

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

30 May 2002

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Thursday, 30 May 2002

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. A. Chamberlain) took the chair at 10.03 a.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Youth Affairs: adviser

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I direct my question to the Leader of the Government and Minister for Youth Affairs, and I refer to an article in the first edition of the Melbourne *MX* of 6 April 2001, reporting the violent invasion and trashing of the offices of the vice-chancellor of Melbourne University, causing over \$100 000 of damage, terrorising numerous occupants of the office and resulting in the arrest of 74 students. I ask: will the minister confirm that the David Henderson reported in the article as being president of the National Union of Students, which organised the criminal invasion, is her adviser on youth affairs who in 1998 publicly promoted the use of deadly drugs?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — The opposition stoops to the lowest level!

If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had actually done his proper research, and did not have to have pieces of paper handed to him, he would have seen that David Henderson — my adviser — at the time and immediately following that incident was reported as condemning the violence that took place at that invasion of the vice-chancellor's offices. David was reported later that day as not supporting the invasion and saying that he did not support the violence that took place on that day.

Supplementary question

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — As the minister would be aware, the offenders involved in the invasion were dealt with in the courts yesterday. Will the minister advise the house: was Mr Henderson at court giving support to his troops?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — They are getting worse! The answer is no.

Sport and recreation: funding

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I refer my question to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. In light of the minister's previous statements to the house relating to the good work the Bracks government is doing in the area of sport and

recreation, will he advise the house what he is doing to ensure that all Victorians have access to quality sporting opportunities in rural areas of the state?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — As I have mentioned over recent days, during the last few weeks I have had the tremendous opportunity to announce the distribution of substantial amounts of money for a number of community groups in relation to sport and recreation. Many of these announcements have included projects within the minor facilities category of community facilities funding distributed by the Sport and Recreation Victoria watchdog.

The financial assistance provided through the minor facilities category, as honourable members in this place should be aware, is for projects of less than \$150 000. The Bracks Labor government believes this program in particular addresses the grassroots needs of local communities in sport and recreation.

When we came into government we doubled the budget for this program from \$2.5 million to \$5 million. We also increased the capacity of rural communities through their councils to access funds and changed the funding ratio to \$2 for every \$1 compared to the previous government's funding of \$1 for \$1.

This round of funding for the 2002–03 financial year saw 166 projects in 73 municipalities across Victoria receiving financial assistance. One of the tremendous aspects of this is the diverse nature of the projects — from lighting of venues, increasing playing time available for those groups, to upgrading of pavilions to provide access to women and people with disabilities and the provision of skate parks for teenagers in isolated rural towns.

Not only is the immediate outcome outstanding for those communities, what is also impressive and heartening in terms of the distribution of funds is that it endorses the work of those members of the community who put in extensive time and effort to strengthen their local communities in a volunteer capacity. Not only are they getting a tremendous outcome in terms of physical infrastructure, but the outstanding work of those local community members is being endorsed.

Combined with the local dollars, this program will see the development of over \$10 million worth of investment in community sport and recreation infrastructure across Victoria that will provide increased opportunities for participation at the grassroots level.

I am also pleased to advise the house that an additional commitment of funds for this program has been made for the 2003–04 financial year. This is a tremendous portfolio and a tremendous outcome for people in sport across the whole of the state, and again reinforces that the government is strengthening communities, growing the whole state and delivering for all Victorians.

Minister for Youth Affairs: adviser

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — My question is to the Minister for Youth Affairs. I note in her previous answer to Mr Furlletti the minister said that Mr David Henderson condemned the invasion at Melbourne University, yet the newspaper article indicated that he was warning that students were planning to step up their campaign. In that light, I refer to the minister's responses to answers yesterday when she advised that the conduct of Mr Henderson in promoting and advocating the use of deadly illicit drugs in 1998 occurred at a time when he was immature and misguided. Does the minister condone Mr Henderson's involvement in the invasion and trashing of the office of the vice-chancellor at Melbourne University in April last year, and does she excuse the criminal offences committed on that occasion as a joke or a harmless prank?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I have already answered this. This is just a political stunt by the opposition. It is on a witch-hunt involving a young man who is just starting his career. I have answered that question. I have indicated the position that David Henderson took in relation to that matter.

Supplementary question

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — In the light of the answers we heard yesterday when the minister informed us that Mr Henderson had now resiled from that position and has been given a second chance — the evidence today suggests that he might be having another chance — does the minister accept that Mr Henderson is not a suitable person to give her sensible and rational advice on youth affairs?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I have indicated that I am fully supportive of David. On 19 April 2001 David received a letter from Professor Alan Gilbert, the vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne, thanking him for his letter and for his assurances that the:

... union's promotion of the national day of action on 5 April in no way implies support for the students who engaged in violent and destructive protest at the University of Melbourne.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We have finished that question.

Port of Melbourne: channel deepening

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — Can the Minister for Ports advise the house what the Bracks government is doing to ensure that the proposal for channel deepening in Port Phillip Bay meets the social and environmental expectations of Victorians?

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Ports) — I thank the honourable member for her question and her interest in the continued development of the port of Melbourne.

I am very pleased to provide the house with details of where the process currently stands in relation to the channel deepening proposal. The port of Melbourne is, of course, a key driver of Victoria's economy. Last year it handled more than \$65 billion worth of cargo. This included 37 per cent of Australia's containerised cargo.

The Bracks government, as part of its strategy to maintain the port of Melbourne as one of Australia's premier ports, believes the port must have the right infrastructure, including channels at the right depths. In line with this commitment, last December the Bracks government delivered in-principle support for the channel deepening, subject, of course, to the resolution of appropriate environmental, technical and feasibility studies.

The Bracks government delivered on this commitment when it announced a detailed investigation into channel deepening as part of its *Building Tomorrow's Businesses Today* statement, and funding of \$5.2 million for the investigation in the 2002 budget, Investing in Our Future.

Building on these actions, I welcome the decision by my colleague the Minister for Planning to require an environment effects statement (EES) to assess the environmental impact of the proposed deepening of the shipping channel at the entrance to Port Phillip and the approach channels to the port of Melbourne. In particular, I welcome the agreement which the minister was able to reach with the commonwealth government which has been successful in gaining the accreditation of the Victorian environment effects statement process from Environment Australia, the federal environment body responsible.

This is very significant for the proponent and means that the Victorian environment effects statement will

satisfy the requirements of the commonwealth legislation, and will ensure that the environment effects statement process is undertaken as expeditiously as possible. This is good news for everyone involved in this very important project for the future of the port of Melbourne and the Victorian state economy.

These decisions ensure that a balanced assessment of the proposal will be undertaken and that it will consider all of the key economic, social and environmental implications. It fits very well with the Bracks government's commitment to build sustainability into everything it does. The EES will include an extensive consultation program which will provide opportunities for the broader community to contribute to the proposal's assessment.

The Bracks government has a vision for the port of Melbourne and recognises its key role in the economic life of our state. The government is committed to taking the necessary actions to ensure that the port continues to serve the needs of the whole Victorian community and plays an even stronger role in the state's economy into the future.

School buses: Echuca

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I direct a question to the Minister for Education Services and refer her to her frequent trumpeting of the outcome of the government school bus review. If the government's actions are as beneficial to country students as the minister frequently proclaims, why then as recently as 14 May did she refuse to maintain travel assistance to certain students attending schools in Echuca who need to use a New South Wales school bus for part of their journey?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Education Services) — The government has a view with respect to its responsibility to get Victorian students to school. The policy is to assist Victorians to attend Victorian government, and in some cases non-government, schools. It is not for students from other states travelling into this state or vice versa. The government's policy and position is quite clear: we will look after Victorian students who attend Victorian schools.

Supplementary question

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — The minister did not listen to my question, because the students to whom I am referring are constituents of mine from the Picola and Barmah areas, and they need, because of a quirk of geography, to travel into New South Wales to get to an Echuca school. I will give the minister an opportunity to re-answer the question, and I

will also ask a supplementary one. The school bus review accepted that students could access the nearest suitable school, provided they paid the bus fare up to a maximum of \$756. What then is the justification for charging the families that I referred to in my question, who are Victorian families, up to \$1640 simply because geography requires them to travel through New South Wales to get to school?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Education Services) — The policy of the department is that with buses that travel interstate, students are required to pay the full fare that is charged to the department for the service of the bus by the operators. It is for that reason that these students have been charged the full amount.

Information and communications technology: skills program

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — I refer my question to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology. The minister often refers to the Bracks government's programs to enhance young people's information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Can the minister inform the house whether any of these programs also enable young people to gain practical ICT experience?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I thank the honourable member for her question. I have already mentioned in the house that — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not interested in a discussion between the leader on this side and Mr Craige on that side. Just keep quiet and allow the minister to respond to the question that has been put to her!

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — I have already mentioned in the house that Victoria has the largest number of graduates coming out of our tertiary institutions with information and communications technology (ICT) skills — a fact that is good for the sector's future here in Victoria. We also want to ensure that we continue to develop the skills of our young people in ICT. It is important for their own personal futures, and it is also very important for the sector itself.

It is important that we provide that experience not just at a university level but also in our school system. To that end, the Bracks government has instituted the ICT Achievers program, which is a pilot program developed by Multi Media Victoria being run through the Department of Education and Training in 50 schools.

This program introduces 11 new ICT curriculum areas ranging from animation, which is a niche area of development here in Victoria, through to computer graphics and robotics.

This pilot will involve not only the students participating in enterprise training and those skills in ICT but also the professional development of our teachers so they can assist in developing the potential of our students. The participating schools will undertake a 10-week program aimed at developing the students' ICT and entrepreneurial skills and will also look at innovation, applications of ICT, intellectual property and privacy, and commercialisation. The program will be demonstrated later in the year at a range of ICT education and business expo settings.

Among the number of schools that are out there doing things that are a little bit different and also assisting their own communities is Mornington Secondary College, which is working with the Histar Invotek Group to provide the wireless networking facilities for the upcoming edutech conference. It will also provide the help desk facilities for those who will be presenting at the conference. Also, Lorne P-12 College is working with local cottage accommodation businesses to develop new web sites. This is of great benefit to the students who get to work and interact with these local businesses, but it is also great for those businesses who will have access to new and modern web sites and facilities to market their accommodation facilities.

The Ararat Community College is working with the senior community in Ararat to develop a web portal so people can have access to the kinds of services and information that they require to make it easier for them to find out what is going on in their community and what facilities are available to them as seniors. This is another example of students working with the community, firstly to better their skills and secondly to give something back to the community. It is a great example of what can be achieved.

The Bracks government recognises that ICT skills are vitally important to our young people for their own career futures, but it is equally important that — —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Minister for Youth Affairs: adviser

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I direct my question to the Minister for Youth Affairs. I refer the minister to the answer by the Minister for Education in the other place yesterday when she laid responsibility for drug education policy and implementation in Victorian schools at the feet of the Minister for

Education Services, who is also the Minister for Youth Affairs. I ask the minister: is it true that Mr David Henderson, who we know has fulsomely promoted the use of illegal and dangerous drugs in the recent past, recently refused a formal request by the Youth off the Street Foundation to implement a groundbreaking anti-chroming kit into Victorian schools, when every other state and territory in the nation has already embraced the program? Is it true, Minister?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I have been advised that some schools in Victoria have recently received a teaching resource from a New South Wales charitable organisation called Fr Reilly's Youth off the Street Foundation. This organisation has sent this resource to Victorian schools without consultation with the schools or the Department of Education and Training. I am advised that no request was made to the department for approval and no permission was requested to distribute the resource. The department will evaluate the resource to determine its consistency with the government's drug education policy and provide advice to schools accordingly. The department is undertaking that review at the moment.

Supplementary question

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I thank the minister for her answer and point out to her that Fr Chris Reilly has made public statements that contradict completely what the minister has told us here in the chamber today. Fr Reilly has said — actually here in this Parliament building yesterday — that he was directed to Mr David Henderson of the minister's office by the education department to request that this anti-inhalant kit be introduced into Victorian schools, and that he directly refused to do so. Fr Chris Reilly has made that allegation. How does the minister respond to that allegation, and if that is the case why did the minister accept Mr Henderson's advice?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — The honourable member obviously was not listening to my answer when I said that the department was undertaking the review. Contrary to the report contained in the *Australian*, the department has not advised the organisation or any school to date that the resource has been banned. Mr David Henderson spoke to them and advised them to send a copy of that document so the department could review it!

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We have finished that question and we will move on to the next one.

Schools: lifesaving carnival

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — Will the Minister for Education Services inform the house of any Education Week initiatives that provide examples of links between communities and schools?

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Education Services) — As I have informed members of the house, last week was Victorian Education Week, and it was a great success. As part of that week the Royal Life Saving Society held a bronze rescue carnival in both Dandenong and Ballarat, also involving the Victorian youth development program.

More than 300 students from years 9 and 10 competed in this innovative lifesaving carnival. Teams of 25 students from nine metropolitan and four country schools tested their water and land rescue skills. In the process the students developed team-building skills and self-confidence. At the metropolitan event the students were joined by marathon swimming star Tammy van Wisse.

The bronze rescue carnival highlighted the partnerships that 10 secondary colleges have developed with the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, and that is what this government is all about — building partnerships between the community and school organisations.

The carnival was a great showcase for the Victorian youth development program, and this youth development initiative provides a framework for young people to be actively involved in their communities and to direct their own personal development.

Unlike the opposition, the Bracks government understands the vital importance of supporting the community's desire to work together. That is something the opposition does not understand, but the government does, and we are getting on with the job of supporting young people, in contrast to opposition members, who have been doing nothing but fight among themselves. They are divided and they are whining and carping; in contrast, the Bracks government is getting on with building a better society.

Minister for Youth Affairs: adviser

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I refer the Minister for Youth Affairs to her answers to questions without notice yesterday and today when she indicated that Mr David Henderson had her full support and that that support was reinforced by the Premier and her ministerial colleagues, and I ask: does the Premier still support the position of her employment of Mr David Henderson who, as president of the student

union, organised the protest which saw its members engaging in wilful and criminal destruction of property and the traumatising of staff at Melbourne University last year? Does the Premier still support it?

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I support David Henderson, the Premier supports David Henderson and Professor Gilbert supports David Henderson!

Hon. R. M. Hallam — On a point of order, Mr President, members at this end of the chamber had no opportunity at all to hear the question. I ask you to invite the honourable member to repeat it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The honourable member makes a reasonable request. Members at the back of the chamber could not have heard the question because of interjections. The honourable member will repeat the question.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — Thank you, Mr President. I am conscious of the fact that obviously a very sensitive nerve has been touched. I repeat for Mr Hallam my question, which was whether Mr Henderson has the support of the Premier and of the ministerial colleagues of the Minister for Youth Affairs, notwithstanding that as president of the student union he was the one who organised the trashing and the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think we have the flavour of the question.

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I think the honourable member heard my answer, but I will repeat it. I support David Henderson, the Premier supports David Henderson, my ministerial colleagues support David Henderson and Professor Gilbert supports David Henderson, you grub!

Supplementary question

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — Given the minister's response to my primary question, I ask her to elucidate as to whether the Premier and her ministerial colleagues also endorse the suitability of a person who promotes the use of illicit drugs and who organises — —

Hon. M. M. Gould — On a point of order, Mr President, I have answered that question asked by

the honourable member. He is making untrue statements, and I ask him to withdraw.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is no basis on which to require that. The question is clearly a supplementary question. The provisions allow for a supplementary question, and the minister now gets 1 minute to respond to the question, and she can give the response she wishes.

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI — Thank you, Mr President. My primary question related to the support of the Premier for the employment of Mr Henderson. This supplementary question relates to support of the Premier and the ministerial colleagues of the Minister for Youth Affairs of the suitability of Mr Henderson to act as the minister's adviser on youth affairs.

Hon. M. M. GOULD (Minister for Youth Affairs) — This was a better question, but it has been asked and it has been answered. Yes!

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If honourable members have problems with each other, I suggest they leave the room — one from that end and one from this end!

Lawn bowls: funding

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — I ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation to advise the house of what steps he has taken to ensure that Victoria's sporting sector leads the country in terms of developing skills and promoting professional development.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — The Bracks government introduced a policy prior to the previous election of committing \$520 000 over a four-year period to assist with the development of lawn bowls in Victoria. An element of this policy was to promote excellence in greens management throughout Victoria's lawn bowls clubs. I am please to advise the house that I have recently allocated \$30 000 to the Victorian Greenkeepers Association (VGA) to promote excellence in greens management.

The VGA was established early in the 1900s and currently has a membership of 246, the majority of whom are employed in preparing greens for Victorian bowls clubs. Since the Bracks government's commitment, VGA membership has risen from 75 to 246, and professional services are being offered to greenkeepers across Victoria. The VGA has close links

with the Royal Victorian Bowls Association and the Victorian Ladies Bowls Association, and is represented on a joint greens committee that grades and programs greens.

With the government's assistance the VGA intends to develop a number of specific initiatives to promote and encourage excellence in greens management. These include a seminar highlighting new technology in greens management and information on occupational health and safety, the presentation of industry awards to recognise excellence in various aspects of greens management, further improvements of the VGA's communications capacity via newsletter and web site development. I understand it is undertaking research, including investigation of the incidence of nematodes. I am reminded of what nematodes are when I look across the house. If Mr Craigie is not sure what a nematode is, it is a parasitic worm. The identification of and treatment for nematodes will be part of this research. This is undoubtedly a fine example of the Bracks government's commitment to grassroots sport.

MOTIONS TO TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Minister for Youth Affairs: adviser

Hon. C. A. FURLETTI (Templestowe) — I move:

That the Council take note of the answers given by the Minister for Youth Affairs to questions without notice asked by honourable members relating to Mr David Henderson, adviser to the Minister for Youth Affairs.

I note that, as she did yesterday, the Minister for Youth Affairs has fled the chamber at a pace surpassed only by gazelles! It is interesting to note the significance she places on issues which are indeed significant for Victorians.

I start by referring to what honourable members will have read — that is, an editorial in the *Herald Sun* this morning that makes a very simple statement which is at the core of the questions that were asked today. I refer to the public's right to know about Mr Henderson's involvement in youth affairs. This is not about Mr Henderson's employment; it is more significant than that. It is about the government's processes for the employment of people in the very sensitive areas of youth affairs. This is a very significant issue, because if we have one adviser who has this track record then we are entitled to ask whether there are any others hidden away.

It was brought to bear yesterday and reinforced today that we have a situation where, without prompting,

Fr Reilly, who came to address a prayer breakfast at Parliament House yesterday morning, raised the issue of Mr Henderson refusing to allow in Victoria the distribution of the groundbreaking anti-chroming kit distributed by the Youth off the Street Foundation. It was interesting to see the minister's reaction today when she was asked whether she took the same Mr Henderson's advice, the Mr Henderson who, four years ago at the ripe old age of 21 — not a youth, but a 21-year-old, and only four years ago and not 10 — was advocating and promoting not only for fun, as was suggested, the use of illegal drugs, but for political advantage to get himself elected to the National Union of Students, which eventually he was. That is treated by the government as a joke and a prank.

That may be what the government thinks, but the reality is that in gagging Mr Henderson yesterday, the government has cloaked itself in the utmost secrecy — as we have been saying in this place for some time. This government, which signed an agreement with the Independents to be open, transparent and accountable, is clamming up tighter than an oyster, and it will not open. We are seeing now in the other place that finally, after almost three years, the Independents are coming to realise that this government cannot be trusted and that all the deals they have made are falling to pieces.

Only in the last sitting week in this place the fact was raised with the Minister for Energy and Resources that she was not answering questions honestly. Honourable members will recall that I quoted on a number of occasions the Independents charter that was signed. Yesterday and again today we had questions asked about how something like this could happen, and what did the government do? It pulled up the barriers and refused to answer those questions. The minister started screaming down her microphone trying to drown out the question.

I suggest that the minister get onto the telephone later today and scream down the phone to the editor of the *Herald Sun*, because its editorial is saying the government needs to be open and needs to tell the people of Victoria what the circumstances are with this man who, four years ago may have been guilty of immature and inappropriate conduct but last year was the organiser of a group that went to Melbourne University and ransacked the vice-chancellor's office causing over \$100 000 in damage and traumatising university staff. He was at the front of it saying, 'This is only the beginning'. It is in the newspaper, which I am happy to quote. It is shameful and disgusting, and the sooner this government becomes open and honours its charter with the Independents, the better off Victorians will be.

Hon. GAVIN JENNINGS (Melbourne) — Interestingly, when I alleged time and time again during Mr Furletti's contribution that he was lying he did not ask me to withdraw the imputation about what he was saying. He knows he was lying to the Parliament in the questions he asked and in the take-note motion he put to the house today — —

Hon. C. A. Furletti — On a point of order, Mr President, I did hear Mr Jennings say that I was lying to the Parliament and I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. GAVIN JENNINGS — In fact, I know the honourable member was lying, and I will not withdraw that comment.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If in fact inappropriate comments or objectionable comments are made against a member who is present in the chamber and the words pass an objective test that they are offensive and the honourable member objects to them, there is a requirement on me, if I believe it is of that nature, to require the honourable member to withdraw. I have consistently done that to both sides of the house. I ask the honourable member to withdraw the statement he made.

Hon. GAVIN JENNINGS — I appreciate the difficulty that I may be placing you and perhaps the chamber in, Mr President, but the honourable member has brought this upon himself. At this point I find great difficulty in withdrawing.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Can I put it in a different perspective. My suggestion is that, in deference to the Chair, the honourable member withdraws. That has been the requirement and the issue is not debatable; I require that from both sides of the house. When a statement is made I make the request. Clearly the precedent is that words such as, 'You are lying' or 'You are a liar' are objectively offensive. Once objected to I have consistently required those words to be withdrawn without debate, and I make that request now. I suggest you do that as a mark of courtesy to the Chair, if nothing else.

Hon. GAVIN JENNINGS — In deference to the Chair, I withdraw. It is pretty clear to the chamber that that is the only reason why I have withdrawn, because the truth is that the allegations made in the chamber today — that Mr Henderson organised activities at Melbourne University that led to some destruction of property and to some injury — are clearly untrue. On the public record, on the university's web site and in its newsletter the vice-chancellor of the university has congratulated the joining of the student leadership of

the university with the leadership of the university to condemn those actions. Mr Furletti knows that, the chamber knows that and the people of Victoria should know that if they are going to make assessments on the calibre of the individuals concerned.

Yesterday in my contribution I agreed with the proposition that Mr Henderson did a stupid thing in 1998 when he advocated the use of ecstasy. I said clearly on behalf of the government and the minister at the table that the statements made in 1998 were stupid and were totally unacceptable if privately or publicly advocated today. I laid down to the chamber the real test of whether this young man deserves to be employed by the minister — that is, his ability to perform the job, provide advice and satisfy the expectations of his job. That is the measure to use to judge whether he deserves ongoing employment.

Before my contribution to this take-note motion today and in anticipation of the debate I was handed material about an employee of the opposition currently employed within the Parliament. The material dates back some years and is clearly racist, clearly goes beyond sexual innuendo and clearly advocates violence. I was encouraged to name names and put it on the public record. I was encouraged to call for a sacking, but I will not put it on the public record or name names, because I encourage the opposition to get out of the cesspool, to stop this besmirching of the reputations of people for actions they may have taken prior to their employment.

Get out of the cesspool and do not encourage a tit-for-tat activity. Raise your standards. Improve your moral fibre. Get up and make real assessments about what is appropriate administration. Get up and make a proper assessment of whether the minister and her office are delivering on her ministerial responsibilities. Don't play grubby games or make pathetic attempts to drag down an individual for alleged statements made in 1998 that were clearly not illegal but stupid — in fact, absolutely stupid.

What the opposition is calling for in the sacking of this individual is clearly illegal. What you are advocating is illegal because it does not satisfy the equal opportunity and unfair dismissal laws. You are the advocates of illegal behaviour. Your behaviour is reprehensible and I will not engage in similar activities. I will not be reduced to your standards. I will not come before this Parliament and lie in my questions or contributions. I take this place seriously. You are treating this place with contempt because you come in here and you lie and get away with it!

Hon. I. J. COVER (Geelong) — I join this debate following the Honourable Gavin Jennings, who has made another bid to be the Leader of the Government in this place. At least he has stayed here and addressed the motion before the house. Towards the end of his contribution he said, 'I take this place seriously'. It is a shame on you and the government that your ministers do not take this place seriously. This is a serious debate that has been going on in this place for two days and on both days the minister responsible has fled the chamber at the start of the take-note motion.

Many serious matters have been raised in take-note motions in this place. I put it to the house that this is the most serious and it is echoed by the *Herald Sun* in its editorial today when it refers to the accountability and openness of the government, particularly the minister. I challenge Mr Jennings, as the quasi Leader of the Government, to get your minister in here to contribute to the debate. If we are to judge the suitability of Mr Henderson's performance and get further views it is important that she is here to contribute to the debate.

I further put to this place that you cannot take seriously Mr Jennings's claim that he takes this place seriously. I have been here since 1996 and for the three and a half years the opposition were sitting on the other side of the house I could not imagine ministers of the calibre of the Honourable Mark Birrell, the Honourable Robert Knowles, the Honourable Roger Hallam, the Honourable Geoff Craige and the Honourable Louise Asher ever leaving the chamber and not facing any challenge given to them by the opposition. They stood up and responded to every challenge. The hypocrisy of the Labor government now that it is on that side of the house is appalling and a disgrace.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation goes on ad nauseam about how much the government cares. He says, 'We care; you don't'. If you care so much, get your ministers in here not just today but every day there is a take-note motion to address the issues the opposition is raising on behalf of the people of Victoria. It has been picked up by the *Herald Sun* this morning. Mr Furletti challenged the minister to get on the phone to the editor of the *Herald Sun*. Today's editorial states:

The only joke here is the government's handling of this issue and its glaring failure to live up to lofty pledges of openness and accountability.

It starts right here in this place, during the motion to take note on this very important issue. The *Herald Sun* editorial also states:

Youth affairs minister Monica Gould said yesterday that David Henderson's call for students to try ecstasy and amphetamines was just a silly Melbourne University prank.

It then states:

Wrong, Ms Gould.

The people of Victoria are saying, 'Not happy, Minister'. They are not happy with the appointment process and the lack of openness and accountability in this place about the process. In the past two days the issue has been raised in this place and through the media exposing the lack of process of the government and its claim to be open and accountable.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. I. J. COVER — I am talking about the government and the minister and the lack of process and accountability and openness. Furthermore, Mr Jennings might also get on the phone to the editor of the *Herald Sun* because he told us it is illegal to call for the sacking of the adviser. He had better also tell the editorial writer, who states:

Mr Bracks, ditch Ms Gould's paid youth adviser and take this free youth affairs advice: don't treat voters like children.

The government says it takes this place seriously, yet it is treating this place and the people of Victoria like children and it stands condemned for its behaviour in this matter and for not addressing the issues during the debate on the motion to take note.

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — Again I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to the debate. Again we see the opposition members doing nothing but fighting and squabbling among themselves, when they are totally divided. They could not even get this story right. Is it Mr Olexander's story? Was he going to run with it, or was it Mr Cover's? Yesterday that was one of the biggest things happening on the opposite side of the chamber.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA — They are trying to run this story when the minister has already answered the question, about the statements made by David Henderson when he was a university student. He believed that they were foolish and they were done in a tongue-in-cheek way, which has already been pointed out. The opposition saying that he should be sacked is ludicrous. It is ridiculous to say that on the basis of something somebody did four years ago, statements they made at university when they were running for student council elections — comments made in a tongue-in-cheek way — somebody should be dismissed from their employment. That is not the way it operates;

it is not the way it works. It may be the way the opposition hires and fires people but it is not the way that people should be hired and fired. Employment should be about how people do their job and whether it is being done competently and properly. The fact that some years previously somebody made statements as a student is no reason to deny them employment today.

The opposition goes on about the statements made about drugs. Yesterday in my contribution I compared and contrasted the opposition policies and activities in drug and alcohol services when it was in government and this government's attitude to drug and alcohol services. I pointed out that the opposition when in government was on about closing services such as the Smith Street clinic and Pleasant View clinic — the nurses in those services and other alcohol and drug services across the state were simply given voluntary departure packages and left the system. The opposition parties when in government had that sort of attitude to alcohol and drug services, but since our election this government has substantially increased youth alcohol and drug treatment services, including very important home-based withdrawal services, outreach workers and rehabilitation and accommodation services.

I want to quickly outline some of those because the government believes these activities and services, such as specialist alcohol and drug services and facilities, are very important in addressing the drug and alcohol problems of young people. The government has spent \$1 million on local community projects aimed at young offenders and victims of child abuse as well as young people at risk; established a prevention research project; set up an inhalant issues forum; and developed protocols and guidelines. It is these sorts of programs that clearly demonstrate our government's attitude to alcohol and drug services and the importance that we place on ensuring that we do everything we can to look after young people, unlike the opposition when it was in government.

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I rise to participate in this debate with some regret that the debate is necessary in the first place. The big question here is: what do you have to do in the Bracks government to have your hands on the policy levers in youth affairs? The answer is: all you have to do is have the support of the minister, the Honourable Monica Gould. You can advocate the widespread use of illegal and illicit drugs to thousands of students forcefully and repeatedly, and all you have to say is, 'I didn't really mean it; I was just young and silly at the time'.

What else do you have to do to keep your hands on the levers of youth affairs in this state? You can organise a protest where bolt cutters, crowbars and axes are taken along and where 74 or 75 students are arrested for wilful damage; you can terrorise the staff at the University of Melbourne and you can destroy property and all you have to say is, 'Sorry about that, but I have the support of my minister. Therefore, that's okay — because I will still keep my hands on the policy levers in youth affairs in Victoria'. In today's Bracks government you just have to say you did not mean it; that you are sorry about the wilful damage and the staff that had to undergo trauma counselling because they feared for their safety; that you are sorry about more than \$100 000 worth of damage, and about 75 young people facing court.

One thing is very clear: the Bracks government's wagons are circled around Mr Henderson and they will not let anyone near him. They have decided to dig in and back this fellow. They will not let the media talk to him; they will not let him talk to the media. They will not let anyone scrutinise his activities. There is a very good reason for that. His advice and presence in the minister's office goes directly to the credibility of the Leader of the Government in this place. She is backing him, the Premier is backing him, the ministers are backing him, and the wagons are circled around him. What they do not understand is that the public mood about this is shifting. If there is one thing that can shift the wagons it is public attitudes, and public attitudes are changing.

Everybody agrees that this government's administration of youth affairs policy in this state has become an absolute joke. However, in the minister's eyes everybody else is wrong and she is right, the Premier is right, all the ministers are right, having the wagons circling around Mr Henderson is right, and Mr Henderson is right, too. The youth community is wrong, youth organisations are wrong, student organisations are wrong, the opposition is wrong, and Fr Chris Riley is wrong — everybody else is wrong, but the Bracks government is right. The government should get a mirror and look into it, and then it will see what everyone else sees: that it is wrong on this issue.

This goes to the credibility of the standard and level of advice being received on youth affairs in this state. The government is dragging the credibility of that issue into the gutter. Nobody else is doing it. The government has not been able to show the leadership required in this situation. In this situation 'Sorry' is not good enough; 'I didn't really mean it' is not good enough. To control the levers of youth policy in Victoria some leadership needs to be shown.

It is unfortunate that the minister has walked out of this chamber yet again. However, it is unfortunately typical of this government's approach. The government has to decide: is it governing in the best interests of young Victorians, or in the interests of its union mates and Mr David Henderson?

Motion agreed to.

Schools buses: Echuca

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I move:

That the Council take note of the answer given by the Minister for Education Services to a question without notice asked by the Honourable W. R. Baxter relating to school bus services.

I am thoroughly disappointed that the minister is not in the chamber. Today the five questions from the opposition and the third party were all directed to the Leader of the Government. I am confident in saying that there would not be another Parliament in the British commonwealth where a minister — not just an ordinary minister but the Leader of the Government — who has questions directed to her, and then take-note motions on her answers debated, does not stay in the chamber to defend her answers and her government.

On many occasions the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has seminar and conference topics that go to the issues of parliamentary democracy and accountability of the executive. It is quite likely that the actions of this government since the sessional orders were changed in this chamber may well become a subject of discussion at a future CPA conference, because I think delegates from around the world would find it quite extraordinary that a minister would not remain in the chamber to be accountable in the very way that the Westminster system of parliamentary government is designed to operate.

I was also thoroughly disappointed with the minister's answer to my question. Firstly, it is hardly likely she misunderstood what I said in assuming that I was referring to New South Wales students; and secondly, if she did believe that I am thoroughly disappointed that she would think I would be advocating the expenditure of Victorian taxpayers' money on New South Wales students. Of course I would not be doing that.

I also find it extraordinary that she had no recollection of signing only 16 days ago a letter to my colleague, the honourable member for Rodney in the other place, which went to this very subject and where she refused, despite the recommendations of the school bus review committee, to maintain assistance to those students who, by a quirk of geography and the meanderings of

the Murray River, cross from Victoria into New South Wales and then back into Victoria to travel to appropriate schools in Echuca. It seems extraordinary to me that this government, which claims to look after country Victoria, would deny these people equity and a fair go simply because the meanderings of the Murray River dictate that that is the way they must get to school.

The stupidity of all this is that the minister stated in her letter that they could go at the \$756 rate — and I point out that the parents have no objection to paying the \$756; what they object to is paying \$1640 — if they got on another bus and went in the reverse direction to where they want to go: into Nathalia, change buses, and then travel an even longer distance into Echuca. They could do that for \$756. The oddity is that that sends them off in the wrong direction and means the students are on the bus for 1 hour longer each day than they need to be. The irony of it all is that they change buses at the front gate of Nathalia Secondary College. What stupidity to say, ‘Yes, you can go via another school for \$756, but if you go direct to the school you want to get to, and the school we have acknowledged you are entitled to attend, we will charge you \$1640 for no other reason than you happen to cross the border into New South Wales and then come back into Victoria’. Where is the logic in that? That is the sort of government we have in this state —

Hon. M. R. Thomson — Was it any different under you?

Hon. W. R. BAXTER — In answer to the minister’s interjection, yes, it is vastly different to other times. Here we have this extraordinary claim by the minister that the school bus review has done so much for country children and has been a great breakthrough. But this is the oddity that is thrown up by a minister who is clearly not on top of her portfolio: she cannot recall the letter she signed in the last fortnight, but she wants to go off on a tangent and suggest that I do not know what I am talking about. The opposite is directly true: this minister is clearly out of her depth, as we have seen today in answers to all her questions. It is time she went, and it is certainly time that she ceased to be the Leader of the Government.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I have answers to questions 2546, 2787,

2788, 2794, 2830–6, 2884–7, 2890, 2891, 2902, 2903, 2920.

LAW REFORM COMMITTEE

Entry, search, seizure and questioning powers

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) presented report, together with appendices and minutes of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report and appendices be printed.

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

The Law Reform Committee is a bipartisan committee, which has looked at the powers of inspectors in over 120 Victorian acts over the last 12 months since the reference was given to it by the Premier on 18 April, 2001. The committee found an enormous variety and, indeed, inconsistency in the way powers were described and applied, and it has recommended a set of basic principles that should apply to the powers of inspectors.

The Law Reform Committee said that the starting point should be that restrictions on civil liberties and individual and commercial activities should be as limited as possible. It has recommended that great restraint should be exercised in giving inspectors powers, especially private inspectors. It also found that there were too few provisions in current acts to safeguard citizens’ rights and ensure transparency and accountability. The committee also found that more work needs to be done on the selection and training of inspectors and creating complaints mechanisms and consistent standards between enforcement agencies.

The most contentious issue dealt with by the committee was that of the powers of transport inspectors on the now privatised transport system. It found that the key issue was to reform the ticketing system so that it operated to make the use of the powers of detention and arrest by private inspectors a rarity, rather than a common occurrence. While supporting the powers of inspectors to ensure the integrity of the public transport system, the committee recommended that significant additional safeguards be imposed on the use of their powers. The safeguards recommended include amendments to the Transport Act 1983 to clearly delineate when the powers can be used, significant additional mandatory training of inspectors and the establishment of a separate public transport unit within the Victorian Ombudsman’s Office.

The Law Reform Committee made some 82 recommendations; it looked at over 120 Victorian acts of Parliament and received and considered 33 submissions and 43 final submissions and heard evidence from 63 witnesses. I wish to thank and acknowledge the tremendous support of Hansard staff with this investigation over the last 12 months. I also want to thank and acknowledge the dedication and hard work of our executive officer, Merrin Mason; our research officer, Kirsten Giles; our research assistant, Janey Tootell; and our office manager, Jaime Cook. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General —

Report on Investment attraction and facilitation in Victoria, May 2002.

Report on Nurse work force planning, May 2002.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — Code of Practice for the Welfare of Rodeo and Rodeo School Livestock.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Minister's exception certificates under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rules Nos. 33 to 35.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE FRANKSTON CENTRAL ACTIVITY DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT

Report

**Debate resumed from 19 March; motion of
Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley):**

That the Council take note of the report.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN (Chelsea) — I would rather not have had the opportunity to participate in a debate such as this because this is yet another sorry instalment in the misguided and philosophically confusing attitudes and strange actions of the Australian Labor Party and its blatant interference in democratic processes.

It is a tragic day for Frankston. What should have happened was that through the actions of the Frankston City Council to try to ensure that transparency and probity were the utmost concern, there should have been closure on this very important issue. This development should have proceeded in the best

interests of all members of the Frankston community without interference, without interruption and without the sorry, sordid circumstances that have evolved since this whole inquiry and this whole sham started.

This yet again confirms how the Australian Labor Party bases itself on the politics of envy, of class and of division simply because all that its members want to achieve is their own political survival. They have little interest in community outcomes and little interest in what the community really wants. Their sole and terrible interest is only in themselves and their own political capital.

We remember when the select committee was established the debate in this place. Allegations of 'It is a sham'; 'It is a Star Chamber'; 'It is a kangaroo court'; and 'It is a witch-hunt', were flying around, being made without any hesitation from members of the government. They deliberately tried to slam this process because they knew that one of their own was about to get caught. These circumstances and the story are being told, and clearly that process has not only been vindicated but endorsed.

On Wednesday, 17 October 2001 the Minister for Local Government, Bob Cameron, issued a press release headed, 'Minister hits out at kangaroo court'. It states that:

The Minister for Local Government, Bob Cameron, has slammed the state opposition for its attempt to instigate a politically inspired inquiry into a tender process at Frankston City Council.

Is it not wonderful how words come back to haunt you? The press release of the minister issued on 28 May confirms that there is a prima facie case for a proceeding to be brought against Cr Mark Conroy for a breach of the Local Government Act.

Have we heard anything from the Minister for Local Government, Bob Cameron, subsequent to that press release? Has he apologised to this house for calling the opposition inquiry a sham and a kangaroo court? Has he apologised to the people of Frankston who were being represented by the Liberal Party and the National Party to try to find the truth of what happened? No, he has not, because the government cannot face the reality that its own people have been caught — prominent members of the Australian Labor Party: the honourable member for Frankston East, Mr Matthew Viney; and the former mayor of the City of Frankston, Cr Mark Conroy.

I refer to the honourable member for Frankston East's maiden speech in the other place on 9 November 1999, in which he stated:

The Labor view is that the role of government is to support and strengthen community institutions, services and structures, so that individual community members can grow, develop their potential and prosper. I am passionately committed to that view.

He also said:

In my time in the house I hope to contribute to the strengthening of our community and to deliver good government for the people of Frankston East and Victoria so that they may grow and develop their enormous potential and may prosper in all ways.

Once again, it is remarkable how words come back to haunt you. If this fraud of a politician were genuinely committed to the sentiments he outlined in his maiden speech, he would not have intervened in this tragic situation.

I place on the record the *Macquarie Dictionary* definition of 'bribery' and 'corruption'. 'Bribery' is:

the act or practice of giving or accepting bribes.

And 'bribe' is defined as:

any valuable consideration given or promised for corrupt behaviour in the performance of official or public duty.

'Corrupt' is defined as:

dishonest; without integrity; guilty of dishonesty, especially involving bribery.

If we take the literal interpretation of those definitions then Mark Conroy and Matt Viney are guilty. They are guilty because this investigation — —

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — On a point of order, Mr President, the honourable member has just accused a member of the other house of bribery. I take great exception to that accusation and ask him to withdraw.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — On the point of order, Mr President, that is why I have gone through the process of giving a definition of 'bribery'. I will give that definition again for the honourable member's edification:

any valuable consideration given or promised for corrupt behaviour in the performance of official or public duty.

The honourable member is being premature in regard to my contribution on this issue because I am clearly going to outline circumstances which give strong weight and consideration to why the two people I have named are in fact guilty — —

Hon. Jenny Mikakos interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The position in relation to this matter is that the rules in relation to comments about members of another house are clear and consistent. An allegation against a member of another house that they could or may be guilty of corruption is clearly beyond the pale of a motion like this, which is a motion to take note of a report. If the report referred to corruption then that would be appropriate. In this case the report I gather does not refer to corruption by that particular person and therefore the honourable member is not allowed to go down that path.

If he wanted to make such an allegation against a member of another house it would be by substantive motion. I suggest that the honourable member move on and withdraw the allegation he made in relation to Mr Viney.

Hon. B. C. BOARDMAN — I withdraw, and I thank you for your ruling, Sir.

I will continue along the same lines and quote from the report by Mr Chris Wren and Mr Kelvin Goodall in relation to this issue presented subsequent to the select committee report that was tabled in this place earlier this week. In paragraph 34 at page 15 reference is made to a file note that was printed in August 2000 where the Gandel Corporation noted the endorsement of Mark Conroy as the Labor candidate for the federal seat of Dunkley, and it states:

The significance of this is that Conroy is operating to ensure that everything has politically beneficial results. Thus he takes no risks unless he sees it as an advantage to his political career.

It goes on to say:

Conroy's 'delivery list' includes a new aquatic centre likely to be built on Sherlock Reserve, not far from the CAD.

If I go back to my interpretation of the definition I have quoted from the *Macquarie Dictionary*, it does not mention that there has to be a pecuniary benefit for a person to be corrupt or to accept bribes. I offer that by way of consideration.

Moving on, the relationship between Mark Conroy and Matt Viney was pivotal to this whole circumstance because Mark Conroy was elected as a councillor in March 1997 and Matt Viney, prior to his election in 1999 to the other place, had an extensive history in working in local government, particularly in the then Hastings shire. You would have thought that these people would have had an understanding of the Local

Government Act: its involvement, its responsibilities and what the rules and regulations were for these people to operate in their various offices. Nonetheless, that aside, they have still deliberately misinterpreted their roles and responsibilities to go down a path which unfortunately has developed to the situation we have today.

I always thought that Mark Conroy was bad news. The day he was elected he was elected on a false premise, one which I have continually questioned over the past two years. It is fortunate that that continued questioning resulted in Mark Conroy being unsuccessful in his quest for election to the seat of Dunkley. It is interesting that the company I have referred to, Gandel, was taking specific note of Mark Conroy. It is extraordinary that the mayor of the council, someone who by virtue of his position is supposed to be at arm's length from these types of processes, was constantly being referred to by the Gandel Corporation in case notes, in discussions and communications between the Gandel board and the Gandel Trust.

It is confirmed on page 16 of Mr Wren's report where yet another internal meeting note of May 2001 states that:

Mayor Conroy's concern over Dunkley was seen as a risk, with the regional aquatic centre being his priority.

This is the situation: we had a mayor and a councillor who was fixated on his political career. He was besotted by his own personal ambition. All he wanted to do was to try to implement projects and obtain some form of result that was beneficial to himself, to the complete exclusion of the community. That is why Gandels went down this path of deliberately trying to negotiate with this person on a one-on-one basis, even extending that negotiation and that involvement to the employment of Mr Rogan Ward, someone who has a long and detailed history with Mark Conroy, to try and overcome some of these issues. They knew that Mark Conroy was bad news. They knew he could not be trusted. They knew, because of the vulnerability of his situation, because his ambition was blind and he was totally and utterly fixated on one outcome — election to the seat of Dunkley — that they had to pay him special attention. That is why this situation evolved.

That is why it led to a change in the Gandel bid. That is why it led to information being passed to Gandels, where it quite clearly should not have been. That is why it led to Mark Conroy tipping off the *Independent* newspaper. That is why it led to Mark Conroy having extraordinary levels of conversations, by way of phone, facsimile and other means of communication, with Matt Viney and Rogan Ward to tell them exactly what

was going on in an internal, confidential way which clearly and utterly is illegal. That is why this brief that the government has announced on Tuesday will proceed and why Mark Conroy will be found guilty.

In the short time I have available I want to quote Mark Conroy, because this quite clearly needs to go on the record. In the *Frankston Leader* of 25 March 2002 under the heading 'Inquiry clears me: Conroy', he stated last Wednesday that he had been cleared of what he called:

'slandorous allegations, despite the committee still "smearing" his reputation under parliamentary privilege'.

The article further states:

He said he had been the victim of a political witch-hunt.

This is what he said on ABC Radio yesterday to Kate Arnott:

If you can't go and talk to a local member of Parliament about a very, very important local project — then I mean what's his job — what's my job — and if hasn't done anything wrong, and he hasn't, then how could've I done something wrong.

Mark Conroy now admits that he broke the law, and he is guilty.

Hon. G. D. ROMANES (Melbourne) — The Honourable Cameron Boardman's contribution has demonstrated overwhelmingly once more that the government's view of the select committee on the Frankston CAD development, which was stated by the Honourable Gavin Jennings, the Deputy Leader of the Government, on 19 March in a previous debate, was that this was a tawdry exercise of the select committee in the lead-up to the federal election.

The comments of the Honourable Gavin Jennings on that occasion were:

The net worth of the select committee's consideration is its finding that it is likely there was a breach of protocol and probity issues in relation to matters that were reported in the press in the Frankston area on 2 October. In its summary of the select committee's findings and recommendations the committee was unable to shed any light on where, when and how those breaches occurred.

As we all know — those who have read the report of the select committee — the committee found that there was a need for further investigation by the Office of Local Government into the alleged breach of section 77 of the Local Government Act. That was an offer made by the Minister for Local Government previously that was not taken up by the opposition.

What has happened in the last few days is that we have had the tabling of the report of the municipal inspectors

who were appointed by the Minister for Local Government to undertake the investigation that was recommended by the select committee.

The independent report of the municipal inspectors throws into stark relief the inadequacies and the political bias of the select committee. It is interesting that there are significant findings in the Wren committee report that are contrary to the upper house findings. If we look, for example, at the select committee's assessment of the process — that the process was okay — and if we look then at the Wren committee's assessment of the process, it makes it very clear that the bidders themselves found something wrong with the process.

In part 26 on page 13 it states:

One of the difficulties the working party found during the course of the process was that it had to be reactive rather than proactive in order to satisfy the requirements of the probity process. That process seems to have constrained a free flow of communication and gave rise to a considerable amount of second-guessing. For instance, if one party requested information from the working party, it felt constrained to make that information available to the other party but without indicating why it was doing so. That gave rise to conjecture on the part of the receiving party about whether it was being given a message that it should therefore respond to in some way within its bid.

So the bidders themselves found the process complex, lengthy, difficult and costly.

The other issue which is central to the reason these committees came into being was the issue of the tip-off. That goes to the heart of the matter because it was back in the spring session of Parliament that a member from the other place, the honourable member for Cranbourne, alleged in the Parliament that Cr Conroy, the mayor of Frankston, had made a telephone call on a mobile phone that tipped off Gandels and that Gandels increased its bid by \$5 million at that point.

There are findings in the Wren committee report which throw interesting light on this. If we look at page 43 of the Wren committee report, section 120, the committee concludes that:

In the circumstances, notwithstanding McClelland's observations, I am satisfied that there was no tip-off phone call made to Gandels that gave rise to McNamara's subsequent call to Kerr.

The select committee had found that Mark Conroy probably tipped off Gandels in a phone call. The Wren committee found the opposite. It was not satisfied, and there were no mobile phone records to substantiate the allegations. Furthermore, in sections 118 and 119 there is further information which throws light on that

conclusion of the Wren committee. I quote from section 118 on page 43 of the report:

Another factor to be considered is the level of detail and insight that Conroy would have had into the critical aspects of scoring at the time the tip-off phone call was allegedly made. It was not until after 4.30 that the Excel spreadsheet component of the briefing occurred at which stage Conroy may have appreciated the scoring significance of Gandels failing to execute the contract and requiring the 90-day assessment condition.

I quote from section 119:

A further factor to remember is that by the time the alleged tip-off phone call was made, the Gandel group board meeting had concluded and the holidaying directors were in the air having already discussed the execution of the contract and whether it would or would not retain the condition. As stated previously the Gandels personnel all deny receiving any tip-off.

It is there in black and white that the board that was supposed to have been tipped off at that point were in the air flying to Queensland on holiday.

There is another very important point that needs to be made. In the upper house select committee inquiry it is reported that Cr Fuller, an opponent of Cr Conroy, gave evidence that she had written a note in a diary observing Cr Conroy's conduct in the working party meeting on the day when he was supposed to have made that tip-off.

Cr Fuller made the comment in her diary that Mark Conroy was blatantly biased, and with encouragement from the chairman, went on to add the word 'corrupt'. That is what has been used in the local paper to destroy Mark Conroy's federal campaign for Dunkley.

Pages 34 and 35 of the Wren committee report show a very different perspective on Cr Fuller's diary note. Section 97 of the report says:

Fuller said 'initially some of the questioning I thought was actually good, but as it went on he just — I felt he was almost debating and that's when I thought he was way overstepping the mark, he was actually showing preference ...'. She recorded in her diary 'MC blatantly bias — corrupt'. She explained to me that the use of the word 'corrupt' meant he was corrupting the process. She felt he was corrupting the process by his behaviour in that he wasn't allowing the viewpoint from the consultant to be different from his, he was arguing with them all the time. She felt he was trying to impose on others his viewpoint. She did not mean he was personally corrupt.

Investigator Wren concluded that the evidence does not suggest that there was a tip-off being made to the prospective tenderer Gandels or that there was a bribe. The government therefore confirms its view that the appointment of the select committee has been a

political witch-hunt in the middle of a political campaign. The Wren committee, which was requested to undertake further investigations by the select committee, found no corruption, no bribes and no tip-offs to prospective tenderers. The select committee has been a waste of time and taxpayers' money and a slur on the reputation of this house.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I am pleased to join the debate on the select committee's report into the Frankston central activity district development report.

Today I want to talk about the process rather than the content of the report because in this sort of activity the process is important as well. It is particularly relevant now to add to the debate, given that the report from the municipal inspectors, Mr Chris Wren and Mr Kelvin Goodall, in respect of the same matter was tabled in this house earlier this week.

In talking about process, it is instructive to look at a chronology of important dates associated with this matter. They start back on 17 October 2001 when this chamber appointed a select committee to inquire into the Frankston central activity district development. On 19 March the select committee reported to the Parliament, on 26 March the Minister for Local Government appointed municipal inspectors to look into the matter, and on 28 May — earlier this week — the inspectors' report was presented to Parliament.

Going back to 17 October when this chamber voted to appoint a select committee, as part of that debate — and it is very clear if people go back and read the debate on that day — there was an offer on the table from the opposition which said that if the minister was prepared to appoint a municipal inspector, then it would not proceed to appoint a select committee of the upper house. That was a very clear commitment, and if honourable members go back and read the Honourable Bill Forwood's contribution on 17 October, they will see it is there in black and white — the offer was on the table.

As events turned out, the offer was refused by the government — there was no agreement at all — and the select committee was appointed and undertook its work. History also tells us that there was no participation by the Labor Party in that committee. Despite having the opportunity to appoint two members to that committee, it did not accept the invitation.

Following the publication of the select committee's report on 19 March — surprise, surprise! — exactly one week later, on 26 March, the Minister for Local Government appointed a municipal inspector. Is it just

coincidence that a week after the tabling of the select committee's report, the minister suddenly changed his mind and suggested that it might be a good idea to appoint a municipal inspector? He made that decision on 26 March. Why has he changed his mind since 17 October? There is only one explanation, and that is that the work of the select committee and its report justified a further investigation by the government itself. It realised that it should have done it way back in October. The work of the select committee in encouraging action on the part of the government has been vindicated.

For goodness' sake, if the minister had had that view back on 17 October, a great deal of time could have been saved. I do not know how many hours of work the Honourable Andrew Brideson put in as chairman of that committee, but I would think it was a great deal. As a diligent member of the committee, the Honourable Geoff Craige also put in a lot of time. I know my colleague the Honourable Roger Hallam put an extensive amount of time into it, and we know that he undertakes his work responsibly, diligently and seriously. The secretary of the committee, Matthew Tricarico; research officer Sarah Davey and all of those people could have been saved a great deal of time had the Minister for Local Government made the decision to appoint a municipal inspector way back on 17 October. Parliament could have been saved the expense of the committee — and there would be considerable expense in having all of the public hearings recorded and reported and then ultimately reports published.

All that could have been saved because there was an offer on the table from day one that this select committee, appointed by the upper house, would not proceed if the minister had agreed to appoint a municipal inspector back on 17 October.

As I said before, the fact that eventually municipal inspectors were appointed to investigate the matter vindicates the decision of this chamber to appoint a select committee to inquire into the matter.

I will refer to a couple of remarks made by the Honourable Glenyys Romanes, because she described the select committee report and process first as being a tawdry exercise and then as a political witch-hunt. It seems to me there is a great contradiction in that, because I ask myself: what was different between the inquiry of the select committee and that of the government's own appointed municipal inspectors? There was no difference! They were inquiring into exactly the same things, so if the select committee was a political witch-hunt, we should be describing the

municipal inspectors' inquiry as a political witch-hunt as well because they were undertaking exactly the same exercise. There is a complete contradiction there. What is the difference between the Parliament appointing an inspection process and the minister appointing an inspection process? There is no difference whatsoever.

The Honourable Glenyys Romanes said there was a difference in the reports. I have read both reports and I have them in front of me, and I reckon there is a great deal of commonality between the two reports, both in their content and even in some of their terminology.

Hon. Andrew Brideson interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — As the Honourable Andrew Brideson said, they have come to the same conclusions. What is the significant difference? I do not believe there is any significant difference at all. The outcomes have a great deal in common — in fact, the outcomes of both inquiries are almost identical. To suggest that one is a political witch-hunt and the other is a valid process undertaken by a municipal inspector just does not make sense. There is no validity in coming to that conclusion.

Hon. Andrew Brideson — And Wren repeated pages and pages of the report.

Hon. P. R. HALL — The Honourable Andrew Brideson agrees with my comment that there is even a lot of commonality in content between the two reports — and so there should be, because that proves that the select committee appointed by this upper house did its job properly and did it well.

I will say in conclusion that an important function of the Legislative Council of this Parliament is the ability to appoint such committees to inquire into matters of public importance. Long live the Legislative Council!

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE (Central Highlands) — The report by Chris Wren and Kelvin Goodall states on page 59 in paragraph 174:

I therefore consider Cr Conroy has released confidential details provided to him during the course of the working party's briefing to Matt Viney and Rogan Ward in breach of section 77(2) of the Local Government Act 1989.

It is signed by C. J. Wren, Inspector of Municipal Administration.

It is difficult to understand, given this statement of a guilty verdict on Cr Conroy, that Matt Viney and Rogan Ward were not cited for their total involvement in this process. There is no doubt in the minds of the people of Frankston and Victoria that as guilty as Conroy is, so are Rogan Ward — the bagman in this

little exercise — and Matt Viney, the honourable member for Frankston East in the other place.

The Bracks Labor government branded the Legislative Council select committee a witch-hunt and claimed that no evidence of wrongdoing had been presented. What have I just read from paragraph 174 at page 59 of this document? Is that not evidence — —

Hon. M. R. Thomson — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, the house has just had an incident in which the Honourable Cameron Boardman had to withdraw in relation to declaring a member of another place guilty of something, and I suggest that this member does the same.

Hon. K. M. Smith — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, no allegations have been made by Mr Craige in regard to this issue. Mr Craige said that Mr Conroy was most certainly guilty of corruption, but he did not say — —

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, I did not say he was guilty of that.

Hon. K. M. Smith — From that point of view there is no point of order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! On the point of order, I have listened as carefully as I can to the debate, which is obviously my job here. I do not believe any serious allegations have been made at this stage. I rule that there is no point of order and ask Mr Craige to continue.

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — Read the *Hansard* report!

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — The government claimed that there was no evidence of wrongdoing. Do not read *Hansard*; read paragraph 174 on page 59 of the inspectors' report: guilty, Your Honour! Conroy is guilty, according to this independent report, which says that he breached the Local Government Act.

What else did the Bracks Labor government say about the select committee? It said it was a kangaroo court and a Star Chamber, against a private citizen. It went on to say it was a fishing expedition, a political stunt, and — importantly — a tawdry exercise. It said when it was established it was a tawdry, sorry day in the history of the Parliament. It also said that the inquiry had no purpose other than as a Star Chamber.

It is now time for government members in this chamber to stand up and admit they were wrong. They were wrong in every single way, and the government's

independent report clearly illustrates and demonstrates the guilt and delivers a guilty verdict. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that there is a guilty verdict handed down in this report.

I will add some more weight to this independent report and to the argument for how important the select committee was. As the Honourable Roger Hallam said, this select committee did not even need to be appointed but because of the tardiness of the Minister for Local Government and the tardiness of the Bracks Labor government — the kings and queens of cover-up in this state did not do anything — we appointed a select committee.

The government's independent report relies heavily on the select committee report and it relies heavily on its evidence. If we turn to page 6 of the inspectors' report one cannot help but have a smile upon one's face, because in paragraph 19 this independent inspectors' report states:

The select committee report provides a useful summary of events between November and March 2001 which, at the risk of plagiarism, I adopt ...

Over 50 per cent of this report contains evidence from the select committee!

Hon. B. C. Boardman interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!
Mr Boardman!

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — The government refers to the committee as a Star Chamber, a kangaroo court, a tawdry affair, a political stunt, yet your report — —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Craige will address his remarks through the Chair.

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — The government's independent report relies extensively on what the select committee did and on the select committee report.

The ALP spin doctors were certainly at work when this report was handed down. The *Herald Sun* of 29 May features the headline 'Labor MP cleared by report on land deal'. I say in this chamber that I support the statement made yesterday by the honourable member for Mildura in the other place, Russell Savage, that he did not believe the report went far enough. The terms of reference of the inspectors' inquiry were written in such a way that a statement would be made only about Cr Conroy, yet if you read their report you find the stench of the involvement of Rogan Ward and Matt Viney goes right through it and the report has their fingerprints on it from front to back.

The inquiries by the two local government municipal inspectors and the select committee dealt with the issue of confidential information leaving council and getting into the hands of a third party and the newspapers. Confidential information was used inappropriately, and that is what this report is all about. If honourable members look at pages 15 and 16 of the inspectors' report they will see how the plot unfolded. The honourable member for Frankston East in the other place, Matt Viney, encouraged the release of that information. According to paragraphs 33 and 35 on pages 15 and 16 of the report, Viney spent a lot of time advising Conroy on how to position himself to have the best political advantage throughout 2001.

The relationship between Conroy and Viney is important in the context of the investigation. Conroy regarded Viney as a mentor and a confidant and described their relationship as a fairly close one politically and personally. I put to this chamber that in fact the release of this information was encouraged by Matt Viney. Mark Conroy used Matt Viney's office regularly and used the equipment — this report says it. He had a key to the door and he was in and out of there all the time.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — So what?

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — There's no relationship? 'So what?', we hear. There was very important confidential material being discussed, and if one looks at the evidence of the phone calls and goes to page 62 of the report, one cannot help but reach a conclusion that there was a very close relationship between Matt Viney and Conroy and a number of phone calls. Most of us would not make that number of phone calls to our best friends on a given day, so there had to be something going on. When I look at page 62, for 28 September, I have a question for the two inspectors of municipal administration: why is the phone call from Conroy's mobile phone to the electorate office of the Premier not listed? A phone call was made at 1305 — and for those who do not know, that is 1.05 p.m. — but it is not listed in the report!

I go on to page 63, and there is a factual error in this report: the investigators mucked up some of the phone calls. In fact on 2 October they listed two phone calls, at 2.34 p.m. and 2.54 p.m., as Ward to Conroy and Ward to Conroy. Wrong! It should have read Conroy to Viney and Conroy to Viney. They were wrong again.

There is no doubt that this whole thing smells, and Matt Viney and the bagman for the ALP and for Conroy and Viney, Rogan Ward, were involved in this up to their necks. Bribery is not always about money; it can also

be about political capital. and there is no doubt that the political capital that was offered to Conroy and to Viney was extensive. It was not bribery in money terms — not brown paper bags — but the political capital, the advantage politically, that they could have got out of what was going on. The government must investigate the puppet master Viney. Viney is the puppet master in all of this, not Conroy, and certainly not Rogan Ward. Viney was certainly an accessory and conspired to release that confidential information. There is no doubt that that occurred.

Viney is guilty of corruption — —

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, the honourable member has made a number of assertions that I take great exception to. He has asserted that a member of the Legislative Assembly is an accessory to a criminal offence. In his subsequent statement he said that the honourable member for Frankston East is guilty of corruption. I ask him to withdraw those assertions. Absolutely nothing in this report suggests either of those assertions.

Hon. C. A. Furretti — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, the honourable member is making allegations that relate to Mr Craige's indicating that there were criminal offences involved. Mr Craige went to great lengths to indicate that there were no criminal offences involved. What Mr Craige did say, however, was that the honourable member for Frankston East in the other place was an accessory to the breach of confidentiality by Mr Conroy and that they conspired together — that is exactly what he said — to release that information.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, the President ruled not so long before you took the chair that you could not impugn the reputation of another member without it being by substantive motion. Mr Craige has impugned a member of the other house and he should be asked to withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The previous point of order was about guilt but there was no definition of that guilt so I ruled against that. I have listened again very carefully to the honourable member as he made his contribution. The honourable member did say that a member of the other house had conspired, and I believe that that would require a substantive motion so I request the honourable member to withdraw that.

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — I withdraw. There is no doubt that Viney is guilty of bribery and corruption in this whole exercise.

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, again the reputation of a member of another house is being impugned and I ask again for that to be withdrawn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, on the point of order, Mr Craige is flouting the ruling of the Chair. I request him to withdraw both of those comments.

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE — I withdraw. He is guilty!

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — What a disgraceful performance! Both the Honourable Cameron Boardman and the Honourable Geoff Craige have given us the most disgraceful performance that does no credit to them or this chamber. If honourable members opposite are interested in making this chamber relevant they need to stop this type of behaviour and lift their standards, because at the moment they are bringing this chamber and this Parliament into disrepute. They know that politicians in this country are unfortunately not regarded very highly, and this type of behaviour does nothing to enhance the reputation of members of Parliament.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Craige!

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — Mr Deputy President, the members opposite have gone to great lengths to throw a lot of mud around at individuals who have actually been cleared by this report. The honourable member for Frankston East has in fact been cleared by this report. They were unable to find anything in their witch-hunt or through that biased Star Chamber process that they set up.

When a report of an independent inquiry established to investigate the process concludes that there were no findings of bribery — and I will refer to the specific passages in the report that make that assertion — members of the opposition use parliamentary privilege to make absolutely slanderous allegations that they do not have the courage to repeat outside this house. I challenge Mr Boardman and Mr Craige to go out on to the steps of Parliament House and repeat those statements if they dare. They know their statements are defamatory, and they do not have the courage to repeat them outside this place.

This government takes very seriously allegations of breaches of the Local Government Act and improper behaviour under that act. That is why the Minister for Local Government in the other place on 3 October last year, following a complaint from the chief executive

officer of the Frankston City Council, appointed an inspector of municipal investigations to begin investigations into possible breaches of the Local Government Act. Even before the Star Chamber was set up the minister had put in train a process to investigate possible breaches of the act.

Today we have seen a rewrite of history. Honourable members opposite have completely forgotten about the actions of the minister and the bureaucracy in beginning an investigation in October last year after a complaint was made. They have forgotten that during the debate on the terms of reference of the Star Chamber committee the government made an offer to set up — —

Hon. B. C. Boardman — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, I caution the honourable member to consider what she is saying, because she has just said that an offer was made to the opposition during the debate on the terms of reference of the select committee. That is not correct. If she can provide some evidence of that we will be very interested to hear it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! That is not a point of order. I invite Ms Mikakos to continue.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — You will recall that discussions occurred about setting a process in train and appointing a municipal inspector, which is very similar to what occurred, but the opposition parties were determined to set up a process that would enable them to throw mud at the Labor candidate for the federal seat of Dunkley. That is what the select committee was all about — of the six public hearings, five happened to take place before the federal election and the committee would have had the sixth hearing before the election if that witness had been available. That is all it was about. The Honourable Cameron Boardman made that clear in his contribution when he gloated about the fact that Mark Conroy was not elected as the federal member for Dunkley.

The government takes the Local Government Act very seriously. It takes the independence of local government as the third tier of government very seriously. It set up a process to investigate possible breaches of the act when a complaint was made.

I refer to the assertions made by the Honourable Cameron Boardman, because the report clears the honourable member for Frankston East and Mark Conroy of any bribery allegations — —

Hon. G. R. Craige — That wasn't even in the terms of reference.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — You need to have another look at the terms of reference, because if you look at them — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — I have, actually.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The Honourable Jenny Mikakos is on her feet, and I am sure we all want to hear what she has to say. The house cannot hear anything because of the constant barrage of interjections. I urge honourable members on my left to desist.

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS — Page 1 of the report sets out the terms of reference. Paragraph (b)(ii) states:

... under other legislation which require further investigation.

'Other legislation' includes the Crimes Act. The terms of reference were broad and were not limited to the Local Government Act. The investigators were able to make findings, if there was evidence, which there wasn't, of bribery. Paragraphs 151 and 152 indicate that they obtained all of the books of account of the honourable member for Frankston East.

Paragraph 151 of the report states:

Viney made available all the books of account, pay-in books and ledgers relating to the Dunkley campaign and I can find no evidence to suggest there is any substance to this allegation.

The honourable member for Frankston East was prepared to make all the relevant information available. The investigator concluded in paragraph 152:

This is a serious allegation that imputes the integrity of Viney and Conroy. I consider it is baseless ...

People have been cleared of bribery and corruption, yet honourable members opposite give their own definitions and tests and say that if members of Parliament or elected local government representatives work towards community outcomes, work for their communities, in some way that makes them guilty of bribery. That is the most absurd test I have ever heard. If we adopt that test probably most members of Parliament in this place would be guilty. Perhaps honourable members opposite do not work for the benefit of their communities and therefore do not fall within that definition. It is a ridiculous test, and it is outrageous that honourable members opposite have come into this house and have ignored the findings of

this report and effectively attempted to come up with their own conclusions.

I acknowledge that there are serious findings in the report. The executive summary of the report concludes that it is also highly likely that confidential information was released. That is not a conclusive finding. Under the rule of law someone must be prosecuted and found guilty. This is a recommendation for action to be taken. The Minister for Local Government has set in train a process so a prosecution can be commenced —

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

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — I first make the observation that if it were not for this upper house we would not have a document that reported that a select committee found a breach of section 77 of the Local Government Act had occurred.

We also would not have a select committee report saying that a further breach of section 77 of the Local Government Act may have occurred, and we would not have a select committee report saying that a third breach of confidentiality is most likely to have occurred. If it were not for the upper house we would not have a document from inspectors of municipal administration saying:

I therefore consider Cr Conroy has released confidential details provided to him during the course of the working party's briefing to Matt Viney and Rogan Ward in breach of section 77(2) of the Local Government Act 1989.

If it were not for the upper house we would not have had either the select committee report or the report of the inspectors. We have the first because this house took a decision to investigate allegations that had been brought to its attention about activities occurring in the City of Frankston. The government called the committee a Star Chamber and a witch-hunt. The government proved itself wrong, because that select committee, which comprised three members from this chamber who did an excellent job under great difficulties and received no cooperation from the government, came up with a document which dragged the government kicking and screaming to a situation in which it had to establish a further investigation by inspectors of municipal administration. I think the upper house is working. In the context of this sordid affair we established a select committee and forced the government to take action to investigate the matter at Frankston.

The second point I wish to make is this: if it were a member of either the National Party or the Liberal Party

that was the subject of allegations of corruption or bribery or any breach of an act of Parliament at any level, we would have the whole of the house here defending that person. Today only five members of the government are present; two of them have just arrived. To support the previous speaker we had the most junior minister and three government members. It is unbelievable that a government would allow a debate on such an important issue to occur without its members being here in force to put its side of the story and to support its speakers. That means something else to me. Maybe government members think there is a lot more in this than is in the report.

When you read the report you wonder what else was going on that could not be found out. There may be a lot worse things happening in Frankston than have come forward in this report. What would make somebody believe that that could be the case? The phone calls referred to by Mr Craig? They are not only referred to in this document; they are there in chapter and verse.

Hon. J. M. Madden — Now you're making it up. You're speculating!

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — It is not speculation. The details of the phone calls are in the document — pages and pages of them. Do you know that within seven days there were 60 calls on this issue to Mr Viney's office or to Mr Viney?

Hon. G. R. Craig — From whom?

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — From all the people involved in this affair. Within that seven-day period 86 calls involved Cr Conroy. Are you going to tell me that something was not going on? That there was nothing wrong in Frankston? Some 146 calls to Viney's office and Conroy's office within seven days. What was going on, I ask you! We know what was going on. It was the very time when the council was down to the final consideration of this huge project — a project involving \$100 million to \$150 million. That is what was going on during those seven days!

The Brideson committee came up with some ideas on this and pointed out on page (iii) that there were breaches of section 77 of the Local Government Act.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — I was involved in local government for 30 years, and during all of that time

councillors and officers were aware of section 77 of the Local Government Act.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The cross-conversations in the chamber will cease. I am sure everyone wants to hear the contribution being made by Mr Lucas, so I invite him to continue, without interruption.

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — During that time councillors and senior management were very aware of the provisions of section 77 of the Local Government Act, which refers to the improper use of information. It states:

- (2) A person who is, or has been, a Councillor or a member of a Council committee must not release information that the person knows, or should reasonably know, is information —
- (a) that is confidential to the Council; and
 - (b) that the Council wishes to keep confidential.

Penalty: For a first offence: 20 penalty units;

For a second or subsequent offence: imprisonment for 3 months.

I know about that provision; anybody who has worked in local government would know about that provision. The question is: has Mr Viney ever worked in local government? Answer: yes he has, as a senior officer. Has he ever worked in local government or with local government as a consultant? Yes, he has.

Mr Viney would know about the provisions of the Local Government Act. Yet when Cr Conroy came along to him with confidential information, did he send him away? No, he did not — and he took a whole lot of calls after that on the phone. Not only did he have information, but there are records in the inspectors' report of phone calls to Mr Viney's office over a period of one week. The figures show 60 calls within seven days, at the very time the council was considering this \$100 million to \$150 million project. Did Mr Viney send Cr Conroy away? No, he did not.

That means a lot to me because as a former local government officer and local government consultant he would have known that he was participating in something that was illegal. He has participated in an illegal arrangement whereby someone has come along to him with information that he should not have been sharing with him or talking to him about. However, this document shows that the information was given. There is no intimation on any page of either report that

Mr Viney sent Cr Conroy away. Indeed, Mr Viney was a willing participant in this, and that is what comes through from this document. I put to this house that he knew he was getting involved in something he should not have been involved in. So, yes, Mr Viney is guilty. It is clear from this document that he is guilty. He should also be investigated — —

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, again I call on the honourable member to withdraw that statement. There is nothing in the report that concludes that Mr Viney is guilty of anything. I take exception to that remark and ask him to withdraw it.

Hon. C. A. Furletti — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, the guilt referred to was the association between Mr Viney and Cr Conroy.

Hon. Jenny Mikakos — Guilt by association!

Hon. C. A. Furletti — It referred to the association between Mr Viney and Cr Conroy, and that was the guilt referred to. I submit there is no point of order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Again I have listened carefully to the comments made in this debate. I uphold the point of order and ask the honourable member to withdraw that particular comment.

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — I withdraw. I am not sure exactly what I am withdrawing, but I withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I have asked the honourable member to withdraw the accusation that the particular member was guilty. I make that clear.

Hon. C. A. Furletti — Of what?

Hon. J. M. Madden — Just withdraw it!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The honourable member has withdrawn. I have just cleared up — —

Hon. J. M. Madden — With qualification.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Minister! I invite Mr Lucas to continue.

Hon. N. B. LUCAS — I respect your ruling, Mr Deputy President, and I withdrew. I said that Mr Viney participated in this discussion and in the receipt of information that was banned under the Local Government Act. He was involved in discussions of a range of issues and he also should be investigated.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, and honourable members on both sides, the debate has been cleared up.

**TRANSPORT (FURTHER
MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL**

Second reading

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill serves a broad range of purposes designed to improve Victoria's public transport system, including reform of the taxi and hire car industries and regulation of security cameras in taxis. It also includes further reform of the tow-truck industry and gives the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure power to inspect and audit medical records of public transport safety workers to ensure a safer transport system. The bill clarifies the power of an authorised transport enforcement officer to request a person suspected of a transport offence to provide verification of their name and address. Finally, the powers of the director of public transport will be extended to facilitate the performance of his functions.

The bill also amends the Melbourne City Link Act 1995 by extending by two days the period in which Transurban may backdate temporary registration.

The thrust of the taxi industry reforms in the bill is to retain regulated entry into the industry while improving the quality of service provided to the Victorian public by means of an accreditation regime for taxi depots and communication networks which dispatch bookings on behalf of the taxi industry. These initiatives will complement further proposals to develop accreditation requirements for taxi operators and licence-holders under new powers set out in the bill. The reforms have been designed to introduce gradual change to the industry in an effort to protect existing interests while also stimulating a dynamic industry environment which is more responsive to consumer and driver needs. It is proposed to introduce a late-night tariff on taxi fares, and the bill provides for a new condition to be applied to taxicab licences which will ensure that this tariff is paid entirely to taxidriviers — a change that is expected to improve the availability of taxis during times of peak requirement.

Other changes include removal of the public interest test as a barrier to market entry for small commercial passenger vehicles other than taxis, with the introduction of a commercial fee based on the market rate payable for a hire car or special purpose vehicle licence. These two changes to the licensing provisions for small commercial passenger vehicles other than taxis are applicable to all licences applied for from 9 May 2002.

In order to improve safety for taxidriviers and their passengers, amendments have also been made to the Transport Act to enable the regulation and control of security cameras in taxis and the images taken by the cameras. The installation of security cameras commenced in the last few months of 2001, and is expected to be completed by the end of June 2002. To date, control of the cameras has been maintained under taxi licence conditions. However, the new legislation will allow a process for the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure to enter into an agreement with a person or body authorised to download the images and provide them to police in appropriate circumstances for law enforcement purposes.

The proposed agreement has been prepared in consultation with the Victorian Privacy Commissioner to ensure that the provisions are sufficient to protect the privacy of people using taxis. Other than authorised persons who work under an agreement with the secretary, only staff of the department and the police will have access to the images. The new provisions also provide substantial penalties for any person who unlawfully possesses, downloads, publishes, transmits or discloses the images from a taxi security camera.

A review of the tow truck industry recommended the addition of objectives to the tow truck provisions of the legislation to emphasise the role of the provisions in the protection of consumers — particularly accident victims — when dealing with tow truck operators and vehicle repairers as well as timely clearance of accident-damaged vehicles from accident sites and prevention of undesirable behaviour by tow truck operators. The bill removes non-accident-related towing of motorcycles from regulation by the Transport Act but accident towing of motorcycles will still be regulated. The cooling-off period for an authority to repair accident damage has been extended to 72 hours with provision for a written waiver after 48 hours, to allow an owner of a vehicle for example, a taxi or commercial vehicle, to arrange quicker repair when needed. The new legislation also provides for extension of police powers to enable police to maintain control of an accident scene. The new powers are necessary particularly at heavy vehicle accident scenes to prevent

touting for repair work and to ensure the orderly salvage and recovery of damaged vehicles and their loads.

The bill provides that responsibility for determination of taxi fares and tow truck fees, currently determined by the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, will now rest with the Minister for Transport, after evaluation by the Director of Public Transport and an independent assessment by the Essential Services Commission. The commission will be able to exercise its usual powers of investigation and inquiry in conducting evaluations and its report will be tabled in Parliament.

The bill amends the powers of the Director of Public Transport in order to clarify the director's ability to construct, maintain and operate public transport infrastructure and to run public transport services. The director is also given power, to be exercised with the minister's approval, to compulsorily acquire land for public transport purposes. This provision will facilitate projects which are funded or managed by the Department of Infrastructure.

The bill also inserts a power for the Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure to audit rail safety workers' medical records for the purposes of accreditation of operators. This amendment is to allow safety accreditation auditors to ensure that an accredited rail operator or a contractor has appropriate medical examination procedures and health monitoring systems in place to ensure that safety workers are medically fit for their work. This measure will further improve the safety of public transport operations in Victoria.

The bill clarifies the power of authorised officers to request a person suspected of a transport or ticket offence to provide evidence to verify the person's name and address. The information is necessary to ensure that enforcement proceedings or an infringement notice can be expeditiously served on the correct person. The information has always been requested and recorded by transport enforcement officers and for many years the Magistrates Court has upheld that practice. However, in view of the requirements of privacy laws, the bill includes a number of measures to clarify the power of authorised officers to request verification information and to record the information. The bill also introduces a substantial penalty for misuse of the verification information, and only permits the information to be used for enforcement purposes. To ensure the protection of privacy, guidelines governing the collection, use and disposal of personal information gathered in the process of detecting and enforcing

public transport related offences are currently being developed.

Relevant to the proposals for the Minister for Transport to determine taxi fare and accident towing fees, after independent assessment by the Essential Services Commission, I wish to make a statement pursuant to section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons why the bill alters or varies section 85.

Clause 22 of the bill inserts a new section 255E into the Transport Act 1983, which states that it is the intention of section 189(7) of the act (as inserted by clause 20 of the bill) to alter or vary section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975.

The combined effect of proposed sections 255E and 189(7) is to confer an immunity on persons as a consequence of their making of a statement or giving of a document or information to the Essential Services Commission in good faith, in connection with an investigation under proposed division 9 of part VI of the Transport Act. The protection applies whether or not an oral statement is made or a written document or information provided in connection with a written submission or public hearing. These provisions have the same effect as the equivalent provision in section 63 of the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, which was inserted to cover section 51(7) of that act.

The reason for limiting the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court with respect to these matters is to give persons who wish to make statements or provide information under division 9 of part VI of the Transport Act a degree of confidence that their statements or information can be made or given without fear of litigation. This is likely to enhance the quality of the submissions and information made available to the Essential Services Commission, and thus enhance the quality of its reports.

These provisions are important to improve the quality of service provided to the Victorian public and to facilitate a more efficient and customer-focused small commercial passenger vehicle and tow-truck industry.

The bill amends section 73C of the Melbourne City Link Act 1985 to allow the backdating of temporary registration by an additional two days. Motorists will have until midnight on the Tuesday immediately following the weekend of travel on City Link to purchase a weekend pass, enabling payment with cash. Motorists will have three days after first travel to purchase other City Link passes such as the 24-hour pass and the Tulla pass. This amendment was negotiated by government and delivers a significant

improvement to City Link products for occasional users and country Victorians.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. G. B. ASHMAN (Koonung).

Debate adjourned until next day.

CASINO (MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Casino (Management Agreement) Act was passed in 1993; it ratified the management agreement between the state and Melbourne casino operators. Section 15 of the Casino Control Act provides for the management agreement to be varied by the parties, however the variation has no effect unless it is ratified by Parliament.

The purpose of this bill is to ratify the seventh deed of variation to the management agreement for the Melbourne casino complex. This deed of variation provides for Crown to be released from its contractual obligation to build a lyric theatre. In return, Crown will pay to the state \$18 million over five years. This contribution by Crown will be allocated towards a major arts project in the arts precinct near the Yarra River. Crown will have no equity or interest in this project.

Crown will still be required to construct an alternative capital development of no less value than \$42 million, the cost of the lyric theatre as determined by an independent quantity surveyor on 9 March 2001. The nature and timing of the development will be up to Crown to determine. Crown will be responsible for obtaining the necessary permits and approvals for the alternative project, however the state retains the right to approve or not approve the project being included as part of the casino complex.

This deed of variation has been approved by the government, as the construction of the lyric theatre would have severely undermined the viability of Melbourne's historic theatre precinct, and the payment of \$18 million to be made by Crown will benefit the Victoria community.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley).

Debate adjourned until next day.

STATE TAXATION ACTS (FURTHER TAX REFORM) BILL

Second reading

Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill contains the government's tax measures for the 2002–03 budget. The government's business tax initiatives have already been announced in the Building Tomorrow's Businesses Today package that provides business tax cuts of \$262 million over the next four years. These initiatives build on the government's Better Business Taxes package of last year which followed the most comprehensive business tax review undertaken in Victoria for nearly two decades. All of these initiatives bring the total business tax cuts announced by the Bracks government to over \$1 billion — a significant achievement in a first term of office. The budget also contains targeted measures to assist first home buyers with families to purchase their own homes and it also assists concession cardholders who wish to move to other accommodation.

In formulating the Building Tomorrow's Businesses Today package, the government has focused on measures to grow the whole of Victoria and deliver more high-quality jobs and better living standards.

These taxation measures are financially responsible and target improved outcomes for businesses and families. They provide a solid basis for the continued improvement in living standards for all Victorians.

I now turn to the major features of the bill. The bill contains a number of important changes to the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971 that will stimulate employment in Victoria and encourage business investment.

Effective from 1 July 2002, the rate of payroll tax will be lowered to 5.35 per cent, one year ahead of the schedule previously announced in *Better Business Taxes*.

The rate of payroll tax will be further reduced to 5.25 per cent, effective from 1 July 2003. These initiatives mean that the Bracks government will have

reduced the payroll tax burden for business by 9 per cent since coming to office.

The payroll tax-free threshold will also be increased from \$515 000 to \$550 000, effective on 1 July 2002, one year ahead of schedule. This will free around 300 small businesses from the burden of paying payroll tax. In addition, hundreds more that would have become liable for the tax will now remain below the threshold. This increase in the payroll tax threshold is the first threshold increase in a decade.

The land tax threshold will also be increased from \$125 000 to \$150 000, effective from 2002–03. This will remove around 21 000 taxpayers, or around 15 per cent of all taxpayers, from the burden of land tax. In total, almost 6000 properties in regional Victoria will become exempt from land tax.

Stamp duty on unquoted marketable securities will also be abolished from 1 July 2002, one year ahead of schedule. This stamp duty impedes investment decision making and financing by small business and its abolition will save businesses over \$10 million each year.

This bill also recognises the government's community obligations. The government will reform, streamline and expand the concessions system presently in place to assist first-home-buying families and concession cardholders. The existing concessions were last reviewed in 1998 and the two schemes currently have different exemption requirements and cut-off levels. Both schemes will now be consolidated for the first time and expanded with a full exemption applying for both first-home-buying families and concession cardholders up to \$150 000 and a partial exemption from \$150 000 to \$200 000. The removal of the income test for first home buyers with families will simplify administration. It will also remove any unfair discrimination where, in a family situation, one of the partners might be moving in and out of the work force.

These reforms mean the value of the maximum concession for both schemes will increase to \$4660. Previously, the maximum concession for concession cardholders was \$2200 and for first-home-buying families, it was \$2560. As a result of these reforms, up to 4000 additional families, pensioners and lower income earners will be eligible for relief, bringing the total number estimated to benefit from these concessions to about 8000 — many of whom will be in regional Victoria. Common arrangements will provide improved accessibility, ensure efficient streamlined administration and eliminate any current confusion in

the marketplace regarding the present variations between the two schemes.

The government's Building Tomorrow's Businesses Today package cements Victoria's position as a good place to do business. Furthermore, our reform and expansion of the concession arrangements will assist first-home-buying families, lower income earners and pensioners.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned for Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) on motion of Hon. N. B. Lucas.

Debate adjourned until next day.

BUDGET PAPERS, 2002–03

Debate resumed from 16 May; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources):

That the Council take note of the budget papers, 2002–03.

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — Australia's automotive industry, which is principally headquartered and based in Victoria, is a major contributor to our national economy and Australia's skills base. I wish to use this budget debate to urge clear-cut government facilitation of car companies and automotive companies in this state. Particularly in the light of the current Productivity Commission review of Australia's automotive industry tariffs, I emphasise the need for high-level advocacy of the long-term case for our efficient automotive sector. This is critically important for public policy in 2002.

As I see it there are three dynamic challenges facing this important Australian industry. The first is global market access and as part of that the future of the tariff regime in this country. The second is industrial relations and the need to improve labour productivity. The third concerns exchange rate fluctuations and the inevitable impact they have on the export capacity of this important sector. My remarks are heavily weighted towards the first issue, given the Productivity Commission's assessment of the tariff regime as it affects car manufacturers and automotive component manufacturers.

At the outset I want to say that I believe trade liberalisation since the 1980s has been good for Australia. It has made our manufacturers more efficient; it has put in place disciplines that have created higher productivity and generated an even stronger focus on the most important goal for the Australian economy, which is to be export based.

During that period we have seen the automotive sector completely transform itself. Regardless of the old stereotypes that a few people still apply to this sector, it is now skills based, export focused and in many areas world competitive. Tariffs have fallen from a high of 57.5 per cent to what will be a level of 10 per cent by 2005 — an extraordinary cut in historic protection. The industry has been reborn, and Melbourne is fortunate to be the home of that sector and the benefits it now brings.

Total automotive exports in 2000–01 are a guide to its critical importance. They were just under \$5 billion, and there is a likelihood that they will reach \$7 billion by next year. This is a sector of the Australian industry that is leading through its own performance and has attracted the eye of people who in the past may have been its greatest sceptics.

It employs over 50 000 Australians, with about 27 000 involved in the component sector.

There are the four major car manufacturers, which are the most visible, but of equal importance are around 200 local component tooling, engineering and design businesses.

Significantly, this sector is also an R & D leader with research and development expenditure of about \$420 million per annum — something that has led to its high level of achievement over recent years.

We have also seen regular reinvestment and fresh investment, with the most recent announcements of scale being those by Holden, with its \$386 million V6 aluminium engine plant, and Mitsubishi's announcement of a \$170 million investment in its operations.

These are welcome investments by the large players as the industry gains strength collectively through such individual additions to investment.

The strengths of this sector obviously bring major benefits to Melbourne and to some of our regional centres. They also bring significant benefits to Adelaide and Sydney and the South Australian and New South Wales economies and to the Australian economy overall because of export performance. We see in Melbourne that we are the principal beneficiaries of investment by Toyota, General Motors and Ford.

Perhaps less publicly understood is the equally inspiring work of automotive products manufacturers within our realm. I mention particularly outstanding corporations like Robert Bosch Australia, the Air International Group, PBR International and Delphi

Automotive Systems. These Australian-based automotive manufacturers are examples of companies that see a long-term future for this sector and huge potential for export growth and who are investing in skills. Along with other operations, be they domestically owned or foreign owned, they are creating significant employment, they are adding to the training and education base of the nation and they are assisting in the R & D effort with value adding production.

When you put all those achievements in together, it only emphasises the point that a focus on the Productivity Commission's review of this sector is of vital importance to Victoria as well as Australia.

In dealing with the first major challenge that I cited at the beginning of my speech I want to address some of my remarks to how this industry will fare, especially in terms of governmental decisions on future levels of industry assistance.

In its submission to the Productivity Commission I believe Ford Australia correctly sums up the strengths of this sector and its role. It says:

Australia's automotive manufacturing industry, small by global standards, has been transformed into a uniquely valuable national asset with skilled and motivated employees producing high value and high quality motor vehicles. Increasingly, Australian vehicle producers have the confidence to put their products to the test in some of the world's most competitive markets.

The submission also says that Australia is now:

... one of the most open and competitive home markets of any country in the world ...

Indeed it is. We are competitive. We are coping with competitive pressures, and we need the right domestic policy settings to ensure that we extract the maximum benefit out of the future growth opportunities for this sector.

In its submission to the Productivity Commission the Federation of Automotive Parts Manufacturers makes the point:

The Australian automotive industry is a major contributor to the economy in many ways:

It generates relatively high numbers of jobs, substantial output and investment.

It is a leading-edge customer for many industries such as steel, glass, plastics, paints and tooling.

It is important to the future of particular regions such as parts of Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney ...

Its submission then goes on to make perhaps the most important point:

It contributes substantially to skills formation in Australian manufacturing.

It is a major innovator in product design and process engineering.

It is a leader in best practice manufacturing methods and technology.

It has substantial linkages to the services sector.

It has developed a large and growing export market.

Given that no significant Australian business is likely to thrive without export sales, implicit in which is a need to break into fresh markets, we can draw some strength from the fact that the automotive industry has achieved that goal, even though it has faced some of the most difficult circumstances and of course significantly falling tariff levels.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended 12.55 p.m. until 2.07 p.m.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Stonnington: sporting facilities

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — I bring to the attention of the house the severe lack of open space, in particular sporting grounds, in inner suburban Melbourne and the consequent decision of the Stonnington City Council within my electorate to impose a 12-month freeze on the number of sporting teams and clubs that are allowed to be established in that city.

People who are aware of the changes in inner Melbourne would know that young families have moved back into the area and that there is a significant new demand for open space and for sporting facilities and sporting grounds. All people need to do is come down to Stonnington on a Saturday or Sunday morning to see the number of people playing various sports — football in the winter and cricket in the summer, as well as netball and various other sports.

All sporting clubs in the area have experienced significant growth. There is a continuing need for more open space and for more sporting clubs. I understand that the Stonnington council has made this move to put a freeze on the number of sporting clubs because of the lack of available grounds, but more creative solutions are needed long term.

We as a society — the council, the government and the community — need to look at providing more open space and utilising existing open space more creatively to ensure that the needs of our residents are met. If we want people to stay fit and to get engaged in sport and not get involved in antisocial activities, we need to encourage them to play sport, and we need more open space and more sporting facilities to do so.

Anglicare Victoria winter appeal

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — I take this opportunity to express my appreciation of the work of Anglicare Victoria. I will be delighted to attend the launch of the Anglicare Victoria winter appeal tomorrow at Footscray railway station. The appeal will be launched by the Melbourne Anglican Bishop, the Most Reverend Peter Watson, and Sharan Burrow, president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

The aim of the appeal is to help families who are in difficulty and struggling with poverty, who often become overwhelmed and unable to cope and who fall into despair, isolation and illness.

Some 678 000 Australian children are growing up in jobless families, where their risk of living in poverty is increasing. The fact is that homelessness, hunger, cold and violence are part of our community, and for those enduring poverty the harsh realities of winter simply make matters worse.

In 2001 financial counsellors from Anglicare Victoria reported that on average 59 per cent of their clients presented with a problem or dispute relating to credit card debt.

The people from Anglicare also help their clients with issues relating to unemployment, mobile phone contracts, motor vehicle insurance and other types of insurance.

Sunraysia Tennis Academy

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I take this opportunity to congratulate one of my constituents, Ray Kilkenny, for developing the Sunraysia Tennis Academy in Mildura, which I recently had the pleasure of opening as its patron.

Ray has developed a program that will combine formal education with a professionally planned tennis program for secondary students. Sunraysia is the ideal place for such an academy, given its climatic conditions, which are fantastic all year round, and the fact that Sunraysia is a fast-growing regional area.

It is fair to say that Australian tennis does not have players of the standard we have seen in the past, so the academy will play a vital role in ensuring that those players with real potential have the opportunity to reach the highest level of excellence.

The players' formal education is the priority component of the program, and if students fall below the designated scholastic level their tennis training will cease until that level is achieved.

Ray will be assisted by Phil Lancaster, who has coached tennis players in Australia and the United States of America for over 20 years, and Sam Swan, a level 1 Tennis Australia coach.

I commend the formation of the Sunraysia Tennis Academy and have much pleasure in being its patron.

Disability services: transport

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I rise to speak on a matter of importance to frail and elderly people as well as to the disabled and their carers, particularly those in the Dandenong Ranges and in the south-west portion of the Yarra Ranges in my electorate. It has been brought to my attention that there is an urgent need for volunteer drivers to transport these people, as they struggle to access public transport and are basically immobile without assistance.

Volunteers are required as part of the efforts of the Knox Community Volunteers program and South-West Transport. Those organisations put in a desperate plea for members of the community to come forward and aid in maintaining their services. The volunteer drivers are required to deliver people to medical and social appointments. They receive training and support as well as petrol allowances and newsletters.

I stand today to encourage people in my local community who have any spare time on their hands to become part of this admirable service. They will receive the personal reward of assisting residents who cannot move unaided from point A to point B, which most of us take for granted. They will be contributing to a fantastic service to the community in allowing the elderly and the disabled to maintain their independence and prevent social isolation.

The program is flexible in that it allows volunteers to nominate which times best suit them to support the program. I encourage all people in the outer eastern community to volunteer for this valuable service.

George Tibbles

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN (Ballarat) — I will talk today about the recent death of Mr George Tibbles in Casterton. He was a wonderful man who will be sadly missed. He was our ALP branch secretary in Casterton for 42 years, which is an amazing effort on his part. He was a true believer.

Somerville, Tyabb and District Heritage Society

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) — I recognise and commend the valuable community work of the Somerville, Tyabb and District Heritage Society. This heritage society, in association with others, has an extensive collection of irreplaceable historic artefacts and is strongly supported by many of my constituents on the Mornington Peninsula.

The society recognises the need to gather and preserve important historic documents and artefacts, which it does with great care and enthusiasm. I am proud to be the patron of this successful heritage society and I will record the important contribution made to the community by several individuals who work hard to preserve the heritage of the area.

Somerville, Tyabb and District Heritage Society is fortunate to have a strong membership, and in particular I recognise the contributions of president Mr Ken Archer, secretary Mrs Brenda Thornell and visible supporters such as Mrs Leila Shaw and Mrs Valda Cole for their continuing efforts to preserve for future generations a high-quality, accessible history of the district.

Toongabbie Primary School

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — It has been brought to my attention that the Department of Education and Training intends in the next few days to relocate a portable classroom away from Toongabbie Primary School. Toongabbie Primary School is a country school of approximately 126 pupils. It uses this portable classroom as a computer laboratory. The school has recently purchased new computers. The school community has gone to considerable expense to install new cabling and wiring to fit out this portable as a computer room, and now the government is intending to take it away from them. There is no suitable alternative facility at the school to house the school's computers.

The parent community is incensed at this proposed action of the government, as I believe it has every right to be. The government makes great claims about improving information technology services in schools,

but this proposed action completely contradicts those claims. I call on the Leader of the Government in her role as Minister for Education Services to act immediately to prevent the removal of this essential facility from Toongabbie Primary School.

Knox hospital

Hon. W. I. SMITH (Silvan) — Health care is a fundamental right of every person in Australia and Victoria, and particularly in the outer east. Individuals in Victoria expect equitable access to health care, to emergency services and to expertise. People in the outer east do not have that because they do not have a tertiary public hospital out there. The Kennett government was committed to building a tertiary hospital at Knox, but the Bracks government has completely walked away from it.

I acknowledge that it put some money into the two hospitals in the area — the William Angliss Hospital and the Maroondah Hospital — but the people in the outer east have a lot of trouble, and one reason for that is that there is no Scoresby freeway so it is not that easy to get into some of the inner city hospitals. Their closest access for emergency services is the Alfred hospital and the Box Hill Hospital, and with kids and families it is very difficult.

I call upon the Bracks government to stop turning its back on the people of the outer east and to acknowledge the desperate need for emergency services, a tertiary hospital and expertise in a whole range of medical services lacking in that area by starting to commit to a Knox hospital.

Surf Coast: community consultation

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — Last week a most positive Bracks government community consultation was held in my electorate on the Surf Coast, involving the Attorney-General, the Minister for Education Services and Minister for Youth Affairs, the Minister for Finance and Minister for Industrial Relations, and the Minister for Tourism and Minister for Employment. The two-day consultation included visits to local schools, industries and youth agencies. Consultations both formal and informal were held with the Surf Coast Shire Council and many members of the local community.

A packed community reception was held at the Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club, followed the next day by a very well attended community morning tea at the Surfworld Plaza in Torquay. I thank the ministers and all members

of my community who participated and made our two-day consultation such a success.

Reservoir: mobile phone tower

Hon. JENNY MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — On Sunday, 26 May 2002, I attended a public rally in St Vigeons Road, Reservoir. Many local residents attended, together with the honourable member for Preston in another place and Cr Stanley Chaing, the local ward councillor, to protest against Hutchison Orange erecting a mobile phone tower on top of a vacant shop at 51 Banff Street. The antenna is being erected in a residential area against the wishes of the vast majority of local residents. At the public rally residents raised concerns about the safety of electromagnetic radiation, and scientific evidence has questioned the safety of this technology. I call on the federal government to change its telecommunications legislation to give local councils and communities a say in the planning process, and I call on Hutchison Orange to listen to the views of my constituents.

Arts: cultural grants

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to inform the house of a grant that was made by the Bracks government to Ms Alison Croggon, who is a poet who lives in my electorate. Through the Arts Victoria International program Ms Croggon has been granted \$5000 so that she can undertake a poetry reading tour of Ireland in the latter part of this year.

That demonstrates the Bracks government's commitment to supporting both new and established artists. By supporting Ms Croggon and many others like her, whether they be poets, sculptors or dancers, we encourage a diversity of opinion from a diversity of art forms, and that is extremely important in a healthy democracy. This is the message that Ms Croggon and many other recipients of these grants will take to the world: Victoria under the Bracks government is a very proud and healthy state and a tolerant multicultural society.

BUDGET PAPERS, 2002–03

Debate resumed.

Hon. M. A. BIRRELL (East Yarra) — Prior to the break I was talking about the significance of the automotive industry, and I believe those values are neatly summarised by the comments of the Australian Industry Group in its publication *A Core Foundation of*

the Australian Economy of May this year where it states:

The future development of Australia's automotive industries is of critical importance to the growth and wellbeing of the manufacturing industry and the Australian economy ...

Australian automotive industries are a vital component of domestic manufacturing. Despite its small size relative to the global market, the domestic automotive sector accounts for around 8 per cent of total manufacturing activity.

It then highlights what I believe to be the most relevant point.

The sector has also contributed strongly to the improvement in the export performance of the manufacturing industry in recent years.

That export performance is on the line as part of the Productivity Commission's review because it will lead to final federal government decisions about the level of industry assistance over coming years and the level of tariffs.

My concern is that we ensure that any movement in tariffs after 2005 takes into account a wide range of factors that impact upon our industry. I support the current review of tariffs. I support the reduction of tariffs to 10 per cent by 2005 but I do not believe there should be unilateral or ill-considered movements after that date. Specifically I believe we have to take into account what overseas nations have done with trade liberalisation — have they opened their markets to Australian cars and components and offered something that is the equivalent of a level playing field? There is no such level playing field now, including the trade activities of the United States of America, where significant barriers are placed in the way of Australian companies that wish to compete in that automotive market.

I am concerned about the failure of other countries to deliver on their trade liberalisation goals. In fact, most other countries that are relevant to this issue are well behind what Australia has done, and it should educate those decision makers who seek to further reduce tariffs after 2005.

The Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers points out in a submission to the Productivity Commission that it has:

... little confidence that the United States will be willing to forgo its 25 per cent tariff rate on imported light trucks by 2010.

In that part of its submission to the Productivity Commission it highlights that the so-called land of the free, the United States, has one of the most punitive

tariffs on imported automotive vehicles. It has not reduced that tariff to date and is not planning to do so by 2005 and may not have done so by 2010. We need to take into account whether the APEC-Bogor goals are likely to be met: whether the public commitment of other countries to trade liberalisation is rhetoric or whether it will become reality.

If you look at other countries that we wish to consider in terms of trade liberalisation, the story is at best mixed. In the United Kingdom, while there is no trade control on goods originating from European Union members there is a common tariff of 10 per cent on passenger vehicles and a 3.5 to 4.5 per cent tariff on automotive components. In the United States there is a 2.5 per cent tariff on passenger vehicles and, as I mentioned before, 25 per cent tariff on light trucks. It should not be forgotten that light trucks make up 70 per cent of United States production and therefore the tariff has a profoundly damaging impact on those that wish to compete against America.

In Germany, whilst it is free from tariffs originating from the European Union members, there is a common external tariff rate of 10 per cent on passenger vehicles. In Canada there is a 6 per cent tariff on vehicles and automotive components. Worse still, if you look closer to home, Malaysia has 140 per cent to 300 per cent tariff for passenger vehicles and 60 per cent to 200 per cent for four-wheel drives. Its outrageous tariff on components is 25 per cent to 42 per cent. In Thailand the tariffs on vehicles range from 60 to 80 per cent.

The story gets even worse when you look at non-tariff import barriers. Once again this information is to be taken on board by those who make the final decisions on what we do with our protection regime, noting as I do that there has been a massive reduction in the past and there will be inevitable reductions some time in the future. Japan has very significant non-tariff barriers against Australian automotive companies that want to export into the marketplace. They include unique vehicle type approval systems, design rules, environmental and safety standard rules and complex and rigid distribution systems. All of these are deliberate non-tariff barriers on our products. Korea has a variety of customs delays and indirect taxes on automotive imports. Malaysia has quotas on imported vehicles, restrictive and discretionally applied import licences and, on top of that, a local content scheme requiring over 45 per cent local sourcing.

Taken together the tariff and non-tariff barriers of our competitors and markets that we want to enter are still very high, and very few countries can claim to have done as well as Australia in terms of trade

liberalisation. This is not a case against future reform in the area by the commonwealth government, but it is a case for taking into account all relevant factors before you make a decision.

I believe the difficulties that our manufacturers are having in accessing global markets should be at the front of the mind of the commonwealth government over coming months, and I hope it is well considered by the Productivity Commission. In a nutshell, while there is no doubt that the access levels have increased we still face considerable difficulties in terms of getting into marketplaces that have opportunities for us, if not for the barriers that have been put there.

The second major challenge facing this industry that I raised in my opening remarks is industrial relations. Given that there is a need for Australia to be world competitive, we need increasing labour productivity levels across the sector. If we do not have that our costs will rise proportionately and we will become less likely to win new contracts. The Australian Industry Group has correctly focused on this problem in its submission to the Productivity Commission. It states:

... the level of industrial disputation in the automotive sector remains unacceptably high.

It addresses issues that need to be tackled without delay, including the following:

Union and award structures within the automotive industry need to be reformed.

Union delegates need to be better trained.

Against the backdrop of the destructive and rogue behaviour of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and in the context of recent damaging industrial disputes in Victoria and New South Wales it is clear this is a major issue requiring action in particular by state governments. They can be leaders of public opinion and should be so, particularly in the case of the AMWU, which is correctly described by the AIG as a union that is:

... racked by factional infighting and interdivisional rivalries. Such lack of cohesion has a negative impact upon automotive industry employers.

The AIG submission goes on to point out:

The highly militant Workers First faction controls the metals division of the AMWU in Victoria ... The Workers First faction appears to have little interest in cooperating with employers and adopts a highly militant approach. Officials of the Workers First faction have shown little regard for the rule of law.

The intolerable behaviour of this union is harming the prospects of the industry. It would not matter what was done in trade liberalisation or further policy on tariffs in this nation over the coming decade or more if there is this heightened problem of industrial stability for automotive makers and component makers, because then industry will have very little future at all.

Improved workplace relations has to be a major policy and program focus of the state government as well as the federal government.

The final challenge which the industry faces and which should be a focus of ongoing government interest is currency fluctuations. There is no doubt that the export element of this great industry has gained by the relative position of the Australian dollar, and we have to ensure that our exports are the highest priority in broader macro-economic planning in this field.

On page 7 of its submission to the productivity commission, General Motors Holden has put these matters in this context:

In the area of exchange rate factors, the vulnerability to fluctuations in exchange remains a significant issue and one that needs to be reflected in any future assistance arrangements for the industry. There is hope that in the long term, the disincentive to capital intensive industry created by Australia's volatile exchange rate will be alleviated. The share of the national export revenue represented by services and manufactures has shown a steadily increasing trend. If this continues, in time the currency will come to be regarded as productivity driven rather than commodity driven, and volatility should decline as a result. Additionally, as companies such as Holden build their export capability there is an increasing opportunity to develop natural currency hedge positions.

I commend Holden and other members of the industry for their focus on this issue and for their attempt to ensure that the Productivity Commission reflects on this challenge to the whole sector as well as others in its review of the future of the industry.

In conclusion it is my personal view that the automotive industry can face these challenges successfully and pass any tests that will be set for it over the coming decade. It is increasingly competitive and export focused; it draws on skills and creates clusters of knowledge. All of that is highly desirable. In a government context it needs the advocacy of both state and federal levels. In particular, I urge caution after 2005 in terms of a government's approach to changing tariffs if there is no complementary reduction in tariff and non-tariff barriers overseas.

I strongly support the continuation of industry facilitation schemes and in particular a new form of the automotive competitiveness and investments scheme,

known as ACIS, which has been successful and needs to continue in a new form in the future.

Finally, these issues do not divide us on party lines, and I commend a collaborative and bipartisan effort towards achieving these objectives.

Hon. E. G. STONEY (Central Highlands) — I wish to confine my remarks to expressing my disappointment at the lack of government support in this budget for both tracks and trails and rail trails in Victoria.

In 1994 the Kennett government initiated the rail trail program under the then Minister for Conservation, the Honourable Mark Birrell. I speak with some knowledge, having headed up the committee of parliamentarians appointed by the then minister. We had an officer and a budget to look at 63 disused rail corridors in Victoria with a view to recreating those that were suitable for rail trails. After we started the program we discovered that rail trails were very popular worldwide and there was a rush towards creating rail trails along disused rail corridors. We discovered this after we started the program, so we were in line with a worldwide trend. Large tracts of corridors that had been sold in the 1970s by the then British government are now being bought back.

Victoria was in a fortunate position where the community still owned the corridors — they were owned by the Public Transport Corporation — and our job was to bring them across to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and create them as Crown land with a view to developing rail trails.

At the end of 1999, at the time of the election, we had 17 official rail trails and during that time, in the Kennett era, the rail trail program was a designated item in the budget. The item was in two parts: the first, to repair and strengthen structures along disused rail corridors and the second, to develop rail trails and hand them back to the community. The community was given back control of its own land and many communities jumped at the opportunity, rose to the challenge and created committees of management, and some of those rail trails have had fabulous outcomes. For example, the Warburton to Lilydale rail trail is 97 per cent finished and every weekend you have to almost book to get on it in sections where people are walking, riding horses or bicycles or exercising their dogs. Most of the rail trails are multi-use trails, which means you can get out there and really enjoy the country, perhaps with your pet dog or on your horse.

Other trails include the Murray to the Mountains trail. We put \$1.6 million from the Community Support Fund, along with money from the core budget, into that. The trail is 93 kilometres long and it is sealed from Wangaratta to Beechworth. Another line takes off and goes to Bright. On weekends I understand it is almost overcrowded as hundreds and hundreds of cyclists for some reason come down from Beechworth and then get picked up at the bottom of the hill. They really enjoy that ride down and being picked up. Of course, it is great for tourism because they stay the night at Beechworth, Myrtleford or Bright and use the local facilities.

I understand the committee of management and the councils in that area are planning to go from Wangaratta to the Murray and ratify the name that was chosen in the first place. The planning is well under way with the councils and committee of management, and I wish I was part of the government so that I could push this along and give them a hand to get this great project up and running. The Murray to the Mountains is the iconic rail trail north of the Divide and has become well known throughout Australia.

The Bellarine rail trail is finished and is very popular; it was finished with grants from the previous government. The Bairnsdale to Orbost rail trail will cover 96 kilometres when it is finished. The trail between Bairnsdale and Nowa Nowa is now finished; it is sealed to Nicholson and is hard gravel after that. I understand the government has now allocated \$102 000 from timber regional forest agreements adjustment money for further sealing of that trail. It is pulling it from other sources and not from the budget. For some reason the government is reluctant to allocate any money in the budget for these things. The trail will be surfaced from Colquhoun to Nowa Nowa, which is good.

That project has widespread community support in that area. I know many people have had the phone call from Mr Bob Yeates, the manager and owner of the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*, and once you get the phone call from Mr Yeates it is, as the Honourable Mark Birrell would know and as the Honourable Marie Tehan also found out, worthwhile humouring him and finding some money to do a bit more on the trail.

A lot of the trails through different areas have produced passionate local advocates, and it was all made possible by initial funding from the Kennett government. The point I am making is that since its election this government has not found anything in its core budget to create rail trails. It is relying on other funding, such as that from timber readjustments and from the local offices of the Department of Natural Resources and

Environment, and then claiming credit for supporting rail trails.

The timing of the election in 1999 was unfortunate for many reasons; the three-year funding for the rail trail program was about to be renewed. The first three years had run its course, and it was always known we would get another three-year budget because the government supported the program. Some senior people in the department perhaps did not support it, and successive ministers were always getting advice that perhaps they should scale it down. However, because the Kennett government ministers supported it, money was always found and enough arrived from the budget to continue the program.

In the Shire of Mitchell there is a little trail that I hope will be developed one day. It leads from Tallarook up past the art gallery to the Trawool convention centre. The Shire of Mitchell is very interested in that, and Mr Gary Cecil has approached me many times about promoting it. I cannot understand why this government cannot see the advantage of finding some money and overtly supporting rail trails through the budget. There is no doubt that the whole program is moribund; it has come to a halt. The status of the rail trails today is really about the same as it was in 1999, except for a few bits and pieces and a few special allocations. There has been nothing from core funding.

For example, the Nyoora–Wonthaggi rail trail in Mr Ken Smith's electorate is only 30 per cent complete; the Ballarat–Skipton rail trail, only 17 per cent; Bandiana–Cudgewa, which is in Mr Baxter's electorate, nothing done; Gippsland plains, nothing done; Camperdown–Timboon, 10 per cent; Merton–Mansfield, 10 per cent; and Warrambool–Port Fairy, nothing. Others that have been finished and were opened around 1999 include Mirboo North–Boolarra, the Yea township rail trail, the Walhalla goldfields and the O'Keefe rail trail.

I congratulate the government on finding some CSF money for the Great Southern rail trail, which is just outside Mr Ken Smith's electorate. Again, the funding is not from the core budget; I understand the CSF contributed about \$600 000; the local DNRE office, not the central office, \$265 000; the local catchment management authority, \$75 000; and South Gippsland Shire Council, \$270 000, totalling about \$1.2 million. That will not be enough to finish that Great Southern rail trail but it will get close. There is nothing that this program or any other can rely on out of the budget; there is nothing in the budget papers to support it.

Right from 1994 it was always planned that the government would have to find that initial capital funding to get these projects up, and then the communities and the councils would take them over, maintain them, look after them and update the signage. That is impossible for those local communities to do without initial capital funding from the government. It is very disappointing that the government has not picked up this program.

One rail trail advocate, Mr Ray Pearce, is also very concerned at the way rail trails are being funded. He writes:

The key element in all this, however, is to reinstate a reliable regime of funding for trails across the entire state, rather than the government of the day 'cherry picking' a single trail for extensive development, as recently happened with Great Southern in Gippsland. This has not entirely stopped development elsewhere but has certainly set it back.

I do not want honourable members to take what I say the wrong way: no-one denies it is fabulous that the Great Southern rail trail has got up; I was always a strong advocate of it. It is an area with a cool climate and is a lovely place to go for a walk, ride a bike or ride a horse. However, the principle of funding is one of cherry picking and there is not an overall program throughout Victoria. It shows a great lack of vision on the government's part that it has not picked up this program.

It is interesting to note that by 1999 the development of Victoria's tracks and trails was regarded as leading Australia, and Victoria was one of the leading states in the world. Many interstate and overseas visitors have been to see what we are doing. In fact, on 4 September 2001 I received an email from well-known track consultants from Western Australia, Jesse Brampton and Mike Maher. They came over here for a couple of weeks, travelled around, saw a lot of rail trails and came up to my electorate and then went down to Gippsland to have a good look around. I quote from sections of the email:

We'd like to give you some brief feedback of what we saw of your trails ...

Rail trails

We saw quite a number of these: Lilydale–Warburton, Murray to Mountains, East Gippsland, Great Southern, Mirboo North, Bass Coast.

The consultants went on to praise some of the rail trails but were quite scathing that some of them are languishing. This is the part that is of most concern to me.

Hon. G. R. Craige — Are you going to read it out?

Hon. E. G. STONEY — I am going to read it out, because they list the deficiencies they saw:

Perhaps many of these things will be attended to as the trails are finished, but at present they left us a bit flat. We are aware that support and dollars have been limited, and that in many cases local communities are doing the best they can, but these questions remain valid even under those circumstances.

Those consultants are telling us that Victoria is losing, and probably by now has lost, its status as the leading state in the development of rail trails and tracks and trails generally. It is something we built up from nothing; the former government created this status of Victoria being the leading state, and I am most fearful that we have lost it and may never get it back.

There is no doubt that we need a new announcement on rail trails; we probably need a minimum budget of, say, \$3 million over three years — \$1 million a year would go a long way to finishing the job. I know that many organisations think that is about the figure that could and should be found.

I do not know why the Minister for Environment and Conservation has not picked this up — it is obviously very politically attractive to the government. I notice that she and the Minister for Transport are very keen to take the credit — and attend a lot of photo opportunities — but they just do not want to put their hands in their pockets.

I would like to see an outcome; I would like to see this program kick-started and finished. I know that organisations like Bicycle Victoria and Railtrails Australia, and most certainly the 17 committees of management of the official rail trails, are desperate to have this recognition and to have this core funding put their way again.

As well as the rail trail program, the Kennett government formed the Victorian Tracks and Trails Coordinating Committee. This interdepartmental committee was chaired by myself and based at Tourism Victoria. After the election, the chair became Mr Geoff Howard, the honourable member for Ballarat East in the other place. I understand that the VTTCC has been moved to Parks Victoria. It appears it is being downgraded and will possibly be disbanded. This will be a great opportunity lost to promote and encourage the use of tracks and trails for tourism and a great loss to the opportunities for building and development of tracks and trails.

I know that Parks Victoria does some promotion of tracks and trails, but the VTTCC brings in various departments and gives them ownership of the whole program, and keeps it a little bit apart from the

management of our tracks and trails most of which are, of course, on public land.

I would have thought that tourism would be the one to administer this. It would move it one step from Parks Victoria if that were the case. When such a body is based at Parks Victoria, obvious pressures are brought by Parks Victoria that perhaps could not happen if it were based in another department and one step removed. It would be very tempting for Parks Victoria not to actively support promotion, construction and upgrades of tracks perhaps because of budget constraints, access and other policies.

In conclusion, the Kennett government started two excellent programs: the rail trails program and the tracks and trails program. The government, when elected, has ridden on the backs of these initiatives, has had many photo opportunities — I know the Minister for Transport has been from the Murray River to the mountains for the opening of anything, including a coke can, on that rail trail, and has had many opportunities of getting photos in the daily media up there. I do not mind that; I do not mind the government of the day taking up the challenge and getting praise for it. What we want are the outcomes. I am suggesting again that this government look very closely at the opportunities presented to it — the political opportunities and certainly the opportunity to finish the job and perhaps help a lot of those rural communities.

I call upon the Bracks government to put its hand in its pocket and continue the two wonderful programs where the opportunity presents itself — —

Hon. G. R. Craige — Short arms, long pockets!

Hon. E. G. STONEY — Short arms and long pockets — I think you've hit it on the head, Mr Craige.

I call on the government to continue the program: seize the opportunity and continue to develop Victoria's tracks and trails and rail trails.

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — In rising to speak on the take-note motion, it is worth commenting that those on the other side who have spoken on the budget papers have expressed great pleasure with this budget. I guess one can understand how this is so, because in the short term they probably feel very good because spending is up and to a certain extent a surplus is being maintained. It is a very nice feeling to be able to hand out money to everybody.

It is a nice feeling to make people happy with handouts, but it is a nice feeling in the short run. In truth, expenditure under this government has been generous. I

might also describe it as splurging. That is fine while the money is rolling in, but how long will it keep rolling in and is it prudent? When the money is rolling in a prudent manager starts to invest, to husband, to squirrel — however you like to describe it — that money away, to put it aside for a rainy day, because one thing you can be sure of: a rainy day will come sooner or later.

There is no doubt that the economic growth of Australia has been outstanding, thanks in large measure to the federal government, which has managed the economy and the budget with great skill and great care. Through the introduction of the goods and services tax and its general management of the economy it has managed to see that Australia has missed the worst of the economic downturns that have affected other parts of the world. Victoria and the Victorian budget have benefited from that prudent management at the federal level.

I said there has been a splurging expenditure under the current government. This year's budget papers show that expenditure for the last financial year was something like \$24.2 billion, a massive \$1.285 billion over the \$22.96 billion that was allocated, an overexpenditure of some 5.6 per cent; that is a significant overspend of a budget.

The government should be worried about that, but the budget papers do not display any of that worry. Why? Because although expenditure has blown out by \$1.285 billion, income was over budget by \$1.541 billion, a 7 per cent increase. The overspending has been matched by the increases in income. The government should be worried about a 5.6 per cent blow-out, but it does not seem to be at all worried simply because that blow-out, luckily for it, has been matched by an increase in income. To a great extent that has been through greatly increased taxes that have not been particularly deeply felt by the citizens of Victoria because of the booming economy, which, as I said, has been achieved by the federal government rather than by the state government.

Since the last Kennett government budget taxes and charges for the average Victorian family have increased by about \$1500 per annum, a significant impost. How would a prudent manager who was getting increased income spend it if you decided to spend it rather than to squirrel it away or repay debt or fund superannuation liabilities and so on? A prudent manager would spend it in building on the infrastructure of the state — the type of activity that could be cut back when revenues start to decline — but that is not what the government has done. It has committed this bubble of revenue coming through the system to ongoing expenditure in wages,

salaries and the types of things that will be extremely difficult to cut back to match any cutback in revenue.

Although the budget papers show that to a certain extent debt has not increased, they also reveal, if one reads a little further, that debt has increased, because they show a \$1 billion increase in unfunded superannuation liabilities through the projection period.

I shall dwell in more detail on the soundness of budget expenditure and the risk, as I see it, at which this budget places Victoria, the risk inherent in taking a revenue bubble that is coming through and committing it to recurrent expenditure. If that revenue bubble passes, how do you go about meeting that recurrent expenditure to which you have signed yourself up? How realistic is it to have such high recurrent expenditure? You can already see how realistic some of that is, as page 17 of budget paper 2 shows a chart of per capita spending in selected portfolios for the various states of Australia.

The major portfolios, as we all know, are basically education, health and welfare. These charts clearly show that for 2001–02 Victoria spent more per capita on education than the other major states of New South Wales and Queensland. In health and welfare Victoria spent significantly more per capita than the states of New South Wales and Queensland.

Compared with the other major states for these two primary areas of expenditure — education, and health and welfare — the per capita spending in Victoria significantly outpaced the other states. Clearly there is an element of overexpenditure in those areas.

I turn to one of the most vital areas of a budget, the economic outlook that underpins the revenue forecasts on which the expenditure is based. If those forecasts are optimistic, the budget is fatally flawed. Once again budget paper 2, in chapter 3, deals with the economic conditions and outlook, particularly the world economic environment. In that context it is important to note the basic parameters on which the budget is based, which are derived from the budget overview document at page 8, which shows the economic growth forecast of 3.75 per cent for the current year, 2001–02, which one can expect to be fairly accurate. The growth forecasts for the subsequent four years of the outlook period are running at 3.5 per cent, which as we would all know is historically a high level of economic growth.

The unemployment rate for the current year of 6.25 per cent is projected to decline over the four years of the budget outlook period to 5.5 per cent. Obviously as the unemployment rate goes down, the costs on

government decrease and the revenue to government increases through the various taxes that apply to employment. It is a very optimistic forecast for unemployment to decline to that level.

Inflation is predicted to be maintained at 2.25 per cent. Once again that is a highly optimistic forecast, given inflation is creeping into the system and interest rates are on the increase. They are fairly optimistic assumptions on which to base the budget and it is important to put them in context. Page 46, chapter 3, budget paper 2 puts them into the international context. Victoria is projecting growth rates of about 3.5 per cent over the outlook period, whereas world growth rates are projected at between 1 and 1.5 per cent, and growth rates for the United States of America are projected at about 2 per cent. So we are projecting for Victoria a growth rate wildly in excess of the world rate, and very significantly in excess of that of the United States. Therefore one can only hope that the federal government — because it will be the federal government that is responsible for this — is able to match those growth rates. Certainly they could be seen to be very much at the higher range and therefore place the budget at some risk.

The extent of the risk is set out in chapter 6, page 111 of budget paper 2 — ‘Statement of risks’. It is a sensitivity analysis of the effect of a movement in many of those parameters and what the impact of that movement will be on the budget. I will quote from the table on page 113:

To assess sensitivity to change, the level of the economic indicator, in each case, is permanently increased by 1 percentage point in the first year (above the forecasts ...) and is then reverted back to the forecast growth rate.

It is not a cumulative increase or decrease of 1 per cent: it is a one-off step increase of 1 per cent and then a continuation of the previous growth rate — a very fine sensitivity measure. The measures look at gross state product, employment, consumer prices, average weekly earnings, share prices, property prices, interest rates et cetera and show that if there is a 1 per cent movement in one year — not a cumulative 1 per cent movement, but a 1 per cent movement in one year — the 2004–05 impact is \$320 million bottom line to the budget. It is fairly sensitive to those economic assumptions.

The prudent thing to do when you find yourself in the very happy position of having increased expenditure is to make sure that you use that expenditure to reduce debt, and if you want to spend some of that extra income, you use it on items like infrastructure which it is possible to curtail in the event that that increased

expenditure dries up. It is imprudent to commit all that increased expenditure to recurrent expenditure.

Unfortunately that is what this budget seeks to do because although things are fine now, this budget is laying the seeds for exactly the same sort of problem that the previous Labor government left to Victoria. During the good times it spent up big, and then when the economy turned — as it will inevitably turn — it found that its recurrent expenditure was way above what its reduced income could fund, and hence it was in big trouble.

In real terms all we see for this expenditure is an increase in political spin and an increase in bureaucracy. That is the recurrent expenditure on which I have dwelt. Hospital waiting list figures are up, given that Victoria spends more per capita in that area than all other states. The crime rate is up, and given that Victoria spends more per capita on education than any other state, things like teacher-student ratios have not significantly improved at all. What does all that mean? What does the fact that members on this side of the house are expressing this level of concern mean? What do the experts say?

One of the key changes that the Labor government brought into the budgeting process was to have the Auditor-General go over the budget and, as it were, sign it off. I would like to quote from a letter which was signed on 2 May 2002 by the Auditor-General, Mr J. W. Cameron, and is included in the budget papers. It is addressed to the members of the Parliament of Victoria. I had to take a copy of the budget papers to the photocopier in the library and put it on 150 per cent enlargement to be able to read this letter — it is presented in such small print in the budget that it is almost impossible to read, but it is instructive to read. I will read into *Hansard* certain sections of this letter to conclude my contribution to this debate.

The Auditor-General, in commenting on the various assumptions underlying the budget, says in part in the second paragraph of his letter:

Any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the estimated financial statements of the Victorian general government (budget) sector to which this report relates is disclaimed to any person other than the members of the Parliament of Victoria.

You could not get a wider ranging disclaimer than that, could you? Everything is disclaimed. The only people who have any accountability and responsibility for this, he says, are honourable members. He then goes on in the fourth paragraph to say, again in terms of his

comments on how the budget is prepared and the assumptions underlying it:

The review has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards applicable to review engagements —

and this is the key clause —

and has been limited primarily to inquiries of relevant personnel and assessments of the reasonableness of the key methodologies and processes followed ...

He then goes on to say:

These procedures do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, thus the level of assurance provided is less than that which would be given in an audit. Accordingly, an audit has not been performed and an audit opinion is not expressed.

Once again, a total disclaimer of all the underpinning assumptions.

In the fifth paragraph he reiterates that, saying:

As a result, I am not in a position to obtain the level of assurance necessary to express a positive opinion on those assumptions and the accompanying forecast information included in the estimated financial statements. Accordingly, an opinion is not expressed on whether the forecasts will be achieved.

If that were an audit comment in any form of financial report from an organisation, you could not get a more damning audit comment, simply saying:

Accordingly, an opinion is not expressed on whether the forecasts will be achieved.

In other words, he is expressing no opinion at all as to the extent that the budget stands up in any sense. So not only is this budget condemned by members on this side of the house but the fundamentals underlying the budget are condemned by the Auditor-General and, as I indicated before, that letter is reproduced hidden in the budget documents in about 6-point type, which is virtually impossible to read without a magnifying glass.

With those few comments, I conclude my contribution to the take-note motion.

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — I also rise to speak on the budget papers and to put on record that this is one more budget that is a missed opportunity to provide good government and sound financial management for the people of Victoria.

Unfortunately, the budget that was presented earlier this month by the Treasurer in the other place indicates that the Bracks Labor government is the highest taxing government in this state's history. A lot has been made about the fact that the government has managed to

balance the books and that it is not a deficit budget. But that is only half the battle when it comes to fiscal prudence.

I have made the point in this place on a number of occasions, and I make it again, that one of my major guiding principles in public life is to ensure that we can reduce the burden of taxation and other forms of government revenue collection, including fines and charges, on the residents of Victoria. It is not good enough to simply make the figures add up at the end of the day.

As legislators we should be aiming to reduce taxes. We should be aiming to reduce the financial impact upon the daily lives of Victorian citizens and Victorian business people.

Despite some tinkering at the edges and some adjustment in rates, this government is presiding over the largest increase in taxation revenues that I can recall — that is, the largest increase in taxation revenues in a generation. It is sitting back and collecting the revenue without a thought to giving it back to the people whose money it is. It is reaping the benefits of economic growth without returning those benefits to the people to ensure that economic growth can continue.

By sitting on its hands and doing nothing, by being the tax collector that it is, this government is sowing the seeds for an economic downturn in Victoria. It is creating serious disincentives to investment and a climate where people are assessing whether they should stay in this state or move elsewhere — be they business people or wage and salary earners.

There is no doubt that this budget provided one of the biggest opportunities of all time to deliver meaningful taxation reform and a meaningful reduction in the overall impact of taxation on the Victorian public. It is an opportunity missed and we will rue that for an entire generation because if you cannot provide for taxation reform and taxation reduction at times of economic prosperity — and we are living in times of relatively high economic prosperity, thanks mainly to the macro-economic settings of the federal government — and you cannot deliver the benefits of taxation decreases and taxation reform in this sort of time, you are certainly not going to deliver it in future years when there may necessarily be a need for belt tightening. There are many aspects of taxation revenue that should have been addressed by this government in this budget; they were not, and the government will stand condemned for its actions.

One of the largest areas of growth in taxation revenue, as all Victorians know, has been stamp duty, in particular stamp duty on the sale of property, and residential property in the main. Stamp duty on residential property is an iniquitous tax based on looking at the past and not at the future. In many ways it taxes the Australian dream. It stops people from purchasing their own homes and it stops people from changing their homes as their circumstances dictate. It is a tax that needs reform. The government cannot simply sit on its hands without adjusting stamp duty rates on residential properties while reaping the benefits of increasing property prices.

The government does not need to increase tax rates; it allows economic growth to increase the tax take for it. It is a passive recipient of the largest transfer of funds from Victorian home owners to a high-taxing government in the history of this state. It is just not good enough for this government to sit and wait, and it is not good enough for it to say the impact of stamp duty is none of its business. It is its business. It is acting as a tax collector, and it is not governing in the best interests of Victorians.

There are many ways in which the government can move to alleviate the impact of stamp duty on residential conveyancing, especially at times of rapidly increasing property prices. It can index the stamp duty scales; it can look at lifting the threshold; it can adjust those scales on a one-off basis; it can look at reducing the actual tax rate at each level of the scale; or it could get radical and start considering whether stamp duty on residential conveyancing is a tax we need in Australia and in Victoria in 2002.

What is not good enough is for this government to sit back and say that the average Victorian home owner who purchases a medium-price home in Melbourne will pay \$15 000 in stamp duty — a state tax — to the state government for the privilege of purchasing that home, when an equivalent first home buyer in Queensland will pay around about \$5000 in stamp duty for an equivalent property. That is three times the stamp duty level of Queensland.

I said earlier that government taxation policy is not just influencing investment, it is influencing lifestyle choices, and that is the sort of impost this government places on average Victorians, mainly young Victorian families looking to make a start on their own, get a roof over their heads and realise the Australian dream. This government is taxing them at the time they can afford it least. It is inequitable; it is iniquitous, and it should be looked at. This government is sitting on its hands. It stands condemned.

Another emerging stamp duty issue is related to the great problems that are being identified in the insurance industry. Premiums are increasing as a result of the realignment in the Australian insurance market after the collapse of HIH and also as a result of the realignment of the international insurance market following many major catastrophes, the most major being the very unfortunate events in New York of 11 September last year. The insurance industry is going through a shake-up, and rightly so. I have often privately described the whole basis of reinsurance throughout the world as the world's largest pyramid scheme. It is a system that was based on a 17th century premise that does not hold good in 2002. HIH found that out, and the major world reinsurers found that out after 11 September.

I would dare to say that the industry did not really pull up its socks back in the 1980s with the Lloyds crash, but it is finally getting its house in order, and as a result there is pain, there is suffering and there is an increase in premiums. What is this government doing? As we know, this government sits back and taxes insurance premiums through the imposition of stamp duty. Not only does it tax the premium, but in its classic tax-collector way this government sits back and taxes the GST payable on that insurance premium as well through the imposition of stamp duty on the GST portion.

As insurance premiums rise, the tax collector sits back and watches the money roll in. Mr Brumby, Mr Bracks and their mates in the Labor Party are just sitting back and rolling in the cash. They are benefiting from the misery of those poor unfortunate individuals, business people and community groups who are suffering huge increases in insurance premiums as a result of the massive realignment in the insurance industry.

This government pays lip-service to making some changes to assist those people — it goes through the motions — but the one clear mechanism at the government's disposal, to adjust the stamp duty payable on insurance premiums, it does not want to know about. It does not want to hear about it, and it runs away. It is the government's tax, and its tax take is going up as the level of pain and misery caused by the problem is going up out in our community.

Rather than assisting the people who are suffering as a result of increased insurance premiums, this government sits back and collects the dollars in silence — and it is condemned by its silence. It is a high-taxing government that does not care about the impact of its high-taxing policies on the people of Victoria whom it purports to represent and support. The

public should be aware of that, and the public should not let this government get away with it.

There are other taxes. We could start on payroll tax and go through the impacts of payroll tax. We could start talking about the impact of Workcover premiums on businesses and the fact that again this year the government has chosen not to adjust the premium rates. Back in 1999 it gave a commitment to look at reducing the impact of its totally nonsensical legislative changes that led to 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 per cent increases for Victorian businesses in their Workcover premiums, but again this year this government walked away from it.

No matter where we look on the taxation side, despite some pyrrhic cuts, this government is sitting back and acting as the greatest tax collector in this state's history. It should stand condemned. It would stand condemned if all it did was collect the tax and let it sit in a bank vault or in the Treasury, but it is further condemned by what it is doing with the money, because, as other speakers before me have pointed out, it is not only taxing Victorians far too heavily, it is spending like a drunken sailor.

The government is bloating the public service, paying exorbitant salary increases that can only have an inflationary effect as their impact reverberates through the marketplace. It is not providing for the real needs of the Victorian community. You only need to look at my electorate of Monash Province to see why this government is letting the people of Monash Province down on the expenditure side of the budget as well as on the revenue side. Whilst this government sits back and collects the dollars, it gives them away to its mates. It calls committees of inquiry, increases public service salaries and positions in the public service and spends on glossy brochures and advertising campaigns to tell us how good and fantastic it is, but it does not deliver real infrastructure and service benefits to the people of Victoria.

Monash Province is an inner urban area. My electorate borders the central business district of Melbourne, and it has experienced significant change in the past decade — an amazing demographic transformation. It is a vibrant place, a place people want to live in, but with the return of the population from the middle and outer suburbs to the city areas we have emerging infrastructure needs that this government has completely ignored.

Earlier today in my member's statement I highlighted the need for more public open space. There is a great demand for public open space for sporting fields and parks. Does this government care? No. It is actually

reducing the size of the Albert Park reserve. I know we need an extension to the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, but it should not be achieved at the expense of parkland and open space for which there is a crying need. The government is not providing in that area.

On the topic of road funding, particularly in the area I represent, this government stands condemned by its inaction. The people of Port Melbourne have been crying out for the dockside road to be built. It was scheduled in the 1990s to be built in the 2002–03 financial year. It was in the forward estimates back when the Liberal Party was in government. Here we are with the budget delivered for the 2002–03 year. Is there any funding for the dockside road? No, it has completely disappeared. It has been wiped off the agenda. The dockside road is needed to divert the traffic that is currently going down Williamstown Road and through the residential areas of Port Melbourne from the port of Melbourne directly onto the West Gate Freeway by providing a direct connection from Todd Road through to Webb Dock. It is a road that is absolutely necessary to stop the impact of heavy through traffic on the residents of Port Melbourne.

We know the port of Melbourne is expanding and its lift rates are getting better because of a protracted battle to make our ports more competitive. More ships are coming in, more containers are being unloaded and more trucks are loading those containers to take them to market. That is a good thing; we want to encourage that, but we do not want the truck traffic driving in front of people's lounge rooms and bedrooms. We do not want it travelling through residential streets. That road has been planned and scheduled and should have been built, but it is not being built. The Labor Party stands condemned. The Deputy Premier, who is the local lower house member for Albert Park, stands condemned for ignoring the residents of Port Melbourne, who have been demanding the building of the dock road. Now it is not going to be built; it is nowhere in the forward estimates. This government stands condemned for that.

There are other projects that desperately need road funding. We need significant resurfacing of other major roads in the area — roads like Toorak Road. The part of the Princes Highway known as Dandenong Road that comes through my electorate needs resurfacing. We need black spot funding. The corner of Chapel Street and Dandenong Road, to which my colleague the Honourable Andrea Coote referred yesterday in this place, is a significant black spot. Further down on Chapel Street, at the intersection with Peel Street, is an identified black spot that has not been funded by this government. The government chose not to fund that

high-accident area in its black spot program. There is no funding there. We need our major roads looked at. They are carrying more and more traffic as a result of changes in the demographics of the area, yet the government is doing nothing.

Particularly in the area of education this government has let Monash Province down. The influx of new residents has seen burgeoning numbers of children at local schools. Our local schools are at bursting point throughout the electorate. The Port Melbourne school is at bursting point. Right through South Melbourne, Albert Park and St Kilda schools are at capacity, as they are also at Prahran and Caulfield, and the three primary schools in Malvern — Lloyd Street, Malvern and Malvern Central primary schools — are well beyond their capacity. There is an urgent need for new capital funding for schools in the area to meet the increased demand.

I put on record that I know other areas have urgent capital works needs and I know the standard answer of the Department of Education and Training is, 'When the school numbers increase the first thing we do is bring in some portables'. That can be a solution and a medium-term solution for a lot of schools, especially those in outer areas on large blocks of land. But when you come into the inner city and you are dealing with schools built over 100 years ago, with very limited open space as it is, the choices are currently to put in a portable or have a playground. If you put in a portable in inner city schools, there is no play area. This government and the Department of Education and Training should know this and should make a priority of these inner urban areas that cannot simply expand out into the open space as other schools do, because these schools do not have open space. They have dire needs.

The numbers in the schools are expanding at an alarming rate. People with young families are moving back into the area, which is a great thing. There has been a rejuvenation of inner suburbs from Port Melbourne through to the other end of my province at Chadstone. Governments need to provide infrastructure to support the families moving into the area. It is not good enough to ignore them; it is not good enough to squander the taxation dollars this government is collecting on glossy brochures, on advertising campaigns and on hundreds of reviews, committees and inquiries. It is not good enough to bloat the public service when there is an urgent need for capital works programs to increase the size of our local schools, to go up rather than out and take up valuable playground space.

The government is doing nothing. It is sitting on its hands. This is a budget of wasted opportunities. This is a budget that may well deliver to the Labor Party's true believers in the trade union movement and the ranks of the Labor Party, who like to fight among themselves at state conferences and so on, more union membership. I do not know. But I know what it does not deliver: it does not deliver positive outcomes for the people of Victoria and of Monash Province. They are the Labor government's forgotten people. They are the people this government expects to continue to pay higher and higher taxes. They are the people the government also expects to have second-class infrastructure and services. It is not good enough. This government should be less about taxing and more about delivering. It is great and wonderful at taxing — that is the one thing the government is expert at. Unfortunately, it is a shambles in everything else.

The people of Monash Province condemn the government for again ignoring their needs and demands so it can fill its coffers and help out its mates.

Debate adjourned for Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) on motion of Hon. Bill Forwood.

Debate adjourned until later this day.

ELECTORAL BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 28 May; motion of Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation).

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — The fundamental foundation of our democracy is the voting system we have and the capacity we have to elect people to Parliament to represent us. It is important that we have a system that is not only fair and transparent but is also seen to be fair and transparent. It is vital that we have an electoral process that the people of Victoria have absolute confidence in.

After the 1999 state election the Victorian Electoral Commission produced a substantial two-volume report to Parliament. In the introduction to the report the Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry, states:

This report comments on the performance of critical election arrangements and procedures and, where appropriate, indicates directions for future improvement. The report also makes a number of recommendations to deal with areas in need of urgent legislative change.

Finally, the contribution made by the VEC's staff, who provided tireless effort and personal commitment to ensure

the highest quality electoral services were provided to the electors of Victoria, should be acknowledged.

I have been intimately involved in elections in Victoria for some time, and I believe we can all agree that we have had the highest quality of electoral services. As the second-reading speech points out, The Constitution Act Amendment Act, the bible by which we run our elections, was enacted in 1958 and was in need of some rewriting and updating. Examples were given in the second-reading speech. I make the point that to have an electoral act which sets out clearly the rights and obligations of all participants in the electoral process, from voters to candidates to political parties, is important.

Having flagged in his foreword that he believes there are areas in need of urgent legislative change, on pages 60 to 62 of the report, the Electoral Commissioner details the changes he believes are important under the heading 'Recommendations for legislative change'. The first is a rewrite of Victoria's electoral legislation — the bill with which we are dealing today. I make the point that this bill has 175 pages, so it is a substantial rewrite. It is in 12 parts. It is important that I put the various parts of the bill on the record.

Part 1 deals with the preliminary issues. Part 2 deals with the establishment of the Victorian Electoral Commission, which will become a body corporate with the Electoral Commissioner the sole member of that corporation. Part 3 goes into detail about the enrolment procedures and information. Part 4 refers to the registration of political parties. There has been some interest recently in what constitutes a political party.

Hon. R. M. Hallam — Particularly in Queensland.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Particularly in Queensland. One notes the recent events there in relation to the founder of the One Nation party. It is important that those issues be dealt with in the bill. Part 5 refers to the election procedures in detail. Part 6 deals with voting. Part 7 deals with the election results, which come after the voting process and in which we are all intimately interested.

Hon. W. R. Baxter interjected.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — True. It is worth picking up Mr Baxter's interjection. There are parts of the world that do not have the robust system we have in this state nor the confidence in the results of that system. Victoria is very fortunate in that we have a system that works and also a system in which we can have confidence. I make the point that in the last federal election two seats were won by a margin of less than

100 votes when the total number of votes counted was over 80 000. At the last state election the seat of Geelong was won by 16 votes and the Honourable Philip Davis had a landslide in Gippsland Province of around 600 out of about 135 000 electors.

Part 8 deals with the Court of Disputed Returns. The system of having a Supreme Court judge acting as the Court of Disputed Returns is maintained. Part 9 deals with enforcement and offences. Part 10 refers to general provisions, evidentiary provisions, offences by corporations and refunds of deposits. Part 11 refers to transitional inconsequential matters, and part 12 deals with election expenditure and brings public funding into Victoria. I will touch on that later.

The point I was making is that on page 60 of the Electoral Commissioner's report Mr Barry asked for a rewrite of Victoria's electoral legislation. He states:

Victoria needs coherent electoral legislation written in plain English.

I think that is a sensible approach and I am impressed by the way this process has taken place.

As one would expect with a piece of legislation like this, there was real interest in what was happening. On more than one occasion I was fortunate to be briefed by officers of the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and in particular Paul Thornton-Smith, who went out of his way to assist me to come to grips with the issues. I place on record my congratulations to the officers and to the staff of the Attorney-General for their assistance in this matter.

When reading the new legislation I was concerned to understand where each bit came from, and I have in my hand a document that was prepared for the Liberal Party by the VEC which took each clause of the new bill and said, 'This is its provenance, this is where it came from; it is a direct take from the old act; it is a modified version of what we want to do; it is based on the commonwealth model'. It became the way that I could get an understanding of the way we were going with the bill. It enabled me to be fully confident that I was across the issues in the bill, and in this circumstance I think that was important. I know the amount of work that went into producing a clause-by-clause analysis of the bill and I am grateful for the efforts that the VEC put in to make its analysis available to me. It was because of that, as I said, that the bill that comes before the house today is one that the Liberal Party can support.

The second part of the recommendations for legislative change was crucial: only those electors who are

enrolled and live in the electorate should be entitled to vote in the election. There were real principles about that — where people live, how long they have lived there and issues such as that. This request for legislative change is in clause 87 of the bill, which talks about the entitlement to vote and goes through what an elector is, where they come from, how it can work and goes on to similar issues. This matter is also covered in clause 90 of the bill which is the clause that lists questions that must be asked of a voter, such as: what is your full name, where do you live, have you voted before in the election today? That request is picked up in those two clauses.

Qualification to be a candidate is also an amendment in this bill to the Constitution Act.

The bill also deals with the death of a candidate on election day. We all remember the extraordinarily unfortunate death of Peter McLellan, the then sitting member for Frankston East at the time of the last election, who died on voting day and caused a supplementary by-election but also caused some head-scratching on that particular day.

The bill also deals with web sites. It deals with postal voting being replaced with pre-poll voting. The bill brings in a change of language, and I do not object to that. We now have election centres rather than polling booths; we now have election managers rather than returning officers —

Hon. N. B. Lucas — What's in a name?

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — What's in a name, Mr Lucas asks. We now have clear English, and that is an advance. I note that one of the recommendations on page 62 which would have had the effect of allowing a postal vote that had been postmarked the Sunday after an election to be counted was not accepted, and there were quite obvious reasons for that. Despite the fact that the aim of the VEC was to ensure that everyone who wanted to vote could vote, it would not be appropriate to allow postal voting the day after polling day. I see a nod from the Deputy Leader of the Government, and I suspect he is of a similar mind, although I know he can speak for himself. We thought about that, and on balance we believe the bill is right in what it has done in this regard.

There was also a review of offences and penalties. The administrative side of the bill as requested by the Victorian Electoral Commissioner has been done and done well and is appropriate and, as stated in the conclusion of the second-reading speech:

The bill is clear, simple, rationally organised, and more accessible to voters and other stakeholders in the electoral process. It sets out essential principles of electoral law ...

I think that is sensible and worthy of support.

Last week I noticed that the Standing Committee on Electoral Matters of the federal Parliament issued a call for submissions on the recent federal election. My view is that a major change to electoral procedures like this — and I hope that if we ever go down this road again this could be taken into account — should be more widely canvassed than this one was. I understand that last year quite some work was done in preparing the bill before us today but that because of the federal election other things got in the way. My belief is that if you want to change the electoral laws perhaps providing a parliamentary inquiry or at least an exposure draft or some process that would enable all people to be involved might be wise. As I said, I am comfortable with this, but I think the federal model is one that could be considered.

The final part of the bill is part 12. The Liberal Party has traditionally been opposed to public funding of elections, but I note that public funding is now an integral and normal part of federal elections and elections in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, and I am pretty sure that they will become the standard for elections across Australia over time.

I was lobbied by some longstanding friends and acquaintances who strongly put to me that this was against our philosophy and that it was not an appropriate position for the Liberal Party to support or accept. My belief is that it is most important that people voting on polling day have in front of them information on which to make an informed decision.

Honourable members know it is an extraordinarily expensive process to run an election now. Bringing in the commonwealth system of \$1.20 per vote is a sensible way to ensure that political parties and/or candidates and individuals who get more than 4 per cent of the vote in a particular seat have some basic funding which enables them to communicate their views to the voters they wish to persuade to vote for them. It is becoming more and more difficult to raise funds and at the same time elections are getting more and more expensive. The commonwealth model has been adopted where there is sensible disclosure of that.

We have not gone the full way with the commonwealth model because in the proposed Victorian model you must spend the money in order to receive the public funding component. A profit cannot be made because

you run for Parliament. Candidates will be entitled to claim up to the amount that they have spent only if they get more than 4 per cent of the vote.

With those few words I indicate on behalf of the Liberal Party that it supports this legislation and looks forward to fighting the next election according to its rules. I say to the government: bring it on!

Hon. GAVIN JENNINGS (Melbourne) — One pleasant aspect of living in Victoria, indeed Australia, is our democratic traditions and the electoral processes, of which Australians are the beneficiaries. There are many fine democratic traditions within this nation.

Anybody who is an observer of what happens in the Legislative Council in the Victorian Parliament knows that on many occasions I bring into question the contribution of the Legislative Council to our democratic institutions, but that will be a debate for another time. In this debate we should focus on the contribution the electoral system plays in our democracy, and the opportunities there are for voters to participate in an electoral process which is more transparent, easier to gain access to, and provides for a degree of accountability in terms of the validation of the voters roll in the electoral processes. The bill will make a positive contribution to the way our democracy works.

An additional feature of the bill is that it provides an opportunity for public funding of election campaigns. Many people in the Australian community may be sceptical, if not cynical, about the value of the opportunity for public funding of election campaigns. Let me be absolutely positive in my affirmation of the principle of public funding on the basis of increased access to the public domain for minority parties and individual candidates. It will increase their opportunity to make an impact on the voters during the electoral cycle and to canvass a broader range of issues within election campaigns. The opportunity to place those points of view in the electoral marketplace has been previously denied them because they have not had access to sufficient funds.

Obviously the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the National Party, all of whom will have members contributing to this debate, will be major beneficiaries because traditionally in the election outcomes over the last century the majority of votes have landed on the pile of either the ALP or the Liberal Party, in particular. Indeed, one would anticipate that to be the case in the future.

I say to any candidates from minor political parties who may have ambitions about my seat at the next election: I do not cringe from the possibility of them mounting a successful campaign from the left or the right in terms of making a claim for my seat. That is their right and public funding will provide that opportunity for candidates of political parties from the left and right of the ALP. That excellent opportunity will be afforded to candidates across the political spectrum.

The bill provides for a range of reforms that were identified in a comprehensive review of the 1999 election undertaken by the Victorian Electoral Commission under the stewardship of Colin Barry and his team. That review proved a useful guide for the government and the Parliament on the ways in which our electoral system can be improved. It culminates in the bill before the house today.

The bill is designed to do a number of things: to improve the administrative procedures and conduct of elections and to make it easier for candidates and other election stakeholders to understand the electoral processes and their opportunities to participate in this vibrant democracy. In terms of the conduct of that election, the bill will enable the Victorian Electoral Commission to introduce new technology to assist in the generation of voters rolls, the maintenance of voters rolls, and the conduct of ballots as they occur on election day.

The bill provides the head of power for the Victoria Electoral Commission to issue election manuals and directions regarding these procedures and to make them available to members of the Victorian community, members of Parliament, registered political parties, and prospective candidates.

Many aspects of our electoral procedures under statute need to be brought into line. In many ways we have an antiquated approach to our election law. It is almost like a camel that has been constructed by committee and variation. It is a very clumsy legal animal. It dates back in various forms through the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1958 to the original designation in the 1850s. The legislative framework of the election law in this state is a cumbersome construction.

There were clearly a number of deficiencies in that legislative framework and the government intends to address them with a total rewrite of the electoral law. We found the existing regime was overly prescriptive in certain areas and very tightly regulated, yet had monumental variation and a significant number of blind spots in its regulatory regime about how elections were undertaken. In a fashion similar to my contribution in

the last few minutes, the language is fairly cumbersome and convoluted and does not assist the Victorian community to understand their election law. It certainly was not conversant with modern election practices and the way in which elections take place.

I would not want to impart any motivation for some conservative members of the chamber to perhaps speculate on why they may be pleased to repeal certain elements of the act, such as those that provide a sanction for members of the Victorian community to take a gun, pistol, sword or bludgeon to the polling place. I am certain no members of this chamber would advocate the repeal of those sections on the assumption that they would be taking their bludgeons to the next polling day. That is a clear demonstration of the antiquated nature of the electoral laws that apply up until this very day and until the new act receives royal assent. So we can see that there are a number of antiquated aspects of the current laws that needed to be made right.

The bill provides, as has been indicated in the debate already, the opportunity for political parties to receive funding for their election campaigns — which is a pre-existing feature in the commonwealth jurisdiction and in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. It provides an opportunity for political parties from right across the spectrum and, indeed, independent candidates, if they receive 4 per cent of the vote, to be able to claim their expenses for the costs they have borne in getting their message to the people.

A number of people in the community may be sceptical about that because they think it is motivated by self-interest. It may be in part, but there is a broad democratic principle that underpins access to information in the modern world, which is dictated by access to the media and often requires paid advertising to get your message across — particularly for those people in the margins of the political debate, those emerging minor parties and independents that have been a feature of electoral outcomes in the last few years both in Victoria and across the nation. This bill provides the opportunity for a reimbursement of \$1.20 per vote received by those parties and candidates, and will be payable upon verification through an auditor's statement that those costs have been borne during the course of an election campaign.

The bill provides powers for the Victorian Electoral Commission to be satisfied that they are legitimate expenses and have been incurred during election campaigns. The commission will be empowered to receive additional information if it is dissatisfied about

the quality of information it has received about those claims. It will have powers to enforce penalties upon those who make false claims.

As has been indicated, there is no opportunity within this scheme for profiteering to occur in relation to those claims. It will not be possible, in the Victorian model, for any candidate or party to make a claim and receive funding for amounts in excess of what they have expended in election campaigns. I believe this is clearly preferable to the commonwealth government system, which has in the past enabled parties to receive moneys in excess of their expenditure during the election campaign.

A key element relating to the question of providing for public funding of election campaigns is an undertaking the Labor Party took to the 1999 election — to cap the donations of gaming licence operators. In fact, it was an undertaking that we cheerfully made in the course of that election. We believe that was responded to positively by the people of Victoria, and we have satisfied that undertaking in this piece of legislation.

In the deliberations of how that cap of political donations may apply, the government explored a range of options of how to legally ensure that that cap was established and maintained, and decided to create the legal link between the licences that the gaming operators hold to generate their income, and that is the device that has been provided in the bill. A holder of a gaming licence is prohibited from donating in excess of \$50 000 in a financial year to any political party. If it is found through the returns, as assessed by the Victorian Electoral Commission, that a donation in excess of \$50 000 has been made there will be a requirement to return those additional funds to the state effectively in the form of a fine both of the donor and the recipient of that donation.

In exploring the legislative options for creating that legal connection between gaming licences, the government has contemplated extending that ban of the cap of donations to licences that generate income for any corporation that holds them within Victoria. The Attorney-General has indicated in the second-reading speech that it is his intention to make a reference to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee to make recommendations about how that roping-in mechanism for other licence-holders may be given effect and for the committee to provide advice to the Parliament by 30 June 2003 about how that mechanism may be used to broaden the scope of the capping of donations to political parties.

I shall briefly outline the range of measures that apply to the election process itself that form the heart of the substantial rewrite of the bill and run through how it increases accountability, transparency and access to elections in our vibrant democracy. They fall under various categories. The impacts of the bill on electors are aimed at encouraging more Victorians to vote in elections by making it easier for them to enrol in the first instance and then to cast their vote at election time. By various means of improving the technical capability of the Victorian Electoral Commission the bill makes it easier for electors to update their enrolment using procedures operated by the commission, so electors can provide their change of address and other information in an easier way. The commission will be obliged to invite voters to update their enrolment on their changed circumstances. There will be a more interactive relationship between the commission and the voter.

Privacy provisions are being added to the legislation to enhance the security of the voters roll. Electoral rolls will not be available for sale, and the use of those voters rolls will relate wholly and solely to electoral matters rather than being used for telemarketing or put to any other purpose that may facilitate either lobbying or for commercial activity outside the electoral process. As I have indicated, the commission will introduce technology that will assist voters to use computer technology for interstate and overseas locations and to provide early voting opportunities.

The bill tightens the restrictions in relation to the eligibility of voters and is more prescriptive than the existing regime in ensuring that electors must enrol at their principal place of residence and can only vote from that residence and must have resided at that location for more than three months before the election date.

The impact of the bill on political parties is that in a more coherent way than we have ever seen before it outlines the duties and obligations of political parties in the electoral process. It guarantees political parties access to enrolment information about ordinary, postal and absent voters from the Victorian Electoral Commission. It includes a requirement for the registration of political parties to be tightened so that we have a degree of confidence in our democracy that only those parties that can generate substantial community support will be registered. It is the critical threshold 4 per cent again. It is the same trigger that applies to the availability of political donations. The 4 per cent is the figure that applies to both of those instances.

If a party falls below the 4 per cent return across the seats it contests at an election, the bill requires the Victorian Electoral Commission to trigger a review about its ongoing registration. A number of political parties that were particularly prominent in the 1950s and maybe into the early 1970s disappeared by the wayside, about which I do not cry crocodile tears. The way in which the commission will operate in the future is that once a particular political party's support diminishes and is below that 4 per cent trigger it will be deregistered.

The impact of the bill upon individual candidates is that the candidate will be required to be enrolled as an elector instead of being merely entitled to enrol. We will not see the bizarre situation of somebody potentially being elected to the Victorian Parliament who was not on the electoral roll. In the name of increasing security and confidentiality, the bill sets limits of access to information about candidates so that only the candidate's name and nominated contact details will be made available by the commission.

The impacts of the bill on the commission itself, as I have indicated in my contribution, fall into a number of categories. They assist the commission in establishing and maintaining modern electoral management practices. The commission itself will consist of the Electoral Commissioner and become a corporatised body with the powers and duties to be transferred to the VEC.

A number of name changes are being made by the bill. Responding as a citizen, I believe some are useful and some are obscure regarding the role that may be undertaken by members of the VEC or the locations where elections may take place. For better or for worse, swings and roundabouts, returning officers will now be known as electoral managers. From a political party's perspective, if election outcomes could be managed, as representatives of the Parliament we may all be a lot happier! That is something in my experience that cannot be managed.

Polling day in future will be known as election day; polling places will be known as voting centres; pre-poll voting, hospital voting and interstate and overseas voting will be known as early voting; and the locations for such services will be early voting centres.

In relation to early voting centres, there will be an opportunity for the Victorian Electoral Commission to determine whether it is a mobile voting centre or a fixed voting centre to ensure that there is equitable and reasonable access, particularly for those Victorian citizens who may find themselves in hospitals or

nursing homes during the course of an election campaign. The commission is obliged under the bill to be sensitive and mindful of those access issues to guarantee maximum voter access to polling day — it is not called polling day any more, it is election day.

Through the use of improved management systems and technology we would anticipate that the electoral commission will encourage more Victorian citizens to be active participants in the electoral process, and this a good thing for our democracy.

On the way through there has been a clear role played by Colin Barry and his team at the VEC, which includes some good citizens now in the advisers box, and a very positive role has been played by the Department of Justice — a number of key advisers to the Attorney-General have played a prominent role in this exercise. I personally would like to put on the record my gratitude to a good friend of mine, Daniel Andrews, for his contribution to the delivery of these measures, and we look forward to future elections being operated in an efficient, transparent manner that will add to our democracy and the traditions that we are particularly proud of in Victoria. We would hope that with improved participation and improved access to election campaigning from people from right across the political spectrum, this can only enhance our vibrant democracy, and I too look forward to the next election.

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I am pleased to join with the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Government in supporting the bill before the house — the update and rewrite of the electoral provisions of this state.

I have thought for some time that it was a little curious that these provisions were contained in the quaintly named The Constitution Act Amendment Act, and I think it is quite a good idea that these provisions be incorporated in a single act that has the more obvious title of Electoral Act.

I have no objection at all to the update of the language that is used, although I share Mr Jennings's cynicism to a degree, I suppose, as to whether some of the descriptions are entirely clear. For old stagers such as some of us in this house it will take some time to get our minds around the new terms. I have been a booth worker at every state and federal election in Victoria since 1961. Now I am going to have to call myself a centre worker, apparently, instead of a booth worker. Nevertheless I think it will be better for the public at large that odd names like 'returning officer' and 'polling place', which are not entirely clear to people who do not deal with politics every day of the week

have been changed. So to that extent I think these name changes are acceptable and will become commonplace and widely understood after an election or two.

It has been noted by previous speakers how fortunate we are in this state and this nation to have a very robust electoral system. Its integrity is absolutely unquestioned, and I think that that is a safeguard and benefit which we should cling to dearly and take every opportunity we have to protect it and safeguard the integrity of the voting system.

On top of that, in this state we are fortunate that it is one vote, one value. We are not assailed by gerrymanders or malapportionment, and the will of the electors can be expressed with confidence and be reflected in the membership of a parliament that is elected to be in direct relationship to what the electors intended.

I similarly do not have a particular objection to some of the archaic provisions being repealed. I would not be bringing a bludgeon along to a polling place, and I have not done so — although I have to say, regrettably, that during the Benalla by-election it might have been handy before the booths opened if I had had a bludgeon available because some apparatchiks came up from Melbourne on behalf of the Australian Labor Party and conducted themselves in a manner that those of us in country Victoria were unaccustomed to. The Labor apparatchiks removed banners and posters that had been erected by other parties and erected their own banners in front of others which had already been placed there by representatives of other candidates. A particularly nasty situation developed at the Benalla West Primary School which took some settling down. I do not know whether that sort of activity is customary in the suburbs of Melbourne on election day. I hope not, and I expect it is not, but it certainly occurred at the time of the Benalla by-election and left a very bad taste in the mouths of quite a few people.

The bill goes to a number of issues which have been canvassed by the previous two speakers, and I am not going to go through them all again. Obviously the accuracy of the electoral register and the electoral roll is very important indeed. It seems to me it must be a massive job for the VEC to keep the roll up to date because not everyone is as conscientious as they might be in advising the electoral office of their change of residence. The extension of the provisions to ask electricity retailers to supply some information to the commission at first glance seems to be a bit curious, but from my discussions with Mr Barry and others I can see that that is a resource that is a fairly accurate record of where people live. Everyone has to have electricity connected and register with the retailers. I do not have

any objection to appropriate arrangements being made with the electricity retailers to provide information which might assist in keeping the electoral roll in an accurate and up-to-date condition.

I am a little concerned, though, about the overreaction we seem to have in this community in terms of privacy. I cannot see for the life of me why the electoral roll cannot be a more public document than is envisaged under this act. My experience over many years has been that the electoral roll has been a good resource document in the community, used for altruistic and beneficial purposes. On any instance in which I have been involved, I have never seen it used inappropriately. I always thought at the time under the Cain government when the roll was changed to delete gender and occupation that it was more difficult to use it and actually locate the person whom you were hoping to find, and usually you were hoping to find that person for a reason which was going to be beneficial to that person.

I just sound this warning so we do not get too carried away with some of these privacy issues, which seem to be very fashionable at the moment. If I were being entirely cynical I would say there is an element of hypocrisy in this bill, because it extends the amount of information which will be made available about the electoral roll to political parties and candidates and members of Parliament but further restricts what is available to the general public. In a sense I think that is an unwise thing to be doing. That will increase cynicism about politicians in the community rather than lessen it because it will be seen by some people that we are in fact looking after ourselves and we are restricting what is available to them.

I also support the tightening up of what names people can register themselves under on the electoral roll, or indeed register a political party. We have had numerous examples of self-publicists wanting to register names that were clearly concoctions, contrivances or attempts to embarrass either a government or an individual. We have also seen people attempting to register political parties so their names can appear on thousands of ballot papers simply as a publicity stunt, a lobbying exercise or a lever, without being at all serious about being elected to Parliament. The changes that are contemplated to those provisions are wise and fully supportable.

I likewise endorse the proposals that Mr Jennings has just covered for the registration of parties and the deregistration of those parties that either do not stand at least one candidate over a period of five years or whose membership appears to have fallen under the required

number, as well as the proposal that once registered parties should not remain registered forever and that there ought to be a review mechanism. Those issues are properly covered in this bill, and I certainly support those provisions.

I also note the change of name from pre-poll voting to early voting. That is obviously a sensible name change. Pre-poll voting was a bit of a misnomer in some people's minds. I have had discussions with the Electoral Commissioner about pre-poll voting, or early voting as it is now to be called. While I do not dispute the principle that we need to make provision for persons who will not easily be able to vote on election day and that they should have an opportunity to vote early and directly without having to formally apply for a postal vote, I would be concerned if early voting were to be extended to establish early voting centres widely throughout electorates in the fortnight preceding voting day.

I do not have any objection at all to giving people the capacity to go and vote at the election manager's office in each Assembly electorate, as I think that is appropriate, but in the Benalla by-election pre-poll voting centres, as they were then called, were established at Benalla, Mansfield, Bright and Yarrowonga. The logic of that was to enable people who needed to lodge a pre-poll vote to be able to access a pre-poll vote centre easily, and yes they achieved that, but by the extension of that logic if you were providing ease of voting for people at Mansfield why not provide similar ease for the people of Nagambie, for example, or Myrtleford or wherever?

It would seem logical that if you are going to have more than one pre-poll voting centre you would need to have one at each town of reasonably significant size. The problem with doing that is, of course, that it is a huge resource requirement not only for the electoral commission but also for the political parties, which feel they need to man those booths. I do not believe the number of people pre-poll voting justifies an extension of facilities to that degree.

The other problem I have with encouraging pre-poll voting — which is what you would do if you established centres all over the place — is that people may vote early then something might happen during the election campaign, an issue may arise or a very significant development may occur which would have changed the way they voted, but it would be too late, and they may well be disappointed that they did not wait until nearer to voting day. I sound a warning against an undue extension of pre-poll voting.

I place on record that my discussions with Mr Barry have been fruitful. He has taken my concerns on board, and I hope that at a general election, yes, we will have early voting available at each election manager's office in each Assembly district, but that will be about the extent of it unless there are particular extenuating circumstances that dictate otherwise. One such circumstance might be in the new seat of Lowan, with the cities of Horsham and Hamilton at either end of the electorate, where it may well be necessary to have an early voting centre at each of those towns. I do not object to that, but what I am trying to do is quarantine the establishment of early voting centres to locations where it can be clearly demonstrated to be warranted.

I also note in passing that we need election managers to exercise a bit of commonsense about where party workers can operate from early voting centres. We have not had too much difficulty in Victorian elections, but I will give the house an example of what occurred in the federal election last year in the seat of Indi. At a pre-poll voting centre in Stanley Street, Wodonga, the returning officer insisted on the booth party workers being 6 metres from the door. That had the effect of pushing them up in front of a business two doors removed from the returning officer's premises. When I spoke with the returning officer and suggested that that was a bit unreasonable, he suggested I speak with his superior in Wangaratta, the divisional returning officer, which I did. She gave me the glorious answer that the rules were the rules and she was there to enforce them, so I did no good there.

I waited until after the election and then wrote to the federal electoral commissioner and pointed this out. I said that we needed a commonsense set of rules and that enforcing the 6-metre rule was not always appropriate. I also pointed out to him that I had had cause during the course of the election to take a person to pre-poll vote in the division of Kooyong and that to my surprise and satisfaction I found the three booth workers from the Liberal Party, the Labor Party and the Democrats in the foyer of the building immediately outside the returning officer's door. That was a quite sensible and practical arrangement, rather than what we had seen in Wodonga.

This week I received a reply, not from the commonwealth electoral commissioner — I would have thought when a member of Parliament writes to the electoral commissioner one might have got a reply from the commissioner himself — but from someone in the office, who basically said that I did not know what I was talking about and that the reason the 6-metre rule was enforced was that the booth workers were causing congestion outside the returning officer's office. It so

happens that the booth was being manned only by the National Party and the Liberal Party on the occasion about which I made my representations to the returning officer, so it could hardly be contended that the two persons outside the door were causing congestion when fewer than 20 people a day were voting on those early days.

I put on the record that these are the sorts of ridiculous answers one tends to get on occasions. I am pleased to say that the Victorian system works much better than the federal system and that I will be further pursuing the matter with the federal electoral commissioner because the last thing we want during elections is the inappropriate application of rules and regulations with no commonsense being used, to the detriment of businesses that have nothing to do with the election at all.

I will move on to what is probably the significant new feature of the bill — that is, election funding. I know there has been a little bit of angst in some quarters about public funding of elections, and I confess that in the early days I was philosophically opposed to the concept myself. However, I have changed my mind for a number of reasons. One is that I believe one of the threats to democracy that we have in this nation is the declining direct involvement in the political process by members of the public. There is no doubt at all that a lot fewer people are paid-up financial members of political parties these days than was the case in the 1950s, in particular the major parties and to some extent the smaller parties. Even more importantly, there are fewer and fewer people actively involved, even though they might be financial members of a political party.

It seems to me that one of the dangers is that parties therefore rely more and more on donations, and that has with it some element — I put it no higher than that — of undue influence, because some element of undue influence can be exercised by people making a substantial monetary contribution to a political party. If in the absence of a high membership base parties have to rely more and more on donations, then consequences will flow therefrom. I believe it is quite acceptable to use public funding to give political parties the resources they need to at least get their message out, and of course it would be of greater assistance to smaller parties than larger ones. We know the Labor Party is funded to a fairly generous degree by the unions.

We know that corporations, whilst they tend to be more even-handed than the unions and to give money to both sides of politics, do tend to make some substantial contribution to the conservative parties, in particular the Liberal Party. But we should be encouraging diversity

in our political system and giving those who are capable of putting an alternative point of view an opportunity to do so and to get together a structure that gives them a number of votes which justifies their existence. There is nothing to be lost by encouraging them and enabling them to have some sort of assistance. It means they are then less reliant on funding from elsewhere, which might have some undue influence implicit in its giving.

The \$1.20 and the indexation factor are eminently reasonable, and I support them. The aspect I particularly like is that you do not get it automatically. You have to ask for it and demonstrate to the electoral commission that you have spent the money. So you cannot have a windfall gain by getting more than you spent and you cannot have the cheque sent to you unless you actually file a return. That will really put to the test the Independents in another place who have gone around this state in the most populist fashion opposing public funding. Should they happen to be back here after the next election — I do not expect any of them will be — and even if they are not back they will have to ask for the money. Bearing in mind how much they opposed it, it will be interesting to see whether they hold their hands out and accept it after the election.

The reporting requirements by and large mirror the commonwealth provisions. The original bill introduced in the other place had a myriad of differences between what was proposed and what is the commonwealth circumstance. I had a lot of difficulty with that concept because it seemed to me that all that was likely to do was impose an onerous burden on volunteers who work for the parties and it was likely to lead to technical hiccups and confusion between the two. No-one is complaining that the commonwealth requirements are inadequate or are being abused. The system is working well at the commonwealth level and it seems to me that it makes commonsense that the state provisions should mirror those of the commonwealth. I am glad that the government has come around to that point of view and that that is basically what we have here, save for the matters I have just alluded to, in terms of certifying the level of expenditure.

The National Party is pleased to support the bill. We believe it has merit and that the introduction of public funding is justified. As such, the bill will strengthen and underpin democracy in this state. We can be proud and we can also be rightly thankful that we live in a system where votes are properly cast in secret and are accurately tallied and that the results derived are indeed the wishes of the electors.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. R. H. Bowden) — Order! I am of the opinion that this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. R. H. Bowden) — Order! In order that I may ascertain whether the required majority has been obtained I ask those members who are in favour of the question to stand where they are.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

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

Third reading

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I move:

That this bill be now read a third time

In doing so, I thank honourable members from the respective parties for their contributions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. R. H. Bowden) — Order! I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill requires to be passed by an absolute majority. I again ask those honourable members who are in favour of the question to stand where they are.

Required number of members having risen:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

**PATHOLOGY SERVICES
ACCREDITATION (AMENDMENT) BILL**

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of Hon. M. R. THOMSON
(Minister for Small Business).

TOBACCO (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business).

BUDGET PAPERS, 2002–03

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Hon. C. C. BROAD (Minister for Energy and Resources):

That the Council take note of the budget papers, 2002–03.

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — I rise to make a brief but succinct contribution to the 2002–03 budget debate. In so many ways this is a typical Labor Party budget. Many Victorians are beginning to understand what is always typical about a Labor budget — that is, the tax take and tax rates are going up. The government will be seeking, obviously, to live off unexpected financial windfalls. The government will again fail to deliver, on the basis of this budget, on infrastructure and other major projects. This is a typical Labor budget in the aspect that it lets the economic fundamentals of the state deteriorate further.

To date, many people in the Victorian community have felt some of the tax windfalls, and accumulated budget surpluses of the past have at least been spent to provide better services to the people of Victoria. Many people have laboured under that misapprehension for at least the last three years. This budget puts the lie to that misapprehension.

I also put on the record that this budget can be characterised by a number of expenditure blow-outs and priority misdirections and that there is vague reporting encapsulated in it. We have seen a proliferation of political advertising funded by it and, of course, massive growth in the bureaucracy.

The most serious criticism of the budget is that it is based, as are all Labor budgets, on inputs rather than outputs. By that I mean it is big on bottom-line increases in spending and the numbers of bureaucrats and/or public servants, but very short on results. An output is a result, and the results being achieved by this budget are minimal.

When talking about results I talk about hospital waiting times, which are up; about crime rates, which are rising dramatically despite the increased inputs provided for in the budget; juvenile justice centres which are rife

with illicit drugs; and teacher-student ratios, which, after all the hype and added expenditure in the area, are virtually identical to those the government inherited when it came into office. Like most Labor budgets, this budget is very big on inputs and talk of inputs, and very short on outputs and results.

The total operating expenditures for this financial year are expected to reach \$24.242 billion, which is an increase of approximately \$1.2 billion over the budget estimate of \$22.957 billion. In other words, over the past year the Bracks government has had a \$1.285 billion budget blow-out in unplanned, unbudgeted operating expenses. If it were not for the \$1.5 billion unbudgeted windfall in revenue, this year's budget would definitely be in deficit. Within two and a half years of coming to office, this government would have been writing a red line under Victoria's finances and would have had none of the valid reasons for doing so that our federal government has in terms of added massive expenditures for defence and border security, or any other reasons. The federal government has faced very serious issues of security for the nation. The Bracks government has not, but it would have been in the red were it not for that approximately \$1.5 billion windfall.

The \$1.2 billion unbudgeted expenditure increase came about because the government realised it did have the extra money and decided to tell Victorians it was rewarding them with some extra sweeteners. That is not what has occurred. The extra expenses have been incurred because of unplanned increases in costs which the Bracks government had little choice but to incur. The \$1.2 billion was basically made up of higher-than-expected wage increases which are to be paid to police, health workers and people in the general public service and the flow-on costs of those increases in superannuation expenses. That is why there is an unbudgeted \$1.2 billion blow-out in this budget.

It is very difficult, however, to quantify how much of that is going into superannuation because none of the agreements have been disclosed, but logic dictates a fair whack of that unbudgeted blow-out has to be devoted to those superannuation expenses. The budget papers do reveal that in total there has been about a \$540 million unbudgeted increase in superannuation expenses in the current year and by any reading that has to be seen as an understatement.

I said this budget was strong on inputs but very short on outputs and results. The Bracks government is boasting, of course, that the unemployment rate in the state fell to 5.7 per cent in April, which was down from 5.8 per cent in March. It said that that is the lowest of any state in

seasonally adjusted terms. That could be interpreted as a result or an output. However, the reduction in the unemployment rate to 5.7 per cent was due to the loss of over 11 500 job seekers in that month in this state. In April in seasonally adjusted terms employment fell by over 8000, of which 5000 were losses of full-time jobs.

During every month of this year full-time employment has fallen in trend terms in Victoria, and since December 2001 there has been a loss of 4800 full-time jobs in this state. To put it in other terms, over the year to April 2002, of the approximately 19 500 full-time job losses in Australia about half, or 48 per cent, were located in Victoria, and our population is not commensurate with a 48 per cent reduction of the full-time jobs in the nation. This is not a great output, not a great result, but it is a reality.

We also have to look at the other output or result area and that is business investment. Last year, in 2001, manufacturing investment in Victoria was approximately \$2.7 billion and that is about 15.5 per cent lower than a year earlier, and 16.5 per cent lower than in the last year of the Kennett government. That is not a fantastic output and not a fantastic result. The level of investment in manufacturing in particular is now at its lowest level since 1992. That is an output and a result, but not one the Bracks government should be proud of.

Investment in non-residential buildings and structures has declined in every quarter under the Bracks government and is now about 40 per cent lower in trend terms than when the Bracks government was elected. That is a huge and significant reduction. The opposition has been asked what the state government should do to contribute to greater economic prosperity and better outputs and results through its budgetary management. It might seem to be stating the obvious, but perhaps the Bracks government should be finding and encouraging areas where growth has a high potential. Perhaps areas of strength could be identified as they were by the previous government and they could be supported and resourced. Perhaps instead of ramping up public sector expenditure on the public service in particular — I am talking about the bureaucracy — the government could adopt the role of ringkeeper and allow industry rather than the public sector to grow. Perhaps it could look at things like the motor vehicle industry, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications manufacturing and food processing or a range of other areas.

The previous Kennett government did that. It identified areas of potential growth in the state and worked out budget parameters that would support growth in the private sector in those areas. It fast-tracked projects and

assisted with seeding and capital funding and tax reductions. It used fiscal levers to do that. It is not impossible. Perhaps the Bracks government could do that if in another year or two it wants to boast some good outputs as a result of its budget and its management.

Maybe it could control the union movement; improve the tax regime; remove some of the legal uncertainties facing business. Perhaps it could concentrate more on the necessary infrastructure that the private sector needs than it currently does. The Bracks government's record on infrastructure spending is not even as good as that of the Tasmanian government. That is an output or result that the Bracks government should not be proud of.

Ask any Bracks minister what they have done and they will talk about inputs. If you ask, 'What have you done in education?', they will say, 'We have spent \$X billion and hired this many teachers'. Ask them what they have done in health and they will tell you the same story: 'We have put in \$X billion and hired so many nurses'. Ask what they have done for community safety and they will talk about the same thing: the 800 police. They talk about inputs; they do not talk about results. The fact is that in each of those areas — community safety, health and education — there is not an output record that the government can be proud of. In fact, when compared to the output or result areas of the last government it is a worse record. Services are deteriorating. They are not expanding or getting better or more efficient.

The Bracks government can boast that in the past two years it has increased the public sector by approximately 5000, and this budget continues that trend. In the first two years the government averaged about an 8 per cent growth in the bureaucratic sector every year. The size of the Victorian public service grew by approximately 4380 by the end of the second Bracks government budget.

Information that has been provided to the Parliament shows that at the end of the last full financial year of the Kennett government, which was 1998–99, the number of members of the Victorian public service was 26 255. By the end of the last budget period — that is, 2000–01 — the Bracks government had grown the public sector to 30 635. In the first two years the Bracks government saw an increase in public sector numbers of over 4000, representing an increase of 16.7 per cent.

That is an output result, and the Bracks government can talk about that, but most of that increase of 16.7 per cent was not on service providers. They were not doctors, nurses, teachers or police, but public

servants — people who sit behind desks in buildings in city offices. The figure of more than 4000 relates primarily to staff numbers in the eight core departments and approximately a dozen administrative officers associated with those core departments.

Premier Bracks has led this charge in his own department. He has increased the number of full-time equivalent staff within the Department of Premier and Cabinet from just over 400 at 30 June 1999 to an estimated 630 by 30 June 2001, and that has increased further in this budget period. Even that increase on June last year is a 55 per cent increase. Last year the government spent \$3.8 million on new ministerial staff and will spend \$3.8 million each year over four years, I believe, again funded in the budget and costing the taxpayers \$15.2 million. These are advisers in the Premier's office.

Since coming to power the Bracks government has also increased its expenditure on consultants. The average annual spending on Bracks government consultants over the first two completed financial years was \$38 197 611, an increase in average annual spending over 1998–99 of about 10 per cent, so there are more consultants and not less, despite the promises, and this budget continues that trend. It is not possible for the Bracks government to claim that the increase in the public service has been funded by a reduction in consultancies. It is certainly the opposite. It has increased and ramped up the amount of money to be spent on those consultancies.

It is not only public servants who are seconded into these offices, but external consultants have been brought in apace. Many of those consultants have very special links to the Labor Party. Because this is the key result area of this budget, I will briefly outline some of the information the opposition has been able to obtain about how that money is being spent.

The Bracks government has repeatedly refused under freedom of information to supply complete lists of its ministerial advisers and permanent staff appointments. However, through the excellent work of the opposition's waste watch committee it has been able to piece together this picture from other sources and from the odd Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal victory where opposition members have been granted access to information on how this money is being spent.

Premier Bracks has packed his office and the offices of most of his ministers with Labor mates and many partisan appointments, which we can only surmise has been to reward Labor Party people for past favours or perhaps for future favours. Unfortunately the

government has been reluctant to share this information with Victorians.

Heading up the list is Tim Pallas, who was, of course, a failed Labor preselection candidate for the federal seat of Melbourne Ports, but importantly a former Australian Council of Trade Unions assistant secretary. Again in the Premier's staff from the trade union movement come Jenny Newcombe from the Australian Education Union and Jenny Doran from the ACTU. Jacqueline Flitcroft, the Premier's speechwriter, has an interesting political background and link to the Labor Party. She was once a staffer to former Labor star candidate Cheryl Kernot. She is now working in Victoria and being funded very nicely.

Premier Bracks's private office is full of well-paid directors, senior advisers and press secretaries who have not had a huge amount of experience in industry or anywhere else. Most of them are former union officials, failed Labor election candidates, or both.

The chief of staff in the Deputy Premier's office is Andrejs Zamurs, a former Department of Human Services official, who donated over \$1500 to the Victorian ALP in 1999–2000. It is not known whether Mr Zamurs donated this money to the ALP before or after he was employed by the minister, but donate it he did.

Last year's state budget, as does this year's, shows that more staff are to be hired. It is interesting to note that last year an extra nearly \$4 million was spent. Again another nearly \$4 million will be spent this year, and the budget provides for that. We have another two years to go of spending an extra \$4 million, which will bring that up to more than \$15 million over the purported term of the full Bracks government.

Even though this money has been provided for in the budget, there was still a \$700 000 blow-out in the last financial year. Even though a generous \$3.8 million a year has been allocated for extra staff and advisers, there is still a blow-out. How is that money being spent?

The state administrative committee of the ALP could double as a list of the *Who's Who* of ministerial advisers. Committee members include Garth Head with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place; Jill Hennessey with the Premier; Andrew McKenzie and John Scheffer with the Honourable Gavin Jennings; Fiona Richardson with the Minister for Small Business; Natalie Sykes with the Minister for Planning in the other place; and Tony White with the Attorney-General.

Basically that means that this budget not only funds services and the core public service in Victoria, but it funds the state administrative committee of the ALP. If you win a job on the state administrative committee it will not take you long to get into a minister's office with a salary.

Hon. K. M. Smith — A big salary.

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER — As Mr Smith interjects, a big salary, absolutely. I wonder if at ALP conferences when they call for nominations for these positions they also ask for a job description, because it is almost a certainty that if you get on the administrative committee you will be working for a minister somewhere.

Scattered throughout other ministerial officers there are a lot of failed election candidates of the Labor Party. Kerri Erler, who was unsuccessful in winning the seat of Bellarine in the other place, is in the Premier's office; Garth Head, who ran for Waverley Province, is in the office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place; and Claire Thorn, who was spectacularly unsuccessful in the lower house seat of Box Hill, is now in the office of the Minister for Senior Victorians in the other place.

The office of the Minister for Health in the other place seems almost to be the failed candidates burial ground, because he has Jacki Willox, who ran for Monash Province, and Maxine Morand, who ran for the federal seat of Kooyong, making up the numbers there. It might be that if you run for a safe Liberal seat you get a job in the office of the Minister for Health!

Former union officials are also represented strongly in this extra expenditure, which is budgeted to increase by \$4 million per year for at least another two years. In the office of the Minister for Energy and Resources the chief of staff is Robyn McLeod, who is well known to honourable members in this chamber. Ms McLeod was formerly a senior industrial officer for the Australian Workers Union. She is also a two-time failed candidate for the seat of Mordialloc in the other place. Robyn McLeod — she is fantastic!

The Australian Nursing Federation is represented in Bronwyn Pike's office by Julie Ligeti, who is the chief of staff there. Ms Ligeti is a former industrial officer with the ANF.

The Minister for Local Government of course is not to be outdone — Bernie Dean comes from a background in the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. And scattered throughout many of the other

ministerial offices are a whole range of former union officials and Labor Party operatives.

Hon. K. M. Smith — Hacks!

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER — Mr Smith refers to them as hacks, and I defer to his better judgment because he is our whip and has been here a lot longer than I have.

The Premier, interestingly, refuses to hand over to Victorians a complete list of ministerial advisers, which really flies in the face of his promise of open and accountable government, but I think we have all gotten over that — we are so over that now; we know it is not the reality. Labor obviously is committed to this extra annual expenditure on employing unionists, its mates, time-servers, operatives, hacks and people whom it possibly wants favours from in the future.

The attempted appointment of Jim Reeves and another Labor mate, Andrew Hockley — as chief of government communications — demonstrates this. It just seems to us on the opposition side that if Victorian taxpayers are going to be required to pay for the Labor Party's retirement and superannuation scheme, then at least the Bracks government could be open and honest about that.

In concluding I call on the Premier and the government to release full lists of how this money is being spent, to be honest about how they are spending this money and to at least allow Victorian taxpayers to understand how their valuable tax dollars — \$3.8 million now and increasing each year for the next two at least — are being spent.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I am pleased to join the budget debate and —

Hon. J. M. Madden — Brief and succinct?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I will make a very succinct and to-the-point contribution, and no doubt a passionate one at times.

Hon. J. M. Madden — Vitriolic?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — No doubt a bit of that too, perhaps.

I actually wanted to make some general comments about the nature of the budget we have seen this year from the government, because it would be fair to concede that the commentary we have seen in some of the media has been benign. There has been a great deal less criticism about the budget than we have seen in

previous years, and I guess that is a reflection of the state of the economy. Revenues are up, and as a consequence the government has maximised its leverage over the revenues of the state — in fact, this is a record-taxing budget. Revenues to the extent of an additional \$1500 per household have been received as a result of taxation increases by the Labor government since it came to office in 1999.

Being given the title of the highest taxing government in the history of Victoria is no compliment, notwithstanding my observation a moment ago that the commentary in the media was rather benign. Victorians are increasingly becoming aware of that increased tax burden, and it is only possible for that to be the case while we are undergoing what is a period of relatively high prosperity.

The budget structure is completely dependent on what is in effect a booming property market which is likely to persist, according to the budget estimates, for some little while, but clearly as pressure comes on the Australian dollar, on interest rates and inevitably on an adjustment to the property market we will see a decline in revenues from stamp duties from that sector. The other areas that the government is dependent upon include revenue from tax-sharing arrangements with the commonwealth through the goods and services tax.

There have been significant increases in a range of taxes, and motorists in particular have been hit by the recent budget with an increase in motor vehicle taxes from \$895 million to \$1050 million.

Having made a general comment about increases in taxes, one of the areas of revenue which I find surprising is that the Victorian government is determined to ensure that the Victoria police force becomes a tax collector, having seen an increase of 240 per cent in police fines from \$99 million to \$336 million since the advent of the Bracks government. That is not a healthy position in relation to the role of the police force to be seen and to be revealed in the budget documents as an increase in revenue. The government will bring the police force into disrepute. You can reflect on biblical times when tax collectors were seen to be pariahs. I do not think that is an appropriate way for the community and the government to measure the Victoria Police. Those are some general remarks.

I now want to reflect on an area that is relevant to my electorate, tourism expenditure, which has plummeted from \$52.2 million last financial year to a budget estimate of \$38.4 million this year. That is a projected reduction of nearly one-third and is a significant blow

to an important industry in Victoria and a blow to country Victorians because a lot of economic activity depends on tourism, in particular to far East Gippsland, which we know is also being battered by recent decisions of the Bracks government in relation to downsizing of the sustainable yield volumes in the timber industry.

There is an exceptionally tough time coming up for East Gippsland, not only adjusting to reduced levels of economic activity in the timber industry, but also clearly because of the declining effort by the government with respect to tourism. This is reflected by the reduction in the number of visitor nights recorded in Victoria, which have fallen since the government came to office. The number of nights spent in accommodation in Victoria fell from 55.4 million in the final year of the previous Liberal government to 52.5 million in the first year of the Bracks government. The government's budget target for 2002–03 is between 52 million and 54 million, still below the level achieved by the previous government. It is a sad indictment.

A tax that will particularly affect rural Victorians is a new \$50 levy to be applied to the registration of motorcycles, a regressive tax. I am sure the Acting President would share with me a concern that most farms have at least one and generally several motorcycles that must be registered and will be taxed, irrespective of the capacity of the owner to afford that additional tax. It is certainly true that many people have modest financial means, particularly young people and students who choose to ride motorcycles as a means of transport because of, relatively speaking, their cheapness, and that tax increment of \$50 will obviously hurt them severely.

With a budget surplus in excess of \$500 million, this new tax will generate in the order of \$10 million. It seems a miserable — in fact miserly — contribution to revenue coming from a government that chooses to increase its expenditure like a mad thing. Expenditure has increased by more than \$2 billion since the Bracks government came to office, and it looks as if preparations are being made to continue to increase taxes to ensure that growth and expenditure can be continued. I do not regard that as being responsible, and the Liberal Party has already announced that it would remove the \$50 motorcycle tax upon being elected to office.

I do not wish to dwell too long on the budget but will make one more point in relation to it. It is disappointing to me that a member of Parliament in the other place should use the opportunity after the state budget to not

only promote his political party's activities but to misrepresent those activities in the sense of commitments to the electorate. I was disappointed to learn that the honourable member for Narracan in the other place was saying that the government is committed to funding the Pakenham bypass. An article in the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 20 May states:

'The state government has indicated it will match the federal government but they (federal) haven't put it (money) up yet', Mr Maxfield said.

He is referring to funding for the Pakenham bypass. That is a lie. There is clearly no funding in the state budget for the Pakenham bypass this year, next year or any year. It is a project that will cost approximately \$200 million. The federal government has previously allocated funds to it which have not yet been taken up by the state government. It initially committed \$30 million, but in October last year the federal government increased that commitment to \$100 million to be matched by \$100 million by the state government. That announcement was matched by the federal Labor Party. There is provision for funding to flow to the Pakenham bypass project from the commencement of the 2003–04 financial year. Those funds have been allocated and are set out in this year's federal budget.

However, Mr Maxfield has, throughout the electorate — in media comments in newspapers, radio and television — been claiming that the state government has funded the Pakenham bypass to the extent of being prepared to match what the federal government is doing. That is simply untrue, and I find it disappointing to have to come into the house and advise it that a member in another place would so mislead his electorate and people in Gippsland. He would be absolutely condemned for it were it possible for that discussion to occur in this house between the two of us.

In my view the comments I have quoted clearly indicate that Mr Maxfield has expressed views about the funding arrangements which are a gross distortion and misrepresentation; all of that, in my view, means it is an absolute lie. In the 10 years I have been here I do not think I can recall ever making that observation about a member of Parliament, but I think it needs to be on the public record. I am quite happy —

Hon. G. D. Romanes — On a point of order, Mr Deputy President, we have dealt with a number of issues along these lines during the course of various debates today. Mr Davis is casting aspersions on another member of the Victorian Parliament in another place, calling the honourable member for Narracan a liar, and I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, I have not accused a member in another place of being a liar. What I have just said is that the facts presented in public media, from which I have quoted, are deliberately and knowingly not true. I have said that those statements are so untrue as to be a lie. I have not called anybody a liar. You can rule, Mr Deputy President, but I am not making that allegation. I am not saying that the honourable member for Narracan, Mr Maxfield, is a liar; I am saying that the facts of the matter are that I have read into the transcript — and can provide a copy for the honourable member who takes objection — that the material that is being circulated — the commentary being made by the honourable member for Narracan — is not true.

Hon. G. D. Romanes — Further on the point of order, Mr Deputy President, we have only Mr Davis's word for his view that what the honourable member for Narracan has said is untrue, and as before I ask him to withdraw his statements, which cast aspersions on the member in the other place.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — On the point of order, Mr Deputy President, were it necessary for me to prove the point, I could quote from the federal budget papers to substantiate the fact that funds have been allocated in the federal budget this year, notwithstanding the claims made by Mr Maxfield.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis, is now debating the point of order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Glenyys Romanes, I have listened very carefully to what the honourable member has been saying, and certainly he has been very insistent in his remarks about the honourable member in the other place. When you look at the rulings on the rules of this place, there is no doubt that the only way a member can make a citation or an attack on another member is by a substantive motion. Therefore I rule that Mr Davis withdraw the remark about the honourable member in the other place.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Mr Deputy President, I need clarification because I am not quite sure what the words are that I am to withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! In my view from where I sit — and I listened very carefully — I believe that you said the member had lied about the particular position, so I ask Mr Davis to withdraw.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — With deference to the Chair, I withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you very much, Mr Davis.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I was saying that in relation to the material that has been circulating in the Gippsland area and in various media outlets, the honourable member for Narracan has made certain statements which are clearly misleading and untrue — —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Absolutely untrue, in relation to the way funds are to flow for the Pakenham bypass. It is absolutely a fact that no funds are provided in the Victorian government's budget for the Pakenham bypass. It is absolutely a fact that the federal government has provided funds, which will flow from the commencement of the 2003–04 financial year, that those funds are required to be matched by a state contribution and that the state government has not provided for those funds.

The honourable member for Narracan has made it explicitly clear, and I read these words into *Hansard* a short time ago:

'The state government has indicated it will match the federal government but they (federal) haven't put it (money) up yet', Mr Maxfield said.

The federal government has put money up and the money is — —

Hon. J. M. Madden interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — That comes from the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 20 May — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I am simply making the point that it is a great disappointment to me to have to come into this place and take issue with another member about the truth and the facts of a particular matter which is in debate. I believe it would be more appropriate for a member of Parliament representing his constituency, rather than misleading the community about the availability of funding, to get in and lobby his own government, which has determined that there will be no funding.

We know that the Treasurer visited Warragul recently and advised the community, including journalists, that there would be no funding for the Pakenham bypass. So it surprises me that the honourable member for Narracan is insistent upon continually running this line, which is a complete misrepresentation of the facts — the facts being that the federal government has provided funding from the commencement of the 2003 financial year. That funding is to the extent of

\$100 million, which is currently unmatched by any contribution from the state of Victoria. But notwithstanding those facts, the honourable member for Narracan persists in misrepresenting that issue.

This is probably the most important issue for the Gippsland region. It is the most important infrastructure project for the Gippsland region because the solutions to the increased difficulties of accessing, in both a social and economic sense, the main transport corridor of the Princes Highway east and City Link are totally dependent upon an improvement of traffic flow through Pakenham, which is one of the most dangerous road traffic corridors in Australia, and that is the reason that the federal government has provided \$100 million for that project.

In conclusion, my biggest disappointment with this budget is the failure by the government of Victoria to provide any funds for the Pakenham bypass.

Debate adjourned for Hon. M. T. LUCKINS (Waverley) on motion of Hon. Bill Forwood.

Debate adjourned until next day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 4 June.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Road safety: car computers

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — I wish to raise a serious road safety issue tonight for the Minister for Sport and Recreation to raise with the Minister for Transport in the other place.

A company in the electorate of Clayton has designed a computer system that fits into a regular car. I have a picture of the two computer screens which you can see behind the steering wheel. On this computer you can play music files, watch movies, write assignments, play games, use the touch screen to operate temperature

controls, open and close windows; and perhaps open the doors at the touch of a button. It has a portable hard drive that can be hooked up to your home computer and you can download any data whatsoever.

It seems to me that this raises some very serious road safety issues. I do not know how any person could be driving a car and using this computer at the same time.

Hon. R. M. Hallam interjected.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — Or whether indeed, as Mr Hallam interjects, you would want them to.

This computer is going to cost about \$6000 so it is really not in the realm of many people to use it, but I would like to ask the Minister for Transport to investigate the risk to drivers of this in-built computer, and I seek an assurance that appropriate regulations and maybe even some legislative changes to the Road Safety Act be instigated forthwith. We all know that the road toll is far too high. We in the Parliament must continue to be proactive in combating it.

Small business: Yellow Pages survey

Hon. W. I. SMITH (Silvan) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Small Business in regard to the dorothy dixer she asked herself on small business confidence in this state, and the Yellow Pages quarterly survey. She declared yesterday, and also put out a press release, that Victorian small business confidence has surged. But the minister obviously has not analysed the figures as well as she could have or she has not understood the figures because, yes, indeed small business confidence has surged, but it has also surged across the whole of Australia. In fact, the figures for Victoria are exactly the same as those for other states.

The telling assessment in the Yellow Pages quarterly survey that the minister did not articulate yesterday was the assessment of the state government's policies. In regard to the Victorian state government's policy attitudes, 18 per cent of small businesses in Victoria are supportive of them. I repeat that: 18 per cent are supportive of the Victorian government's policies. The indicator has gone backwards; it has gone back minus 12 per cent.

If you look at the confidence rates by state, sector and size, you will find that Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory are well ahead of Victoria in confidence levels. In fact, if you look at the Yellow Pages business index you will find that for small and medium business for Victoria the survey says:

Employment was flat.

Prices rose significantly.

Expectations for capital expenditure were flat.

Small and medium enterprises (SME) support for the Victorian government was lower than national trends.

The reality from the survey, instead of what the minister was putting to us, is that small business attitudes towards the Bracks government's policies have again proven negative in the latest quarter. More than one quarter of small businesses in Victoria believed government policy was detrimental to their operation. Since the election of the Bracks government, small business sentiment towards Labor government policies has been negative in every quarter.

I ask the minister, when she is putting out her press releases and giving her dorothy dixer in Parliament, to be a little bit more transparent and open and do a little bit more assessment of the facts. She says that small and medium businesses are feeling confident about the future. I suggest that since the index revealed small business sentiment about state government policy has been negative in every quarter since the election of the Bracks Labor government it clearly highlights that small business is concerned about the policies. So when the minister does her review and looks at her figures and puts out the next one she should make sure she understands what the figures say.

Warrior Women exhibition

Hon. E. C. CARBINES (Geelong) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Health in the other place. Last week I had the honour of launching in Geelong at the Gordon Institute of TAFE an exhibition entitled Warrior Women. This exhibition is currently touring regional Victoria to raise the community's awareness of breast cancer.

Warrior Women is a most confronting exhibition, as all the pieces displayed have been created by women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Each piece reflects the artist's individual response to her diagnosis and its impact not only on her life but on those closest to her. The stories depicted are truly moving — stories of endurance, survival and, most sadly, loss. Warrior Women is an inspirational exhibition, and I congratulate everyone involved for their courage and thank them for bringing it to Geelong.

Inescapably the message that Warrior Women brings is the prevalence of breast cancer in our community. Health professionals at the launch spoke of breast cancer being the major killer of Victorian women, with

an estimated 1 in 10 women diagnosed at some time in their life with this insidious disease. Accordingly, I ask the minister what steps the Bracks government has taken to address the incidence of breast cancer among Victorian women.

Insurance: public liability

Hon. E. J. POWELL (North Eastern) — I would like to raise an issue with the Premier in the other place about public liability insurance cover for pony clubs. Over the last year we have heard in this house many instances of organisations whose public liability insurance premiums have escalated or, worse still, where they have not even been able to gain insurance cover at all. This is forcing some business organisations to scale down or, even worse, to close down.

Yesterday in this house we debated and passed a Liberal Party motion which we hope will protect adventure tourism operators. This bill was supported by the National Party but opposed by the Labor Party. We have been frustrated. The National Party has been trying to get this government to act for the last 12 months, and members have raised the issue many times in both houses of this Parliament.

The Leader of the National Party, Mr Peter Ryan, has sought leave in the other place to bring in a private members bill to protect volunteers from civil liability for damages. I will be attending a rally in Shepparton which will coincide with the Melbourne rally on Saturday, 1 June, at 11.00 a.m. This rally has been organised by Maurice Brown, the chairman of Northern Zone Pony Clubs, in conjunction with Wendy Holland, the district commissioner of the Shepparton Pony Club. They were notified by the Pony Clubs Association of Victoria that public liability insurance is now almost impossible to obtain and that their cover will cease on 30 June 2002, which means they will have to close down because they cannot operate without cover. The rally is not just for pony clubs; any sporting group or any organisation that wants to voice concerns is invited to attend.

I know that a meeting was held today to look at public liability insurance across Australia, and I understand that it was to finish at 5.00 p.m. Therefore, if any resolutions arise out of this meeting I ask the Premier to act quickly and to give our volunteer organisations such as these pony clubs protection against spiralling public liability insurance costs which are crippling them and other industries right across country Victoria.

Angliss Hospital

Hon. G. B. ASHMAN (Koonung) — I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place, and in doing so I acknowledge the funding the government has provided for the minor upgrades at the Angliss Hospital in Ferntree Gully. I welcome the stage 1 works and hope that the stage 2 works are very close behind.

The issue I raise arises because of this minor redevelopment that is under way, because part of the redevelopment will impinge on the car parking facilities at the hospital, which are quite inadequate at the moment. Some on-street car parking is available in John Street, but I remind honourable members that this hospital is located in a residential area. On previous occasions I have indicated to the house and to the minister that this site is landlocked and that it is almost impossible to expand the footprint of the hospital. It is going to be somewhat difficult for the government to provide on-the-ground additional car parking.

What is required as a matter of urgency on this site — although it has certainly not been funded and no funding is flagged in any of the budget papers — is a multistorey car park of some size. The site is not particularly well serviced by public transport. As I have said time and time before, the preferred option of the people in the outer east of Melbourne was to build the Knox public hospital, and that is still our preferred option, but given that the government appears to be committed to these minor upgrades of both the Angliss and the Maroondah hospitals it is imperative that the minister give urgent attention to the car parking resources that will be available to the Angliss Hospital, otherwise we will end up with overcrowding in the suburban streets surrounding that area.

Helmeted honeyeaters: recovery program

Hon. D. G. HADDEN (Ballarat) — I raise an important matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation in the other place regarding Victoria's state bird emblem *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*, or the helmeted honeyeater, which is about 20 centimetres in total length and is found only in Victoria.

I became a member of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater after listening to an honourable member's parliamentary contribution early in 2000 on the near demise of our state bird emblem. In 1989, when the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater was formed, there were just 15 breeding pairs left and the birds' habitat had been reduced to a small area at Yellingbo. Our state

bird emblem was threatened with extinction. The friends have continued to study the birds' behaviour, conduct bird surveys and assist the recovery team and the Healesville Sanctuary breeding program.

The successful 2001–02 breeding season recorded 21 breeding pairs and 37 fledglings across 11 breeding territories around Cockatoo Swamp and Macclesfield Creek at Yellingbo, south-east of Lilydale. The survival of captive-bred helmeted honeyeaters released into the Bunyip State Park east of Gembrook will also be monitored to ensure the successful habitat of a second population of the birds. This recovery program is a good example of a successful partnership between dedicated volunteer community groups and professionals and the ongoing support of government.

The Bracks government recently guaranteed its ongoing funding of this vital recovery program for Victoria's bird emblem of the equivalent of \$180 000 per annum as a condition of the Natural Heritage Trust funding program. I therefore ask the minister if she would could make urgent representation to her federal counterpart to commit ongoing and recurrent funding for a full-time field ornithologist's position for the helmeted honeyeater recovery program.

Panel beaters: insurance system

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Small Business through the Minister for Sport and Recreation. It is a pity the minister is not here tonight because I know she has received a number of requests in relation to this particular area of the vehicle repair industry.

I raise the issue of insurance companies reducing hourly rates for remove-and-replace and repair work without any reference to or negotiation with the businesses concerned. As an example, my constituents Richard and Helen Munro, partners in United Panel Works at Mildura, have provided me with excellent documentation outlining their problems with regard to their insurers.

Three months ago the Munros found out that their insurers, CGU-VACC Insurance, had decided to reduce the hourly rate it would pay from \$30 an hour to \$23 an hour for remove-and-replace work and for repair jobs. The Munros wrote to their insurer on 7 January 2002 pointing out that the rates have been unchanged for almost 14 years but that the cost of providing their work had increased dramatically during that time. They have written numerous letters since that date and have received no response at all.

The cost of just employing a tradesperson has been conservatively calculated at \$25.46 per hour, but the total cost of covering that tradesperson's wage, plus the wages of non-productive quoting and office staff and the overheads, comes to a whopping \$59 per hour.

United Panel Works has approached a number of other insurance companies for competitive quotes but has found that almost all wanted to reduce their hourly rate to exactly the same figure, which suggests collusion between companies.

United Panel Works feels it is fully justified in asking for an increase in the hourly rates that CGU-VACC Insurance pay for their claims and believes that \$40 per hour for remove-and-replace work and repair work and \$50 per hour for group 1 paint jobs are realistic figures.

Will the Minister for Small Business please contact the insurance industry so a practical and swift resolution to this important issue can be achieved?

Homelessness: park bench shelter

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — I refer the Minister for Housing in the other place to an article in the opinion page of yesterday's *Age* newspaper entitled 'Melbourne's new affordable housing: park benches for \$2700'. The article refers to a design by prize-winning architect Sean Godsell, who has developed a unique park bench shelter, and it states that in response to the growing problem of homelessness in Melbourne, the park bench can be opened up at night to provide a little roof under which homeless people can shelter.

The article by Chris Middendorp states:

But if we accept Godsell's bandaid measure, we're saying that we have finally given up. Turning our back on a tradition of care, homelessness will officially be dumped in the too-hard basket. Our people will be banished to the bench.

I tend to have some sympathy with his views, and I feel that giving people this bandaid measure is not what this community is all about; in fact, I think it is an appalling suggestion.

The budget contains an extra \$2.2 million to support homeless people, but since we have 17 800 homeless people in this state that means each one of them will receive only \$123.60 and these benches cost \$2700, which is almost a whole year's accommodation for a homeless person in an apartment. It is an appalling scenario.

The article goes on to say:

Can it be acceptable to spend squillions on wonderful community structures such as Federation Square and the new

museum and allow men, women and children to sleep rough on a park bench next door to them?

Yet there are real solutions to homelessness. More public housing flexible enough to respond to the aspirations of the homeless. Increased crisis accommodation. Employment ...

My questions is: with the Bracks government's 2002–03 budget showing a cut of \$12.2 million overall for homelessness assistance programs, does the government support the park bench proposal?

Live music: promotion

Hon. P. A. KATSAMBANIS (Monash) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for the Arts in the other place relating to the continuing decline in the availability of live music venues in Victoria. Honourable members in this place would know of my long-term commitment to the live music industry in Victoria and would recall that around this time last year I mentioned the continuing decline in live music venues. I notice that last week the Minister for the Arts put out a press release entitled 'Play it loud — Bracks government gets behind live music in Victoria'. In that release the minister was talking about some initiatives that assisted local artists to play live music.

Unfortunately since May last year when I raised the issue of live music venues in this place the minister has done absolutely nothing to ensure that live music venues continue to be available to musicians here in Melbourne and Victoria generally. You can have as many musicians as you like, you can resource them as much as you like, but if there is nowhere for them to play and they are still stuck in their garages playing away in their neighbourhood they will never get the chance to be discovered or signed up. They will never get the chance to realise their dreams and achieve the real gains for our community that we know getting signed can achieve for a band and for Victoria.

The minister's letter replied to my concern back then with some mealy-mouthed platitudes but really offered nothing, and in the 12 months since the minister has continued to offer nothing. I put it to the minister that apart from issuing these press releases and making some statements like the one she made last week she has yet to demonstrate any real commitment to making sure that live venues become available around Melbourne.

Last year I highlighted the closure of the Continental in Prahran and since then many other venues have closed down, the most well-known being the Punter's Club Hotel in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, which was disappointing for all the bands and fans who went there. I now seek from the minister some commitment in

practical terms as to what she is doing to ensure that live music venues do not continue to close and that they will be available for Melbourne's very good live musicians to continue to play and be discovered in these venues.

Motorcycles: safety

Hon. G. R. CRAIGE (Central Highlands) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation on the basis that a document I have has the web site address www.vic.alp.org.au/policy/sport, so I presume it comes under his jurisdiction. It is headed 'A new partnership with motorcycle riders' and 'Labor's commitment to the Victorian community'. I will raise some matters on behalf of the Alexandra and District Motorcycle Club and Victorian motorcyclists. This document states:

We are committed to working with motorcycle riders and their organisations to improve rider safety and increase the opportunities for recreational riding.

It goes on to state that:

Labor will ensure that the motorcycle community gets a say on road safety and traffic management ...

What about the \$50 tax on motorcyclists that the government is to take? I have looked at the document on 31 August 1999 and it is all there. I have looked at another document on 11 January 2000 and I looked again today and that policy and this document are still listed as the ALP's relationship with motorcycle riders.

I will comment on two areas of the ALP's commitment to partnership — education and safety and off-road facilities. The Labor Party, in this document, promised not to put any more wire-rope barriers up. I do not know what they have put on the Eastern Freeway but they look like wire-rope barriers to me. This document mentions commitments to funding for rider education and safety awareness programs, but none of that money has been allocated at all to any group. In 1999–2000, \$15 000 was promised, with \$30 000 a year in 2000–01, 2001–02 and 2002–03, yet no money has been allocated to any organisation.

I read on further in relation to my issue in Alexandra and in particular off-road facilities. The motorcycle club has a very good off-road facility at Alexandra that fills all the requirements. The club has placed itself in the right position and inquired about funding, but no money has been allocated. Yet the document promises funds for the development of off-road facilities — \$30 000 in 1999–2000, then \$60 000 a year in 2000–01, 2001–02 and 2002–03. Our bike riders with international recognition have got their expertise on dirt

bikes, whether it is Wayne Gardner, Mick Doohan, Troy Bayliss or Kevin Magee. They have all gained their experience on dirt.

The minister made a commitment that he would develop facilities off road. It is in this document but he has not allocated 1 cent of that available money to anywhere in this state. On behalf of motorcyclists and their safety, and the Alexandra and District Motorcycle Club, I ask the minister to immediately address this issue and be fair dinkum about the commitment he gave them.

Government: investment assistance

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter for the Minister for State and Regional Development in the other place. Earlier this day the Auditor-General's performance report into investment attraction and facilitation in Victoria was tabled in this Parliament and chapter 4 of that report relates to the extent of and criteria for government investment assistance in Victoria. The report contains a number of interesting statistics covering a six-year period, five under the previous government and one full year under the current government.

The report by the Auditor-General indicates that in the last full year of the previous government some 5775 jobs were attracted through investment facilitation and the cost of direct financial assistance in that year was \$20 million. If you compare that with the first full year of the current administration in 2000–01, some 5456 jobs were facilitated — that is 300 less than under the previous administration at a cost of \$107 million in direct investment — an extra \$87 million spent to produce 300 fewer jobs.

To compare the full period quoted in the report, under the previous minister, the Honourable Mark Birrell, the average cost of a facilitated job with direct financial assistance was \$3500 but under the current minister the cost of each job facilitated is now \$19 700 — a dramatic increase. In terms of direct investment, under the previous minister for every dollar spent in direct investment assistance a return of \$88 was achieved in investment facilitated. Under the current minister the return for every dollar spent in financial assistance is only \$15.

I seek from the Minister for State and Regional Development an explanation of what projects have been assisted with the \$107 million provided in the 2000–01 year, what were the employment and investment targets for each of the projects and what was the level of assistance provided. I also ask for an outline

of the government's policy with respect to providing direct financial assistance.

Southern Family Life

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — The issue I raise tonight is for the Minister for Community Services and refers to the Southern Family Life organisation based in Sandringham in my electorate. It has been providing help and support for families in crisis in the Higinbotham area for over 30 years. It provides an outstanding service as the first point of help for family problems, child protection, family violence and other such problems. It tries and in many cases is able to provide help, support and solutions to families, so keeping them out of the formal social welfare system, thus helping families and in most cases saving the social welfare system budget.

For some years Southern Family Life has received a grant from the government for these services — not for all its services because it is self-funding in many of its programs — that are the government's responsibility. The Department of Human Services funding for these programs has been barely adequate for many years but this year a so-called productivity dividend has been applied to further reduce the amount received. This is in the face of direct cost increases of between 4 per cent and 5 per cent. This will be impossible for the organisation to bear so its services will be cut. That will not only be bad for local families in crisis but will also be an extra load on the social welfare system.

I request that the minister review the so-called productivity dividend for Southern Family Life and for all Child Welfare Association of Victoria members across the state.

Taxis: multipurpose

Hon. N. B. LUCAS (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport in the other place. A constituent in Pakenham has raised with me an issue concerning users of the multipurpose taxi program, the M40, and what appears to be the growing financial disadvantage they are experiencing.

In 1984 Victorians with disabilities were able to obtain subsidised taxi travel at a rate of 50 per cent up to a limit of \$25. Unfortunately, over the years the value of that subsidy has reduced dramatically. From 1986 to 2000, as an example, taxi fares have increased by 124 per cent. Although I am not quoting the same period, I note that between 1989 and 1999, a 10-year period, the increase in the basic pension rate was 29 per

cent. It has been raised with me whether it is a fair level of subsidisation and whether it can be looked at.

I am aware that Blind Citizens Australia raised this matter with the government last year. It received a response from the parliamentary secretary, who indicated:

... there is no additional funding available to increase the level of subsidy within the 2001–02 financial year.

I have not heard any announcements this year of any increase in this level of subsidisation for the 2002–03 budget, which means there will not have been any increase for a number of years. On behalf of my constituent in Pakenham and the members of Blind Citizens Australia, who use this form of travel regularly to get where they want to go at a reasonable fare, which is becoming harder and harder, will the Minister for Transport provide his views to me and any other relevant information relating to a possible increase in the support for disabled people using taxis under the M40 multipurpose taxi program?

Banks: community

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs in the other place a matter relating to community banking. I first comment on the Kew East community bank in my and the Honourable Mark Birrell's electorate. Kew East is the first community bank to begin operating in the City of Boroondara and recently surpassed the \$10 million mark in banking business, which is a successful and rapid achievement of that goal. It is the 29th community bank in Victoria and the 59th opened nationally and operated as a franchise in conjunction with the Bendigo Bank. I congratulate Chris Bovill and the board of management on their achievement. I understand they will also achieve their 1000th customer in the next few weeks.

The bank has made a grant to the Fourth Kew Scout Group of \$1000 for maintenance works on its hall in Glass Street, East Kew. The work of the community bank — I was fortunate to be present at the launch of the bank in December last year — has been very successful and swift. It is a model for the integration of that banking service into the community, both seeing the community do the work to support the establishment of the bank with both financial and in-kind contributions and eventually the bank being successfully able to return a small share of those profits to the community, in this case in Kew and around the East Kew shopping centre.

The nature of my question relates to community banking generally. I note three other community banks are trying to establish in my province — one in Canterbury, another in Surrey Hills — those two are cooperating very closely — and the Ashwood group, which is working very hard to find a partner in the neighbouring area to establish a successful community bank. The precise nature of my question is to establish what the new minister's attitude is to community banking. We know that the Honourable Marsha Thomson, as Minister for Consumer Affairs, was not supportive of community banking and failed to intervene when major banks closed their banking operations in both country Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.

Hon. M. A. Birrell — Shame!

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — As Mr Birrell says, it is a shame, and it was disgraceful. We witnessed the failure of the minister to stand up for small businesses and older Victorians in this place when she refused to answer questions about community banking. We have a new minister, and I am very interested to establish her attitude to the closure of banks. Labor's policy at the last election was that without government action the devastating consequences of bank closures would continue. I want to establish whether she will take that promised government action and support community banking.

Making the Most of Life

Hon. K. M. SMITH (South Eastern) — I address my question to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I am sure he would like to join me in wishing Felicity Murphy in the papers office a happy birthday for yesterday. I can see that the minister wants to burst into song, but I ask him to hold himself back.

On 20 March during the adjournment debate I raised with the minister matters about an organisation called Making the Most of Life. It is an organisation to which the minister made a presentation of a prestigious award in 2000 but shut down the next year by taking away all its funding.

I asked the minister at the time if he would look towards giving the organisation a \$20 000 grant so that it could promote healthy lifestyles for older Victorians. The minister said:

... I am willing to seek clarification on the status of that issue with my department and shall provide the honourable member with the information.

Each day the mail comes in and I eagerly expect a letter from the minister but he has not had the common decency or courtesy to give me a reply. The minister has had more than enough time to make up his mind whether he will support this group of elderly Australians, and I ask him to give me a response tonight.

Responses

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — In relation to the question by the Honourable Andrew Brideson regarding computer systems for cars and the associated risks, I am happy to refer that matter to the Minister for Transport in the other place.

In relation to the question asked by the Honourable Wendy Smith regarding small business and the Yellow Pages business survey, I will refer this to the Minister for Small Business.

In relation to the issue raised by the Honourable Elaine Carbines regarding the Warrior Women exhibition and issues associated with breast cancer, I will refer this to the Minister for Health in the other place.

In relation to the question asked by the Honourable Jeanette Powell regarding public liability issues, particularly in pony clubs, I will refer this to the Premier in the other place.

In relation to the issue raised by the Honourable Gerald Ashman about the Angliss Hospital upgrade undertaken by the Bracks Labor government and issues associated with car parking in the area, I will refer this to the Minister for Health in the other place.

In relation to the Honourable Dianne Hadden's issue regarding the state bird emblem and the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, I will refer this to the Minister for Environment and Conservation in the other place.

In relation to the matter raised by the Honourable Barry Bishop about the hourly insurance rate relating to a particular constituent, I will refer this to the Minister for Small Business.

In relation to the matter raised by the Honourable Andrea Coote regarding homelessness issues and the latest design by a particular architect of a park bench and associated matters, I will highlight those to the Minister for Housing in the other place.

In relation to the issue raised by the Honourable Peter Katsambanis relating to the decline in live music

venues, I will refer this to the Minister for the Arts in the other place.

The Honourable Geoffrey Ronald Craige raised the matter of motorcycle riders and associated policy issues, and a number of those issues cross portfolios. I am happy to seek clarification across the portfolios which the issues relate to and will seek to have the information provided to the relevant member.

The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips raised a matter regarding government investment assistance. I will refer this to the Minister for State and Regional Development in the other place.

The Honourable Chris Strong raised a matter regarding the Southern Family Life organisation, and I will refer this to the Minister for Community Services in the other place.

In relation to the issue raised by the Honourable Neil Bedford Lucas regarding taxi fare subsidies for Blind Citizens Australia and other associated groups, I will refer this to the Minister for Transport in the other place.

In relation to the Honourable David Davis and the issues he raised regarding the Kew East community bank and associated community banking matters, I will raise this with the Minister for Consumer Affairs in the other place.

In relation to the Honourable Kenneth Smith's issue regarding the Making the Most of Life program, I have sought the information. I understand that it was determined that the model in which the Making the Most of Life program set up an exhibition was not deemed as the most appropriate way of using the funds. It was believed that getting people physically active rather than just putting up a display is better, and because of that, I understand, a different model has been formulated and funded through the relevant organisations from Sport and Recreation Victoria. If the honourable member requires further details, I am happy to provide them at the earliest possible opportunity.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 6.25 p.m. until Tuesday, 4 June.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Tuesday, 28 May 2002

Transport: Scoresby freeway

2409. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the impediments (if any) to the immediate commencement of construction of the Scoresby freeway.

ANSWER:

The construction of the Scoresby Freeway is possible because the Bracks Government has committed to funding the project, and has obtained a commitment from the Commonwealth Government for it to fund 50% of the project's costs. A decision to proceed with the Freeway could not have been made sooner, because the Kennett Government failed to commit any funds to the project, or obtain any Commonwealth funding.

Before construction of the Scoresby Freeway can be commenced, the following activities must be undertaken:

- Preparation of a business case under the Partnerships Victoria policy to determine the scope and potential for private sector involvement in delivery of the project. The business case will be considered by Government in mid 2002.
- Once a decision is made, processes will be commenced for the identification of suitable contractors and subsequent tendering processes.
- In the meantime, work is proceeding on land acquisition, contract document preparation, environmental clearances (including EPBC Act Referrals) and other pre-construction activities.

State and regional development: industrial liaison officer

2467. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for State and Regional Development): In relation to the Industrial Liaison Officer within the Department of State and Regional Development:

- (a) What is the salary range of this officer.
- (b) Is this a full-time position.
- (c) What is the job description for an Industrial Liaison Officer.

ANSWER:

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on the Department's Industrial Liaison Officer provided to an Opposition member by the Department of State and Regional Development on 2 November 2000 under FOI.

Premier: industrial liaison officer

2468. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Premier): In relation to the Industrial Liaison Officer within the Department of Premier and Cabinet:

- (a) What is the salary range of this officer.
- (b) Is this a full-time position.
- (c) What is the job description for an Industrial Liaison Officer.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This information has already been provided and I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Industrial Liaison Officers provided to an Opposition MP by the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 5 December 2000 under Freedom of Information.

Health: Human Services — industrial liaison officer

2469. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): In relation to the Industrial Liaison Officer within the Department of Human Services:

- (a) What is the salary range of this officer.
- (b) Is this a full-time position.
- (c) What is the job description for an Industrial Liaison Officer.

ANSWER:

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Industrial Liaison Officers provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Human Services on 8 December 2000 under Freedom of Information.

Treasurer: Treasury and Finance — industrial liaison officer

2470. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): In relation to the Industrial Liaison Officer within the Department of Treasury and Finance:

- (a) What is the salary range of this officer.
- (b) Is this a full-time position.
- (c) What is the job description for an Industrial Liaison Officer.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Industrial Liaison Officers provided to an Opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 9 November 2000 under FOI.

Education and training: Employment, Education and Training — industrial liaison officer

2471. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): In relation to the Industrial Liaison Officer within the Department of Employment, Education and Training:

- (a) What is the salary range of this officer.
- (b) Is this a full-time position.
- (c) What is the job description for an Industrial Liaison Officer.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows: The Department of Education and Training (DE&T) employs two officers who perform roles as Industrial Liaison Officers (ILOs). Both of these positions are classified at the VPS 5 level (\$62,220–\$87,108). The ILO role (industrial) is undertaken as part of the duties of the Manager, Industrial Relations, within the Human Resources Division of DE&T. The ILO (Building Services) role is a specific role within the Facilities Branch of DE&T. Both positions are full time.

The job description for the ILO (industrial) position is encompassed in that applying to the Manager, Industrial Relations, and includes the provision of strategic employee relations/industrial relations advice to senior management and dispute resolution.

The ILO (Building Services) position is a specific position with responsibilities that include providing strategic advice to senior management in relation to the implementation of the Department's capital works program.

Industrial relations: State and Regional Development — annual report

2483. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: In relation to page 27 of the Department of State and Regional Development 2000–2001 Annual Report:

- (a) Who were the representatives that attended the inaugural industrial relations round table and when was it held.
- (b) Is another round table planned for 2001–2002.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The inaugural Industrial Relations Roundtable for the automotive components industry was held on 27 June 2001. It was attended by representatives of fourteen automotive component companies, five unions, Australian Industry Group, and the Victorian Government.
- (b) Yes.

Transport: Scoresby freeway

2502. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): How will the Government fund the \$550 million share of Scoresby construction costs.

ANSWER:

Under this Government's *Partnership's Victoria* initiative a comprehensive review of options for private or public funding is required to be carried out for major projects such as the Scoresby Freeway and this is currently under way. The exact method for funding the freeway will be decided by Government later this year.

Transport: train signalling

2512. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What money has been spent on train signalling in the metropolitan area for each year since 1995 for —
 (i) signalling maintenance; (ii) new signalling infrastructure; and (iii) total signalling spending.
- (b) What money has been spent on train signalling in the rural area for each year since 1995 for —
 (i) signalling maintenance; (ii) new signalling infrastructure; and (iii) total signalling spending.

ANSWER:

(i) The Melbourne Metropolitan Area

Financial Year	(a) Maintenance Expenditure (\$m)	(b) Renewal Expenditure (\$m)	(c) Total Expenditure (\$m)	Notes
(A) 1995 / 1996				1
(B) 1996 / 1997				1
(C) 1997 / 1998				1
(D) 1998 / 1999				1
(E) 1999 / 2000	10.6	15.6	26.2	2
(F) 2000 / 2001	10.5	20.1	30.6	2, 3

Notes:

1. Pre-privatisation data (ie before 29 August 1999) not available within DOI. The data is being sought from other parties but may not be available to the breakdown level requested.
2. Includes total expenditure on some multi year projects.
3. Excludes six months of data from one franchisee that reports on a calendar year basis.

(ii) Victorian Interstate Standard Gauge Network

Financial Year	(a) Maintenance Expenditure (\$m)	(b) Renewal Expenditure (\$m)	(c) Total Expenditure (\$m)	Notes
(A) 1995 / 1996				1
(B) 1996 / 1997				1
(C) 1997 / 1998				1
(D) 1998 / 1999				1
(E) 1999 / 2000				1
(F) 2000 / 2001	0.8			2

Notes:

1. Pre-privatisation data (ie before 1 July 2000) not available within DOI. The data is being sought from other parties but may not be available to the breakdown level requested.
2. Data is only available for Major Planned Maintenance. Information for reactive maintenance and renewals is being sought.

Victorian Intrastate Network

Financial Year	(a) Maintenance Expenditure (\$m)	(b) Renewal Expenditure (\$m)	(c) Total Expenditure (\$m)	Notes
(A) 1995 / 1996				1
(B) 1996 / 1997				1
(C) 1997 / 1998				1
(D) 1998 / 1999				1
(E) 1999 / 2000				2
(F) 2000 / 2001				2

Notes:

1. Pre-privatisation data (ie before 1 May 1999) not available within DOI. The data is being sought from other parties but may not be available to the breakdown required.
2. Post privatisation data for signalling expenditure is not available. The data is being sought from other parties but may not be available to the breakdown required.

Manufacturing industry: manufacturing industry consultative committee

2624. THE HON. P. A. KATSAMBANIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Manufacturing Industry):

- (a) On what dates has the Manufacturing Industry Consultative Committee met since 1 July 2001.
- (b) Which members attended each meeting.
- (c) Did any Ministers or Ministerial advisers or staff attend each meeting; if so, who and on what dates.
- (d) What topics did the Committee discuss at each meeting.
- (e) Has the Committee discussed the Feltex dispute.
- (f) What effect, if any, does the Committee believe that this dispute will have on investor confidence in Victoria.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) Since 1 July 2001, the Manufacturing Industry Consultative Committee has sat on the following dates:
 - 8 August 2001
 - 26 September 2001
 - 25 October 2001
 - 13 November 2001

(b) The following members attended the meetings:

8 August 2001:

Ms Stella Axarlis – Bilcon
 Ms Helen Cusack – Unilever
 Ms Christianne Davies – Bosch
 Mr Paul Fennelly – AIG
 Mr Leigh Hubbard – Victorian Trades Hall Council
 Mr Craig Johnston – AMWU
 Mr Peter McDougall – VECCI
 Mr Cesar Melhem – AWU
 Mr David Stobart – Austrim Nylex
 Mr Peter Thomas (Chairman)

26 September 2001:

Ms Christianne Davies – Bosch
 Mr Peter Phillips – VECCI representative for Peter McDougall
 Mr Paul Fennelly – AIG
 Mr Craig Johnston – AMWU
 Mr Cesar Melhem – AWU
 Mr David Stobart – Austrim Nylex (Acting Chairman)

25 October 2001:

Mr Peter Black – Tenix
 Ms Christianne Davies – Bosch
 Mr Paul Fennelly – AIG
 Mr Leigh Hubbard – Victorian Trades Hall Council
 Mr Craig Johnston – AMWU
 Mr Peter McDougall – VECCI
 Mr David Cragg – AWU representative for Cesar Melhem
 Mr David Stobart – Austrim Nylex
 Mr Peter Thomas (Chairman)

13 November 2001:

Ms Helen Cusack – Unilever
 Ms Christianne Davies – Bosch
 Mr Peter Black – Tenix
 Mr Leigh Hubbard – Victorian Trades Hall Council
 Mr Peter McDougall – VECCI
 Mr Cesar Melhem – AWU
 Mr David Stobart – Austrim Nylex
 Mr Peter Thomas (Chairman)

(c) My adviser on Manufacturing, Mr Tony White, was in attendance at the meetings on the following dates in an observer capacity:

- 8 August 2001
- 13 November 2001

(d) The Committee discussed the following topics at each meeting:

8 August 2001:

- The New Agenda for Manufacturing
- Ballarat Manufacturing Week
- Wodonga Manufacturing Week

26 September 2001:

- Progress on MICC Reports on The New Agenda for Manufacturing, these included:
 - Economic Scenarios
 - Value of Manufacturing
 - Advocacy
 - Skills & Education
 - High Performance Workplaces
 - Building Better Businesses
 - Delivery Mechanism
 - Building the Case / Drafting Process

25 October 2001:

- MICC Reports on The New Agenda for Manufacturing

13 November 2001:

- MICC Reports on The New Agenda for Manufacturing
- Round 2 STI Applications
- ISO Report

(e) The Committee has not discussed the Feltex dispute.

(f) The matter was not discussed.

Transport: East Burwood–Knox City tram line extension

2693. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What is the status of the proposed East Burwood to Knox City tram line extension.
- (b) How much has been allocated to this project and when will construction commence.
- (c) What arrangements have been put in place to facilitate adequate public transport integration with surrounding areas.

ANSWER:

- (a) A comprehensive feasibility study is under way to investigate a range of options being developed in conjunction with local government and public transport operators. These options include improvements to existing bus services, as well as various tram scenarios and will be costed and assessed in both financial and economic terms.

The Knox Light Rail extension is one of a number of projects being developed as part of the Scoresby Integrated Transport Corridor Project.

- (b) The Government has committed \$70 million towards seven metropolitan public transport projects, of which the extension of the tram to Knox City is one.

A decision on construction timing will be made after scope and funding issues are finalised.

- (c) When opened, any new tram service will be integrated into the public transport network serving the Knox region.

Public transport operators in the area are being involved in the development of project options and will be fully aware of the potential to integrate their existing services with the new tram service.

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2719. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What was the total cost of the Constitution Commission Victoria Seminars held throughout Victoria between 16 August and 28 November 2001 (including, but not exclusively, Commissioners' fees, travel, room hire etc).
- (b) What was the total cost of advertising for the promotion of the Constitution Commission Victoria Seminars held between 16 August and 28 November 2001 and in what publications were the advertisements featured.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The answer is \$195,992.07. This figure includes the Commissioners salaries over the consultation phase of the Commission's work from August 2001 until November 2001. Some portion of the salaries may not have related to either the seminars or the public consultations. The figure also excludes the salaries of the three Commission staff.
- (b) The answer is \$199,856.42. This figure includes \$40,297.22 for Multicultural Advertising. In relation to which publications were the advertisements featured, there was a mixture of television, radio and newspaper advertisements. Advertisements were arranged with:

The Age	The Wimmera Mail Times
The Australian	Country Press Co-operative
Herald & Weekly Times	Rural Press Agricultural Publishing
The Law Institute	Warrnambool Standard
East Gippsland Newspapers	Sunraysia Daily
Geelong Independent	Win TV
Geelong Advertiser	Bay FM
Fairfax Newspaper	The River
Leader community newspaper	3WM Weekly Advertiser
Bendigo Advertiser	DMG Regional Radio
Ballarat Courier	3SR FM – Sun FM
North East Newspapers	3YB radio
3TR radio	3WM radio
DMG Regional Radio	

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2720. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier): In relation to the Constitution Commission Victoria (CCV):

- (a) How many days have each of the Commission members worked for CCV from its inception until 28 February 2002.
- (b) How many days have each of the Commission members been paid for from the inception of CCV until 28 February 2002.
- (c) What is the total amount that has been paid to each of the Commission members for services to CCV between its inception and 28 February 2002.
- (d) What is the total amount that has been paid to each of the Commission members for expenses incurred between its inception and 28 February 2002.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) Commissioner Hampel worked 43 days. Commissioner Macphee worked 32 days. Commissioner Hunt worked 74 days
- (b) See part (a) above.
- (c) Paid to Commissioner Hampel – \$86,666. Paid to Commissioner Macphee – \$45,360. Paid to Commissioner Hunt – \$90,909.50.
- (d) Paid to Commissioner Hampel – \$1134. Paid to Commissioner Macphee – \$1989.06. Paid to Commissioner Hunt – \$617.15.

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2721. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What are the names of all organisations and individuals who have received contracts from the Constitution Commission Victoria between 16 August 2001 and 19 March 2002, respectively.
- (b) What is the purpose and value of each contract.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) None.
- (b) Not applicable.

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2722. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What consultancies have been undertaken by Constitution Commission Victoria from its inception until 19 March 2002.
- (b) What is the name of each of the consultants.
- (c) What was the purpose and value of each consultancy.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) Survey analysis.
- (b) and (c) Mr T. O'Farrell for survey analysis – \$950

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2723. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What are the terms and conditions of Mr Richard Wright's employment as Director – Research and Communications at the Constitution Commission Victoria.
- (b) What is the specific salary and gratuity paid to him.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) and (b) Mr Richard Wright is a VPS 5, employed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Victorian Public Service. It is not appropriate to identify the specific salary of Mr Wright.

Premier: Constitution Commission of Victoria

2724. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services (for the Honourable the Premier):

- (a) What are the terms and conditions of Shannon Dellamarta's employment as Communications and Research Adviser at the Constitution Commission Victoria.
- (b) What is the specific salary and gratuity paid to Shannon Dellamarta.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) and (b) Ms Shannon Dellamarta is a VPS 4, employed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Victorian Public Service. It is not appropriate to identify the specific salary of Ms Dellamarta.

Industrial relations: ACTU call centre code of conduct

2734. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations): Has the Government signed the ACTU's call centre code of conduct; if so, on what date was it signed.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Government has not signed the ACTU Code of Minimum Standards for the Call Centre industry, nor has it signed the ACTU Charter of Practice for the call centre industry.

There is no document entitled 'Call Centre Code of Conduct' produced by, or promoted by, the ACTU.

Health: needle and syringe exchange program

2756. THE HON. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Health): In relation to the Needle and Syringe Exchange Program (NSEP) operated by Southern Health in the Dandenong Springvale area:

- (a) How many syringes were distributed in the 12 months to June 2001.
- (b) How many syringes were returned to the exchange by syringe users or members of the public in the 12 months to June 2001.
- (c) How many syringes were retrieved by Southern Health staff or their agents in the 12 months to June 2001.

ANSWER:

In relation to the Needle Syringe Program (NSP) operated by Southern Health in the Dandenong Springvale area:

- (a) There were 734,814 needles and syringes distributed by Southern Health in the 12 months to June 2001.
- (b) There were 461,166 needles and syringes returned to Southern Health by service users in the 12 months to June 2001.
- (c) There were 72,274 needles and syringes retrieved by Southern Health staff or their agents in the 12 months to June 2001.

Treasurer: Kingston — land tax

2768. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What is the annual land tax collected in the City of Kingston since 1996 for — (i) residential property; (ii) commercial property; and (iii) industrial property.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Land tax is calculated on the aggregated value of an owners total non-exempt land holdings. Whether the land is used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes does not affect the calculation of land tax. Consequently the SRO does not record land use data and it is therefore not able to provide a breakdown of the proportion of the land tax attributable to residential, commercial and industrial property.

Transport: public transport — drunkenness and vandalism

2771. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): In relation to public transport in each year since 1985:

- (a) How many incidents have been reported to police regarding drunken behaviour.
- (b) How many reported incidents of drunken behaviour have resulted in fines or other penalties.
- (c) How many incidents have been reported to police regarding vandalism.
- (d) How many of the reported incidents of vandalism have resulted in fines or other penalties.
- (e) How many people have been arrested and charged for vandalism.
- (f) What is the total financial penalty enforced for vandalism offences.

- (g) What is the total court ordered jail terms for vandalism offences.
- (h) What has been the financial cost of rectifying vandalism offences.
- (i) What other non-financial penalties have been issued for vandalism offences.
- (j) What are the annual patronage figures for the public transport system under its various guises.

ANSWER:

Parts (a) to (i)

The Honourable Member has placed a large number of questions on notice that relate to public transport and traffic offences. Most of the questions are unclear as to the specific information he is requesting and all require reconciliation of data held by separate agencies to prepare a reply. To answer the questions would represent an unreasonable diversion of time and resources.

If the Honourable Member focuses his question more closely I would be happy to reconsider it.

Part (j)

The annual patronage of the public transport system under its various guises from 1985 to 2001 is available from the following annual reports:

- Metropolitan Transit Authority Annual Reports 1984/85 to 1987/88
- The Met Annual Report 1988/89
- State Transport Authority Annual Reports 1984/85 to 1988/89
- Public Transport Corporation Annual Reports 1989/90 to 1997/98
- Department of Transport Annual Reports 1993/94 to 1994/95
- Department of Infrastructure Annual Reports 1995/96 to 2000/01
- V/Line Corporation Annual report 1999
- Bayside Trains Annual Report 1999
- Hillside Trains Annual Report 1999
- Swanston Trams Annual Report 1999
- Yarra Trams Annual Report 1999

Transport: rail projects group

2779. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) How many staff in the Rail Projects Group are former KPMG staff since the appointment of the Bracks Government.
- (b) What percentage do these staff make up of the Rail Projects Group.

ANSWER:

- (a) There are three former KPMG staff currently working in the Rail Projects Group on contract.
- (b) These three contractors constitute 7.5 per cent of the Rail Projects Group.

Transport: Nightrider bus — daily validation figures

2797. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What is the average daily patronage figure for each of the following Nightrider bus services annually since 1996 — (i) Melton; (ii) Werribee; (iii) St Albans; (iv) Sunbury; (v) Craigieburn; (vi) Epping; (vii) Eltham; (viii) Lilydale; (ix) Croydon; (x) Bayswater; (xi) Belgrave; (xii) Dandenong; and (xiii) Frankston.

ANSWER:

The Nightrider network of bus services comprises 9 bus routes which operate to Bayswater, Croydon, Craigieburn, Dandenong, Eltham, Epping, Frankston, St Albans and Werribee. Various extensions have been added to some of these routes since 1993 when Nightrider commenced, services to Belgrave and Rowville on the Bayswater route, a service to Lilydale on the Croydon route, a service to Mornington on the Frankston route and services to Melton and Sunbury on the St Albans route.

Patronage is only reported on a regular basis against the main route. Total patronage by route between 1996 and 2001 is provided in the attachment.

NIGHTRIDER PATRONAGE BY ROUTE 1996 – 2001

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Bayswater	8704	8384	8532	8596	10739	10676
Craigieburn	4116	3905	4163	3676	4258	3417
Croydon	10613	10065	10229	9456	11153	12619
Dandenong	13557	11775	12413	10978	12446	14284
Eltham	6694	7245	6643	6660	7660	7284
Epping	4016	4482	4809	5476	6048	5557
Frankston	12438	12184	12697	11615	13059	12453
St Albans	8969	9082	9405	7215	7450	5971
Werribee	7458	6970	7265	5324	4896	3962
Total Patronage	76565	74092	76156	68996	77709	76223

Transport: Nightrider bus — average daily revenue

2798. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What is the average daily revenue collected on the following Nightrider bus services annually since 1996 — (i) Frankston; (ii) Dandenong; (iii) Belgrave; (iv) Bayswater; (v) Croydon; (vi) Lilydale; (vii) Eltham; (viii) Epping; (ix) Craigieburn; (x) Sunbury; (xi) St Albans; (xii) Melton; (xiii) Werribee; (xiv) Frankston; (xv) Dandenong; and (xvi) Belgrave.

ANSWER:

The information requested is confidential to the individual contract arrangements between the Nightrider bus operators and the Department of Infrastructure and therefore cannot be provided in this instance.

Transport: motor registrations since 1985

2804. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): How many car registrations have been made since 1985.

ANSWER:

Data from the financial year 1985/86 through to 2000/01 is presented in the table below. Please note that as fees relating to vehicles registered under the Federal Interstate Registration Scheme are collected on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, information relating to those vehicles participating in the scheme has not been included.

FINANCIAL YEAR	REGISTRATION VOLUMES Motor vehicles, cycles and trailers
85/86	2,899,409
86/87	2,997,501
87/88	3,053,573*
88/89	3,190,066*
89/90	3,198,017
90/91	3,237,392
91/92	3,272,684
92/93	3,308,914
93/94	3,376,564
94/95	3,433,081
95/96	3,481,722
96/97	3,533,714
97/98	3,696,379
98/99	3,815,449
99/00	3,877,098
00/01	3,957,234

* Denotes trailers excluded

Sources: 85/86 to 88/89 RTA/VicRoads Annual Reports
89/90 to 00/01 VicRoads' Central Payment Management Database

Transport: motor registrations — revenue

2805. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): How much money has been raised from car registrations in each year since 1985.

ANSWER:

Data from the financial year 1985/86 through to 2000/01 is presented in the table below. Please note that as fees relating to vehicles registered under the Federal Interstate Registration Scheme are collected on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, information relating to those vehicles participating in the scheme has not been included.

FINANCIAL YEAR	GROSS REGISTRATION REVENUE Motor vehicles cycles and trailers (Exclusive of refunds)
85/86	\$190,545,000
86/87	\$202,582,000
87/88	\$194,429,000
88/89	\$142,115,000
89/90	\$103,480,849

FINANCIAL YEAR	GROSS REGISTRATION REVENUE Motor vehicles cycles and trailers (Exclusive of refunds)
90/91	\$105,482,035
91/92	\$213,991,687
92/93	\$293,596,852
93/94	\$358,201,807
94/95	\$372,414,557
95/96	\$376,166,621
96/97	\$388,552,434
97/98	\$410,236,387
98/99	\$425,267,679
99/00	\$437,104,551
00/01	\$453,758,304

Sources: 85/86 to 88/89 RTA/VicRoads Annual Reports
89/90 to 00/01 VicRoads' Central Payment Management Database

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2827. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: What are the recommendations of the final Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne.

ANSWER:

I am advised that a draft Land Use Plan, developed by the Melbourne Port Corporation (MPC), was put to public exhibition and consultation in the second half of 2001. The MPC has received 19 submissions and is working towards finalising that report with the Webb Dock Implementation Group, an interagency forum convened to deliver the requirements of the Webb Dock EES.

The Draft document does not contain recommendations, but outlines a land use strategy and planning objectives for land and infrastructure in the Port of Melbourne over the next 20 years.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2828. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: What important economic benefits will the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne bring to the local community.

ANSWER:

The Port is one of Victoria's major assets and it is a key economic generator for the State. I understand that one of the key purposes of the Land Use Plan is to articulate the Melbourne Port Corporation's vision and direction for land use planning and development of the Port over the next 20 years aimed at achieving economic prosperity for the State of Victoria.

In terms of economic contribution, based on the 1998/99 trading year, the Port:

- Employs a total of 18,181 people directly and indirectly; (NIEIR* 1999)
- Supports annual wages/salaries of \$1.008 billion; (NIEIR 1999)
- Contributes \$5.8 billion to the Victorian economy; (NIEIR 1999)
- Handles \$60 billion worth of trade annually;

Imports and exports through the Port also play an important role in the economies of the adjoining local government areas. For example, for 1998/99, it has been estimated that the Port contributed:

- \$418 million to the City of Melbourne’s gross regional product (1.7%);
- \$125 million to the City of Port Phillip’s gross regional product (2.7%);
- \$49 million to the City of Hobsons Bay’s gross regional product (1.8%); and
- \$46 million to the City of Maribyrnong’s gross regional product (2.0%).

* *NIEIR – National Institute of Economic and Industry Research*

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2829. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: What important environmental benefits will the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne bring to the local community.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the Port of Melbourne Draft Land Use Plan references significant work undertaken by the Melbourne Port Corporation (MPC) in developing a Whole of Port Environmental Management Plan (EMP). The MPC has already committed funds towards implementing this environmental improvement plan, with landscaping works at port interfaces and a waste management plan. Tenants have also responded with the development of site specific EMP’s.

The ongoing implementation of the Whole of Port EMP (as summarised in the Port Land Use Plan) will deliver a range of benefits to local communities adjoining Port land.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2837. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: What important social benefits will the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne bring to the local community.

ANSWER:

I am advised that a key theme of the draft Land Use Plan is Port Sustainability. The MPC believes that a sustainable port is one which is economically successful and achieves this in a socially and environmentally responsible manner by taking a holistic and integrated approach to port management.

Consistent with the Government’s policy approach established in Growing Victoria Together, over the next three years the Corporation aims to develop a “triple bottom line” approach to business practice which recognises the interdependence of economic viability, environmental soundness and social responsibility in delivering sustainable business outcomes.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2838. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: How will the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne take into account the effect of port development on local amenity.

ANSWER:

I am advised that in developing the land use plan the MPC has sought to involve as many stakeholders as possible, particularly the surrounding Local Municipalities and community, to ensure that the plan reflects the needs of a broad range of interests.

The draft Land Use Plan includes strategies to deal with visual impact and amenity issues. These include implementation of the Port Amenity Enhancement Program, the provision of landscape buffers, noise monitoring and noise attenuation measures and strategies to deal with light spill.

The main areas of vacant port land at Webb Dock and Victoria dock were subject to environmental assessment and planning processes which resulted in specific mitigation measures. The MPC has also prepared, and is implementing, a Whole of Port Environmental Management Plan.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2839. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: How will the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne be reviewed.

ANSWER:

I am advised that once finalised, the Land Use Plan, developed by the Melbourne Port Corporation (MPC), will be reviewed every two years. The biennial review may include a review of trade forecasts and port infrastructure needs. The review process will take account of:

- New port and intermodal technology and productivity improvements;
- Stakeholder input from MPC's Communications Program; and
- Private sector decisions and government policy.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2888. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: How many submissions in relation to the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne were received from — (i) local residents; (ii) corporations; (iii) Melbourne Ports Corporation; and (iv) Melbourne Port Operators.

ANSWER:

The Melbourne Port Corporation advises that nineteen (19) submissions were received on the Draft Land Use Plan. The submissions came from:

- (i) *Residents* – 1 individual, 1 residents group and 1 consultant
- (ii) *Corporations* – 2 Corporations
- (iii) *Government* – 6 Government agencies and 4 Municipal Councils
- (iv) *Melbourne Port Operators* – 4 port operators/tenants

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2889. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: In relation to the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne, when will the viewpoints at the end of Webb Dock become accessible to the public.

ANSWER:

The Melbourne Port Corporation advises that the new Webb Dock East landscaping, including the planting, public access path and fishing platforms, are expected to be complete at the end of June 2002, however it will remain closed to the public until June 2003 for the maintenance/establishment period. This will enable greater opportunity for plant survival and establishment.

Community services: Kew Residential Services

2900. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services (KRS), as at 30 December 2001:

- (a) How many properties have been purchased off-site for the relocation of KRS residents.
- (b) What is the purchase price of each property.
- (c) What is the expected renovation cost (if any) for each property.
- (d) How many residents can each property accommodate.

ANSWER:

- (a) 10 properties have been purchased off-site for the relocation of KRS residents. Five have been redirected from other use.
- (b) The average purchase price is \$ 206,494.
- (c) The average expected building cost is \$450,999.
- (d) One property will accommodate four residents and nine properties will each accommodate five residents. The average cost of three of the properties redirected from other use is \$151,666 and the average estimated building cost is \$430,000. These accommodate five each. Two properties are existing stock.

The following table provides the detail on each property.

Properties purchased as at 31 December 2001

No.	Purchase Price	Building Cost	Beds	Comments
1	161,484	462,364	5	Works have commenced
2	198,023	480,068	5	Works have commenced
3	214,873	386,686	4	Works have commenced
4	261,799	386,686	5	Works have commenced
5	167,999	480,068	5	Works have commenced
6	105,000	414,118	5	Works have commenced
7*	94,819	520,000	5	To be tendered for construction
8*	374,765	460,000	5	To be tendered for construction
9*	319,626	460,000	5	To be tendered for construction
10*	166,555	460,000	5	To be tendered for construction
Total	2,064,943	4,509,990	49	

Properties redirected from other use as at 31 December 2001

No.	Purchase Price	Building Cost	Beds	Comments
1	210,000	340,000	5	Works completed
2	0	0	6	Existing stock at PRS
3	0	0	6	Existing stock at PRS
4*	130000	520,000	5	To be tendered for construction
5*	115000	430,000	5	To be tendered for construction
Total	455,000	1,290,000	27	

Notes:

Includes all property purchases prior to 31 December 2001. Prices do not include GST

*Construction costs is estimate only as tenders have not been sought. Remaining figures based on tender sum,

Community services: Redlands, Wandin North

2901. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the redevelopment of the Redlands, Wandin North, accommodation for people with disabilities, as at 30 December 2001:

- (a) How many properties have been purchased off-site for the relocation of Redlands residents.
- (b) What is the purchase price of each property.
- (c) What is the expected renovation cost (if any) for each property.
- (d) How many residents can each property accommodate.

ANSWER:

- (a) 1 property has been purchased to date.
- (b) The purchase price was \$352,500.
- (c) The anticipated construction cost is \$940,000 for this new facility, which will provide one unit with 4 resident beds and a second unit, divided into two, each part with 3 resident beds.
- (d) The property will accommodate 10 residents.

Community services: accommodation — people with disabilities

2904. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): How many people with disabilities were in receipt of— (i) in Home Accommodation Support; (ii) Accommodation Outreach Support; (iii) Family Options Support; (iv) Home Support; (v) a Shared Supported Accommodation place; and (vi) a Training Centre place, as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Table 1: Breakdown of Clients by Activity, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	31 Dec 2001
In Home Accommodation Support	574	598	600
Accommodation Outreach Support	1273	1216	1347
Family Options	94	90	72*
Home Support	0	272	299
Shared Supported Accommodation	4031	4168	4196
Training Centre	818	811	794

*Note: the decrease in the number of clients placed with a carer family reflects the department's efforts to ensure, wherever possible, that clients remain with their birth families.

Community services: accommodation — people with disabilities

2905. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): What was the Disability Services expenditure for people with disabilities for — (i) In Home Accommodation Support; (ii) Accommodation Outreach Support; (iii) Family Options Support; (iv) Home Support; (v) Shared Supported Accommodation; and (vi) Training Centres, as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Table 1: Expenditure for In home Accommodation Support, Accommodation Outreach Support, Family Options Support, Shared Supported Accommodation, Training Centres, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	30 December 2001
In home Accommodation Support	\$19,600,000	\$23,400,000	\$11,100,000
Accommodation Outreach Support	\$11,400,000	\$12,400,000	\$5,000,000
Family Options Support	\$3,500,000	\$4,700,000	\$2,000,000
Home Support	\$0	\$6,300,000	\$5,200,000
Shared Supported Accommodation	\$264,400,000	\$297,300,000	\$154,900,000
Training Centres	\$69,400,000	72,900,000	39,600,000

Community services: respite services for carers

2906. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to respite services for carers of people with disabilities, how many households were in receipt of a respite service as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

The information provided in Table 2 demonstrates a cumulative figure for the financial years 1999–2000, 2000–2001 and the first half of 2001–2002.

Table 2: Carer Households receiving a Respite Service, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	31 Dec 2001
Respite	9870	10634	8090

Community services: respite services for carers

2907. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to respite services for carers of people with disabilities, what was the Disability Services expenditure for respite services as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Table 1: Expenditure for Respite Services for Carers, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	30 December 2001
Respite for Carers	\$28,900,000	\$32,300,000	\$16,400,000

Community services: flexible care packages

2908. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the Flexible Care Packages for people with disabilities, how many people with disabilities were in receipt of — (i) a short-term assistance package; and (ii) an ongoing package as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

The information provided in Table 3 demonstrates a cumulative figure for the financial years 1999–2000, 2000–2001 and the first half of 2001–2002.

Table 3: People with a Disability in Receipt of a Flexible Care Package, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	31 Dec 2001
Flexible Care Packages	1348	2945	2159

A further breakdown by short-term assistance package versus an ongoing placement is not available for 30 June 2000, or 30 June 2001 as short-term assistance packages were not introduced until the second quarter of the 2000–01 financial year. As at 31 December 2001 approximately 75 percent of people receiving a Flexible Care Package were receiving an ongoing placement with the remaining 25 percent receiving a short-term assistance package.

Community services: flexible care packages

2909. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the Flexible Care Packages for people with disabilities, what was the Disability Services expenditure for — (i) short term assistance packages; and (ii) ongoing packages as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Table 1: Expenditure for Flexible Packages, 30 June 2000, 2001 & 31 Dec 2001

Activity	30 June 2000	30 June 2001	30 December 2001
Flexible Care Packages*	\$8,300,000	\$13,000,000	\$6,400,000

* Detail information re short term assistance and ongoing packages as requested in the question is not available.

Small business: supply needs of government departments

2917. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business: What percentage of supply needs of the Department of Justice are met by small and medium size business.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Honourable Member’s question falls outside my portfolio responsibilities. The Honourable Member should direct her question to the Honourable the Attorney General.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Wednesday, 29 May 2002

Environment and conservation: coast action program

2494. THE HON. J. W. G. ROSS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation):

- (a) How many new plants have been planted along Victoria's coastline in each local government region under the Coast Action Program in 1998–99, 1999–2000 and 2000–01, respectively.
- (b) What audits have been undertaken of the plant survival rate by way of local government region for the Coast Action Plan in 1998–99, 1999–2000 and 2000–01, respectively, and what are the results.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The Coast Action/Coastcare program has provided grants to community groups to undertake revegetation, restoration, conservation and management activities since 1994. Over the three years in question, over 250,000 indigenous plants have been planted through this funding (the table shows these plantings in years and broad local government regions*). It is important to note that through activities such as weed control, many more plants have naturally regenerated, and that community groups have planted many more plants not funded by this Program.

The grants program provides opportunities for funding for a wide range of coastal and marine conservation and management projects including weed control, provision of visitor facilities, walking tracks and beach accesses, monitoring programs, erosion control and the development of interpretative and educational materials. Projects are developed to address the needs of each individual area as identified by the relevant community groups and land managers. In some areas revegetation is not required, or is not high a priority as other projects. No plants have been planted using Coast Action/Coastcare Program funding during the periods referred to in the local government regions covered by Cardinia Shire Council, Bayside City Council, City of Port Phillip, City of Melbourne, Maribyrnong City Council and Warrnambool City Council. The table below lists only funding provided for revegetation.

Local Government Region*	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
East Gippsland Shire Council	6,900	5,000	6,500
South Gippsland Shire Council	2,500	14,500	400
Wellington Shire Council	-	-	500
Bass Coast Shire Council	12,000	10,100	16,250
Casey City Council	1,000	-	200
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	2,700	10,200	18,000
Frankston City Council	10,000	1,100	-
Kingston City Council	-	-	3,000
City of Hobsons Bay	-	2,000	3,500
Wyndham City Council	-	-	1,000
City of Greater Geelong	-	1,000	3,000

Local Government Region*	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
Borough of Queenscliffe	10,000	6,000	2,200
Surf Coast Shire	14,500	14,500	18,500
Colac-Otway Shire Council	16,250	2,000	6,000
Corangamite Shire Council	-	2,000	10,000
Moyne Shire Council	700	5,000	11,200
Glenelg Shire Council	2,500	2,000	-
TOTAL	76,900	75,400	100,250

* Note these councils were not always the land manager for the area where the new plants were placed, but they have been organised into the requested broad local government regions.

- (b) For each project funded under this program there is a nominated body, often the land manager or community group, that is responsible for the maintenance of the project.

Industrial relations: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2528. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

There are no statutory authorities operating within my portfolio area.

Consumer affairs: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2534. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

There are relatively few statutory authorities in the Consumer Affairs portfolio and I am informed that there are no staff in those authorities who held government credit cards as at the relevant dates.

Workcover: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2535. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Workcover): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No positions were identified as holding Government credit cards in statutory authorities within my portfolio area.

Finance: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2536. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The following statutory authority positions within my portfolio responsibility has been identified as holding a Government credit card:

Government Superannuation Office

Position	As at 30 June 2000	As at 30 June 2001
Chief Executive Officer	Yes	Yes
General Manager Corporate	Yes	Yes
General Manager Customer Services	Yes	Yes
Chief Financial Officer	Yes	Yes
Chief Information Officer	No	Yes
General Manager Beneficiary Choice Program	No	Yes
General Manager Strategy & Investments	Yes	No
Chief Information Officer	Yes	No
Assistant GM Customer Services/Secretary to the Parliamentary Trustee	No	Yes
Acting Assistant General Manager Customer Services/Corporate	No	Yes
Web Design and Content Coordinator	Yes	Yes
Personal Assistant to the General Manager Customer Services & Chief Information Officer	Yes	No
Personal Assistant to the Operations Manager	Yes	Yes
Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer	Yes	No
Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer	No	Yes
Personal Assistant to the General Manager Corporate	No	Yes

Office of the Regulator-General

Position	As at 30 June 2000	As at 30 June 2001
Regulator-General	Yes	Yes
Administrative Officer	Yes	Yes
Director – Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
General Manager	Yes	Yes

Arts: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2537. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Arts): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I advise that:

Given the number of statutory arts bodies, answering this question would be an unreasonable diversion of Departmental resources, and I therefore recommend that the Honourable Member write directly to each agency requesting the information.

Treasurer: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2539. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Treasurer's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No positions were identified as holding Government credit cards in statutory authorities within my portfolio area.

Environment and conservation: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2541. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The provision and verification of information covering all agencies within the Environment and Conservation portfolio would involve an unreasonable diversion of Departmental resources. Should you wish to specify a particular statutory authority I will endeavour to provide a response.

Transport: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2543. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

VicTrack

As at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, 12 members of VicTrack staff held government credit cards.

Position Titles of authorised card holders are attached. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs.

Spencer Street Station Authority

At 30 June 2000 the Spencer Street Station Authority was not in existence.

At 30 June 2001 there were three credit cards issued. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs. Position titles of authorised card holders are as follows:

- Chairman.
- Business Manager.
- Director – Property & Commercial Development.

Public Transport Corporation

As at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001 there was one card issued. Name of individual is not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs. Position title of the authorised card holder is:

- Manager at Preston Tram Workshops.

VicRoads

Position titles of authorised card holders are attached. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs.

Position Titles of Corporate Credit Card Holders - VicTrack

- Supervisor PABX Maintenance
- Service Manager, Telecommunications
- Technical Officer, Networked Database Administration
- Technical Support Officer (Non Urban Train Radio)
- Supervisor (Non Urban Train Radio)
- Lines Maintenance Supervisor
- Executive Assistant
- Supervisor Transmission Maintenance
- Supervisor Control Systems
- Manager Customer Services Telecommunications
- Technical Support Officer Control
- Installation Services Officer

**VICROADS CORPORATE CARD HOLDERS
AS AT 30 JUNE 2000**

SENIOR INVESTIGATIONS OFFICER
 PATROLMAN
 LEADER TRAFFIC CONTROL
 ROAD DEPOT OFFICER
 COORDINATOR QUALITY AND PROJECTS
 FIELD GANG OFFICER
 ROAD SAFETY COORDINATOR
 MANAGER REGISTRATION & LICENSING AND TRANSPORT SAFETY SERVICES
 ROADWORKER/SEALING
 MANAGER LIBRARY & BUSINESS INFORMATION CENTRE
 FINANCIAL OFFICER
 ADMINISTRATION OFFICER ADMIN & HR
 ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT OFFICER
 TEAM LEADER INCIDENT MANAGEMENT
 SURVEILLANCE MGR MAINTENANCE PROJECTS
 MANAGER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
 SENIOR MAINTENANCE ENGINEER

Education and training: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2545. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Education and Training portfolio responsibilities.

The information requested is not readily available and the time and resources necessary to obtain and process the information cannot be justified. The Member is invited to submit a more specific question.

Police and emergency services: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2547. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that the number of statutory authorities within my portfolio is such that to answer the question would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources. If the Honourable Member wishes to indicate those statutory authorities he has a particular interest in, I will reconsider the question.

Corrections: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2548. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Corrections): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the number of statutory authorities within my portfolio is such that to answer the question would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources. If the Honourable Member wishes to indicate those statutory authorities he has a particular interest in, I will reconsider the question.

Planning: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2549. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Given the number of statutory bodies in my portfolio, answering this question, would be an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources, and I therefore recommend that the Honourable Member write directly to each agency requesting the information.

Major projects, and tourism: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2552. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWERS:

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Major Projects portfolio responsibilities.

No staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within my portfolio area held Government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Tourism portfolio responsibilities.

No staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within my portfolio area held Government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

Gaming: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2553. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister’s portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Details of credit card holders for the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority and the Office of Gambling Regulation are as follows:

Position	As at 30 June 2000	As at 30 June 2001
Chairman – VCGA (current)	No	Yes
Chairman – VCGA (previous)	Yes	No
Director of Gaming and Betting Director of Casino Surveillance	Yes	Yes
Assistant Director, Gambling Operations & Audit	Yes	Yes
Assistant Director, Legal & Legislation	No	Yes
Assistant Director, Compliance & Investigation	Yes	Yes
Assistant Director, Information Technology	No	Yes
Casino Project Manager	Yes	Yes
Solicitor	No	Yes
Office Manager	Yes	Yes
Administration Officer	Yes	Yes

Women's affairs: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2555. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Women's Affairs): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

No staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within my portfolio hold government credit cards.

Aboriginal affairs: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2559. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

There are no statutory authorities within the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio.

Workcover: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2560. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for Workcover: What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No positions were identified as holding Government credit cards in statutory authorities within my portfolio area.

Planning: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2562. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning: What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

Given the number of statutory bodies in my portfolio, answering this question, would be an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources, and I therefore recommend that the Honourable Member write directly to each agency requesting the information.

Transport: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2565. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister Assisting in Transport (Roads)): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

VicTrack

As at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, 12 members of VicTrack staff held government credit cards.

Position Titles of authorised card holders are attached. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs.

Spencer Street Station Authority

At 30 June 2000 the Spencer Street Station Authority was not in existence.

At 30 June 2001 there were three credit cards issued. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs Position titles of authorised card holders are as follows:

- Chairman.
- Business Manager.
- Director – Property & Commercial Development.

Public Transport Corporation

As at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001 there was one card issued. Name of individual is not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs. Position title of the authorised card holder is:

- Manager at Preston Tram Workshops.

VicRoads

Position titles of authorised card holders are attached. Names of individuals are not provided as this is considered to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs.

Position Titles of Corporate Credit Card Holders - VicTrack

- Supervisor PABX Maintenance
- Service Manager, Telecommunications
- Technical Officer, Networked Database Administration
- Technical Support Officer (Non Urban Train Radio)
- Supervisor (Non Urban Train Radio)
- Lines Maintenance Supervisor
- Executive Assistant
- Supervisor Transmission Maintenance
- Supervisor Control Systems
- Manager Customer Services Telecommunications
- Technical Support Officer Control
- Installation Services Officer

**VICROADS CORPORATE CARD HOLDERS
AS AT 30 JUNE 2000**

SENIOR INVESTIGATIONS OFFICER

PATROLMAN

LEADER TRAFFIC CONTROL

ROAD DEPOT OFFICER

COORDINATOR QUALITY AND PROJECTS

FIELD GANG OFFICER

ROAD SAFETY COORDINATOR

MANAGER REGISTRATION & LICENSING AND TRANSPORT SAFETY SERVICES

ROADWORKER/SEALING
 MANAGER LIBRARY & BUSINESS INFORMATION CENTRE
 FINANCIAL OFFICER
 ADMINISTRATION OFFICER ADMIN & HR
 ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT OFFICER
 TEAM LEADER INCIDENT MANAGEMENT
 SURVEILLANCE MGR MAINTENANCE PROJECTS
 MANAGER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
 SENIOR MAINTENANCE ENGINEER

Industrial relations: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2568. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations: What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

No Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards. In relation to Departmental staff, I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of State and Regional Development on 10 January 2002 and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development on 14 March 2002 under FOI.

Consumer affairs: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2574. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Consumer Affairs: What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

No ministerial staff have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Justice on 20 December 2001 under FOI.

Workcover: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2575. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Workcover): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 16 January 2002 under FOI.

Finance: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2576. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Finance): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 16 January 2002 under FOI.

Arts: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2577. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Industrial Relations (for the Honourable the Minister for Arts): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I advise that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an Opposition MP by the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 21 December 2001 under FOI.

Treasurer: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2579. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Treasurer): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Treasurer's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 16 January 2002 under FOI.

Environment and conservation: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2581. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on 26th March 2002 under FOI.

Transport: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2583. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

In respect of Ministerial office staff, no Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards.

In relation to Departmental staff within the Minister's portfolio area the information was previously provided to an Opposition Member of Parliament by the Department of Infrastructure on 18 March 2002 under FOI.

Education and training: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2585. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Education): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

No Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an Opposition Member by the Department of Education and Training on 8 March 2002 under FOI.

Education and training: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2586. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post-Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

Names should not be provided as this is deemed to be an unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs. No Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards. I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an Opposition Member by the Department of Education and Training on 8 March 2002 under FOI.

Police and emergency services: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2587. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

No Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Justice on 20 December 2001 under FOI.

Corrections: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2588. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Corrections): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am advised that no Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Justice on 20 December 2001 under FOI.

Planning: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2589. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Planning): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

In respect of Ministerial office staff, no Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards.

In relation to Departmental staff within the Minister's portfolio area the information was previously provided to the Opposition Member by the Department of Infrastructure on 18 March 2002 under Freedom of Information.

Major projects, and tourism: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2592. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWERS:

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Major Projects portfolio responsibilities.

No Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards. In relation to Departmental staff, I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an Opposition Member of Parliament by the Department of State and Regional Development on 10 January 2002 and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development on 14 March 2002 under Freedom of Information.

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Tourism portfolio responsibilities.

No Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards.

In relation to Departmental staff, I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to by an opposition MP by the Department of State and Regional Development on 10 January 2002 and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development on 14 March 2002 under FOI.

Gaming: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2593. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Gaming): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 16 January 2002 under FOI.

Women's affairs: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2595. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Women's Affairs): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on departmental credit cards provided to an Opposition MP by the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 21 December 2001 under FOI.

Aboriginal affairs: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2599. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members have Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on 26th March 2002 under FOI.

Workcover: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2600. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for Workcover: What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No Ministerial staff members hold Government credit cards.

I direct the Honourable Member to previous information on Departmental credit cards provided to an opposition MP by the Department of Treasury and Finance on 16 January 2002 under FOI.

Planning: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2602. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning: What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

In respect of Ministerial office staff, no Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards.

In relation to Departmental staff within the Minister's portfolio area the information was previously provided to the Opposition Member by the Department of Infrastructure on 18 March 2002 under Freedom of Information.

Transport: ministerial or departmental staff — government credit cards

2605. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister Assisting in Transport (Roads)): What are the names of all ministerial and departmental staff working and/or employed within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

In respect of Ministerial office staff, no Ministerial staff members have Government Credit Cards.

In relation to Departmental staff within the Minister's portfolio area the information was previously provided to an Opposition Member of Parliament by the Department of Infrastructure on 18 March 2002 under the Freedom of Information.

Environment and conservation: catchment management authorities

2739. THE HON. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the funding of each of the state's catchment management authorities:

- (a) What was the individual funding allocation to each Authority during the periods 1999–2000 and 2000–01.
- (b) Which programs were funded for each Authority during the periods 1999–2000 and 2000–01.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The figures below are the allocations provided through State Government grants funding. Additional funding sources include Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and other initiatives. These additional sources are not included in this response, the totals are presented in the Annual Reports of the Catchment Management Authorities.

The allocations are provided through quarterly grants payments to Authorities.

Name of Authority	Total State Budget Allocations	
	1999/2000	2000/2001
Corangamite	3,886,000	4,400,000
East Gippsland	2,062,000	2,388,000
Glenelg-Hopkins	1,978,000	2,581,000
Goulburn-Broken	3,641,000	4,433,000
Mallee	374,000	1,252,000
North Central	3,534,400	4,079,000
North East	1,883,000	2,608,000
West Gippsland	5,178,000	4,975,000
Wimmera	447,000	1,296,000

- (b) Programs funded in each Authority are:

Name of Authority Program	1999/2000	2000/2001
Corangamite		
Catchment Planning	-	190,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	380,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,031,000	1,105,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	128,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	2,727,000	2,725,000
East Gippsland		
Catchment Planning	-	292,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	351,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,120,000	955,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	152,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	790,000	790,000
Glenelg-Hopkins		
Catchment Planning	-	282,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	437,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,042,000	1,010,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	83,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	853,000	852,000
Goulburn Broken		
Catchment Planning	-	380,000
Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture	200,000	155,000

Name of Authority Program	1999/2000	2000/2001
Second Generation Landcare	-	651,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,140,000	1,120,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	373,000	200,000
Tariff Replacement Funding	1,928,000	1,927,000
Mallee		
Catchment Planning	-	485,000
Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture	203,000	199,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	371,000
River Health and Water Quality	150,000	160,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	21,000	37,000
North Central		
Catchment Planning	-	345,000
Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture	368,400	525,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	519,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,050,000	1,020,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	446,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	1,670,000	1,670,000
North East		
Catchment Planning	-	240,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	462,000
River Health and Water Quality	1,035,000	1,170,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	110,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	738,000	736,000
West Gippsland		
Catchment Planning	-	225,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	320,000
River Health and Water Quality	910,000	230,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	60,000	-
Tariff Replacement Funding	4,208,000	4,200,000
Wimmera		
Catchment Planning	-	453,000
Second Generation Landcare	-	368,000
River Health and Water Quality	390,000	440,000
Sustainable Dryland Agriculture	57,000	35,000

Environment and conservation: Lake Bolac — serrated tussock

2761. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation):

- (a) When did the Department of Natural Resources and Environment become aware that serrated tussock was in the vicinity of Lake Bolac.
- (b) What did the Department do on becoming aware of the problem.
- (c) Did the Department notify the neighbouring properties of a problem with serrated tussock; if so, when.

- (d) Did the Department notify any other Federal, State or Local agency of a problem with serrated tussock; if so, when.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The Department of Natural Resources and Environment became aware that there was serrated tussock in the vicinity of Lake Bolac in December 2000.

Department employees inspected, assessed and mapped the Lake Bolac foreshore infestation and also inspected the adjoining freehold land to determine the extent of any further infestations. The infestation covered less than one hectare in area and had been slashed just prior to the above inspection.

The Department notified Parks Victoria, the responsible land manager of the Lake Bolac foreshore reserve, of this infestation shortly after the initial inspection and provided Parks Victoria advice on how best to manage the problem in association with protection of natural values and water quality, and requested that Parks Victoria undertake a control program.

A Property Management Plan was developed for Lake Bolac in December 2001 involving Parks Victoria, the Department and the Lake Bolac Committee of Management (Rural City of Ararat). Department employees inspected the foreshore reserve and adjoining freehold land again in December 2001 and provided extension material in the Lake Bolac township on identification and control of serrated tussock.

No further infestations have been recorded in the Lake Bolac location since the initial inspection

- (c) The Department notified adjoining land-holders of the presence of serrated tussock as part of the follow-up inspection and assessment in December 2001.
- (d) Apart from notifying Parks Victoria of the infestation in December 2000 and involving the Lake Bolac Committee of Management in the development of the Property Management Plan, no other Federal, State or Local agency has been notified.

Environment and conservation: Chinaman's Bridge caravan park, Nagambie

2820. THE HON. E. G. STONEY — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): Will the Minister make available a copy of the independent report prepared by Offor Sharp and Associates reporting on the concerns of residents of the Chinaman's Bridge Caravan Park, Nagambie.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In December 2001 Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority appointed Ms Leanne Taylor from Offor Sharp and Associates as a Community Liaison Officer to work with the users of the Chinaman's Bridge Caravan Park on issues associated with the closure of the Park and the development of a new Tourist Park in Nagambie. Ms Taylor was required to submit a summary of her findings directly to Sinclair Knight Merz, the consulting firm engaged by Goulburn-Murray Water to prepare the Nagambie Lakes Tourist Park Business Case Analysis. This was to assist Sinclair Knight Merz in the preparation of the report which was subsequently released for public comment in March 2002.

I have been advised that the discussions between the park users and Ms Taylor are regarded as confidential. In order to respect the confidentiality of the individual park users the Authority released Community Information Statement No. 4 which included a list of the issues raised in the report. The Statement which also included Goulburn-Murray Water's responses to the issues was mailed to all Park residents in mid March 2002.

Copies of the Statement can be obtained from the Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority.

Environment and conservation: commissioner for ecologically sustainable development

2821. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the release of the Consultation Paper in December 2000 seeking the views of key stakeholders on the establishment of a Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development:

- (a) What work has the Minister and her Department done on this since that date.
- (b) How many and which officers have been working on this proposal.
- (c) Which (if any) officer is responsible for the implementation of this proposal.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) The Minister and Department have done considerable work on the proposal since the release of the Consultation Paper in December 2000. This work has included review of submissions received in response to the Consultation Paper, further meetings with stakeholder groups and the development of possible models for the establishment of a Commissioner for consideration by the Government.
- (b) Officers from the Policy Co-ordination Branch have been working on the proposal. These officers have been supported by a Departmental Working Group and also an inter-Departmental Working Group.
- (c) Implementation responsibilities will be determined when a final decision is taken on the form in which the office is to be established.

Environment and conservation: commissioner for ecologically sustainable development

2822. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the consultation with key stakeholders on the establishment of a Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development:

- (a) How many submissions have been received and from whom.
- (b) What do the submissions say.
- (c) What support has been expressed for the proposal.
- (d) What opposition has been expressed to the proposal.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) A total of sixty-six submissions were received including eleven from environment/community groups, three from educational institutions, eight from industry groups, eleven from individuals, four from local government, and twenty nine from State Government agencies, statutory authorities and other Government bodies.
- (b) It is not feasible nor would it do justice to the sixty-six submissions received to summarise them as an answer to this question.

- (c) Most submissions essentially supported the establishment of a Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development but with varying views about the appropriate roles and responsibilities and the basis on which it should be established.
- (d) Four submissions did not support the establishment of a Commissioner.

Environment and conservation: commissioner for ecologically sustainable development

2823. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the establishment of a Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development:

- (a) What budget has been allocated to this work since 18 September 1999.
- (b) What expenditure has been incurred in work on this proposal since that date.
- (c) Have any, and what, workshops been held on this proposal.
- (d) Has a draft bill been prepared; if so, why has the Bill not been introduced into the House.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (a) \$1 million was appropriated in 2000–01 to establish the Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development. This funding was carried forward to the 2001–02 budget and will be carried forward to the 2002–03 financial year.
- (b) The only expenditures incurred to date have been against normal departmental operating provision for policy development.
- (c) A number of workshops have been held with key stakeholders on the proposal prior to the release of the Consultation Paper in December 2000.
- (d) No.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Thursday, 30 May 2002

Education and training, and employment: statutory authorities staff — government credit cards

2546. THE HON. D. McL. DAVIS — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Honourable the Minister for Post-Compulsory Education, Training and Employment): What are the names of all staff working in or for statutory authorities operating within the Minister's portfolio area who held government credit cards as at 30 June 2000 and 30 June 2001, respectively.

ANSWERS:

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Education and Training portfolio responsibilities.

The information requested is not readily available and the time and resources necessary to obtain and process the information cannot be justified. The Member is invited to submit a more specific question.

I am informed as follows:

As a result of recent Ministerial portfolio changes, this response only relates to my Employment portfolio responsibilities.

No Statutory Authorities exist within the Employment portfolio.

Transport: rail standardisation program

2787. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the top priority projects for the \$96 million rail standardisation program.

ANSWER:

The top priority is to provide standard gauge access to the Ports of Portland and Geelong and adjacent areas and to the Port of Melbourne and to rail facilities in Melbourne's west from Mildura, Kulwin and Robinvale lines. This will enable grain, mineral sands and general freight to compete with road in accessing all three ports and interstate markets from the productive North West of the State.

Transport: metropolitan Melbourne — level crossing upgrades

2788. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport): What are the top priority projects for level crossing upgrades in metropolitan Melbourne.

ANSWER:

The Government is committed to improving safety at those metropolitan level crossings most in need. To this end, the Government commits \$3M each year to improve level crossing safety in metropolitan Melbourne and across Victoria. In the metropolitan area, the focus is on automating pedestrian gates at level crossings.

In addition, \$12.5M has been allocated over the next four years to upgrade and improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and people using wheelchairs when crossing railway lines. This initiative will improve safety at stand-alone pedestrian crossings.

Transport: Melbourne bus patronage

2794. THE HON. G. B. ASHMAN — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Transport):

- (a) What are the ten least patronised bus routes in metropolitan Melbourne.
- (b) What is the average daily validation figure for each bus service annually since 1996.
- (c) What is the annual government subsidy for each bus service since 1996.
- (d) What is the annual government subsidy of metropolitan buses since 1980.

ANSWER:

(a) & (b) The 10 least patronised bus routes in Metropolitan Melbourne based on daily validation figures for the month of February 2002 are as follows.

10 Lowest Patronised Routes per weekday		
		Ave Daily Validation
784	Mornington-Osborne-Mornington	43
795	Cranbourne-Tooradin via Cannons Creek/Warneet/Devon Meadows	27
479	Moonee Ponds – Sunbury	22
699	Belgrave – Upwey	19
797	Cranbourne Town Service	17
525	Coburg – West Reservoir	16
839	Fountain Gate SC/Oatlands Estate	14
687	Healesville to Chum Creek	8
796	Cranbourne-Clyde via Five Ways	6
609	Kew to Royal Talbot Hospital	3

Notes:

- It should be noted that the 10 least patronised routes represent services that are operated in isolated areas providing only a few trips per day, operated as a community obligation or in the case of Route 609 to service a sheltered workshop for intellectually handicapped people.
- Validation data for all routes in the Metropolitan network with the exception of those operated by the National Bus Company (NBC) was progressively recorded from 1996 to February 2002. Validations for NBC operated routes were only recorded from February 2002. In view of the above, validation data up to February 2002 is incomplete.

- The OneLink validation data is progressively archived and its recovery would require OneLink to allocate significant time and resource to retrieve.
- (c) Contracts are not subsidised on a route by route basis.
- (d) The annual government subsidy of metropolitan buses since 1980 is as follows:

Metropolitan Buses	Subsidy
Years	\$m
1994/95	153.4
1995/96	169.6
1996/97	165.8
1997/98	170.9
1998/99	187.2
1999/00	193.9
2000/01	208.3

Notes:

- Metropolitan bus services were managed by the Public Transport Corporation and its predecessors prior to 1994/95.
- Information regarding subsidies prior to 1994/95 is not readily available and considerable resources would be required to search for archived material to be able to provide this information.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2830. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What State Government funds were budgeted for the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The following are the State Government funds budgeted during the requested periods for the Helmeted Honeyeater program. These figures are combined totals for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Parks Victoria and Zoos Victoria.

1999/2000 - \$163,000
 2000/2001 - \$171,900
 2001/2002 - \$172,560

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2831. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What State Government funds were spent on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Funds spent on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program during the requested periods are as follows:

1999/2000 - \$172,600
 2000/2001 - \$178,500
 2001/2002 - to April 2002 estimated \$152,400

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2832. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What Federal Government grants/funds were received or spent to support the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Grants received from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust to support the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in the requested years are detailed below. The National Heritage Trust does not operate on a financial year cycle, instead grants are given for the 12-month period between 1 October and 30 September. All grants were fully expended in each year.

1999-2000 - \$100 000
 2000-2001 - \$70 000
 2001-2002 - \$70 000

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2833. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What other grants/funds were received or spent to support the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No other grants have been received to support the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program during the requested periods and the Program is funded entirely from the State Government budget and the Natural Heritage Trust. The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater have however received various grants from Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria which complement the work of the Recovery Program.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2834. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What officers were employed on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The following officers were employed on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program during the requested periods:

During 1999/2000 a total of 4.4 full-time equivalent officers.
 During 2000/2001 a total of 4.4 full-time equivalent officers.
 Until March 2002 a total of 4.4 full-time equivalent officers.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2835. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What officers are now employed in the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program and where are they working.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

There are 3.4 full-time equivalent officers currently employed on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2836. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): How many Helmeted Honeyeaters were known to exist in the wild as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001, and 17 April 2002 and any other dates on which assessments have been made since 1980.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Figures from the annual censuses conducted by the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Team since 1990 are given below. Prior to the establishment of the Recovery Team two less comprehensive surveys were conducted by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department and those results are also included.

Between 1989 and 1998 the entire wild population of Helmeted Honeyeaters was individually banded with a unique colour-combination which allowed accurate population counts. However, as the population increased and the priorities of the recovery team changed, it became impracticable to maintain a fully-banded population. Complete population counts were therefore no longer attempted. Instead, the population has been monitored by documenting the number of successful breeding pairs and the number of young fledged each breeding season.

Since 1980 the only population that has existed is at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve.

September 1984	40-44 adults
March 1987	32-36 adults
1 March 1990	46 adults and 24 juveniles [18 breeding pairs in the preceding summer]
1 March 1991	53 adults and 20 juveniles [15 breeding pairs]
1 March 1992	53 adults and 29 juveniles [20 breeding pairs]
1 March 1993	55 adults and 28 juveniles [22 breeding pairs]
1 March 1994	65 adults and 33 juveniles [21 breeding pairs]
1 March 1995	58 adults and 42 juveniles [27 breeding pairs]
1 March 1996	60 adults and 45 juveniles [27 breeding pairs]
1 March 1997	63 adults and 42 juveniles [25 breeding pairs]
1 March 1998	66 adults and 37 juveniles [24 breeding pairs]
1999 breeding season	20 breeding pairs produced 30 juveniles
2000 breeding season	19 breeding pairs produced 36 juveniles
2001 breeding season	20 breeding pairs produced 33 juveniles
2002 breeding season	21 breeding pairs produced 37 juveniles

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2884. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): How many Helmeted Honeyeaters were kept at Healesville as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001, and 18 April 2002, respectively, and any other dates on which assessments have been made since 1980.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The total numbers of Helmeted Honeyeaters in captivity at 30 June each year are listed below. The reduction of the total population since 1999 is mainly attributable to the intensive trials of release to the wild that have taken place since then.

30 June 1990 – 13 individuals
 30 June 1991 – 23 individuals
 30 June 1992 – 25 individuals
 30 June 1993 – 4 individuals
 30 June 1994 – 7 individuals
 30 June 1995 – 18 individuals
 30 June 1996 – 20 individuals
 30 June 1997 – 19 individuals
 30 June 1998 – 32 individuals
 30 June 1999 – 40 individuals
 30 June 2000 – 39 individuals
 30 June 2000 – 32 individuals
 22 April 2002 – 36 individuals

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2885. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): How many Helmeted Honeyeaters were kept at any other institution as at 30 June 2000, 30 June 2001, and 18 April 2002, respectively, and other dates on which assessments have been made since 1980.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Two Helmeted Honeyeaters were held at the Melbourne Zoo on behalf of the Recovery Team between 22 August 1997 and 26 November 1998 when they were returned to the captive breeding colony at Healesville Sanctuary.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2886. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): What releases of Helmeted Honeyeaters have been made under the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program since January 2000.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Since 1 January 2000 a total of 22 captive-bred Helmeted Honeyeaters have been released. Details are provided below:

5 February 2000

Two juveniles released at Beer's Bridge, Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve, as part of trials of release techniques.

12 January 2001

One pair with two nestlings released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

26 January 2001

Two adult pairs released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

27 February 2001

One pair and their 35-day-old offspring released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

March-April 2002

Two adult pairs, one adult female and four immatures released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park, i.e. nine individuals in total.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2887. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program:

- (a) On what dates and at what places were releases of Helmeted Honeyeaters made since January 2000.
- (b) On each of those releases, how many Helmeted Honeyeaters were released.
- (c) How many of the released helmeted honeyeaters remain alive.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

(a) and (b).

Since January 2000 the following releases of captive-bred Helmeted Honeyeaters have taken place.

5 February 2000

Two juveniles released at Beer's Bridge, Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve, as part of trials of release techniques.

12 January 2001

One pair with two nestlings released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

26 January 2001

Two adult pairs released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

27 February 2001

One pair and their 35-day-old offspring released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park.

March-April 2002

Two adult pairs, one adult female and four immatures released at Diamond Creek, Bunyip State Park, i.e. nine individuals in total.

- (c) Two of the birds released in February 2001, and all except one of the birds released in March and April 2002, were alive on 19 April 2002. The other 11 birds have disappeared from the release sites after remaining for various periods and their status is unknown.

Ports: port of Melbourne — final land use plan

2890. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Ports: In relation to the Land Use Plan at the Port of Melbourne, when will the Port Heritage Trail become a reality at the Port of Melbourne.

ANSWER:

The Land Use Plan proposes as a strategy to:

“Investigate opportunities for cultural interpretation throughout the Port, especially at landings at Webb Dock, Victoria Dock, South Wharf and the Williamstown foreshore.”

It is expected that this will occur progressively over the next two years.

Environment and conservation: helmeted honeyeater recovery program

2891. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Resources (for the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation): In relation to the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program, what is the known cause of death of the released helmeted honeyeaters.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The cause of death has only been established for one released Helmeted Honeyeater. It is known to have died as a result of injuries caused by an ill-fitting radio-transmitter harness. Attachment of tiny radio-transmitters is a standard method of tracking wild birds to monitor their movements. It is the only technique that gives a good chance of understanding the fate of released birds once they leave the general area of the release site.

The fate of the other 11 birds released is unknown as none were carrying a radio-transmitter at the time of their release.

Community services: accommodation — people with disabilities

2902. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): In relation to shared supported accommodation for people with disabilities, for the financial year 2000-2001 and the six months ending 30 December 2001:

- (a) How many properties have been purchased which will accommodate people not already being provided with a residential service.
- (b) What is the purchase price of each property.
- (c) What is the expected renovation cost (if any) for each property.
- (d) How many residents can each property accommodate.
- (e) What is the average time from purchase to a property being operational.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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ANSWER:

(a) 47 properties have been purchased during this time. Five existing properties have also been provided to house new residents.

(b) and (c) and (d) – see Table below

Property Purchases 1 July 2000 - 30 December 2001				
No Of	Property	Construction	No of	Comments
Props.	Purchase	Costs	Residents	
	\$	\$		
1	\$86,498	\$416,960	5	
2		\$119,237	5	Existing site
3	\$78,800	\$530,145	6	
4	\$196,888	\$116,100	4	
5	\$327,050	\$250,000	5	
6	\$106,349	\$598,965	6	
7	\$67,955	\$442,916	5	
8		\$555,176	5	Existing site
9	\$88,505	\$414,061	5	
10	\$161,684	\$454,854	5	
11	\$50,770	\$486,601	5	
12		\$393,636	5	Existing site
13	\$31,650	\$500,000	6	
14	\$71,740	\$417,000	5	
15	\$392,758	\$596,223	7	
16	\$67,500	\$457,091	6	
17	\$291,063	\$417,176	5	
18	\$226,844	\$353,781	5	
19	\$201,841	\$344,405	5	
20	\$272,500	\$396,033	5	
21	\$225,701	\$361,300	5	
22	\$166,500	\$395,250	5	
23	\$226,644	\$560,445	6	
24	\$328,151	\$251,449	6	
25	\$368,250	\$375,000	5	
26	\$206,654	\$416,667	5	
27		\$347,000	5	Existing site
28	\$177,500	\$339,545	5	
29	\$248,147	\$276,531	5	
30	\$137,175	\$416,667	5	
31	\$124,000	\$416,667	5	
32	\$307,041	\$416,667	5	
33		\$416,667	4	Existing site
34	\$68,000	\$318,241	5	
35	\$274,500	\$292,727	5	
36	\$103,341	\$629,500	5	
37	\$452,500	\$352,405	6	

Property Purchases 1 July 2000 - 30 December 2001				
No Of	Property	Construction	No of	Comments
Props.	Purchase	Costs	Residents	
38	\$192,000	\$697,905	7	
39	\$351,894	<i>\$470,000</i>	6	
40	\$582,579	<i>\$400,000</i>	5	
41	\$261,930	\$434,000	4	
42	\$342,500	\$380,900	5	
43	\$13,500	<i>\$500,000</i>	5	
44	\$58,000	\$513,465	5	
45	\$24,000	\$441,425	5	
46	\$39,000	\$409,240	5	
47	\$180,000	\$345,320	5	
48	\$165,000	\$339,085	5	
49	\$180,000	\$278,573	5	
50	\$280,000	\$350,590	5	
51	\$75,000	<i>\$400,000</i>	5	
52	\$135,000	\$148,491	2	

Notes:

1. All figures shown are GST exclusive.
2. Property purchase dates, not settlement dates have been used.
3. Construction costs shown are actual tender or anticipated construction prices.
4. Estimates are shown in 'italics'.
5. These costs exclude contingencies, Project management and Consultants fees.
6. All of the above construction works are totally new buildings or significant redevelopments of the existing dwellings.

(e) The average time from settlement of the purchase to a property being operational is approximately 12 months due to the extensive and specific/specialised nature of the accommodation to be provided.

Community services: Plenty Residential Services

2903. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Small Business (for the Honourable the Minister for Community Services): How many residents were at the Plenty Residential Services (PRS) for people with disabilities, as at 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001, respectively.

ANSWER:

There were 103 residents at 30 June 2001 and 30 December 2001.

Education services: schools — staff

2920. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education Services: Which schools have had their staff withdrawn, been closed or otherwise ceased operation since 18 October 1999.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

Since the Bracks government came to Office on 18 October 1999, thirteen school sites have been closed or unstaffed. This compares with 326 school sites closed under the previous government.

The schools are:

Heatherton PS, closed 31/12/1999, approved in August 1999 by the previous government

Mandurang South PS, closed 31/12/1999, voluntary merger with Strathfieldsaye PS

Irrewillipe East PS, closed 26/4/2000, voluntary merger with Elliminyt PS

Sunshine West PS, closed 26/4/2000, voluntary merger with Glengala PS

Brim PS, closed 31/12/2000, voluntary closure

Wando Vale PS, closed 31/12/2000, voluntary closure

Youanmite PS, closed 31/12/2000, voluntary closure

Gerangamete PS, closed 31/12/2001, voluntary closure

Lexton PS, closed 31/12/2001, voluntary closure

Watchem PS, closed 31/12/2001, voluntary closure

James Harrison SC, closed 31/12/2001, voluntary merger with Newcomb SC

Buffalo PS, unstaffed 28/2/2002, voluntary unstaffing

Gelantipy PS, unstaffed 28/2/2001, voluntary unstaffing.

