it increases the risk to electricity industry workers.

I thank the government for the briefing on the bill. One of the issues the bill covers is underground powerlines. Where underground powerlines that have been put in place are not adequately signed or announced, there is provision, through the safety inspector, to go back and repair any failure. It is important that we make sure that underground electricity wires are adequately identified so that we do not disturb them and they do not cause risks to people operating digging machinery and so on. As we increase the amount of underground powerlines we need to make sure they are accurately marked on titles so that when a property is transferred the farmer coming in knows exactly where the lines are.

This issue came up in a Rural and Regional Committee hearing, and from the evidence the committee received it appears that that has not always been done. We probably need to go back and look at some of the older works to make sure the identifications are clear. This bill provides for that, and I think it is a good thing. Like other members in this place, I will be supporting the legislation.

**Mr SCOTT** (Preston) — I too rise to support the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill. I welcome the support for the bill from the opposition parties and the Independent. This is a sensible piece of legislation that deals with necessary amendments to ensure the safety of the electricity industry.

For a brief time in a different life I studied electronic engineering, so I have some idea of the dangers of electricity, and I will briefly outline them to the house. People might be unaware of how small an electric shock is required to kill a person. A very small shock, if it happens across the heart, will kill a person. As outlined by earlier speakers, electricity also poses risks

in terms of fire both to property and to persons. Electrical faults and the fires they cause within households — or more broadly, the fatalities they cause — are a danger to property, people and the broader society. Therefore it is perfectly reasonable that the state act to ensure a regulatory framework via legislation which protects the community.

Turning to the bill, it requires mandatory submission of and compliance with electricity safety management schemes (ESMSs) by electricity transmission and distribution owners or operators. These schemes specify the assets or operations that they relate to, the hazards and risks to persons and property from these assets or operations, and the safety management system to minimise the risk and hazards — within reason, of course. The bill will harmonise these electrical safety management regimes with the gas safety case regimes as outlined in the Gas Safety Act 1997. This is a sensible measure which will reduce the regulatory burden for operators between these industries. Again this is typical of the sensible legislation this government introduces to this house. Energy Safe Victoria will have a role in conducting audits to determine compliance with the ESMSs.

There are a number of other aspects of the bill. Clause 9 will repeal redundant section 149A of the Electrical Safety Act 1998. Further, a provision in clause 12 of the bill will ensure that registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical workers are required to rectify their defective work that is unsafe, with a review of their actions by VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal). Importantly this rectification work will not be at additional cost to the customer where the original work is found to be unsafe. In addition clause 14 of the bill will improve the representation on the Victorian Electrolysis Committee of the railway and tramway industries, and there are also a number of other amendments.

This is a very sensible piece of legislation which deals with safety matters. I am sure all members of the house support a safe Victoria and measures which will ensure that the electrical industry in all its forms complies with appropriate standards to ensure the safety of the community. I commend this bill to the house.

**Mr DELAHUNTY (Lewan)** — I rise to make a few remarks in relation to the important Electricity Safety Amendment Bill. The Nationals spokesman on this legislation, Peter Hall, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, presented us with an excellent report on Monday night, and we discussed the position we would take on this bill. Like the other members of The Nationals, I will not be opposing this

legislation. It requires major electricity companies, whether they be distributors or transmission companies, to have an electricity safety management scheme (ESMS) approved by Energy Safe Victoria. That is essentially about putting into legislation what is currently in regulations.

We spoke in the last sitting week about the Essential Services Act in relation to cases where the minister said that he would replace water used for firefighting. We want to put that in the legislation, but we do not seem to be getting too far, so we are pleased to see that the government is now putting into legislation what we believe is currently in the regulations.

Another purpose of the bill is to allow employers of electrical workers to submit electricity safety management schemes with respect to electrical work carried out by those workers. The member for Mildura made an excellent contribution to the debate on this bill earlier in the day. I will not go any further into that, but we will follow with interest the way this legislation translates out in the community after it goes through the Parliament. The bill will allow orders to be made to require electrical contractors to rectify non-compliant electrical installation work — which happens occasionally, but thankfully I have not heard of it happening too often. As the previous speaker said, electricity is of great assistance to our community, but if you do not get it right, it can be very dangerous and can do enormous damage.

The Nationals consulted widely on this legislation and received no opposition from those who came back to us.

I want to comment on what previous speakers have said. The member for Geelong spoke about the previous coalition government selling off the SECV (State Electricity Commission of Victoria). I was not here in those days, but my understanding from my research is that the Labor government sold off the State Bank, as well as many other things, and it sold off the first stage of the SECV. The member for Geelong criticised the previous government. He must not realise that the Labor government sold off those assets to pay recurrent costs, whereas my understanding is that when the coalition government sold things it was to pay off debt.

**Mr Kotsiras** — That they caused.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — That was debt caused by the previous Labor government. The current federal coalition government has paid off \$100 billion worth of Labor debt. No wonder we have had trouble dealing

with a lot of the issues we would like to deal with. Be that as it may, I had better get back to the bill.

The member for Gippsland East spoke about brownouts. Lowan is the largest electorate in the state, and the member for Gippsland East's electorate is now the fourth largest, I think. It comes in behind Swan Hill and Mildura. I have to agree with the member that we have a lot of lines throughout our electorates, and it is usually following a small amount of rain, particularly after a dry season such as we have been having, that we have the problem that is commonly known as brownouts occurring as connections are made through drizzling rain and dust. Brownouts cause enormous difficulties, particularly at shearing time and for dairy farmers, who need power every day to milk their cows.

I have to congratulate the Essential Services Commission on the work it did with the power industries a couple of years ago to improve the efficiency of repairs, which I think has also come about because more electricians and contractors with the various electricity companies across the state have been approved. I run into some of them occasionally. They have done a lot of good work, and I believe the recovery time from brownouts is improving, particularly in remote areas of Victoria, some of which are in my electorate. Like the member for Gippsland East, I have some concerns, but I think they are making progress, and I would like to commend them for that.

This bill amends the Electricity Safety Act 1998. The act is only nine years old, but I believe there are 17 amendments in this bill to change the definitions and the obligations and powers of the major companies in relation to electricity safety management. One thing I want to talk about is the problems we have with overdimensional permits, which the state government has unfortunately brought into Melbourne. We tried to stop it. I thought we had a chance with the new minister, but the administration of overdimensional permits is now based here in Melbourne with VicRoads. How does that link with this? For electricity safety reasons, the electricity companies — Powercor in my area — need to approve the issue of permits for equipment to be moved along roads. Whether silos, farm machinery, houses or the like are being moved, if the equipment is over 5.5 metres in height, permission must be obtained from Powercor.

With the centralisation of the administration processes we are seeing a slowing down in issuing permits, and that is having an enormous impact on safety and also on economic development in my electorate, particularly in relation to silos. Unfortunately we have not had good rains, but some grain is still going to be harvested, and

we would like to see the state government do something about the issuing of these permits. I believe we need a computerised system that would allow easy access to information from Powercor, from communication companies like Telstra, from others such as VicTrack and from road authorities such as local government. We believe, particularly in relation to the movement of silos, that the safety of people on the roads as well as economic development issues require not only the power companies but also the state government to play a part.

I would like to read a letter I have received from Jaeschke Silos in Tarranyurk in my electorate. The company has had some good meetings with VicRoads and also with Powercor. It had one with Michael Darby, who is in charge of the overdimensional load section of VicRoads at its Burwood office, and Liza Jobling, who looks after the overdimensional load section of Powercor. The letter states:

I have found Michael reasonable to work with and efficient in the job of granting permits for our smaller loads. He has granted these permits for up to three months; hence we only get the one charge for multiple silo deliveries. Unfortunately Michael is constrained in issuing permits for our larger silos in that he cannot grant any permits unless we can produce an approval letter from Powercor due to the extra height of our loads. This is understandable considering that the height of our loads will be within the set minimum heights of Powercor lines ... Unfortunately Powercor will only give us permission for each load on a daily basis and we have to reapply for each day and nominate the day we are travelling, weeks ahead. This means that we are up for the cost of a VicRoads permit ...

I wanted to highlight that because of the issue of safety, which is what we are dealing with in this bill. We need to do some more work with VicRoads and the power companies. I call on the government to facilitate this for the sake of those industries.

The member for Mildura spoke about the fact that the Hopetoun community, with the support of Ballarat University, is looking at solar energy to try to improve its sustainability. We need to do much more work in relation to solar energy. I look at the fact that China supplies about 80 per cent of our solar hot-water systems, and 90 per cent of the homes in Israel use these systems. The three leading countries that use solar systems are Japan, Germany and the US.

Australia, with its hot and very clear skies, needs to do more work in relation to solar energy. It is a very cheap power source. My understanding is that these domestic systems can pay for themselves within approximately 15 years — and they are improving. With those few words I indicate that, like other members of The Nationals, I will not be opposing this bill. I look

forward to some action on some of the matters that I have raised here today.

**Mr SEITZ** (Keilor) — I rise to support the Electricity Safety Amendment Bill 2007. The main purpose of this legislation is to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, to revise the arrangements relating to electricity safety management schemes and to enable enforcement officers appointed by Energy Safe Victoria to serve notices on registered electrical contractors and licensed electrical installation workers compelling them to rectify non-compliant electrical work that has been carried out.

These are important amendments, particularly when we look at the fast developments in our industrial field. We just heard the previous speaker talk about rural Victoria. Whenever you have oversized loads — for example, if you are moving farm machinery equipment or relocating portable classrooms — you always have to have a VicRoads permit and also map out, for the electricity supplier, the route you wish to take. In this country that is a safety measure that we all adhere to and respect; therefore, fewer fatalities and accidents happen in that field. It is not only to prevent people from getting injured but also because of the consequences of brownouts and power failure within a district or an area.

I commend the bill because there is now talk of establishing technical colleges and training in safety and so forth. I hope we will have competent people in the trade teaching young people about the work that needs to be carried out. Members are familiar with how quickly computers have changed; likewise, the electrical industry has changed very rapidly. Most people in this house are only familiar with the basics of electricity supply in their home. For example, if the trip switch is gone, you go out and check it and you put it on again. If it were to blow again, you would start unplugging certain equipment in your house before you would call an electrician to check your house.

That is important, particularly when you consider that this year a number of house fires were started by electrical faults — and that is particularly relevant for older homes. People used to do their own alterations, such as adding a light and making illegal changes. The industry and the Victorian government continue to educate people through the media about not playing around with electricity. You only have one chance at it, and you could die if you are doing the wrong thing. Therefore it should be left to professional tradespeople who understand the work.

I am also pleased to see that the railways and the tramways are going to have a further say in the development of the scheme. They were the big source of the state's electrical training and equipment development. Anybody who served their apprenticeship with the railways or the tramways was sought after by all industries, because that is where the development came, not only in running wires but in doing armatures and developing boards and other systems that are required to maintain our railway and tramway systems. That is still important today. With those comments, I am very pleased that the railways and the tramways will have an input into the electrical safety committee. I wish the bill a speedy passage through the house.

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I would like to thank those members of the house who have contributed to the debate on the Electrical Safety Amendment Bill, in particular the members for Box Hill, Mildura, Seymour, Ferntree Gully, Bundoora, Bayswater, Geelong, Gippsland East, Preston, Lowan and Keilor. At the outset I would like to thank members for their comments and for the broad-ranging support across the chamber for electricity safety, which is so important. I thank the member for Box Hill for his constructive and positive comments on these important matters. They were reflected in contributions from other members.

The member for Box Hill, in summing up this bill, described it as a sensible piece of legislation. That is exactly how we regard it, and we appreciate the sensible level of support that it has been given. This legislation delivers on the government's commitment to delivering safe and reliable electricity to all Victorians.

Once this new piece of legislation is through this Parliament, we will be mandating the submission of electricity safety management schemes by the major players. This will ensure that the major electricity companies running the electricity transmission and distribution businesses adopt best practice safety management. I believe most Victorians would have seen the benefits from the major electricity companies submitting voluntary electricity safety management schemes. This bill takes that voluntary system that step further and ensures that the benefits are locked in.

A number of issues were raised in relation to fire and the management of fire in country Victoria. It is important to acknowledge that by its nature an individual electricity safety management scheme will take into account fire mitigation measures, including electricity line clearance. However, as with anything, if an individual has a concern about fire mitigation practices at a specific location in their neighbourhood,

or in an area they have observed, they should contact the local power company directly. They can do that by phone or by email. If in their view the matter is not addressed satisfactorily, then they can contact Energy Safe Victoria, which will investigate the concerns.

In essence we are saying to the community that if in the future under this new regime, or under the regime of voluntary safety management schemes, there is an issue you want to raise or you have some concerns about, you can raise it directly with the electricity company in the first instance. If you do not get a satisfactory answer you can raise it with Energy Safe Victoria. You can do that by phone or by email. The only caveat I would put on that is that when you are drawing particular attention to a power company, or subsequently Energy Safe Victoria, you need to describe as precisely as possible the area affected by the issue that you have raised so that those responsible for following it up can find the area you are talking about.

The bill will also improve the safety of the community by requiring unsafe or faulty electrical work to be rectified at no additional expense to the customer. Providing this alternative to prosecution for defective work will ensure that defective work is rectified quickly and that the safety of Victorian families is not put at risk.

I once again thank the members who have contributed to this debate. We hope the bill gets speedy support in the other chamber.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

## MELBOURNE AND OLYMPIC PARKS AMENDMENT BILL

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 11 October; motion of Mr MERLINO (Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs).**

**Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen)** — It is a pleasure to stand and speak on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2007. I thank the minister's office for providing the briefing and the public servants who

came along to that briefing. I thank the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs for ensuring the briefing was held early in the first week after Parliament last sat. The opposition will not be opposing this legislation, and I will explain later why we have taken this stance.

The bill provides for the consolidation of land-management arrangements at the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct. Currently different parcels of land are managed by different groups. You have the Melbourne City Council, the minister responsible for Crown land, VicTrack and also the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust (MOPT). Some parcels of land are in limbo and no-one knows who is responsible for them.

This legislation makes sense. Therefore, the opposition will not be opposing it. It has the support of a number of organisations. The member for Warrandyte did a lot of work on this legislation and I am appreciative of the work he has done. Many organisations have supported this legislation. The Victorian Institute of Sport is one. In actual fact the VIS wrote to me and said it supported the legislation, and I wish to quote from its letter:

Thank you for inviting us to comment on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2007. The VIS has reviewed the bill and also taken advice from MOPT regarding any likely impact on our operations.

... None of this has a direct impact on the VIS or our operations and so we would have no concerns or objections to the proposed amendments.

However, an issue was raised with regard to the throwing cage and whether elite throwers would be disadvantaged if their use of the throwing cage was limited. I sought some advice from the minister's office. The minister's office responded and I wish to quote from the email I received:

There will be no change as a result of the legislation for the throwers other than that the land they throw on will be managed by the trust rather than the City of Melbourne. The same processes under which the throwers obtain permission to train on the area from the City of Melbourne ... would be replicated with the trust standing in place of the City of Melbourne.

This is another example of how the legislation will simplify arrangements in the precinct. Under the legislation the throws area will be managed by the same body that manages the rest of the athletics facilities in the precinct.

The minister's office assures me that there will be no restriction on the throwers who use this land. We also met with the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, which said it supports this legislation. If one looks at the vision and mission of the trust one would have to

agree that they are worthwhile. The trust's vision is 'to be recognised as Australia's premier sports and entertainment precinct'. Its mission states:

Our mission is to be an effective custodian of a significant Victorian asset by delivering exceptional and memorable experiences through partnerships, by working together with our partners to create sustainable value enabling us to grow our income and improve, maintain and promote Melbourne and Olympic parks.

As I said, it is a worthwhile and valuable mission. Having spoken to the trust I know it supports this legislation. I just hope the government continues to provide the resources and the support the trust needs to enable it to continue to do the work it is currently doing.

I also understand that the Melbourne Lord Mayor, John So, is very supportive of this legislation, but as I will outline later, the rest of the councillors are not very supportive of it. In actual fact they opposed this legislation. Even before the council met to debate this legislation, the Lord Mayor came out and said that he supported it, without checking with his fellow councillors. I am not saying that a deal was made between this government and the Lord Mayor in terms of council elections next year, but one has to question why the Lord Mayor would come out before even speaking to his own councillors. I would have thought he would go back to council, discuss it at a council meeting, get some feedback from his councillors and perhaps then come out and make a public statement. The minister might have the answers, and I would appreciate it if he could advise us why the Lord Mayor supported the legislation while the other councillors opposed it. I hope he clarifies that during his summing up.

I also received some correspondence from the Melbourne Football Club:

I personally think longer term there needs to be closer integration of planning across the whole MCG/MOP area, as it is effectively one area in terms of public investment and utilisation, and despite these MOP tidy ups we still have various state and local authorities and trusts involved, and issues associated with land use, planning, public transport, environment, major events, ticketing, education et cetera will be much harder/more compromised the more bodies that have their own vested interests.

I am seeking to find out from the minister if there are any future plans for the rest of the area around the MCG. I just put that on the table hoping the minister will provide some answers to the questions that were posed by the Melbourne Football Club.

Some of the tenants of the precinct include Tennis Victoria, the Melbourne Football Club, the Collingwood Football Club — and I have to say here that I am a member of the Collingwood Football Club — the Melbourne Victory Football Club, Melbourne Storm, the Victorian Institute of Sport, Athletics Victoria and the Melbourne Rebels. All these organisations are I think gaining something from this precinct. Unfortunately I do not think that Athletics Victoria is gaining much, and I hope the minister provides some support to this organisation. I will outline later what I mean by Athletics Victoria not having resources and assistance from this government.

The reason for introducing this legislation, according to the government, is that, and I quote from the second-reading speech:

The range of different organisations managing and maintaining this land is inefficient, cumbersome and makes it difficult to plan and coordinate a long-term vision for the precinct.

Under this legislation the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust will manage most of the precinct. In the second-reading speech the minister gave an example of why we need this legislation. The minister claims that when the Collingwood Football Club moved its training base from the rectangular stadium which is to be built in Gosch's Paddock it had to obtain an agreement from the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust. The trust had to get two licences — one from the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the other from the City of Melbourne. Both had to then be approved by the minister responsible for the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. The government's argument therefore is that by having one organisation it would cut red tape and make it easier to provide a lease to the club and in future to provide leases to Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Storm for the use of Gosch's Paddock.

Currently, the minister claims, the Melbourne City Council can give a lease only for up to 3 years. That is true, but not entirely true. The Governor in Council can, if the government decides to, permit any council to give a lease of greater than 3 years — in fact, up to 21 years. The minister's argument, although it is not false, twists the truth a little bit by not pointing out that the councils can, if the Governor in Council approves, give a lease of up to 21 years. It is disappointing that again the government prefers to provide spin and rhetoric when I think this legislation is good and stands on its own. It provides one organisation to manage the precinct.

If you look at the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, section 16(2) on page 36 says:

By the same or any subsequent Order the Governor in Council may empower the municipal council to grant leases or licences for a term not exceeding 21 years of any such vested land for the purposes of the reservation.

It is possible, if the Governor in Council allows it. It still does not mean it will be easy. It still means there will be red tape, and therefore it is appropriate to consolidate the management of all the parcels of land within this precinct.

Apart from the Lord Mayor, who supports this legislation, the councillors on the Melbourne City Council, as I said earlier, oppose it. If one reads the minutes of the committee meeting that was held, one can see why the councillors opposed it. The motion that was put and passed says:

1. That the Finance and Governance Committee:
  - 1.1 oppose the move by the state government to shift the management of land in Yarra Park from council to the Melbourne and Olympic Park Trust; and
  - 1.2 seek a meeting with the state government regarding the broader issue of jurisdiction over parks management.

It is a problem when the government does not sit down and talk to the councillors. The minister's office tells me it spoke to the Lord Mayor. I grant that it spoke to the officers, and that is fine, but you would think it would give the Lord Mayor and the officers enough time to convey the views of the government to the councillors. When the committee was to meet on the day, John So made that statement in the morning without providing any time for the councillors to meet. In terms of consultation, the minister claims that he consults, but he does not give them ample time to sit down and discuss the proposal that he put on the table.

I ask: why would the councillors object? There are a number of reasons. The first reason is that there was no proper consultation with the councillors. They also fear that some of the public land that the government is going to manage under the trust will be closed to the public. Again the minister's office has advised me this is not the case and that it will be open for public use just as is the case at present. The council fears that it will be closed during training days so that, if we get a football team from overseas coming to train, the government might, for security reasons, close off the park and not allow the public access.

The third reason is that this is just one of many cases where the government can come over the top of council and take over a park. What is stopping the government from taking over, for example, Carlton Gardens?

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — It has. It has threatened to take over Carlton Gardens for the flower show. I support the flower show. The former Premier, Jeff Kennett, supported the flower show, and I support the flower show. You would think the government would sit down with the council, but the advice I have been given from council is that the government is refusing to sit down with it and talk it through to come to an agreement. The council said, 'All they have to do is talk to us around the table so they can put to us their views and tell us what they think, and we will come to an agreement'. The government is refusing to meet with the council. Instead the Premier is coming over the top and taking over the park to ensure the government gets publicity.

In my electorate of Bulleen in the municipality of Manningham I fear that the government will come into my area and take over our parks. What is stopping it? That is the real concern of Melbourne City Council. A Greens councillor, Fraser Brindley, said 'the council was being treated as a de facto government department'. Cr Ng said:

... commercial advertising in public parkland was prohibited under the City of Melbourne planning scheme.

The current zoning of Gosch's Paddock does not allow commercial signage. If the current zoning remains advertising on fencing around the new oval would not be allowed.

I believe it would set a dangerous precedent for the city's other parks and gardens. Yarra Park, Princes Park and Fawkner Park are premier city parks that are in a different league to country and suburban football grounds where advertising is common.

The committee also supported an amendment to the planning scheme to enable engineering and landscaping works to begin immediately. Cr Ng's concern was about advertising. If it is possible for it to be closed off to the public, commercial advertising will start to appear, which is a problem. I sought advice from the minister's office, which sent me an email saying:

Under the proposed legislation there is no difference to the existing regime, which does not permit advertising unless an exemption is received from the planning minister.

What is it? How difficult will it be to get planning approval from the planning minister?

**Mr Merlino** — No different.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — No different! I think it is a problem, and I will watch and see how much advertising appears at Gosch's Paddock over the next few years. I will remind the minister what he has said in the chamber.

As a result of the new precinct a new soccer or football stadium can be built, which I think is fantastic for the state and fantastic for soccer and football, so I support the stadium. Once again the Labor Party has shown that it cannot manage a single major project. Whom do they have in charge of this major project? Minister Theophanous in the other place. Among all the ministers you would think they would be able to find someone else, but it is Minister Theophanous who is responsible for this major project. We have seen disaster after disaster after disaster. A report in the *Age* of 13 January 2007 written by Royce Millar and Michael Lynch states:

Planning for Melbourne's proposed soccer and rugby stadium is in disarray, with the state government in a quandary over seating capacity, budget blow-outs and threats of compensation claims by rival venue Telstra Dome.

...

But now the government is under intense pressure to increase capacity because of Victory's success and popularity.

...

The new stadium's future is looking increasingly uncertain, with senior government, sporting and building industry sources agreeing that Spring Street is 'in a pickle'. 'They've painted themselves into a fine old corner', one development source said.

...

The project, believed to have been initially costed at \$80 million and last year officially at \$190 million, is now believed to be edging towards \$250 million.

On 18 January 2007, the same year, the government has changed its mind. Because of public opinion and pressure it decided to increase the seating from about 20 000 to 27 750, almost 8000 more than originally planned — despite the fact that originally everyone was telling it that the stadium was too small. I have heard a rumour that I hope is not true. I have heard that Minister Theophanous threatened Melbourne Victory that Transport Accident Commission sponsorship would be stopped unless it signed the documents. There is no proof, and I am not saying it happened, but there is a rumour going around. If these are the tactics the government is using, I would ask the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs — I am sure he supports Melbourne Victory, Collingwood Football Club, Melbourne Football Club and all the other football clubs — to ensure that this type of action does not occur in this state.

On 19 August 2007, a few months later, after having gone from about 20 000 to 27 750 because of pressure, the government decided to change the seating capacity again. A report in the *Age* states:

The \$268 million stadium has been redesigned to hold more than 31 000 spectators in an all-seater configuration — about 10 000 more than when it was initially unveiled in 2006. But the state government has confirmed it is willing to consider yet more tinkering to that design to allow for small sections of terraced standing room for spectators.

Under FIFA rules you cannot have standing room, but that is another issue. The government has managed to change the capacity of the stadium three times in six months.

When I asked the minister's office when it expected the stadium to be built and what was the final cost I received an email which I will read into *Hansard*, because it might come back to haunt the minister. It states:

The stadium is due for completion at the end of 2009 to be ready for the start of the 2010 Rugby League season for Melbourne Storm. Total cost has been announced by government as \$268 million.

We have moved from \$80 million to \$268 million in six months! I would say the costs will blow out to more than \$268 million, and I will be very surprised if it is fully completed by 2009. I hope I am proved wrong. Provided the Minister for Industry and Trade in the other place does not fudge the numbers in terms of costs, I will be very surprised, as I said, if it comes in by 2009 and if the total cost is \$268 million. It is a problem, because once again this government has shown that it cannot manage a major project in the state of Victoria.

Another concern I have is car parking, which is a big issue. When you decide —

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — I am sorry; I forgot the minister has a driver and a car. Maybe he does not know that parking is a real problem. The government has three options. The first is to improve public transport, but that is absolutely impossible for this government. It would not know where to start to improve public transport. The second option is to have more parking bays — but again, where is the minister's long-term strategy for parking in the precinct? I have not seen it. The third option, of course, is for the government to sit on its hands. I will tell you which option it will choose; it will be the third option. It will sit on its hands and do absolutely nothing. People are going to find it hard to park, and they will find it hard to travel by public transport, simply because this government does not have the ability or the vision to prepare for the long term.

When I asked the minister's office about the parking problem it responded via email, and I quote:

A review into the overall car parking requirements of the precinct is currently under way and is looking at how to transfer any parking bays that will be lost once the stadium is completed

So we have another review. Does the minister think the review should not have been completed before the work on the stadium was started? I did not hear all the minister's answer at question time, but he was very upset that neither The Nationals nor I had asked him any questions. If the minister does something, we will ask him a question, but he has been very quiet over the last 12 months. This is a prime example. Where is the minister's car parking strategy for the precinct? It is nowhere. If the minister is reviewing the parking problem while the rectangular stadium is being built, then I think he has missed the boat. I fear the problem with parking is going to remain. It is a huge problem, and unfortunately this government is not doing anything about it.

I said at the start that I wished to say something about Athletics Victoria. I think it is disappointing that it is asked to be in a building which is falling apart. The building has concrete cancer, and no money has been put aside to assist Athletics Victoria to either improve the facilities it is staying in or perhaps move. I have heard a rumour — again it is a rumour — that the government is going to move Athletics Victoria to Bob Jane Stadium, the home of the South Melbourne Soccer Club. If that is true, has the government told the soccer club? Where is the government going to move the club? Is it going to move, Minister?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — I ask the government to tell me whether Athletics Victoria is going to stay where it is, and, if it is, whether any money is going to be spent on improving the facilities. If you have been down there, Acting Speaker, you will know that there are tin sheds and the seats are very uncomfortable. Again, maybe the minister sits in a box having some wine, but I think it is unfair on the rest who have to use the facilities. The toilets are like something from a Third World country. I just want to hear from the minister when he is summing up whether he will do something to assist Athletics Victoria in the future. I hope he does.

If he moves the club, I do not know where he is going to move it or whether any consultation has taken place with the club and with other clubs which might be affected by the move. If he has not, then perhaps he

should. I am happy to sit down with the minister and advise him on what he should be doing, if that is what he wants. I am happy to do that, despite the fact that he has 5 advisers and 25 other staff.

Finally, because I have only 3 minutes more to speak, the minister said the government is going to give \$12.9 million in drought relief to grassroots sport. It has taken the government 12 months to do this. Some of the councils are going to get \$40 000 to change their turf, and they have to match the funds dollar for dollar. I looked at the criteria for the grant program on a web page, and I would like to know how the \$12.9 million is going to be spent, which electorates it is going to be spent in and whether the minister thinks that is enough in drought relief for grassroots sport. While it is good that there is support, I think we have to look beyond that.

We have to support grassroots sport rather than the minister just coming in every 10 months and giving \$12.9 million to some clubs. I know a lot of clubs in my electorate are hurting and have asked for some assistance, but the government has not given assistance. That is why I am asking where the money is going to go and how the government will choose which councils it will support. Again, while we support the sporting precinct, I think more needs to be done in the area of sport. As I said, if the minister wants some advice, I am happy to give it to him at no cost. I do not have to have a car or a chauffeur; I will give him my advice and hope he will do something about it.

As I said at the start the opposition will not be opposing this legislation, because it is needed. But I think the process this government has undertaken is flawed, because it did not consult and there is no long-term strategy in terms of car parking. I fear what the next move will be in terms of the government going into municipalities and taking open space — parkland — simply because it cannot work with local councils. Instead of sitting down with councils and working through the problems, as it did with the Melbourne City Council on the flower show, which I support, the government has decided to go over the heads of councils and ignore the councillors. Members should speak to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So. Maybe the government will do a deal with John So in terms of next year's elections.

**Ms D'Ambrosio** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Ingram)** — Order! The member for Mill Park will have her chance!

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — What can I say about the member for Mill Park? I hope that in future the minister will consult with the major stakeholders and not go over the heads of councils. Perhaps the minister could provide a long-term strategy for parking in the precinct. Perhaps the minister could tell the Parliament how he is going to assist Athletics Victoria. I know he cares; I just want him to tell me what he is going to do. He is the minister; he is part of the government. If he would be happy to be in opposition, then I would be more than happy to go over to the government benches and do the job for him. The minister should tell us what he is going to do to help Athletics Victoria. In future I ask him to consult and take other councils into account.

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill. First of all, I would like to thank the minister and his office for providing a briefing on the bill, and I thank Johnny McLindon and Lloyd very much for that. I must also commend Brian Morris, the chief executive officer of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, who also gave me a significant briefing. The Nationals do not oppose the bill.

I will quickly run through the purpose of this bill, and that is to amend the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985 to consolidate land-management arrangements in the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct. The bill provides for parcels of land adjacent to the National Tennis Centre and Olympic Park to be incorporated into the precinct and reserved for ‘tennis, other sports, recreation and entertainment’, and ‘sports, recreation and entertainment’ respectively. Some of these parcels of land are currently unreserved while others are reserved as public park but are separated by roads or a rail corridor from other areas of public park. Most of these lands are already being used by the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust by agreement with the relevant land manager, for purposes related to the management of the National Tennis Centre and Olympic Park. Some very small pieces of land around the edges of the National Tennis Centre and Olympic Park within the precinct are included to tidy up the boundaries at those points.

The bill provides for the area known as Gosch’s Paddock to be permanently reserved as a public park under the management of the trust. That is an important aspect of this legislation. It is recognised that Gosch’s Paddock is a highly valued area of public open space that needs to be protected. Some of Gosch’s Paddock is currently public parkland managed by the City of Melbourne, while two other sections of Gosch’s Paddock are unreserved. That is another important

point. The bill will rectify an inefficient land-management arrangement while protecting public access to open space.

The overall intent of the bill would appear to be a practical progression towards a consolidated management of the Melbourne and Olympic Park precinct.

Different aspects of the bill are referred to in the second-reading speech relating to current and potential events and to user groups. Some of these, as we have obviously seen in the Olympic Park precinct over a period of time, have included the Commonwealth Games, the World Swimming Championships, the World Gymnastic Championships and the World Track Cycling Championships, as well as myriad other events throughout the calendar year. It is a venue that attracts not only the tennis but also athletic events, and organisations such as the Victorian Institute of Sport, Melbourne Storm, Melbourne Victory, the Melbourne Football Club and the Collingwood Football Club are all participants using this precinct.

The second-reading speech also refers to the management of the precinct. Whilst part of the land is managed by the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, part of it is also managed by the City of Melbourne, part by the minister responsible for the Crown land and part by VicTrack. Some of the land is under no formal arrangement whatsoever. Myriad difficulties are created by the inconsistencies and bureaucracy associated with the lease agreement under this arrangement. Organisations and clubs operating within the precinct have acknowledged that a longer lease arrangement would be more rewarding for them and give them a much better future, because they could plan with a long-term vision in mind. It also gives them more certainty in relation to improvements and upgrades to facilities.

The plight of the Collingwood Football Club is also referred to — and some members of this house would agree that we should do what we can to upset the Collingwood Football Club. The current situation is that the club is required to obtain agreement from the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust as well as the Melbourne City Council in order to train on the oval at Gosch’s Paddock. I should also have said that licences for the use of this land need to be obtained from the Department of Sustainability and Environment and from the City of Melbourne. These licences need to be approved by the minister responsible for Crown land. That is a good example of the issues surrounding Gosch’s Paddock in the Olympic Park precinct.

Obviously one of the purposes of this bill is to allow these entities to enter into long-term licences with clubs such as the Melbourne Football Club, Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Storm for the use of Gosch's Paddock. As I just said, the Melbourne City Council can currently only offer a licence for up to three years. These clubs are looking for more certainty for their future planning, and it is important that they are able to have that option, so a 21-year lease would certainly be a more sensible approach.

Referring again to the second-reading speech, one of the concerns was that Gosch's Paddock should continue to be reserved as a public park. It is good to see that that will happen, although there are concerns related to that, and I will talk about them in a few moments.

This bill refers to the new rectangular stadium. In doing some research on this stadium I found that there have been a number of press releases on the subject. The member for Bulleen quite rightly pointed out the uncertainty about the capacity of the stadium and how it would operate, and the problems there have been over a period of time. Melbourne Victory expressed the view way back that it was able to attract crowds of significant proportions, but it had concerns about the capacity of the stadium. This issue goes back as far as 2005 when an article in the *Age* stated:

The state government is on a collision course with Melbourne City Council and Collingwood Football Club over a plan to fast-track a new Rugby League and soccer stadium near Olympic Park and turn parkland into a training ground for Collingwood and other sports clubs.

Certainly, as the member for Bulleen rightly pointed out, there have been some concerns with council over that period of time — and as we have just heard they still exist today. I refer to a media release dated April 2006, in which the former Premier, Steve Bracks, said:

A spectacular new 20 000-seat soccer and rugby stadium to be built in the Olympic Park precinct will make Melbourne the envy of the world.

Uncertainty is apparent in the same press release from the fact that Mr Bracks said the stadium would have an initial capacity of 20 000, with scope to increase to 25 000, and that it would cater for current crowd sizes for rugby and soccer. Of course things changed with the Melbourne Victory coming on board and being so popular. At that particular time the estimated cost of the project was somewhere in the vicinity of \$190 million.

Reference was also made earlier to an article in the *Age* in January, which states:

Planning for Melbourne's proposed new rectangular sports stadium is in disarray, with the state government in a

quandary over seating capacity, budget blow-outs and threats of compensation claims by rival venue Telstra Dome.

That is an important aspect. Earlier the minister made some claims, saying that the stadium will be operational in 2010. One of the issues that needs to be raised to make other members aware of it is that Telstra Dome could seek compensation if within 10 years another stadium with a capacity in excess of 25 000 seats was built. If the opening date is what the government was saying it will be, we will probably just miss out on the operation of that particular compensation clause, but that is an important fact to raise at this time.

I will not go through a number of other press releases. The problems with the stadium and the changes over a period of time have been well documented by the member for Bulleen. Certainly now we know that it is a \$268 million project, with a seating capacity of 31 000. I agree with the sentiment that it is an important part of the Olympic Park precinct. The stadium is certainly warranted, given the popularity of the Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Storm teams.

I want to outline some of the concerns that have come up through consulting with various user groups. Most of the feedback was quite positive, with the exception of that from the Melbourne City Council, which again was alluded to by the member for Bulleen. He also made reference to Cr So's approval of the project and to the fact that maybe his councillors were not aware of his giving it the nod of approval. Earlier this month the *Age* reported:

Lord Mayor John So said he was glad to have management of the parkland removed from his jurisdiction. 'It makes sense to have all the land in the precinct controlled by the one authority', said Cr So ...

At that time Cr So's chief executive, David Pitchford, asked the state government for further discussions about the proposed takeover. The government ignored the request.

As we know from the minutes of a meeting of the Melbourne City Council's finance and governance committee earlier this month, it was moved that the committee:

... oppose the move by the state government to shift the management of land in Yarra Park from council to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust; and

... seek a meeting with the state government regarding the broader issue of jurisdiction over parks management.

It was a real concern, and I am sure a sentiment shared by other councils throughout Victoria, that the government would have the authority to come in and take over parkland with what appears to be not a great deal of consultation. At that Melbourne City Council

committee meeting Cr Wilson moved as an amendment:

that the words 'without adequate consultation' be added after the words 'state government'.

That is a really important point. Obviously somewhere along the line the communication levels have not been great. The government certainly has to take some responsibility for that. The amendment was lost, but it makes the point that the consultation process has been lacking.

When I asked what its thoughts on this particular bill were I received a letter from the Melbourne City Council. It states:

From a negative point, council is constantly protecting parkland from commercial exploitation and this site has a history of applications for commercial signage given its location adjacent to Punt Road. It would be a great pity if the parkland qualities of the site were degraded in this way.

Given the earlier contribution to the debate by the member for Bulleen, I am sure that the minister will ensure that those types of things will not happen.

I concur with the sentiments expressed earlier in relation to the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, where the government had decided to take over control of land, that that was a sensible and practical thing to do. But again we would like to see greater consultation, particularly given the feedback from local councils.

One of the issues mentioned throughout this debate has been that with the new stadium being built there will be a reduction in car parking facilities. I believe the net loss may be in the vicinity of 600 car spaces. I make the point that in those circumstances it will be extremely difficult for people travelling considerable distances from rural and regional Victoria. If they want to make a weekend of it, they do not always have access to the public transport services they would like at the time they would like them, and sometimes the costs are prohibitive. That is something the government certainly needs to look at to ensure that people travelling from rural and regional Victoria to attend the precinct have the same opportunities as people living in metropolitan Melbourne.

Over time government initiatives such as those taken during the Commonwealth Games have included reducing the cost of V/Line tickets and the like. To enable such ventures to be undertaken, concrete government initiatives need to be better and to be in place on a full-time basis rather than for just major

events. The net loss of 600 car spaces will have a huge impact on country visitors to the precinct.

One of the things that I am getting feedback on from the local community in relation to this bill is the investment of \$268 million in the new stadium. As the member for Bulleen said, through this process we should not forget participants in grassroots sports. I am happy to acknowledge a couple of the initiatives the minister has announced in recent times, but in a minute I will take him to task on a couple of issues. It is important that we acknowledge the number of participants, along with the volunteers, we have in sport, particularly in regional areas, and how much they mean to communities. For example, I refer to a VicSport submission that is on its website:

Community sport and active recreation are at the forefront of the fight against lifestyle-related diseases.

At the end of the day the investment of dollars that we make in ensuring that communities continue to run sporting activities is really important. It states also that it is estimated that 'throughout the world there are at least 1.9 million deaths among people aged 15 years and over which are directly attributable to physical inactivity'.

When we talk about those types of numbers it is important that we ensure that grassroots sports continue and prosper into the future. I again refer to the point that with an investment of \$268 million in a new stadium it is important that we invest the same sort of money in and have the same consideration for those participating in sport in country Victoria. As members know, the drought is having an impact on country sport. Many sporting seasons have been delayed or reduced or even cancelled as a result of lack of water. During question time today the minister made reference to the support of the Municipal Association of Victoria for recent funding announcements. I am certainly well aware of a report prepared by GHD about strategies to combat the problems we have in regional sport.

One of the things I need to mention is that obviously a number of grass sports surfaces not only in country Victoria but obviously in metropolitan areas as well are struggling. We really need to come up with a strategic plan to ensure the viability of those sports so that they can continue into the future. I look with interest at the good work done in preparing that report. I hope the government will support some of the recommendations in that report, which I am sure it does. I call on the minister to also compile a draft strategy so that we can continue to ensure the viability of those sports throughout the next 10 years, not to just throw a bit of money about whilst the drought is occurring.

I refer to a point the minister made during question time today when he was answering a question — that is, that The Nationals and the Liberals are not providing too many press releases on sporting topics.

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

**Mr NORTHE** — I am more than happy to put the minister on my list; we will send him a copy of every media release I have. If I had a bit more time, I would be happy to read a few of them out. I think it is pretty important that the minister understands that The Nationals are working hard with a lot of local clubs in various sectors that are struggling. I certainly want to read out quickly a press release to just verify that:

Following a recent inspection of the Cowwarr Football Netball Club's substandard facilities The Nationals member for Morwell, Russell Northe, has urged the state government to recognise the funding crisis facing local football and netball clubs.

...

As The Nationals spokesman for sport and recreation, Mr Northe said The Nationals longstanding call for a \$20 million cash injection over four years to develop country football and netball facilities was now more relevant than ever given the impact of drought on local clubs.

That is just one of many, but I also want the minister to be aware of and ensure that we look after our local communities and sporting clubs. I have here a list of clubs that I have given letters of support to in terms of funding assistance. One of those is Boolara Football Club, and I will just quickly read the first part:

It is with pleasure that I give my support to Boolara Football Club in cooperation with Boolara Memorial Park Committee in their application to the federal government for funding through the community water grant scheme.

That was a plan to install two 250 000 litre water tanks. That is something that local clubs are also going to the federal government for. You can be assured that The Nationals spokesman for sport and recreation is working as hard as he can to ensure that our local sporting clubs have the best of those.

In closing, I can assure the minister that, from a community survey, our local communities are very concerned about sport and recreation and their facilities, and certainly it is my job to ensure that we continue to work hard for that. In relation to this bill, as I said, there are some concerning aspects, but overall the intent is good, and that is to have the management under the one banner. The Nationals will not oppose the bill.

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park) — I am very pleased to rise in support of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill. No-one will doubt of

course that Victoria and sport go hand in hand and have done so for many decades. Let us not forget that this government has consistently grown the state's sporting facilities, and when I say 'the state's' I certainly mean the state in its entirety.

Since coming to office the government has allocated funds to more than 1400 community and recreation facility projects across Victoria, including more than \$50 million to 100 different aquatic facilities. The government's Go for Your Life program is designed to get people involved in their communities and improve their health and general wellbeing, and together with the Australian better health initiative it is helping to address the very critical and growing problem in our community, which is obesity. In last year's budget alone a record \$87 million was invested or earmarked for investment in the fight against obesity and for the promotion of good health and wellbeing in our community.

We also allocated an extra \$6 million to the country football and netball program, in addition to the country football grounds assistance program. This government's investment in country, national and international facilities across the whole of Victoria ensured, amongst other things, the success of the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Facilities across Melbourne and regional Victoria, including Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Traralgon, not to mention the world-class Melbourne Cricket Ground, were used for the Commonwealth Games. Certainly many millions of dollars of investment were put into those facilities by this government. We also opened the new competition pool at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre in time for the Commonwealth Games.

As part of our nurturing of our state's sporting facilities this bill makes changes to improve the precinct within which sit two of our most important sporting facilities, and they are the Melbourne and Olympic parks. Both Melbourne Park and Olympic Park are world renowned, playing host to top-class state, national and international events. The location of these facilities near the city has facilitated tourist promotion from which we have certainly derived, as a whole state, great economic benefits. The Australian Tennis Open, the Commonwealth Games in 2006, the world swimming championships, the world track cycling championships and the world gymnastic championships are just some of the noteworthy events that have recently been played out as part of our state's sporting calendar. Of course the Australian Tennis Open is a constant feature of the sporting calendar.

This government is continuing the investment in this significant sporting precinct with the construction of the new rectangular stadium. This precinct is also becoming the hub of a broad range of key sporting codes and organisations: the Melbourne Football Club, the Collingwood Football Club, Melbourne Storm, Melbourne Victory and the VIT (Victorian Institute of Sport), to name just some of those that are coming to this precinct.

The precinct is under this government going from strength to strength, with an asset value of over three-quarters of a billion dollars. The precinct has grown over many years, and the land contained therein is managed under several different arrangements. This bill will consolidate the Crown land currently managed under these arrangements so as to facilitate a whole-of-precinct management approach. Currently some of the land is managed by the City of Melbourne, some by VicTrack, some by the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust and some by the minister responsible for Crown land. By bringing together the separate management systems in a consolidated form we will deliver a streamlined and efficient management arrangement for these vital and most valuable facilities.

This world-class precinct will be managed in a world-class way for the world-class city that is Melbourne. The existing set of arrangements simply gets in the way of orderly management, adds to the burden of bureaucracy and certainly does not make good economic sense. The bill proposes that the management of the precinct will fall to one sole body, that being the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, with ultimate accountability lying with the government.

This new simplified system will allow for greater certainty in the entering into of licence arrangements for the use of Gosch's Paddock, for example, which currently involves the Melbourne Football Club, Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Storm. The bill will help facilitate the tenancy of the new rectangular stadium by these three clubs that currently face a limiting three-year licensing constraint. Sporting organisations such as these, which are great and have an increased reliance on good economic management and good forward planning, require longer term licensing arrangements than are currently afforded to them by existing arrangements.

The Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust will also be vested with the sole responsibility for the management of the National Tennis Centre land and additional Olympic Park land. The minister would need to approve any works in Gosch's Paddock beyond the minor nature that might be proposed by the trust and

would need to approve licences of up to 20 years duration. Gosch's Paddock is a sensitive area, but this government will ensure, through the bill, that it remains permanently reserved as a public park. Indeed the reserve will be extended to include the southern section of Gosch's Paddock, which at the moment is not reserved as a public park. That extends the availability of land as a public asset reserved by the bill. The trust would also be required to report annually to Parliament.

The bill shows the decisiveness and leadership of our Premier and minister. We are moving to a phase where the rectangular stadium will be going full steam ahead. We will be providing greater certainty to users through longer licensing arrangements, and that has to be good for all of those concerned and will certainly be of economic benefit to our state. We have saved the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, as the member for Bulleen mentioned earlier. That is decisive leadership, and it is about ensuring the economic viability of these types of events in Melbourne and that they are allowed to continue so we can reap the rewards they produce. We are moving ahead with certainty and are soon to add another jewel to the crown of this world-class sporting precinct with the addition of the rectangular stadium to the tune of \$268 million worth of investment.

I would like to also pay tribute to the fact that our minister is moving ahead strongly in continuing the investment and the support to sporting facilities and sporting organisations throughout Victoria. A few days ago an important announcement was made of up to \$100 000 worth of grants to councils to continue collaborative efforts to deal with the effects of drought on our sporting grounds. The municipality within which my electorate sits, the city of Whittlesea, as an interface council is looking forward to taking advantage of that grant, so that we are able to continue to provide good sporting facilities for a lot of our sporting clubs.

I had the pleasure of hosting the minister on a recent visit to my electorate to see the development of a collaborative investment between the council and state government at Redleap Reserve. An innovative idea to harvest, recycle and irrigate water from the reserve to water the adjacent sporting oval will provide a wonderful boost to the maintenance and viability of that ground for local sporting clubs. I congratulate the minister and government for bringing forward such initiatives. I certainly commend the bill to the house.

**Sitting suspended 6.32 p.m. until 8.03 p.m.**

**Mr R. SMITH** (Warrandyte) — I rise to speak on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill

2007, and I would like to start by thanking the minister and his departmental staff for a very thorough and informative briefing.

The government would have been very happy that Lord Mayor John So came out so quickly following the introduction of the bill and voiced his approval of it. It is just a shame that the Lord Mayor did not consult with his fellow councillors before making that statement. In fact subsequent council meetings showed little support for the bill, with councillors citing it as another land grab by the state government. Melbourne City Council's Finance and Governance Committee's minutes show that a motion was put and subsequently carried, saying:

1. That the Finance and Governance Committee:
  - 1.1 oppose the move by the state government to shift the management of land in Yarra Park from council to the Melbourne and Olympic Park Trust; and
  - 1.2 seek a meeting with the state government regarding the broader issue of jurisdiction over parks management.

Councillors are concerned that a precedent has been set with this bill for the government to take land from the council as it wishes. In fact last month the government signalled it would also take Carlton Gardens from the council to accommodate the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. An article in the *Herald Sun* of 25 September 2007 states:

Greens councillor Fraser Brindley said the council was being treated as a de facto government department.

'The state government is happy for us to do the grubby work, but when they don't like it, they step in', said Cr Brindley, the environment committee chairman.

It was also reported that the City of Melbourne's chief executive, David Pitchford, asked the government for further discussions about the proposed takeover but that that request was ignored. This government has form when it comes to a lack of consultation, and this is but another example of that.

Clause 8(6) of the bill states that the trust will be able to grant 21-year leases under this new legislation as opposed to the 3-year leases that council can grant at the moment. The minister made a fairly big deal about this issue. He mentioned it in the second-reading speech and also in subsequent media releases, but the fact of the matter is that the ability for the council to grant these leases is already provided for in legislation. The Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 states in section 16(2):

... the Governor in Council may empower the municipal council to grant leases or licences for a term not exceeding 21 years of any such vested land for the purposes of the reservation.

What that means is that by a stroke of the minister's pen the council could already be given the right to grant any lease up to the term of 21 years, so to announce this as something new is really quite misleading. The minister also talked about the new rectangular stadium in his second-reading speech, and while the stadium will certainly be a valuable addition to the precinct, the road to it has been paved with difficulties. There have been issues regarding seating capacity and compensation claims from Telstra Dome, and believe it or not, as is always the case with this government, there have been budget blow-outs. The project was initially costed at \$80 million. It was costed again last year at \$190 million, and now we are looking at a cost of something of the order of \$260 million. There were questions about whether it was even going to go ahead. It was reported in the *Age* on 13 January 2007 that:

Well-placed sources have confirmed that the new home for A League soccer club Melbourne Victory and National Rugby League side Melbourne Storm was close to being scrapped by the government late last year and does not have the support of senior cabinet members.

I guess that was rightly so, given the government's initial reluctance to listen to the future users of the stadium. Melbourne Victory said that the original planned stadium would be obsolete before it was built and was therefore an embarrassment, and there were real concerns about whether Melbourne Victory would even make the new stadium its home. Fortunately public pressure and good sense eventually made the government change its mind, and although it is now confirmed that Victory will make its home at the new stadium, the government would have been in plenty of strife had Victory chosen to make its home at Telstra Dome.

As we look forward to the stadium's construction I have heard there is a fear that construction workers will put their mobile offices and construction equipment on the throwing area next to Vodafone Arena. I would seek some assurance from the minister that that will not happen, because it is really important to keep that area free for training for events. I understand that at the moment it is used quite extensively most days of the week, and it is important that that remains the case.

Olympic Park itself is in dire need of work. I understand that the buildings are riddled with concrete cancer, that many of the offices leak when it rains, that the buildings are quite outdated, that the toilets are dilapidated and that the seating, as the member for

Bulleen said earlier, is quite second-rate. The state of Olympic Park really needs to be addressed. In fact during the debate on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks (Amendment) Bill on 23 May 1995 Jan Wilson, a former member for Dandenong North said:

Olympic Park ... has become very much a part of Melbourne's sports culture. Certain parts of it need to be upgraded and some major maintenance is required, and it is hoped that will occur soon ...

I am sure Mrs Wilson would be very disappointed with this government, because 12 years later, 8 of them under this government, the maintenance issues at Olympic Park have not been addressed, and as far as we know there is no plan to address them.

I would like to finish up by discussing a matter that was raised by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, and I quote from *Alert Digest* No. 14:

The committee also notes that clauses 12, 13 and 14 ... provide for the discharge of certain property interests in defined portions of land and do not provide for compensation. The statement of compatibility remarks that any deprivation of a natural person's property caused by these provisions ...

would not be arbitrary because it is part of a highly structured and circumscribed process relating to a limited number of small parcels of land.

The committee refers to Parliament for its consideration the question of whether any deprivation of a natural person's property under clauses 12, 13 and 14 is 'in accordance with law'.

I would ask the minister to refer to that in his summing up. In finishing, I do not oppose the bill, but I urge the government when introducing these sorts of bills in the future to consult with all the stakeholders and show a little bit more consideration for City of Melbourne councillors.

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** (Dandenong) — It is a pleasure to support the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2007. I commend the minister and the government on this very important bill and the ever-growing evolution of our major events precincts. It is the pre-eminent major events precinct in Australia and one of the most pre-eminent sports precincts in the world, abutting as it does the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The reality is that it is these precincts that have made us the major events capital of the world. It is these sorts of precincts that have built our history and reputation not only in Australia but globally.

It was interesting to hear the member for Warrandyte's contribution, because it is always interesting to note the things that the opposition does not say. There was a much more constructive contribution from the member

for Morwell, who is The Nationals spokesperson on sport. I note The Nationals are not opposing the bill either. They do not have the heart to support the bill, which is really about strengthening this precinct as a pre-eminent major sporting events precinct for Australia.

I just want to correct the member for Warrandyte. He quoted a former member for Dandenong North, Jan Wilson, from about 12 years ago. There is a benefit to having been in Parliament a bit longer than some members. He recalled that Jan Wilson was the opposition spokesperson on racing at the time, and she was talking about Olympic Park when it was a greyhound track, before it relocated to The Meadows in Broadmeadows.

**Mr Kotsiras** — Where were you at that time?

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** — I was here, thank you very much. The reality is that this bill celebrates our major events culture and finds a new home for the growing sport of football or soccer. We should be proud that sports that have a history in Victoria are now being given the prominence they deserve. Those sports are global sports, but they have been fairly underrepresented here. May I say that soccer has been a very strong sport for a long time.

**Mr Kotsiras** — Football.

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** — Absolutely. It is totally under-recognised for its contribution to grassroots sport. The passion of round-ball football amongst the local population was driven by the immigrant community, and now those locally born are also passionate about it.

When thinking about the Melbourne Olympic Park precinct we need to recognise that it is what has led to a major events agenda. Let us not forget the role the Labor government has continued to play in the development of this precinct. Let us have a look at the evolution of the precinct. We see that the Rod Laver arena was built by the Cain government; the southern stand of the MCG and the light towers were built by the Cain government; and if we look at the development to the northern stand of the MCG, we see that the MCG has been totally rebuilt by Labor governments.

I acknowledge that the Kennett government built on that great legacy by deciding to build a second open-air roof at Vodafone arena. It has been a very good facility. I recall I was the Minister for Major Projects at the time the rest of that project was finished, and I think we did a damn fine job. This has all been part of making sure that all the best sports events that Australia gets to host

are held in Melbourne. The development of the precinct has resulted in a growth in sports through the new venues and a need to reduce the administrative burden, which is what this bill is about.

Efficiencies need to be created in order to ensure a proper focus is maintained to meet the financial needs of the precinct and also to meet the needs of the new tenants. There have been additional tenants in our time. If Collingwood Football Club, that great team, had only defeated Geelong, it could easily have won the grand final. But we will need to recognise that there are more tenants using the site. This bill provides protection for tenants, whilst providing good outcomes for the visiting public and also good outcomes for the Melbourne and Olympic Park Trust as the managers of this great asset. We will see more improvements over time.

Reserving Gosch's Paddock as an accessible precinct for local residents provides certainty to the local community. That is also part of this important process. It needs to be recognised that the paddock is not only used for other localised sport but is used for other activities. I would recommend a hot air balloon ride over Melbourne with Global Ballooning. Most mornings they leave from Gosch's Paddock. I am sure some members in this house could get a few of those balloons going without putting the burners on, but that is another story.

We have an opportunity to continue to improve and strengthen this precinct. That is why I commend the government on this bill. It is about tackling issues that sometimes are a bit hard. Tackling the Melbourne City Council and local communities on the very important issue of using public parkland is a hard job. There are also the many different tenants who want to be part of this amazing precinct. I think the government has done an exceptional job in being able to negotiate some very good outcomes that are suitable for everyone.

No doubt when the new rectangular stadium is opened we will all be very proud to see the many different games being played at the Rod Laver Arena, Vodafone, the MCG and other facilities in this precinct on the same day. If anyone can do it, Melbourne can. Victoria can run multiple events roughly around the same time. What a great multi-sport festival atmosphere that provides for people, including locals from Melbourne and also people from regional Victoria and other parts of Australia and around the world, to be part of this amazing precinct. With the Rugby Union competition that has been formed at the national level, we will start to see the building of our own Rugby Union profile interstate as part of that national competition, in the same way as we have seen the national football

competition grow with Melbourne Victory. Who knows, some time in the future there may be a need for another team in Melbourne as the sport grows at a national level.

The Liberal Party has been consistent on one point. It has been saying that the government is slow and has been dragging its feet on the development of the rectangular stadium. I have been involved in some of the discussions in the past, and I know one of the major limitations has been the signing of a non-competitive agreement — non-competition was something the Kennett government liked — with Telstra Dome that there be no other stadium with a seating capacity of over 25 000 people.

That has been a barrier to getting things right, but I think the government has worked it out, made it right and got the sports tenants locked in to make this project a viable option. Telstra Dome is a great stadium; its management reported to me as Minister for Major Projects between 1999 and 2002. However, it is a major impediment when you restrict the future growth of sports facilities in Melbourne through an anticompetitive arrangement such as that put in place by the Kennett government. I am really pleased that the government has had the guts to work through that process. That is why when this new stadium opens we will continue to be proud of the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct and we will continue to see great sport there.

I commend the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, the Minister for Major Projects, the government and the Premier for undertaking this project and the work they will do on our behalf in this sports capital of the world.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — I would have liked the member for Dandenong to have continued speaking about the sports precincts in Victoria and the outcome for AFL Park, which was another outstanding sports area in Melbourne. However, the bill before the house affects what is the greatest sports precinct in the world. It involves a range of stakeholders including Tennis Australia, Cricket Victoria, the Melbourne Victory Football Club, the Melbourne Football Club — which has been seriously displaced from its use of the MCG in recent years — the Collingwood Football Club, the Victorian Institute of Sport, the Australian Football League (AFL), the Melbourne Storm Rugby League Club, Athletics Victoria and the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust.

Opposition members did not need to take a hot air balloon ride to get a good overview of the area, as we

had the benefit of the work of the member for Bulleen, who sent out a JPEG that had more pixels than many that have been floating through the ether in recent times. It took a while to land, but it provided a very good overview of the world's greatest sporting precinct. The Liberal Party does not oppose the bill, but there are a number of wider concerns. Before moving on to those I would like to place on the record a particular element of my own key interest and one that has been supplemented by the research of one of the world's best athletic commentators today, Maurie Plant, who is based in Melbourne but has done a lot of work with the BBC and has been involved in bringing a lot of international athletes to Australia in recent times.

The Olympic Park precinct has hosted a range of athletic events, and one of the most memorable was the race in which John Landy and Ron Clarke competed and Clarke fell over and Landy went back. That particular moment is immortalised in Australian sporting history by a statue in that area. John Landy went on to become a great Governor of Victoria. His good sportsmanship on that occasion has inspired subsequent generations. It was a remarkable moment in time. Landy's athletic career was perhaps dwarfed by that of the athlete he helped, Ron Clarke. Ron ran a number of world records at Olympic Park. I attended one meeting in 1965 where he set a world record in the 10-mile event. The announcer gave the time against the number of laps to go and the enthusiastic post-Tokyo Olympic Games crowd in attendance built up to a crescendo of support as each lap he moved closer to setting a remarkable world record.

The 1970s saw a number of athletes compete in schoolboy competitions at Olympic Park. One was a student of Xavier College who looked as if he had been the beneficiary of the fast food diets that are around today. A young Robert de Castella, very stockily and sturdily built, won the early 3000-metre events at Olympic Park and went on to become the greatest marathon runner of his time, winning world championships, Commonwealth Games events and a host of big city marathons around the globe. In the 1980s Australia became the host country for a range of European athletes who used Melbourne as their training base. They included world champions and world record-holders such as Sebastian Coe, Steve Ovett, Daley Thompson and Steve Cram. They trained not only at Olympic Park but in the wider precinct and the famous athletics track known as the Tan around the botanic gardens.

In the 1990s Cathy Freeman made Olympic Park her training base. She broke 50 seconds for the 400 metres for the first time at Olympic Park. It became a famous

setting for her throughout her athletic career, leading on to Sydney in 2000. She has been a great Australian. Also in the 1990s we saw a number of other athletes make their mark at Olympic Park, including the 100-metre world record-holder Maurice Greene, who performed brilliantly over his favoured distance and went on to win two Olympic gold medals in Sydney, as well as the outstanding Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks, who became the first man to break 20 seconds for the 200 metres in Australia at Olympic Park.

I might note in passing that the Rotary Club of Sandringham, under the guidance of its one-time president Alan Rae, arranged for a library to be built in Namibia a number of years ago at a place called Ben Hur. It was a very important and significant community project. In the 1990s Kenya's Noah Ngeny was based in Australia for two months in each of three consecutive years leading up to the 2000 Olympics. Ngeny trained at Olympic Park daily and won the 1500-metre gold medal.

In the 2000s the world 1500-metre and mile record-holder, Hicham El Guerrouj of Morocco, an extraordinary runner — one of the greatest runners the world has ever seen — ran brilliantly to win a 1500-metre event at Olympic Park. In 2006 a young Victorian, Craig Mottram, caught the imagination of the Victorian and Australian sporting public with a courageous run in the 5000 metres at the Commonwealth Games. Mottram also holds a distinction among the people who have performed at Olympic Park, who have represented Australia overseas and who have been world record-holders — and one could include in that list people such as Ralph Doubell, Herb Elliot and Ron Clarke — in that he holds the record for the fastest time around the Tan track at the botanic gardens, having run it in 10 minutes and 6 seconds. That broke the previous fastest time, which was held by Olympic champions in Noah Ngeny of Kenya and Steve Ovett of Great Britain.

There have been some other key sporting events in that precinct over the years. Melbourne Storm has trained at Gosch's Paddock. I have some concerns about the retention of that area as public open space with the encroachment of other sporting infrastructure. I trust that with the abolition of the railway yard sheds and the demolition of the old Olympic pool there has been an expansion of public open space in that area, which is very important for Melbourne. A number of years ago a Melbourne pharmacist suggested undergrounding the traffic in Swan Street to have a larger plaza arena in the area and a seamless walkway between the tennis centre and Olympic Park. However, there are some major

Melbourne infrastructure and sewerage lines running underneath that area, and that task still needs to be pursued to improve the ambience of the area. Another problem for athletes in training is the heavy traffic on still days. The petrol fumes, carbon fumes, do not move without the wind, and it is not healthy for elite athletes training in the general precinct.

Over the road is the MCG, which is integrated into that area. It is not part of the bill before the house, but for over 150 years there have been some magnificent events —

**Ms Beattie** — Talk about 1990 and the grand final.

**Mr THOMPSON** — I have been asked to talk about the 1990 grand final, a grand final that Collingwood won. However, I would prefer to go back to the 1980 grand final when Collingwood played Richmond. Richmond was successful on that day. There was a remarkable scene in that grand final. Stan Magro spent the afternoon chasing Kevin Bartlett. Magro looked as if he had been the beneficiary of the fast food diets that are popular in Australia in current times. I thank the honourable member for her interjection.

**Mr Nardella** interjected.

**Mr THOMPSON** — We could go back to the MCG in the early 1970s but I will resist that.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr THOMPSON** — There has been another fine interjection about Peter Daicos, one of the remarkable goal kickers in AFL history. His goals from the boundary line were quite remarkable. Not many people would know that Peter Daicos has kicked a football in Queen's Hall. It was on the occasion of an Australian Hellenic function a number of years ago. He was given the challenge of kicking a drop punt from one end to down past the statue of Queen Victoria. As we were negotiating, parliamentary attendant Warren Smith almost had a heart attack. He was almost apoplectic as he saw this event about to take place. But Daicos took steady aim and kicked a marvellous drop punt that landed just to the right-hand side of Queen Victoria in Queen's Hall. Parliamentary insurances were not called upon. It reflected the marvellous skills of a great Australian Rules footballer.

The bill itself does a number of things which provide for the revocation of the reservation of certain land to consolidate the land-management arrangements in Olympic Park and its precincts. The opposition does not oppose the bill, but noting the significant athletics

history in that precinct, I would like to place on record the need to make every endeavour to look after the interests of Athletics Victoria. Australian world champions have set world records in that area. They have trained over decades in that area, and I would be a very strong advocate for ensuring that its interests continue to be protected so we can go on producing world-class athletes.

**Mr CARLI** (Brunswick) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to support the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill. As has been said, this bill consolidates land-management arrangements in the Melbourne and Olympic parks area. In that sense it improves the efficiency of the area and the ability to continue to deliver what is certainly one of the greatest sporting precincts in the world, if not the greatest.

There are no major cities I know of that have the same sort of sporting infrastructure so close to the centre of the city, to public transport and to the road system. It is a great set-up. There are numerous sports provided for there: tennis, cycling, athletics, Australian Rules — Australian Football League teams have their training and administration in the area — basketball and, if you go back far enough, greyhounds. There is obviously Rugby League, Rugby Union and international football, particularly with Melbourne Victory and Melbourne Storm, both of which are Australian champions in international football and Rugby League respectively. It is not only a great precinct, but it has great teams and great traditions. The Australian Tennis Open is one of the great tennis tournaments.

It is very important that the precinct is administered in the most efficient way possible. This legislation consolidates land titles and allows that to happen. It also ensures that there is a permanent reservation over Gosch's Paddock and that it remains a public park. That is certainly a good legacy for all Melburnians.

I want to use some of my time to talk about the rectangular stadium, which is very important in terms of two great Melbourne teams — Melbourne Storm and Melbourne Victory. As I said, both are Australian champions. In April 2006, when the rectangular stadium was announced, there was a great deal of support from rugby and international football supporters. It was certainly seen as a major commitment by the then Bracks government to providing for two major national sports which also have an international perspective. Soon after it was announced as a stadium with a capacity of 20 000 seats it became fairly obvious, given Melbourne Victory's support in its first year, that that would be too small.

There was soon a level of disquiet about the actual size of the stadium.

It was in that period that supporters of Melbourne Victory came together and did a number of very positive things. They were instrumental in assisting the government to identify the appropriate size for the stadium and to get a capacity of 31 000 seats on the drawing board. I want to acknowledge some of the work that was done by the Victory Fans Stadium Action Group. It was a group of supporters representing various groups in the club who came together to both support the idea of a purpose-built rectangular stadium and ensure that the Victory club was supportive and became part of the proposal. It was also very keen to ensure that the FFA (Football Federation Australia), the national body, was aware of the supporters' belief that the rectangular stadium was essential for the city.

I want to acknowledge that at the end of 2005 a supporter, Matthew Lamsis, spontaneously organised a petition calling for a revision of the seating capacity to 30 000. I remember in February 2007 tabling that petition; it had the signatures of 3217 club supporters and other people who had come together because they really wanted to increase the stadium's capacity. The Melbourne Victory action group became a very positive group. It met with the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, other members of Parliament and other individuals. It also met with the club and the football federation and very much assisted the work that was being done at the time to work up the government's eventual response, which was to increase the capacity of the stadium to 31 000 and to ensure that the Melbourne Victory Football Club signed on.

The other thing that came out of that agreement was a commitment by Football Federation Australia to provide international games. One of the successes of football is its international component, so we will have Socceroos games in Melbourne as well as Ollyroos games, Matildas games and other games focused on that venue. It is a very important venue for both the rugby community and the Storm community, and hopefully also for Rugby Union. Obviously there is still an attempt to get a major Rugby Union team — a Super 14 or 15 or 16 or whatever it eventually becomes — established in Melbourne.

There is no doubt that Victoria is the football capital of Australia: Geelong is the Australian Football League champion, Melbourne Victory is the football champion and Melbourne Storm is the Rugby League champion. We are the greatest city not only in terms of spectators, stadiums and facilities but also in terms of the teams and their performances.

I think it is important to acknowledge the very strong support for the rectangular stadium we have encountered both from the rugby community and the football community. Enormous credit has to be given to former Premier Steve Bracks for his stand in support of the rectangular stadium and seeing it as completing a series of stadiums in the city that include the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the largest and greatest stadium, and Telstra Dome, which is somewhat smaller but nevertheless significant. They fit in very well. The stadiums have different capacities and fit different needs of this great sporting city. It is important to realise that, once the rectangular stadium is built, we will have Vodafone Arena, the Rod Laver tennis centre, the rectangular stadium, Telstra Dome and the MCG all within a very short distance of the central business district — some of the greatest stadiums in the world.

I wanted to finish by just saying that the supporter groups are enthusiastic about what they call active support, and active support is the sort of support we are now seeing among those who attend Melbourne Victory games. As we see on television, it is very much support that shows enormous enthusiasm and involves the ability to sing, jump and demonstrate what I suppose is part of an international football culture, but it is a culture that is strongly supported by the fans of the club. They are very keen to see the fit-out of the rectangular stadium to assist in active support and in their ability to stand, cheer and support their club and to provide no doubt one of the greatest atmospheres for sport in this country and one would hope one of the greatest atmospheres for sport in the world.

I am keen to support this important legislation, which consolidates the titles and more importantly assists in completing what is, if not the greatest, one of the greatest sporting precincts in the world.

**Mrs POWELL** (Shepparton) — I am pleased to speak on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2007. As our lead speaker has said, The Nationals are not opposing the legislation, because it does have some common-sense initiatives and common-sense outcomes, but as The Nationals spokesperson for planning and local government I was wondering why this is not a planning bill. I did ask the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, who is at the table, why this is a sports bill and not a planning bill, and the minister explained that it is because he is the minister responsible for the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, and I understand that.

I have concerns, as the spokesperson for local government, about the removal of the City of

Melbourne's involvement as the responsible authority for managing this area. At the moment the parcels of land we are dealing with in this bill have a variety of titles and are managed by various authorities. That is not in the best interests of anybody. It is not efficient or good land management. It is complex and confusing and is a bureaucratic nightmare for people who have to apply for licences or permits or even go to the land title registry. It becomes a nightmare when people want to know who is responsible for permits and licences and where to go. The bill will clarify that and will make it more streamlined.

The bill revokes a number of reservations on parcels of land in this area and reserves other areas to provide for public parkland. A number of members have talked about Gosch's Paddock, which is now used for public park purposes so the public can have access to it. The bill clarifies that and puts it under reservation as public parkland and includes further parts of the area around Gosch's Paddock to increase that parkland. It is a good thing for the community to have access to more public land.

The bill also transfers management to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust (MOPT). There is a committee of management, and I asked the minister whether the City of Melbourne will be on that committee of management. It is not at the moment, but I have sought assurances from the minister that he will look at the make-up of that committee of management and make sure that the City of Melbourne has some input. It is losing the role of being the responsible authority, and it is important that it is part of the decision-making processes and is not removed from them altogether.

I know that in amending the Planning and Environment Amendment Bill 2007, which it introduced a couple of weeks ago, the government made it even clearer that councils are planning authorities. The fact that the government is saying that it will give more weight to local governments to be their own planning authorities needs to be reflected in this bill. It is important that the City of Melbourne have a bigger say in this area. That is very important.

The parcel of land we are talking about is quite substantial. I know the City of Melbourne was disappointed that the bill takes a number of initiatives that sideline it. A number of speakers have spoken about a land grab. The lead speaker for The Nationals, the member for Morwell, who is also The Nationals spokesperson for sport, recreation and youth affairs, received a letter from the City of Melbourne dated 17 October which states:

Council's finance and governance committee meeting of 9 October 2007 resolved in relation to the MOPT amendment bill to:

- 1.1 oppose the move by the state government to shift the management of land in Yarra Park from council to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust; and
- 1.2 seek a meeting with the state government regarding the broader issue of jurisdiction over parks management.

From a positive point this will relieve council of the maintenance and capital improvement costs. From a negative point, council is constantly protecting parkland from commercial exploitation and this site has a history of applications for commercial signage given its location adjacent to Punt Road. It would be a great pity if the parkland qualities of the site were degraded in this way.

Council was also in the process of investigating the potential for additional rowing facilities under the elevated road over Punt Road. This was following inquiries from a girls school experiencing difficulties in finding suitable sites for female rowing facilities. Council would lose this opportunity under the current bill.

It is signed by Cr Fraser Brindley, chair of the environment committee.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mrs POWELL** — My colleagues are saying 'Shame', and I think it is a shame that the council was not able to have input into the management of this land.

As I said earlier, this is an important and significant area of Melbourne. Its facilities are of a national and international standard. The whole precinct is a great sporting and entertainment centre. Events there include the Australian Open Tennis Championships, the Commonwealth Games, the World Swimming Championships, the World Gymnastic Championships and the World Cycling Championships. Many top national and international artists are heard and seen at the precinct, and at the MCG, which will be part of this precinct, we see football, rugby and soccer.

Last year when there was a friendly soccer match between Greece and Australia, one of the biggest issues was parking. I have a flat that is in that area. I know a number of members have talked about parking. It is a really big issue for the residents around that area. There has been discussion about the new rectangular stadium. Once it is completed there will be a loss of 600 car spaces, and I think we need to make sure that the local residents are not disadvantaged. Nobody wants to see us not having a great facility, but at the end of the day the Melbourne City Council has to make sure that its residents are looked after as well.

That is why it is really important that the City of Melbourne has some input into what is going on in this precinct, and into the planning for this precinct. It should not necessarily be at arms length, and the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Planning in the other place should not be the only ones making decisions. The Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust should also be taking advice from the City of Melbourne. I hope that happens.

Another of the concerns around this legislation is the issue of road closures, which is also covered by the bill. Local government goes through a process with any road closure. We need to make sure that process is gone through even if it has to be the minister, through the *Government Gazette*, who allows those roads to close. There must be some community input on the outcome of those road closures, because while it is a world-standard precinct, it is also a place where local residents live and they must have their quality of life looked after.

**Mr Nardella** interjected.

**Mrs POWELL** — The member for Melton is interjecting. I cannot hear him, but I have a flat in East Melbourne and it actually affects me when there is a lack of parking. While it is great to see all the football played at the MCG — and you see thousands of spectators — they also take up a lot of the car parking around East Melbourne and some of the other areas around the precinct. We have to make sure the organisations dealing with the road closures make sure the community is consulted.

There needs to be a balance between the need for appropriate standards in our facilities and looking after the local residents. The bill allows the minister to recommend to the Governor in Council the publishing in the *Government Gazette* of details about closing any road on that land. Again, I urge the minister and the government to make sure that local needs are also taken into account, because the residents that live around there should not be discounted or disadvantaged.

It is great to see this world-class facility. Even in country Victoria we think it is wonderful, because we get an opportunity to visit, take part in and listen to the entertainment that is going on around there, but again I urge the government to understand that people also live in this precinct. The Nationals do not oppose the bill, but I urge the government to liaise closely with the City of Melbourne whose councillors were elected to represent the interests of their ratepayers and the broader community.

**Ms BEATTIE** (Yuroke) — It is with great pleasure that I speak on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2007. For a little while I thought I was hearing things and that I would need to clean out my ears, because I heard members on the other side of the house suddenly become the great defenders of municipal councils when what they actually did when they were in government was to sack municipal councils. They did not give them a say. They appointed commissioners who ripped the heart out of local councils. Now suddenly they are saying we should give local councils a say. Really, I think that is about crying crocodile tears.

What we have here is a bill which protects assets. Once the rectangular stadium is built there will be assets of \$750 million in that sports precinct area of Melbourne. Everybody has talked about the great sporting events and the great facilities around the area, and we saw those facilities at their very best during the Commonwealth Games. I want to add that during the Commonwealth Games it was not only the great sporting events that occurred around there, but people actually came into the city and wandered around the parks and gardens that surround the area. They enjoyed the area in general even if they did not go to any of those great sporting events. Of course, that is what a precinct is all about; you do not have to participate in one thing.

There are many things you can participate in, and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on sporting events, quite naturally, but there have also been great entertainment events in that particular area, and I will just mention a few of those. We have the dancesport championships. Many regard dancing as not being a sport but the dancesport championships are coming up soon. There has been ice skating at the Rod Laver Arena, as well as trucking competitions. The area is used for myriad things other than just the tennis, although it is a world-class tennis centre and home to the Australian Open Tennis Championships. I just want to say how important it is and what a great tourist attraction the Australian Open tennis is. Of course, that will be coming up over the January period. There will also be the Boxing Day test, when the international focus will be on the MCG.

It is really important that the precinct comes under one management trust, instead of what we have there now with the council looking after some of it and different trusts looking after various parts of it. That precinct needs to be under the one banner, if you like. I commend the minister for putting this bill together and getting it before the house in time for those very important events that are coming up shortly, because

once this bill is passed through both houses it will be enacted and ready to go.

I just want to talk about some of the great events that have been held in the precinct. I have already mentioned the Australian Open tennis and some of the entertainment events. I have already mentioned the Commonwealth Games, but there has also been the World Gymnastics Championships, the World Track Cycling Championships and, of course, it is or will become the home of the Victorian Institute of Sport, Melbourne Storm, Melbourne Victory, the Melbourne Football Club and, of course, that other great football club, the Collingwood Football Club. That great football club has been mentioned a number of times, as, of course, has its great players. The member for Sandringham talked about the Macedonian marvel, Peter Daicos.

We have all this important land, including Gosch's Paddock, but there will still be a lot of public park reservation there. Instead of having to go through the myriad authorities that you have to go through at the moment to get some sort of event held there, you will only need the one permit. As I said, currently some of the management arrangements include the City of Melbourne, VicTrack and the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trusts. I just want to mention the Vodafone Arena, as well as the Lexus Centre, which will become the home of the Victorian Institute of Sport. As you can see, Melbourne has a pre-eminent place in the world of sport, and with all of those sporting and entertainment assets under the one banner, it will be consolidated for the future.

People will be able to plan their events with some certainty. The member for Shepparton talked about whether this legislation should fall under the responsibility of the Minister for Planning or the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. Of course it should be under the minister for sport, but it also underpins great planning, because what this government is trying to do is streamline planning. That is what the bill does: it really streamlines the whole process.

With those few words, and in conclusion, I would like to congratulate the minister. I would also like to acknowledge the work put into securing the rectangular stadium by the former Premier, Steve Bracks. I am sure it will be a great legacy — as will many other things, of course — that the former Premier has left us. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr JASPER** (Murray Valley) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks

Amendment Bill and to support the comments made by the member for Morwell and the member for Shepparton. They made very important contributions as country members of Parliament. I have also listened to a great deal of the comments made by many other members. Seeing that the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs is in the house I note the comments made by the member for Shepparton that perhaps the Minister for Planning should have had a major input into the legislation. But I also understand the comments made by the member for Yuroke in indicating that the bill was the responsibility of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs.

**Mr Nardella** interjected.

**Mr JASPER** — In commencing my contribution to the debate I also want to correct the minister over a comment he made this morning about support for drought assistance measures in country Victoria. He mentioned that only one media release had been made by a member of The Nationals in relation to sport and recreation issues, but I was able to provide him with at least a dozen media releases I have made throughout this year, which in fact mentioned the minister on occasion.

**Mr Nardella** — On the bill.

**Mr JASPER** — I have also noted the constant yelling and interjection by the member for Melton, but I will keep raising my voice above his, and I think the house will get more from what I have to say than it would from what he has to say.

It is also interesting to note that rowing was mentioned by the member for Shepparton. I passed along on the Yarra River on many occasions when I was a student at Scotch College and coxing the college eight. I also recognise the important Olympic Park area, which is used for many sports by many sportspeople. I have to say that our daughter did some rowing with Merton Hall, but she was not so pleased about rowing on the Yarra River at that time.

I listened to the contribution to the debate by the member for Dandenong and former Minister for Tourism, and I thought his comments on the development of sport and sports facilities in Melbourne were excellent. I was disappointed when he lost his position as minister, because I believe he performed extremely well and was also approachable. His contribution to this debate was also important in making sure that people understand the importance of sport and recreation and the facilities we have developed.

I also listened to the contribution made by the member for Sandringham. It was interesting to me as a supporter of the Collingwood Football Club, because he commented about Peter Daicos, who apparently kicked a football in Queen's Hall. I am disappointed that I was not there when that happened, because I would have been pleased to see it. He also made other comments about Collingwood, which would have done better than Port Adelaide in opposing Geelong in the grand final. In fact they might have beaten them, because they nearly beat them a couple of weeks earlier.

As a country member of Parliament I want to say that we Nationals are always interested in what is going on in Melbourne. People often say to us that we have no interest in Melbourne, but one of the concerns we have is that many people in Melbourne do not have an interest in country Victoria. Melbourne is a great city, there is no doubt about that, and we have great sporting facilities. When we look at the MCG we see one of the great sporting coliseums of the world. Given the sporting facilities that have been developed around it, we believe this is an excellent sporting precinct, and we believe the developments taking place there are tremendously important.

I note that in the minister's second-reading speech he referred to the Australian Tennis Open and talked about other events that the tennis centre has been used for, including Commonwealth Games events, the world swimming championships, the world gymnastics championships and the world track cycling championships. He did not mention the excellent performances by Neil Diamond, who has sung there on many occasions, and I was pleased to be in attendance on one occasion to listen to him sing. We were in the back stalls, but it was certainly a great night. It is a great facility that has been used for a multitude of purposes. It will be interesting to see what will happen when the extended area becomes host to other athletic events and to the Victorian Institute of Sport, Melbourne Storm, Melbourne Victory, the Melbourne Football Club and of course the Collingwood Football Club.

I support the legislation before the house, and I understand what the government wants to do. It wants to bring the management and control of it all together under one trust that can ensure these facilities are developed appropriately.

I want to go back in history to the 1980s. At that time former Premier John Cain and the Labor government wanted to develop the facility as a tennis precinct for the Australian Open Tennis Championships, and legislation enabling that was introduced into this house. I have to say that at that time the then National Party

held the balance of power in the Legislative Council. Peter Ross Edwards, the then Leader of the National Party, convinced us to support the development of the tennis centre, because he believed this would be an adjunct to and represent a further development of sports facilities for Victoria in the East Melbourne area.

It was disappointing for the government at the time that the Liberal Party did not support the legislation. The Liberals did not support it because they believed it would take away gardens and other areas that people could use for normal recreational purposes. It was totally opposed to the idea because it believed that, if additional land was to be provided for recreational activities, it should be replaced. I do not believe that happened. But the critical thing was that the National Party strongly supported the idea that the tennis centre be developed — and what a great facility it has been for sporting activities. It has also been used as an attraction to bring sportspeople, sporting events and other types of activities into that central area of Melbourne and is therefore an important part of our sporting and recreational facilities.

**Mr Walsh** interjected.

**Mr JASPER** — The Deputy Leader of The Nationals — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Beattie)** — Order! The Deputy Leader of The Nationals!

**Mr JASPER** — Thank you, Speaker, but I was the one who called for order! I thought that the Deputy Leader of The Nationals should be listening to the contribution of the member for Murray Valley, when as a country member of Parliament I am providing strong support for the legislation. Although The Nationals have said that we are not opposing it, in my view we are supporting the legislation as critical for the development of these additional facilities.

I reiterate the strength of support provided by the then National Party in the 1980s to see that the tennis centre was developed — and a great centre it has been, is and will be in the future. The legislation before the house is a further step forward, and it will consolidate the current arrangements into a new trust which will more effectively manage the operations of the facilities and sporting activities that take place there.

As I listened to the contribution of the member for Dandenong I was interested when he talked about additional soccer teams being developed in Melbourne. I said, 'What we've got here is enough for the time being'. As a strong supporter of the Australian Football League and Australian Rules football, I point out that

we do not want to go too far with this. Yes, let us have sporting activities and encourage all types of sport, but we must not forget that this is the home of AFL and we must make sure that that continues. It was great to see that the premiership has come back to Victoria — not right into Melbourne, but close to it. Collingwood will be there next year, don't worry about that!

In closing my contribution, I want to make sure that people understand that, whilst The Nationals are strongly supportive of our electorates and of what is going on in country Victoria and are concerned about the conditions that we are facing with drought, such as lack of water and feed, we are conscious of the fact that the state and federal governments are providing money to assist us in country areas. But the critical thing — I want to close with this comment — is that we do support a strong Melbourne. There should be strength in the major city in Victoria and it should be supported by major sporting precincts and developments. There should be encouragement of sport and recreation as important parts of our lifestyle and our activities.

Of course the roads need to be upgraded as well, which is another issue. Just for the information of the Minister for Roads and Ports, who has entered the chamber, The Nationals support the development of ring-roads and other things in Melbourne — and of course bridges across the Murray. Do not forget those. We want the one at Yarrawonga. Do not forget that, as well.

I support the legislation before the house and trust that it will see increasing development of sport, particularly in this sporting precinct in close proximity to the centre of Melbourne.

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs) — It gives me great pleasure to sum up the debate on the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill, and it is a particular pleasure to follow the hardworking member for Murray Valley. I appreciate his work. I thank all speakers in the debate: the members for Bulleen, Morwell, Mill Park, Warrandyte, Dandenong, Sandringham, Brunswick, Shepparton, Yuroke and Murray Valley.

The Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct and the Melbourne Cricket Ground next door are extremely special and unique public assets. As the members for Dandenong and Brunswick said correctly in their contributions to the debate, this is a unique precinct on the world stage. It is the best sporting, entertainment and major events precinct in the world. It is much loved by Melburnians and by Victorians, many of whom travel from country Victoria to major events or Australian Football League (AFL) games.

**Mr Jasper** — Or Neil Diamond!

**Mr MERLINO** — Or Neil Diamond concerts. There are also interstate and international visitors. That will only increase with the construction of the new rectangular stadium. I do not think many people truly understand how incredible the atmosphere in this new stadium will be. I know that Melbourne Storm and Victory and their supporters are very much looking forward to this iconic stadium being built, as are the AFL tenants in the precinct — the Collingwood Football Club and the Melbourne Football Club — and, of course, Victorian Rugby Union.

This precinct has evolved, and it will evolve into the future. That will bring challenges but also exciting opportunities. We all have a responsibility to leave this precinct in a better state than we found it in. That is what this bill is about: it is about modernising the land-management arrangements and providing them for the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust, permanently protecting all of Gosch's Paddock as a public park and providing existing and future tenants with certainty of tenure.

I refer to some of the key issues raised during the debate. The members for Bulleen and Warrandyte both claimed that I was wrong when I said that the Melbourne City Council cannot grant licences for more than three years on Gosch's Paddock. They stated that the council could grant licences for a longer period, provided it was given the green light to do so by the government. I think those members are a little bit confused from too much reading of this legislation. Let me be clear: there is no power in the Melbourne City Council as the trustee of the northern section of Gosch's Paddock to grant licences for any longer than three years.

Crown land can be reserved for various purposes. The area of land in Gosch's Paddock is reserved for the purpose of a public park, as will all the land in Gosch's Paddock be under this bill. While section 16(2) of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 allows the government to empower a municipal council to grant licences for up to 21 years, a licence under this section can be issued only for the purposes for which the land is reserved. This is where the confusion may have come about. Gosch's Paddock is currently reserved as a public park, and under the new legislation it will remain reserved as a public park. AFL training would not be considered to be using the land as a public park. The relevant section is section 17B of the act. That section makes it clear that licences for use of the land for a purpose that is different from the land reservation — for example, AFL training — can be for only up to

three years. That is exactly why this legislation is essential for both the current and future tenants of the precinct.

As for concerns regarding advertising springing up all over Gosch's Paddock under this new legislation, again the legislation makes absolutely no change to the restrictions surrounding advertising. There is no greater cause for concern with this legislation than there would be under the arrangements that apply currently.

On the matter of consultation with the Melbourne City Council, my department and I consulted with the Lord Mayor, the chief executive officer, David Pitchford, and council officers several months prior to this bill being introduced into the house. They committed their support to this proposal. It was not several days, as the member for Bulleen suggested; it was several months. I will not get involved in the internal politics of the Melbourne City Council. The leaders of the council were briefed on this bill and supported it long before it was introduced into this house.

Athletics is a serious issue. As I said, the precinct has evolved and will evolve, and there are some challenges. The government has commissioned a study into the future of the state athletics centre, and it is continuing to consult with all the relevant stakeholders. I am pleased that the member for Bulleen is both interested in and supportive of athletics in Victoria, and I look forward to enjoying his support for the new initiatives the government may decide upon in the future. I reiterate that key stakeholders Athletics Victoria and Athletics Australia will be consulted, and there will be a great evaluation of what we do in terms of the future of the precinct. That will be one of the key issues for me as sports minister.

As I said, we all have a responsibility to leave this very special precinct in a better state than we found it in. It is one of my key responsibilities, and it will be over the next three years. I commend the bill to Parliament. It is an important piece of legislation, it is modernising the arrangements and it is providing certainty of tenure for both users of the public park and also the tenants of the fantastic Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

## VICTORIAN WORKERS' WAGES PROTECTION BILL

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 11 October; motion of Mr CAMERON (Minister for Police and Emergency Services).**

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — The Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill is a bill that sweeps away any last vestiges of a claim by the Brumby government to be business or employment savvy. The Minister for Industrial Relations and the entire Brumby government need to decide whether they are going to plead guilty to incompetence or to deliberate intention in introducing a bill that will cause such unnecessary cost to business and employment in Victoria.

This bill requires that wages be paid to employees in cash unless an employee has given written authorisation to be paid by cheque, postal order, money order or deposit to a financial institution. It prohibits deductions from wages unless with written authorisation and in compliance with the act, or unless required or authorised by law, court order or industrial instrument. It provides that if a deduction is initiated by or for the benefit of the employer or related party, the employer must first give specified details to the employee. It provides that a deduction authorisation is of no effect if it is for the benefit of the employer or related party and if it is unreasonable. It may be unreasonable if it replaces employer property lost or damaged or destroyed by the employee unless intentionally or through wilful neglect, or if it requires the employee to make up a till shortfall.

The bill prohibits the deduction of an employment placement service fee from the wages of a 457 visa holder. It provides that on application of the employee, the union or the government, a court may impose a penalty of up to \$10 000 for breach of the act and order payment to or reimbursement of the employee. The bill provides the court may order that the penalty be paid to a particular person or organisation which includes a relevant union. The bill also provides that, from six months after commencement of it as an act, any contrary provision of a contract or agreement other than an industrial instrument is void.

If we turn to clause 6 of the bill it provides in subclause (2):

An employer must pay an employee's wages to the employee —

(a) in cash; or

- (b) if the employee has given the employer written authorisation to do so —
  - (i) by cheque, postal order or money order; or
  - (ii) by deposit into an ADI specified by the employee in the written authorisation; or
- (c) by a combination of methods set out in paragraphs (a) and (b).

Let us think about what this requirement means. It means that any single employee who exercises a right to be paid in cash can force their employer to go through the process of drawing wages in cash from the bank, having the money counted out into pay envelopes and arranging for secure delivery to the employee. Where on earth is this government coming from? Has it not woken up to the fact that we are now living in the 21st century, not in the 1980s? People these days in most occupations expect to be paid their wages by bank deposit. Few employers or employees would ever have expected a government to introduce a law that requires an express written authorisation to do so.

If this bill is passed, it will mean that Victorian employers are going to have to comb back through all their employment records to find out if they have any authorisations that have previously been given, and if not they are going to have to go around their workplace asking employees to fill out a useless form in order to authorise something that has been standard practice for years. This piece of useless red tape is going to cost business time and money. It is going to cut productivity, and it is going to deter employment. Requiring employees to be paid in cash means that employers are going to have to introduce new cash payroll handling systems and are going to have to look to hire security guards. There is also the prospect that cash payments put into the hands of some employees with gambling or other problems are likely to see those gambling problems facilitated or other diversions of wages from the needs of employees' families.

To add insult to injury in this complex and cumbersome cash payment regime that any single employee can impose on their employer, if there happens to be an overpayment of wages in one pay packet, this bill is going to prohibit that being evened out in the next pay packet that comes from the employer.

It is absolutely bizarre that in 2007 we have a government introducing legislation that starts off with the expectation that wages will be paid in cash and requires express written authorisation from an employee to do otherwise. Out there in the real world that this government has clearly got no understanding of, unless in fact this legislation has been deliberately

crafted in this way, payment by electronic funds transfer (EFT) of one sort or another is taken for granted. It is not something that employers necessarily formally confirm with a signed, written authorisation. They simply get the bank account details from the employee and start paying the wages into the bank account. Yet the Brumby government is going to try to turn all of this on its head for Victorian employees.

What beggars belief is that this legislation found its way through the cabinet. You have to ask yourself whether it is simply monumental incompetence. Was this provision taken out of some old, dusty precedent of some law on a shelf somewhere, whacked into this legislation without proper thought and then slipped past the eyes of all the supposedly business-savvy and business-friendly members of the Brumby government? What was going on around the cabinet table when this bill was deliberated on? Don't any of the cabinet have the real world knowledge to pick up on this sort of problem? What sort of advice did they get from their bureaucrats?

If this provision comes to the Parliament through incompetence, it is monumental incompetence indeed. The incompetence that would be involved is so monumental that you have to start asking yourself whether there is something more than incompetence. Is it a deliberate device with the intention by the Brumby government of allowing unions to extract funds from employers by going around and finding some employer that has not got their paperwork in order, hauling that employer before the courts and seeking the order of a penalty of up to \$10 000 and having that penalty paid into union coffers? Is that the explanation of how this provision comes before the house?

Perhaps it is a deliberate poison pill or a deliberate handful of ball bearings thrown at any employer who has had the temerity to enter into an employment agreement with their workers, be it an Australian workplace agreement or a collective agreement, which in accordance with long-accepted business practice assumes that wages will be paid by EFT and therefore does not have an express authorisation to payment by some other means. Is this intended to create havoc and difficulty for employers who sought nothing more than to enter into flexible workplace arrangements to the mutual benefit of them and their employees?

Is this part of the mooted GST — get square time — campaign that union officials around the town are talking about launching should a federal Labor government be elected? Is this the minister and the Brumby government jumping the gun on such a GST

campaign to punish employers that they want to get stuck into?

Whatever the explanation, this provision is going to impose huge and totally unnecessary burdens on many Victorian employers. Is the government seriously expecting Victorian employers to go to the hassle, the security risks and the costs of making up pay envelopes if just one employee wants to be paid in cash? Is it seriously expecting employers to spend hours of their own time or that of their staff in combing back through employment records to see if they happen to have a written authorisation applicable to that employee, or if not, going around asking them to sign a piece of paper giving written consent? This is a provision that is just completely out of touch with the real world, and as I said at the outset, it totally destroys any claim to business and employment savvy in the Brumby government.

The remaining provisions of this bill are intended to regulate deductions from employees' pay. They are provisions that are completely unnecessary. The law is already clear that a deduction cannot be made from a worker's pay without lawful authorisation. If an unauthorised deduction is made from a worker's pay, it means that worker is not being paid the wages to which they are entitled. The commonwealth's workplace ombudsman has made it clear that it will vigorously pursue any employer who is not paying proper wages under commonwealth law, and indeed the commonwealth's workplace ombudsman is doing exactly that, including in relation to, as I understand it, one of the particular cases cited in the minister's second-reading speech.

Just to add to the nonsense of this part of the bill, having set out extensive and complex rules about the way in which deductions may be made by an employer from employee wages, we then read the following in clause 7:

- (1) An employer must not make any deductions from an employee's wages unless —
  - ...
  - (b) the employer is required or authorised by law, court order or an industrial instrument to make the deduction.

If the employer is required or authorised by law, court order or an industrial instrument to make a deduction, the prohibition on deductions from a worker's wages that is contained in the bill does not apply. If on the one hand the government is saying, 'Here are these rules you have got to comply with, but on the other hand if you have got some other authorisation, none of this

applies', where do we stand? As I said at the outset, a deduction can only be made from a worker's wages if it is authorised by law in the first place, so if you believe that part of the bill, all of these convoluted provisions are a nullity.

If on the other hand you think that by construing the legislation in some way or other these provisions are actually going to have the effect that the government intends, they are extraordinarily open ended. They impose a vague requirement about not being unreasonable in clause 9(1)(c) of the bill, and then in clauses 9(2) and 9(3) they set out a range of tests which are not definitive and say something may be unreasonable in certain circumstances or may be reasonable in certain other circumstances, but they leave the whole issue up in the air. Where on earth does an employer stand if he or she is trying to comply with these requirements? How is an employer to judge whether or not what they are doing is reasonable given the very open-ended tests that the legislation provides?

Let me illustrate this point by reference to one particular example. Clause 9(2) of the bill says:

A deduction for the direct or indirect benefit of an employer or a related party of an employer may be unreasonable in all of the circumstances if —

...

- (b) it is intended to represent the cost of replacing any clothing, equipment or other property provided to the employee by the employer or a related party of the employer that was lost, damaged or destroyed by the employee unless the employee intentionally, or through wilful neglect, caused the loss, damage or destruction

Members of this house will be familiar with some rules that the Bracks government, and in particular then Treasurer Brumby, imposed on members of Parliament in relation to parliamentary cars that are made available to members of Parliament. Those rules require that if there is a collision involving a car, the member of Parliament concerned is required to pay the first \$750 of any damage that is incurred.

**Mr Herbert** — That is a huge leap.

**Mr CLARK** — Presumably the Brumby government considers that rule reasonable, because it has introduced it, and I am certainly not going to argue against that rule. The point needs to be made that probably members of Parliament are not employees for the purposes of this legislation, that we are not in general terms employees, even though we are treated as employees for income tax purposes. But the analogy nonetheless holds. If it is reasonable for the Brumby

government to impose a rule like that on members of Parliament, is it or is it not reasonable for the Brumby government to impose a similar requirement on public servants?

**Mr Herbert** — That is totally different.

**Mr CLARK** — The member for Eltham says it is totally different. I will look forward to him getting up and putting on the record why he thinks it is reasonable to impose this requirement in one circumstance and not in another circumstance. We have the government tying itself up in knots, on the one hand saying in its legislation something is reasonable and on the other hand saying it is not reasonable. If the government itself cannot get clear whether something like that is reasonable or not, how on earth is a poor employer out there in the private sector going to know whether or not he or she is complying with the vague requirements of this legislation?

Let me now turn to another provision, that contained in clause 9(3)(a)(iii) of the bill.

**Debate interrupted.**

### DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Beattie)** — Order! I interrupt the member for Box Hill to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr George Crawford, a former member of the Legislative Council representing the then Jika Jika Province.

**Debate resumed.**

**Mr CLARK (Box Hill)** — That provision of the bill specifies that:

- (3) A deduction for the direct or indirect benefit of an employer or a related party of an employer may be reasonable in all of the circumstances if —
  - (a) it is in respect of the provision to the employee of goods, services or accommodation by or on behalf of the employee or a related party of the employer and —
    - ...
    - (iii) the employer or a related party of the employer has given the employee an opportunity, if practicable, to obtain the same or similar goods, services or accommodation elsewhere

This is a provision that will affect arrangements in many rural occupations — for example, if a farmer is engaging workers to come and do seasonal work on the farm and is providing accommodation on the farm and

looking for the employee to make a contribution to that accommodation which is deducted from wages, the employer has to have given the employee an opportunity, if practicable, to obtain the same or similar goods, services or accommodation elsewhere. What does that mean? Is it sufficient for the farmer to say to the workers, 'Look, you do not have to stay in the accommodation on the farm. If you would like to drive down the road there is a motel or a guesthouse or some other form of accommodation down the road.'? Is that sufficient?

Arguably it is not sufficient, because the law says the employer has to give the employee an opportunity to obtain the same or similar goods or services elsewhere, and that may well be said to not be giving them such an opportunity and may be simply telling them where to go. Does the employer have to actually line up some alternative that is available off the farm on behalf of the employee instead of the on-farm accommodation? This is the sort of practical question which needs to be answered if the government expects employers to know what their obligations are going to be and to comply with the requirements if this legislation ends up being passed.

Let me say just a few words about a specific provision in the bill relating to 457 visa holders. This provision, contained in clause 10, prohibits the deduction of an employment placement service fee from the wages of a 457 visa holder. The point to be made in relation to this provision is that the legislation has already been introduced, with bipartisan support, into the commonwealth Parliament to deal with the issue and to deal with the issue in a far better way than the way it is dealt with by this bill.

The Migration Amendment (Sponsorship Obligations) Bill 2007 proposes that a sponsoring employer must pay any fees that must be paid to the overseas worker to work in the nominated activity and other fees associated with recruitment and migration agents. This is a bill that has lapsed because of the federal election, but as I say, it has had bipartisan support. When it was considered by the relevant Senate committee the minority report by the ALP members of the committee, while making a number of criticisms of 457 visas, said that Labor supported the committee's recommendations. The committee's recommendations were, with one or two minor suggestions, that the bill be passed. Thus this issue is already being dealt with at a commonwealth level, and it is being dealt with far better than is proposed under this legislation.

Let me make some comments about the penalties that are going to be imposed under this legislation. As I

have said, under clause 12 civil penalties of up to \$10 000 can be imposed on an employer who is found to have failed to comply with one of the requirements of the legislation. Clause 12(4) provides that the court may order that the penalty or part be paid to a particular person or organisation or into the Consolidated Fund. The second-reading speech makes it absolutely clear that the reference to 'organisation' is intended to extend to the relevant union. The then Bracks government previously introduced a similar provision into the long service leave legislation. That provision was opposed by this side of the house when that amendment was introduced last year. This bill before the house is even worse, in that it is trumping up a whole lot of spurious and unnecessary obligations, which it imposes on employers. If employers breach obligations such as paying employees wages in cash without proper authorisation, they can be whacked with a penalty such as this, which could flow straight into the coffers of the trade union movement.

This legislation imposes extraordinarily bizarre and unnecessary obligations on employers. It has to be asked how the government itself intends to respond as an employer if this legislation happens to be passed. How is it going to cope if public servants or other public sector workers refuse to sign an authorisation to be paid other than in cash? Think about the Parliament amongst other entities, for instance. What is the regime that currently applies to staff of the Parliament? Does the parliamentary payroll office have to go around and seek a written authorisation from every electorate officer and other employee of the Parliament?

This legislation is bizarre, and it is a disgrace. It may be that the commonwealth legislation and some of the provisions of agreements and awards under commonwealth legislation may save some employers, but a requirement to pay in cash is so outdated that many commonwealth-based agreements or awards may simply assume that payments will be by electronic funds transfer without saying so.

This legislation is something of concern to many employer organisations. A number of members of this house would have heard on radio this morning David Gregory, on behalf of Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, putting his concerns about this legislation on the record. VECCI has also made clear the fact that the commonwealth Workplace Relations Act requires that employees are guaranteed to be paid the rate of pay applicable under the appropriate Australian pay and classification scale, or the federal minimum wage if no other pay scale is applicable. That aspect of the Australian fair pay and conditions

standards does not permit deductions from those entitlements, whether by agreement or otherwise.

The regulation of deductions and methods of paying wages is something that commonwealth legislation leaves to the states, if it is necessary for them to do so. That follows from section 16(3), paragraphs (h), (i) and (j), of the Workplace Relations Act. If there were a case made by the Brumby government of the need for rules to regulate deductions from workers pay, and if sensible regulatory laws were introduced, we would support that. But this bill is not about sensible regulation, it is about hitting Victorian employers with absurd and unnecessary requirements as part of the loony left of the Victorian ALP giving in to the demands of the union movement.

The Minister for Industrial Relations may nominally be a member of the Labor Right, but it is clear that in policy terms he is a card-carrying member of the loony left. This legislation is a foretaste of the sort of draconian legislation that may well be rolled out around the nation if Australians were unfortunate enough to end up with wall-to-wall Labor governments after 24 November. This is legislation that is bad for employment, it is bad for the creation of prosperity, it is bad for the competitiveness of Victorian business and it is bad for Victorian workers. It is a bill that the Liberal Party opposes.

**Mr WALSH** (Swan Hill) — The Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill does a number of things. It ensures that employers pay employees' wages in money rather than through in-kind goods and services, and it prescribes the method of that payment. It regulates employers' ability to make deductions from employees' wages. It provides for penalties of up to \$10 000 for each breach of regulations and for compensation to affected employees. It requires where practicable that an employee or his delegate — that is, a union — give a written demand for payment of wages in money or return of unlawful deductions before an application can be made for the breach to be heard in court.

It enables an employee, his union, the Minister for Industrial Relations or his delegate to apply in writing for breaches to be heard in the court. It requires application to the court to be made within six years of an offence, and it gives the Governor in Council special powers to make regulations concerning the bill. It also amends the Public Sector (Union Fees) Act 1992 so that public sector union fee deductions must comply with the requirements of the bill. It also amends the Outworkers (Improved Protection) Act 2003 to include outworkers as employees under this bill.

I will come back to the issue of paying cash later but I find it fascinating that outworkers brought in under this bill will all be paid in cash. Will the people who go around collecting whatever product they have need to carry bucketfuls of cash around so they can pay them in the future?

In case anyone has forgotten, in 1996 Victoria referred its industrial relations powers to the commonwealth. At the time the then Premier, Jeff Kennett, said that:

The referral will eliminate the historical fragmentation of Victorian workplaces and remove an unnecessary layer of duplication.

...

The Victorian referral contains a number of important safeguards:

No employee will be disadvantaged by the referral

Existing arrangements continue unless employers and employees choose otherwise

Victoria will retain its constitutional right to withdraw the referral power at any time.

I emphasise that:

Victoria will retain its constitutional right to withdraw the referral power at any time.

It is interesting that we have had a whole range of legislation about industrial relations but this government has never taken seriously the idea of bringing back its industrial relations power.

When the bill was introduced by the then Premier in 1996 the member for Williamstown at the time, Mr Bracks, spoke on the issue of time for the adjournment of debate on that bill and said:

At the end of the day members of the opposition —

that is, the Labor Party —

will do anything to get Victorian workers out of the rotten state system ...

At the time Mr Bracks was passionate about making sure that our powers were sent to the federal arena. That was not a short-term view by the Labor Party. The Minister for Industrial Relations appeared on the *7.30 Report* on 17 February 2005 to discuss industrial relations with a range of speakers including the then Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, and the then federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews. He said:

We believe that a unitary system is the way to go. I'm more than prepared to act as a lobbyist on behalf of the federal

government to try and convince my state and territory colleagues to get on board with the unitary system ...

We have a Labor government which is committed to a unitary system but which has introduced something like 12 pieces of legislation in a make-believe fantasy world where there is some sort of state system here in Victoria. If we go through the pieces of legislation that have been introduced by this government, we have the Child Employment Act 2003 which at that time prescribed that grandparents had to get permits to have their grandchildren help them on the farm. It was a huge issue at the time, it was regulation gone crazy.

We also had the Federal Awards (Uniform System) Act 2003. If my memory serves me correctly, it was about the schedule 3A workers being moved into the federal system. We had the Outworkers (Improved Protection) Act 2003, which brought outworkers in under wages and conditions. That was to the disadvantage of a lot of people who wanted to work at home and wanted to be on a piecework rate so they could fit it into their lifestyle and how they wanted to be part of their family at various times.

We had the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. We had the Construction Industry Long Service Leave (Amendment) Bill. We had the Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005 which established the small business commissioner and put in place a way of regulating contract arrangements for owner drivers and forestry operators — private enterprise people who wanted to get on with their lives being regulated again.

We had the Workplace Rights Advocate Act 2005. We have federal legislation that covers these issues but we had a workplace advocate brought in in Victoria in a smoke-and-mirrors attempt to pretend that this government was doing something for workers. We had the Long Service Leave (Preservation of Entitlements) Act 2006. We had the Public Sector Employment (Award Entitlements) Act 2006. We had the Public Sector Acts (Further Workplace Protection and Other Matters) Act 2006. We have had 12 pieces of legislation introduced by this government after it was a passionate supporter of having a unitary system in Australia. Instead of focusing on having that system working, they are trying to have some sort of de facto system set up here in Victoria.

I do not believe this legislation does a lot to protect employers' rights. It actually turns back the clock in how the workplace is supposed to work in the 21st century. In the 21st century the workplace is about employers and employees working together for the mutual benefit of both. Particularly in times of full employment you find there are win-wins out there.

There are a lot of fantastic employers who work well with their employees to make sure that the total take-home package for their employees is better than it has been in the past, and there are productivity gains for the businesses as well. In a world of full employment the best employee you can have is one you have trained, who knows your work, who is suitably rewarded and who makes a profit for the business.

**Mr Hudson** interjected.

**Mr WALSH** — The member for Bentleigh laughs about this.

**Mr Hudson** — You are talking about a fantasy land.

**Mr WALSH** — It is not fantasy land. This is about how good businesses work with their employees.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Beattie)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr WALSH** — For the benefit of the member for Bentleigh, the vast majority of employers are good businesspeople who know that looking after their staff is good business.

**Mr Hudson** — That is the minority.

**Mr WALSH** — It is not the minority, it is the majority.

This is about locking people back into the old way of doing business. It is about having them against us rather than people working together. It is about making sure that the Labor Party finds some reason for the existence of the unions into the future. If you want to retain your staff, you look after them well, you train them well, you do not — —

**Mr Hudson** — So you agree with Joe Hockey that unions have had their day, do you?

**Mr WALSH** — No. As someone who was proudly a member of the farmers union and who led the farmers union, there is a place for unions. But there is an issue of balance in this that the member for Bentleigh just does not seem to understand. There is an issue of balance, and this bill does not help the issue at all.

If we go to some of the concerns The Nationals have with this bill, I put on the record that The Nationals oppose this legislation for a range of reasons. We believe that some of the clauses in this bill are just absurd. I go particularly to clause 6. It states:

- (2) An employer must pay an employee's wages to the employee —

- (a) in cash; or
- (b) if the employee has given the employer written authorisation to do so —
  - (i) by cheque, postal order or money order; or
  - (ii) by deposit into an ADI specified by the employee in the written authorisation; or
- (c) by a combination of methods set out in paragraphs (a) and (b).

Note

The Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 defines an ADI to be an authorised deposit-taking institution within the meaning of the Banking Act 1959 of the Commonwealth.

To think that the government would be putting legislation before this Parliament that would require an employer to pay an employee in cash is absurd.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr WALSH** — No, it says 'in cash'. Why would you have — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Beattie)** — Order! I ask for a little less conversation across the chamber so the member for Swan Hill can be heard.

**Mr WALSH** — The cash payment is the default mechanism here unless the employee signs an authorisation to have the payment made any differently. The discretion here, for the benefit of the member for Bentleigh, is that the employee has the say as to whether it is cash, a cheque, a bank order or a payment to an authorised deposit-taking institution (ADI).

To think that a businessperson, an employer in this day and age, could be forced to pay in cash is absurd. Horticulturalists in my electorate employ hundreds of casual workers on a weekly basis. They are paid piecework rates, so at the end of a week, or a couple of days if they want some money to get them through the week, they go to the employer and ask for a cheque. They can go and cash that cheque at any of the establishments in Swan Hill, because people know that a cheque from the Siciliano brothers or any of the other families there is good to be cashed. Are you going to ask those families to carry thousands and thousands of dollars of cash? Are you going to ask them to have cash on hand to pay these people if they choose not to sign that authorisation?

**Mr Hudson** — Most of them will.

**Mr WALSH** — Most of them will, but why have it in the legislation? It is archaic to have in the legislation that cash is the default mechanism in today's world. Even a cheque is almost becoming outdated with direct debits and all the other things that are used. Why would you try and drag us back to the 1960s and 1970s by saying we have cash as the default payment?

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WALSH** — With the foxtails and the pompoms around the windows.

If the government were stupid enough to take this bill through to fruition and it was passed, we would find that we as members of Parliament would have to sign that authorisation to say that we want the Parliament to do a direct debit into our bank account as we do at the moment. If we say we would prefer to have cash, how is the Parliament going to pay us in cash, particularly country members who are hundreds and hundreds of kilometres from Melbourne? That is the absurdity of this legislation.

Other issues, and the member for Box Hill briefly touched on this, are around the breadwinner of the family taking home their pay packet. If it is paid direct into the bank account, the family knows how much money it has. There is no opportunity for the breadwinner of the family, male or female, to end up down the pub wasting some of that money gambling or whatever. Is this issue of paying in cash actually a secret ploy by the government to increase the gambling take? It wants people to have lots of cash in their pockets so they will go to the pub and put it on the tote or through the pokies so the government gets greater income.

The Nationals have some major concerns with clause 12, which concerns for whom the court can order a civil penalty or reimbursement. The clause states:

- (1) The following persons may apply to a court for an order under subsection (2) —
  - ...
  - (b) at the request of the employee or a group of employees, an organisation of which the employee is a member or eligible to be a member —

that is, the unions. This is an opportunity for a union to get involved and do things on behalf of an employee to prove the value of its existence.

**Mr Pallas** — The farmers union.

**Mr WALSH** — The farmers union is great. It does not have the power of the traditional union base,

because we do not have a Labor Party that is prepared to legislate to put its rights into legislation.

**Mr Hudson** — You have had a great ride from us.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member should ignore interjections.

**Mr WALSH** — It is very hard to ignore interjections when I hear things like that.

**Mr Hudson** — You have never had it so good.

**Mr WALSH** — Obviously there is an echo from Gough Whitlam's era on the other side of the house, and we all know what happened to Gough Whitlam.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The member should ignore interjections and echoes.

**Mr WALSH** — Clause 12(4) states:

A court that imposes a penalty under subsection (2)(a) may order that the penalty, or a part of the penalty, be paid —

- (a) to a particular person or organisation; or
- (b) into the Consolidated Fund.

The Nationals have a concern with this clause. The intent of the bill is that a worker would be recompensed for any breach of this legislation. Under this clause a court could decide that the particular organisation could be the Transport Workers Union, for argument's sake, on behalf of its members because it made an application. The court could prescribe that the compensation or a percentage of it would be paid to the union for the work it does. If you have a lawyer representing an employer in a case, the lawyer cannot have his or her fees prescribed by the judge or magistrate, but you can have a situation where the union representing a person or a group of people can have its fees paid by court order.

I find it even stranger that, if there has been a breach under this legislation, the court can order the compensation to be paid into the Consolidated Fund. We are actually talking about a breach where a person has not been paid in money, cash or any other form, and there is supposed to be compensation. Why would the Consolidated Fund get the money? It would appear the government is pork-barrelling its own Consolidated Fund by making sure the court imposes penalties that are paid into the Consolidated Fund rather than to the supposedly affected worker.

To summarise, The Nationals oppose this legislation for the reasons I have set out. I do not believe it is good legislation. I go back to the fact that the Minister for

Industrial Relations and the previous Premier were both great supporters of a unitary system in Australia. Why do we have so many pieces of industrial legislation passed through this house which do very little? The cynics among us would say that these pieces of legislation before the house at the moment are part of the Victorian Labor Party's campaign to support Kevin Rudd being elected as Prime Minister. It is about raising the profile of issues because of the perceived disadvantages with WorkChoices — something that I do not agree with. I believe there have been some great things done with the unitary system in the federal jurisdiction.

We believe the legislation has been brought forward as a political game coming up to a federal election. It does not deliver anything real for Victorian workers and actually drags us back into the 1970s and 1980s by prescribing that people have to be paid in cash unless an authorisation is signed. It is absurd that this legislation could get through cabinet. If cabinet had people in it who understood modern business practice and how businesses operate, it would never have got through. The Nationals hope and pray that the bill will be defeated.

**Mr HUDSON** (Bentleigh) — It is a great pleasure to speak on the Victorian Workers' Wages Protection Bill. The Labor government has been concerned for some time about the anything-goes approach adopted by the federal government in Canberra in relation to legislation governing industrial relations and workers rights in Australia. What we have with WorkChoices is a piece of legislation that has basically ripped away from workers progressively over time any of the protections they have had in Australia in relation to their wages and conditions.

We have sought as a government, consistently opposed by the opposition, wherever we can within the powers we have available to us, to pass legislation in this Parliament that will protect the rights, the wages and the conditions of workers. This bill continues this great tradition. WorkChoices has made numerous changes to industrial laws. Those changes have seen employees have their rights ripped away, penalty rates cut, overtime rates slashed and employees sacked so their employer could employ someone else at a lower rate of pay. That was one of the fundamental problems that John Howard had, because he had backed legislation —

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! It is now time for me to interrupt the business of the house.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

### Police: Mornington Peninsula

**Mr DIXON** (Nepean) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services regarding the deployment of police on the Mornington Peninsula, especially at Rye prior to and during New Year's Eve. I ask the minister to ensure adequate police numbers are deployed and that the police deployed are on longer 10 to 12-hour shifts. The reason I raise this issue is that the local police command — and I emphasise it is local police command — have asked me to ask their minister in this place to consider this. I know if the minister were present for this debate, which it does not look as though he will be, he would say it is an operational matter and he cannot do anything about it. I am passing on a message from the senior police in my area asking that the extra police numbers that will be deployed in the Mornington Peninsula on New Year's Eve be deployed in such a way that they can do a realistic job.

On New Year's Eve last year a riot occurred where police were injured, a lot of damage was done to property and things were getting out of control. We do not want a repeat of that this year. Rye was in a similar situation to Sorrento five years ago, when tens of thousands of people arrived in Sorrento on New Year's Eve and incredible damage and vandalism was done to shops, private property and cars. People were injured, there were stabbings and everything was totally out of control. The community decided that it had had enough and worked together with the police and the shire to reverse the situation through a no-nonsense approach. This approach will be taken at Rye this year.

The sorts of things that will happen at Rye this year to avoid the riots we had last year include closing down the pier. The carnival on the Rye foreshore will not operate on New Year's Eve, temporary and permanent lighting will be introduced and the bushes, trees and vegetation in the area will be trimmed. New by-laws will be passed by the local shire, and those by-laws will be strongly enforced by by-laws officers from the shire and also by the police. A message will get out that there is no entertainment or fireworks at Rye on New Year's Eve so it is not worth coming down to cause trouble — and we will get that message out.

Extra police will be deployed in the area, and the deployment will start earlier, not a couple of hours earlier but a few days earlier, so that the drinking and

public property issues will be resolved and enforced. Having police there for longer shifts is important. The reason we ask for that is that, if they are coming from Melbourne, they need to learn about the area, and it is a better use of the resources. The senior police have asked me to ask the minister to provide those police.

### **Moreland: BRAVE Young Men's program**

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, and the action I seek is that the minister give very serious consideration to the BRAVE Young Men's program which operates in Moreland and is nominated for the community participation category in the sport and recreation awards. This program is absolutely outstanding. The BRAVE Young Men's program is a result of the shortage of suitably qualified lifeguards to staff Moreland's leisure centres and aquatic facilities in particular. We have great facilities in Moreland at the Coburg Leisure Centre, the Pascoe Vale pool and the Oak Park pool, which are in my electorate, and the Fawknor pool and the Brunswick City Baths. These aquatic facilities are extremely well utilised, but there is always the need to have qualified and competent lifeguards.

The program's key aim is to provide young men at risk with a structured fitness program. Not only does the program provide a physical outlet, but it also helps develop relationships among participants and increase their links with the local community. The men who participate in the program gain a vocational qualification and make connections with social supports and have access to job opportunities. At the end of the program participants have the chance to obtain their lifeguard certificates, and this has resulted in many of the program's graduates taking up employment at the local leisure centre.

I look forward to meeting with a number of those who are graduates of this particular program when children from Pascoe Vale primary schools St Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Westbreen Primary School have the opportunity at the Pascoe Vale pool in December to have their end-of-school excursion, a program which at that particular pool is jointly sponsored by the Moreland council and me.

The community participation category in the sport and recreation awards recognises initiatives that encourage people to get active. It is aimed at programs and activities that increase opportunities for participation in sport and active recreation by the wider community or particular target groups. I think the recipients of this award would put the \$4000 prize money to great use,

and I am suggesting that the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs give serious consideration to the wonderful BRAVE Young Men's program, which was auspiced in Moreland to look after Moreland's aquatic centres, and to the young men who, as a result of that program, will have a chance of paid employment.

### **Equine influenza: control**

**Dr SYKES** (Benalla) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and the action I request is that the minister extend the assistance measures available to not-for-profit organisations and others impacted by the outbreak of equine influenza, and in particular that he extend the cut-off date for eligible shows and horse events from 31 October until autumn 2008.

By way of background, equine influenza has caused extreme emotional and financial pain to horse owners and associated businesses and families throughout Australia. The government response has focused in particular on the thoroughbred industry, which, whilst welcome, has caused great anger and anxiety amongst other horse industry groups such as pony clubs, eventing horse clubs, adventure tourism operators and pleasure horse owners. I have had many personal representations, telephone calls and emails from affected people, including contacts from the Clydesdale society, the Euroa Pony Club, eventing horse owners, the High Country horseriding operators and local show societies.

Over the past couple of weekends I have attended local shows at Benalla, Myrtleford and Euroa, and while these shows have been a great success the absence of horse events has substantially pulled down the attendance — and therefore the takings and therefore the profits. That comes at a time when we are under enormous pressure due to the continuing dry. On Sunday I attended the opening of the new Euroa Pony Club facilities at Longwood. It is a great credit to many people down there, and in particular to Suzie Batten. Everyone has been impacted by equine influenza.

I have also spoken to other people such as Sue Smith, who runs a saddlery shop in Benalla. She is also a horse seller and the mother of an international equestrian competitor, Emma Smith. Their business has dropped back by 75 per cent — I repeat, 75 per cent. I have also had individuals such as Jennifer Bird and Bernadette Hern contact me. Rosie Rae contacted me on behalf of the Mansfield show society, as well as Steve Baird, who, along with his wife, Kathy, conducts horseriding on the magnificent Bogong High Plains.

The request is quite simple. What we are asking for is that the Minister for Agriculture extend the period of eligibility for grants to show societies and other not-for-profit organisations to ensure that upcoming shows such as those at Mansfield and Alexandra — and, I believe, Heathcote and Echuca — will all be able to claim for the cost of conducting their events and for the loss of profits caused by the outbreak of equine influenza. I also request that the minister turn his attention to increasing the availability of vaccine and support for other businesses, families and individuals severely impacted by equine influenza.

### **Small business: government support**

**Mr CARLI** (Brunswick) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Small Business, who is in the house this evening. It is about small businesses and the support that the Brumby government provides to the small business sector. There is a program called Time to Thrive, which has been very important to the small businesses in my area, and it has provided very important access, particularly to start-up firms. The action I am seeking from the Minister for Small Business is renewed support and financing for the new workforce skills assistance program, the Energise Enterprise small business festival and the management workshops, as well as the continuation of the great work that the government is doing in lessening red tape, ensuring there is a fair payment policy and expanding the small business mentoring service.

This is very important in my area. We have a thriving business incubator in Victoria Street, Brunswick, in the old Brunswick Secondary College. It is a terrific centre of activity where small, start-up firms have access to good advice and support from state government programs. It is those programs I am seeking further funding for. Basically small firms are assisted in setting up, accessing finance, improving the business and management side of their operations, accessing business mentors and networks, finding quality staff and developing succession and contingency plans — really all the things that are necessary to run a successful small firm. These are really important programs. I have seen the benefits in my own area. I have seen firms start from a good idea and build their expertise with state government support and obviously the support of the staff of the incubator. Often they have ended up setting up in the same area.

There is no doubt that small business is an enormously thriving sector of economic activity right throughout Victoria, but certainly it is true of my own electorate. As I said, a lot of it involves new firms and a lot of it comes out of the design school at the Royal Melbourne

Institute of Technology, which is in Brunswick. A lot of it is cutting edge. I think the current program, Time to Thrive — Supporting the Changing Face of Victorian Small Businesses, really works well for those types of firms. As I said, I am seeking action from the Minister for Small Business.

### **Stud Road: bus lanes**

**Mr WELLS** (Scoresby) — I raise a matter of concern for the Minister for Public Transport and ask her to take immediate action regarding an education awareness program on the bus lanes which are being built along Stud Road. There is a real danger with the bus lanes, which I will explain in detail shortly.

The bus lanes on Stud Road will allow buses to travel north–south. Those people who travel out to the outer east will know that Stud Road is a very congested road — in fact I would have to say it is one of the most congested roads in Melbourne. The bus lanes were opened to provide an opportunity for buses to travel very quickly — between 60 and 80 kilometres an hour — in those lanes. That in itself provides an incentive for people who want to travel north–south to catch a bus, because they believe it will be faster to catch a bus than it will be, maybe, to use their own cars. The member for Ferntree Gully and I had reservations about this, because we believed the bus lanes were taking away valuable lanes for cars. However, we have spoken to local bus companies and they are strong believers in this, so we will take their advice for the moment.

However, as I see it the real danger with the bus lanes, and this is why an educational awareness program is very important, is that at most times when you travel north–south along Stud Road it is bumper to bumper in both directions, especially when you look at it from Boronia Road, Burwood Highway and Ferntree Gully Road to Wellington Road and all that area in Knox. The problem is that when, for example, a driver is heading south and signals to go into a residential estate, they have to turn at an unsignalled intersection. The driver relies on the traffic to create a break on Stud Road. Sometimes the intersection will have ‘Keep clear’ painted on the road; at other times it will not. So when a driver turns right they rely on the other cars to stop to allow them to go across. In some cases you would not be able to see a bus flying up the bus lane, because there might be a truck or other higher cars obscuring your view.

If you are turning right across the traffic into the estate, you have got bumper-to-bumper traffic for many kilometres but the bus is still travelling at between

60 and 80 kilometres per hour. If the bus driver is not aware of a car turning right, there is a recipe for a major accident, and we have already seen one car end up on its roof.

### Wind energy: Lal Lal

**Mr HOWARD** (Ballarat East) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources. I call upon the minister to take action to inform the public on the myths and facts about wind farms and to encourage wind farm developers to fully engage with communities directly impacted by their developments.

I was recently approached by members of the Lal Lal and Elaine Landscape Action Group to table a petition before Parliament — it went to the Parliament today and will be presented this week. It contains something like 1500 signatures of people who are opposed to the Lal Lal/Elaine wind farm. While I am not personally opposed to this wind farm or any other wind farm in particular, it occurs to me that many of the concerns that individuals who have signed the petition or others within the group have raised mirror the concerns raised by opponents of other wind farms around the state, and it is my understanding that many of these concerns are based on misconceptions or can be rectified fairly easily.

I believe the majority of my constituents in Ballarat East are generally supportive of wind farm developments around the state, and they understand it is important that we as a state embrace zero-emission electricity generation and take direct action to reduce carbon emissions in order that we can counter global warming. However, some of the common complaints raised by opponents of wind farms include noise, visual impact, reduction in property values and threats posed to wildlife as well as general concerns about the number of developments in the region around Ballarat. It is important that we provide information to those individuals as much as we can to ensure we keep them aware of the facts as opposed to the myths associated with wind farms. While I have been talking directly as much as I can with the people who have raised concerns about wind farms, there is still more to be done.

Other concerns centre around the planning guidelines, particularly the need for greater consultation with the community, and members of the community want to know that they can feed into the process. As this house will be aware, wind farm developments above 30 megawatts go straight to the Minister for Planning in the other house and are not directly considered by local government. This appears to initially raise concerns

because people believe that, if local government is not going to be the planning authority to consider their application, it may be that their concerns will not be fully considered. However, there are clear opportunities for local government and any individual to feed into the process that is established by the Minister for Planning, and members of the community need to be aware —

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

### International Training Salon: apprenticeships

**Mrs VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — I rise to ask the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation to immediately grant apprenticeship funding to the International Training Salon in Bayswater. ITS, as it is known, was established not just as a hairdressing training provider but also to provide a career pathway for young people.

Currently Australia is experiencing a shortage of hairdressers. The reasons for this vary, but many agree that it is due to the fact that it is a predominantly female field. Young women get their qualifications but often do not continue working in the field once they decide to start a family, so their skills are lost to the industry. ITS has constructed a model which encourages aspiring hairdressers to continue gaining further certificates and experience so that they will eventually end up with the skills to own their own businesses. In many cases this allows young mums to better juggle family time as well as providing financial security for their future, but this process commences with apprenticeships.

The owners of the hairdressing academy, Tom, Vince, Rose and Rose, have been running round in circles trying to obtain funding via the apprenticeship/traineeship training program. The only problem is that the minister's own department has been unable to assist them. Applications for this funding will close on 1 November, just two days away. ITS attempted to lodge their application online some time ago. The business was directed to the Office of Training and Tertiary Education website. They then attempted to log in, which resulted in the error message 'Our records don't acknowledge you. Please call this number for assistance'. The number was for the OTTE, who told them to call Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

In turn this department said they needed to call the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, which then suggested that they call the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This went on for three consecutive days. Indeed, one of the owners was told by a departmental

employee that she should, 'Wait a few more weeks, by then we will all know who is responsible for what. Maybe then we can help you'. No-one knew how to assist this business in logging in to apply for funding to assist in its growth.

Is this a ploy by Labor to avoid spending money? They do not seem to have problems spending dollars on self-promotion, but when it comes to helping our kids or small business they seem to have deep pockets and very short arms. Will the department extend the application time to all applicants in this situation to allow for its own inadequacies?

When Premier Brumby reshuffled his frontbench, in true Labor fashion disarray followed. This is not the only department my office has had complaints about, and I am sure it will not be the last. Labor's contempt for Victorian businesses never seems to abate. I urge the minister to do the right thing and come to the aid of ITS.

### **Residential tenancies: students**

**Mr SCOTT** (Preston) — I wish to raise in tonight's adjournment debate a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, who I note is in the house. It relates to residential tenancy issues faced by students living on campuses and in other often informal arrangements. The action I request is that the minister investigate the residential tenancy issues faced by students and meet with representatives of educational institutions and with students.

In the Preston electorate there are large numbers of students, both international and local, studying at universities and TAFEs. There are also significant numbers of students in neighbouring electorates living on campus in purpose-built student accommodation. I have had students come to me, seeking assistance with difficulties they have faced in dealing with residential tenancy issues. Some students live in a grey area where they are not effectively covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. This situation is not ideal, and I urge the minister to take action to improve the residential tenancy regulations covering students.

Educational services now represent a very significant sector of the Victorian economy, and overseas students play a very important economic role, on par with many traditional export industries. Further, many country students need to move to Melbourne to undertake their studies. Thus, successfully ensuring that the residential tenancy issues faced by students are fairly and effectively met is important not just for the students themselves but for the broader community.

In conclusion, I know that the minister is deeply committed to getting the balance right between tenants and landlords. I trust that he will bring a wise and considered approach to the issue of student housing.

### **Latrobe Regional Hospital: special needs midwife program**

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — Tonight I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. The action I am seeking is for the Minister for Health to reinstate the special needs midwife program at the Latrobe Regional Hospital (LRH). The special needs midwife program was taken over by the Latrobe Regional Hospital in 2005 and had established itself as an extremely important service for many expectant mothers and their families in the Latrobe Valley. Funding for this program was at a cost of \$45 000 over two years, and this government decided to abolish it, despite recently announcing a \$1.4 billion surplus. We can afford it, and it should be reinstated.

In October 2006 the then Premier, Mr Bracks, publicly acknowledged the Latrobe Regional Hospital on its innovation and excellence through programs such as the special needs midwife program, yet 12 months later it does not exist. The program offered confidential and trusting support to vulnerable young women, along with pregnancy care and education at various stages of pregnancy including labour and following the birth of a child. LRH has offered to provide a modified version of the special needs midwife program. However, a reduction in the current levels of funding and services will have significant implications for many pregnant women in the Latrobe Valley and potentially the midwifery staff at LRH.

I am sure most hospitals would welcome additional funding for maternity services, and for that reason it is disappointing to lose a program such as this, despite the relatively small amount of funding required. The recent nurses dispute illustrates the frustration of so many health-care workers, and we can ill afford to lose these wonderful people from our health system. Removing such worthwhile initiatives as the special needs midwife program will only further contribute to the stress placed upon midwifery teams.

Karen Ponton, who was employed as the special needs midwife, had given tremendous support and guidance to a vast array of women in the Latrobe Valley community, including young expectant mothers, pregnant women with disabilities, persons from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with special social needs. I am told that Karen has a unique skill in gaining the trust and confidence of many expectant mothers,

which not only assists the mothers in waiting but also alleviates the pressure on midwives employed at LRH. Approximately 8 per cent of babies born at LRH are born to mothers under 20 years of age. In addition, approximately 18 per cent of total births are to single women. Many of the women in these categories have been reliant on the support services offered through the special needs midwife program.

In total, approximately 900 babies are born at the Latrobe Regional Hospital on an annual basis, and many of these births have relied upon the expertise and guidance the special needs midwife has provided. Many new mums have expressed their gratitude and adulation for the services and support this program brings. However, those same persons now express great disappointment that funding for the special needs midwife program at LRH has ceased. In closing, the action I seek from the Minister for Health is to reinstate the special needs midwife program at the Latrobe Regional Hospital.

### **Sport and recreation: industry awards**

**Mr NOONAN** (Williamstown) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. The action I seek is for the minister to strongly consider one of the members of the Williamstown Surf Life Saving Club for a sport and recreation award, which I understand will be announced later in November. Of course there could be no better place to be a surf lifesaver than at Williamstown Beach and there could be no better club than the Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club.

After 22 years of dedicated involvement in the lifesaving club, Scott Ivey has been nominated in the volunteer involvement category. This involvement began when Scott became a member aged just seven years. Seven years later, when he was still just 14 years old, Scott started up the club's first-ever junior committee. From there Scott's involvement went from strength to strength, first becoming a member of the senior committee, then the patrol and inflatable rescue boat captain — and today he is the overall captain of the Williamstown Surf Life Saving Club as well as a member of the executive. He is a busy man.

We all know the crucial role lifesavers play on our beaches over summer. However, Scott is more than just a lifesaver. He is also a strong leader and a terrific club person. Through his work, lifesaving competitions were created for the female club members, not just the men. As a coach he is constantly developing new training techniques to ensure that the club's lifesavers have the highest level of skill. Through all this Scott's dedication

to saving lives has not once wavered. It has always been his main focus. The volunteer involvement category of the sport and recreation awards is aimed at recognising the outstanding contribution made by a volunteer to the industry as a whole. From what I understand of Scott's involvement, 'outstanding' is certainly a word that it is fitting to use. Such has been Scott's tremendous contribution to his club and the people of our community that he has recently been awarded the 2007 Life Saving Victoria Volunteer of the Year award, a fantastic achievement in itself.

Volunteer lifesavers in this state do a great job and in this calendar year have already rescued more than 1000 people on our beaches. I also know this because of our family's lifelong friendship with Neil and Maree Morarty and Dr Michael Kennedy, all wonderful contributors to Life Saving Victoria. This award would be terrific recognition of Scott Ivey's work — as would the \$4000 in prize money, I might add — and I urge the minister to support this application.

### **Responses**

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The member for Ballarat East raised with me the issue of wind farms, in particular the availability of material about wind farms. He also raised with me the need to encourage wind farm developers to better engage with local communities about planning projects. The material he sought in relation to wind farms was something akin to that used by *Mythbusters* to identify the facts and highlight the myths.

As the house will be aware, the Brumby government is committed to encouraging renewable energy here in Victoria. I see that the federal Labor Party is also committed to that, with its new announcement of increasing renewable energy targets at a national level. Because of the commitment in Victoria, I guess we have led the way nationally. This is why the Victorian renewable energy target is responsible for driving all the recent investment in wind energy in this state.

Wind energy is the most cost-effective contemporary form of renewable energy, and it has an important role in reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, particularly brown coal here in Victoria. Victoria is fortunate to have an abundance of world-class wind resources. As the member for Ballarat East would know, there is plenty of wind up there around Ballarat. In fact the areas around Ballarat experience higher than average wind speeds, making it an especially suitable location for wind farms.

While wind farm development generally attracts a lot of public support in this state, it is certainly true to say that there are some commonly held misconceptions about wind farms. That is why we want to address these types of issues. One of the major ones is that wind farms are noisy. This is just not true. Advances in technology mean that the mechanical sound from modern wind turbines has been practically eliminated. I have been to modern wind farms in this state. You can hear the cattle lowing over the sounds of the operating wind farms. Any noise from the turbines rotating is usually masked by the noise of the rustling of leaves, the cattle grazing and other background sounds. Furthermore the planning process ensures that the noise from all wind turbines is determined before the wind farm is built, to ensure that any noise is within an acceptable range.

Another misconception about wind farms is that they pose a risk to wildlife, particularly birds. However, monitoring here has found that no rare, threatened or endangered birds or bats have been killed by wind farms in Victoria. In fact it has recently been reported that there was a sighting of nine orange-bellied parrots around the Yambuk wetlands, suggesting that the numbers of these endangered birds might actually be on the increase. This is despite the location of a nearby wind farm at Deen Maar. Rigorous planning processes ensure that the risk to rare and threatened birds is fully assessed before the wind farm development can go ahead.

Sustainability Victoria has produced a really useful document, *Wind Energy — Myths and Facts*, which can be found on the Sustainability Victoria website. This publication outlines some of the commonly held misconceptions about wind farms, including their reliability, efficiency and cost. I strongly urge all members of Parliament and all members of the community to get this document from the Sustainability Victoria website, read it and show it to their friends. I suggest they even show it to those members of their community who might have some concerns about wind farms and who harbour some of these ill-placed myths.

The member for Ballarat East also raised with me the need to encourage extensive community consultation between wind farm developers and the local communities impacted by proposals. I can assure all members of the Parliament that community consultation is a very important part of the planning process. This is why the policy and planning guidelines for the development of wind energy facilities in Victoria encourage wind farm developers to consult with a number of important local institutions such as the local council, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the local community and that they

should do this before lodging their planning permit application. Once the application is made, normal processes of planning ensure that there are extensive opportunities for local communities to comment on the proposal and have their concerns considered as part of the assessment process. These planning guidelines can also be found on Sustainability Victoria's website.

I would also like to take this opportunity to announce another wind energy resource that will be available to the public shortly. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website will soon contain information about the status of wind farm projects in Victoria. This will allow people to see what projects are in the pipeline and at what stage of the planning process they are in. We are doing this because all too often people are becoming concerned over information that is little more than rumour. This resource on the DPI website will give clarity by enabling people to learn with certainty if there are any developments proposed for their area, and they will also be able to track the process of that development from this important website.

Once people learn of a proposal in their area they will be in a much better position to make inquiries and to become more informed about what the actual proposal involves. This is another way of making sure that the community has a say. It is just another way that the Brumby government is proving itself to be open and transparent. We will continue to strongly encourage wind farm developers to consult extensively with local communities at all times. We will continue to provide Victorians with the information that allows them to be involved and to be heard throughout the planning process. I want to thank the member for Ballarat East for raising this matter and helping to dissolve some of these myths that abound and surround wind farms here in Victoria.

**Mr HELPER** (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for Benalla for raising the issue of support for shows and other non-racing sectors of the horse industry affected by the equine influenza (EI) outbreak in New South Wales and Queensland. The first thing I wish to stress to the house is that of course Victoria does not have equine influenza in this state. In saying that I do not want to report the bleeding obvious, but I do want to take the opportunity to thank a lot of people who have made our risk exposure to EI much less in this state than it would be otherwise.

Firstly, if I may take this opportunity to thank officers of my department, the Department of Primary Industries, for their incredibly hard work. The department is headed by the chief veterinary officer who, immediately after the outbreak was reported in

New South Wales, set up a control team to put in place a movement lockdown of horses in this state and the biosecurity measures that really go to reducing the risk of an EI outbreak in Victoria.

The issue that the member for Benalla raised was that of shows and other non-racing horse sectors that are suffering significant inconvenience and loss of opportunity and suffering in other ways as a consequence of the EI outbreak. I am sure the member for Benalla would join me in applauding the efforts of each and every one of those organisations in voluntarily restricting and reducing movement and following on a whole very worthwhile biosecurity measures. I certainly take every opportunity that I can to recognise the magnificent contribution that the racing industry has made in this state to reducing the risk of an EI outbreak, but also the unfortunately less publicly acknowledged contribution made by the recreational horse sector — the myriad of non-racing horse sectors that we have in this state.

The member for Benalla raised the issue of the cut-off point for the support package that the state has put in place, which amounts to a funding commitment of \$500 000 out of a \$2.2 million package that we announced for increased border security as well as support to non-racing voluntary horse organisations. He wishes that cut-off time of 31 October for events to be eligible to be supported under this package to be drawn out. I know the member for Benalla understands that there has to be a line somewhere that serves as a cut-off point. The government certainly thought that 31 October was a practical cut-off point.

I understand that the Benalla show, as reported by the member for Benalla, suffered a 30 per cent to 40 per cent reduction in attendances as a consequence of choosing not to hold horse events. I applaud the organiser's choice in doing so. Over the weekend, on Saturday, I attended the Stawell show and on Sunday I attended the Ararat show. I think it is fair to say that both of those shows made gallant efforts at overcoming the lack of horse events at their shows. I think it is also fair to say that their patronage would have suffered as a consequence. I do not think I would quantify it as being 30 per cent to 40 per cent, but that will vary from area to area.

In response to the issue raised by the member for Benalla, I will certainly consider it, and I appreciate that he recognises that somewhere along the line there has to be a cut-off point to any particular funding arrangement put in place. I am sure I am joined by every member in this house when again I applaud the efforts not only of the racing sector but very much of

the non-racing sector also in playing a constructive role in reducing the risk of an equine influenza outbreak in this state.

I turn to the issue raised by the member for Brunswick, who sought the Brumby government's ongoing support for the initiatives announced in the *Time to Thrive* statement concerning the small business sector in Victoria. I assure him that the Time to Thrive initiative is meeting and exceeding many of its milestones and will continue to receive strong support from the Brumby government. The *Time to Thrive* statement was a directional support document for the 470 000 small businesses in Victoria. Those small businesses play an incredibly important role, not only in Victoria's economy but in Victoria's community life.

A number of initiatives that were highlighted by the member for Brunswick were the new workforce skills assistance. This service is about free workforce planning advice and training assistance grants being available for businesses to tackle their skills shortages.

A second initiative under the *Time to Thrive* statement is the hugely successful Energise Enterprise small business festival. I came into the small business portfolio in August, and August is the month of the Energise Enterprise small business festival. As a very new minister I had the opportunity to familiarise myself with this vibrant sector through this very vibrant festival. There were many events held — some 370 — and some 26 000 people attended. The pleasing thing, with my rural and regional background, was that almost half the number there came from outside of Melbourne, so I am also very pleased with the regional engagement of the Energise Enterprise festival.

There have been more management workshops. There have been some 200 Under New Management workshops and seminars, and that is indeed above the 130 workshops that were anticipated in the *Time to Thrive* statement. That is clearly exceeding the target that the statement put down, and it shows the highly successful engagement between the state government and the small business sector and the support that we lend to each other.

In terms of the less-red-tape initiative that the member for Brunswick referred to, there has indeed been a database established of businesses that are willing to be consulted about regulatory changes. This has been created to cut red tape and to inform government on where regulatory efficiencies can be gained, particularly from the perspective of small business. I am sure every member in this house would welcome that initiative also.

The final program that the member for Brunswick referred to is the expanded Small Business Mentoring Service. I encourage all members of this house to become aware of the Small Business Mentoring Service. It is an absolutely fantastic service where people who are, on the whole, retired from business life with varying expertise make themselves available at cost price to small businesses to run through all those issues that from time to time face small businesses. They mentor them through the issues that are associated with growth and prosperity for small business as well as mentor them through the very difficult times, which may at some stage result in advice being offered by the mentor to the small business person that their business may not necessarily be all that viable in the long term. Options are provided for how to move forward from there.

It is a service that I take every opportunity to promote around the state, because it is an absolute monte for providing a fantastic facility for small business operators to look over the horizon, look at their businesses in an objective manner and see where the opportunities lie in the future.

In conclusion, I welcome the support of the member for Brunswick for the *Time to Thrive* statement, I welcome the support of the member for Brunswick for small business in his electorate and indeed small business throughout the state, and I assure him that the ongoing support for a number of specific initiatives that he raised under the *Time to Thrive* statement is an ongoing priority for the Brumby government.

**Mr ROBINSON** (Minister for Gaming) — The member for Preston raised with me his concern about the plight of overseas students, in particular how they stand in relation to residential accommodation in the state of Victoria. This is a serious issue. The member has raised on a number of occasions in the past few weeks since I became a minister a range of concerns that he has about residential accommodation. I was out in his electorate last week visiting residents of a residential park, and concerns for that group have also been expressed to the government in the form of the *Residential Accommodation Issues Paper*, so we are doing some good work there.

The circumstance that a lot of overseas students find themselves in is that they reside in on-campus residential premises as part of their tertiary study, but it has been a longstanding arrangement in Victoria that much of this on-campus residential accommodation is actually exempt from the Residential Tenancies Act under section 21 of that act. It is a longstanding exemption, and the origins of it have been a little bit

clouded by the passage of time, but it has certainly been the desire of overseas students and others that it be reviewed. I can assure the member for Preston that I met recently with Mr Eric Pang, convenor of the National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia. Mr Pang and others came to Parliament, and we had a very productive meeting at which he and his colleagues expressed their views on how residential accommodation arrangements could be improved for students in their situation. I am prepared to consider that.

It is worth noting that there are some 117 000 overseas students in Victoria currently and that of those about 70 000 are based around the central business district. I hope to meet with Mr Pang again in coming weeks, and I certainly assure the member for Preston that the concerns of Mr Pang, his organisation and other overseas students and indeed his concerns will be taken into account as we go further with the residential accommodation issues paper.

The member for Nepean raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services concerning the deployment of police on the Mornington Peninsula, particularly around Rye on New Year's Eve, and I will refer that matter on.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised an issue for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs concerning the BRAVE Young Men's program as it operates in the city of Moreland. It is a program she rates very highly, particularly regarding lifeguards at aquatic facilities, and I will refer that matter on.

The member for Scoresby raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and he even went to the extent of providing me with a map as an appendix. We will not have that incorporated in *Hansard*, but it is very useful. He raised an issue pertaining to the operation of buses in very distinctly coloured bus lanes on parts of Stud Road and how that might impact on drivers turning against the traffic. I will refer that matter on to the minister.

The member for Bayswater raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation in relation to an organisation called International Training Salon and further assistance that might be provided to it, and I will refer that on.

The member for Morwell raised an issue for the Minister for Health pertaining to a midwifery services program in the Latrobe Valley and its future, and I will pass that matter on.

The member for Williamstown also raised an issue for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs relating to the Williamstown Surf Life Saving Club and an outstanding member of that club, Mr Scott Ivey, a distinguished volunteer of many years standing. The member wants this individual to be considered for an award by the minister, and I will certainly have that matter referred on.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The house is now adjourned.

**House adjourned 10.53 p.m.**