

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

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4 March 2003**

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Tuesday, 4 March 2003

The PRESIDENT (Hon. M. M. Gould) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Film Victoria — Report, for the period 1 January 2002 to 30 June 2002.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Ballarat Planning Scheme — Amendment C47.

Campaspe Planning Scheme — Amendment C23.

Darebin Planning Scheme — Amendments C39 and C44.

Golden Plains Planning Scheme — Amendments C11 and C13.

Kingston Planning Scheme — Amendment C30.

Knox Planning Scheme — Amendment C29.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendment C67.

Mitchell Planning Scheme — Amendment C15 (Part 1).

Monash Planning Scheme — Amendment C34.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendment C26.

South Gippsland Planning Scheme — Amendments C14 and C15.

Wellington Planning Scheme — Amendment C17.

West Wimmera Planning Scheme — Amendment C2.

Wodonga Planning Scheme — Amendment C15.

Yarra Planning Scheme — Amendment C56.

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment C22.

Radiation Advisory Committee — Report, for the year ended September 2002.

Snowy Hydro Limited — Report, 2001–02.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Legal Practice Act 1996 — No. 20.

Meat Industry Act 1993 — No. 18.

Public Authorities (Dividends) Act 1983 — No. 19.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Minister's exemption certificate under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rule No. 20.

The following proclamation fixing operative date was laid upon the Table by the Clerk:

Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 — 3 March 2003
(*Gazette No. G9, 27 February 2003*).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of the day

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the consideration of the order of the day, business to take precedence, be postponed until the next day of meeting.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — President, I note that the motion — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis, I need to ask if you are debating that motion or making a point of order or — —

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — My response is that the motion has been moved to adjourn the debate until the next day of meeting. That is an extraordinary basis on which to come into this house. The government has recalled the Parliament for an unscheduled sitting day at an unscheduled time, and the major item of business before the house is the address-in-reply. To adjourn the debate on the address-in-reply to the next day of meeting would indicate that it is the government's intention to adjourn the house immediately, later this day, after it has attended to government business.

That would indicate that it has pre-empted the rights of members of this place that are clearly defined under the standing orders and the sessional orders, which the government itself introduced only last week against the advice of the opposition and the other non-government party, which made clear that these sessional orders would lead to a proscriptive model of behaviour in this house. The government prevailed, introduced its sessional orders, and now has, in less than a week, determined that those sessional orders are irrelevant and that it will use its numbers, as it has flagged, to adjourn the business of the day simply to satisfy its own agenda.

Bear in mind, President, that this house is a house intended to represent the people of Victoria, not just a vehicle for an executive mandate. The behaviour that we are seeing here is as we saw it last week and as we saw it callously when the Parliament was recalled unnecessarily today. But having been recalled, we should do a full day's business.

If it is the intention of this motion to adjourn the debate on the address-in-reply to the next day of meeting,

which is as the government has moved, we have a major problem because clearly there will not be sufficient business for the house to continue sitting later this day.

I take great exception to the approach that the government is taking on this matter. I do not understand why the government has come into this place with that approach, having recalled the Parliament to sit at 9.30 a.m., when the sessional orders adopted by the government specified that the house should come sit at 2.00 p.m. on a Tuesday. It recalled the Parliament on a non-scheduled sitting day — a day that was not in the calendar — at great inconvenience to people.

We are here — that is, the opposition is here — ready to do a full day's business. Is it the government's intention not to transact a full day's business? We certainly are here and ready to do that. We are looking forward to the debate on the address-in-reply, and the first thing that the minister has done, and the first words he has uttered on this unscheduled sitting day have been to move the adjournment of debate on the main item of business of the day to another day.

So far as I am concerned this is an unconscionable act of irresponsibility on the part of the government. The government's position has been that it will use its numbers to subvert the rights of parliamentarians who are going about their legitimate business of representing their communities. The government intends to use its numbers to gag debate — and this is another indication how the government intends to gag debate — today on the address-in-reply by adjourning it until the next day of meeting.

It would have been possible for the government to have given priority to its own business by adjourning this debate until later this day, but it has chosen not to do that. It has chosen to adjourn the debate until the next day of meeting. That being the case there is no prospect therefore that following the house's dealing with the second-reading speech, which the government is keen to introduce, there will be any further debate on the address-in-reply. Therefore all honourable members, whether they be government or opposition, will be in a position where they will have attended Parliament for no purpose other than for the minister to gag debate.

That is what the government intended to do when it brought us here today. That, indeed, is what is occurring and that is the way the people of Victoria will see the government behaving. We have a situation here where the government, having introduced its own sessional orders to proscribe debate in this Parliament — which have limited the rights of

members Parliament to get up in this house and represent their communities — is shutting down Parliament and gagging debate. It is trying to ensure there is no debate in this Parliament. Why is it doing that on the first sitting day of an unscheduled sitting week?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Time!

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — The Leader of the Government today has tried to get through in a timely fashion the business for which Parliament has reconvened today, with the specific intention or purpose of enabling Parliament to hear a second-reading speech from my ministerial colleague the Minister for Small Business on an important piece of legislation that will address the conditions of shopping entitlements over the Easter period.

The opposition parties, the Parliament of Victoria and the people of Victoria are very clear — in fact, it was made very clear by the government last week — that the sole intention of Parliament sitting today was to deal with that matter because unless that bill was listed on the notice paper for second-reading debate, thereby enabling us to proceed to that debate in the next parliamentary sitting week, that bill would not be able to pass through both houses of Parliament and be enacted prior to Easter this year.

It is clear, and it was clearly outlined by the government to the opposition last week before the opposition decided not to grant leave for the second-reading speech. It was a very vexed issue last week, but the action of the opposition in determining not to give leave for that bill to proceed — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — The procedures and the rules allow for us to be here today. They allow for Parliament to convene this morning specifically to deal with the formal business of the Parliament and to enable the second-reading speech to proceed before we adjourn.

The rules of Parliament, laid out in standing orders, sessional orders and rulings from the Chair, allow for the circumstances of the sitting this morning. Regardless of the arguments, positions and the interjections of the opposition in the house this morning the rules of Parliament by which we will collectively live over this session allow for this sitting to take place in the format that the Leader of the Government has moved this morning.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson — Not true!

Mr JENNINGS — They absolutely allow for it, Mr Atkinson, and he knows full well there will be no contribution from the opposition. There will be no contribution by the President or no intervention by the clerks or from anywhere else in the Parliament of Victoria to actually say that what the government is proceeding with in doing its business today is outside the scope of the rules. Nobody will be able to indicate to the house that that is the case.

The argument put by the Leader of the Opposition today is that the most important matter before Parliament today is the address-in-reply. It is very clear and anybody who came into this place last week knows that the one amendment that the government made to sessional orders that it tabled in Parliament last week was to allow for additional time for members' contributions to the address-in-reply debate and in relation to the budget.

Despite the accusations by the Leader of the Opposition that it is shutting down the opportunity for all members of Parliament to contribute to debate on the address-in-reply and to the budget speech, the government acted in a responsive way last week to amend the sessional orders to allow for a longer debate. In fact, when the bill comes back onto the notice paper to enable a second-reading debate there will be in excess of 9 hours debate on the bill, according to sessional orders; and when we come back to debate the address-in-reply there will be approximately 15 hours of debate.

So no gag will apply to the address-in-reply, and no gag will apply to the bill. The government wants to deal with the business of the Parliament in an efficient way. Had leave been given last week we would not be here today. It was a conscious and deliberate act by the opposition to try to extract a symbolic pound of flesh, but it will not be successful in extracting that pound of flesh from the government because the government has determined to bring Parliament back to deal with government business in an efficient way. We will not gag debate, either on the address-in-reply or on the important debate that will underpin this bill, on the next day of meeting.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — That was one of the weakest performances we have had from the Deputy Leader of the Government in a very long time because he does not have a feather to fly with. Last Wednesday the house dealt with and adopted new sessional orders. The sessional orders are absolutely and completely specific. They refer to the routine of business on Tuesdays. They state 'Tuesdays at 2.00 p.m.'

The government makes the point that it wants to deal with its business efficiently. Let us do that at 2 o'clock! What is wrong with doing it at 2 o'clock? The house could deal with business as well at 2 o'clock as it can at half past nine, except in that case the house would have to have a question time followed by 90-second statements, wouldn't it?

Let us be absolutely clear about this: the only reason we are here at 9.30 a.m. today is that the government does not like to be scrutinised. It is hiding from the people of Victoria. As the Deputy Leader of the Government pointed out, the government could have brought us back today because it has the numbers. It certainly could have — and it has! The government could have brought the house back at the right time, but it chose not to — and the only reason it chose not to is that it did not want to subject itself to the scrutiny of Parliament. It did not want to subject itself to the scrutiny of the Victorian people.

I spoke on the procedural debate last week. I make the point that procedural debates are new in this place. Until the government brought in its jackbooted sessional orders last week this house did not have procedural debates. I make the point for the benefit of new Labor members that the house did not have procedural debates because people were not gagged and there was no guillotine applied.

Now we have a new system of procedural debates. Last week I challenged the Deputy Leader of the Government on whether or not we would be coming back at 9.30 a.m. today so as to subvert the sessional orders and not have a question time. He refused to answer. In my brief contribution last Thursday I said words to the effect of, 'Are you going to bring us back for a proper day of sitting or are you going to treat Parliament with contempt?'. The answer was proved the moment the Leader of the Government stood up and moved that the debate be adjourned until the next day of meeting.

There is sufficient work for there to be a full day's sitting here today. We should have started at the usual time but even if the government did want to start at 9.30 a.m., there is sufficient work for us to do. There are new members of this place who are yet to give their maiden speeches.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Sorry, their inaugural speeches — they are yet to give the first speech they will give in this place! They could easily have been

accommodated today, but they too have been gagged by the government.

Mr Jennings — They will come back, and they will get their 30 minutes.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Luckily they will; the rest of us will get 15 minutes because we intervened after the government brought into this place sessional orders that said some people would get 5 minutes. The Deputy Leader of the Government put on a song and dance about having quarter of an hour on the budget. It is an outrage that the government has brought in sessional orders that mean some people will only get a quarter of an hour on the budget. How can you analyse the budget in a speech limited to a quarter of an hour? How could the government bring in a sessional order that says one member of this place will be treated differently from another and some members will get 5 minutes and some will get 10 minutes and others will get more? It is appalling!

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — The government does not want scrutiny, it does not want equality, so it changes the way this place is to operate.

Let me make another point: the government's actions today are completely city-centric. Members opposite say they have the interests of country people at heart, but of course they do not. A lot of people have come back here today, and it has been difficult. We have country members in this place who have —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Members on my right!

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Okay, it is unnecessary. The point is, the government comes in here and trashes the orders and then comes to the opposition parties saying we should give it leave. We are playing by the rules the government brought in.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — If you want to bring in these rules, then you have to wear them, don't you! That is your problem.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Forwood's time has expired.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I have been gagged! I have something to say and you are going to sit me down.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Forwood will sit down!

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — This debate is a joke, as is today's sitting of Parliament. It is a complete joke. I was not going to add to it by making a contribution to this procedural debate, but I was prompted to respond to a couple of points made by the Deputy Leader of the Government. I will not be long, but I will make three points, three salient points. First of all, people out there in the community regard today's sitting as a gross waste of taxpayers money. To bring the Parliament back for what inevitably — —

Mr Smith — Name one of them. Name one of them who has complained to you about it.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Absolutely. People read the comments in the paper that we are going to be back here for 10 minutes today. Numerous people have called my office and said, 'Good on you for speaking out against this, about both sides of the house — little boys who do not come to agreement on procedures. It is stupid'.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — You just listen to this, Ms Mikakos. It is a gross waste of taxpayers money to bring this house back for a sitting that will probably last less than an hour this morning. It is a gross waste of taxpayers money.

The Deputy Leader of the Government said that this is all because leave was refused by the opposition to bring in a bill that has to go through both houses of Parliament before the Easter period. I say this to the government: it cannot just come in here and assume that leave will always be given for every piece of legislation that comes before the Parliament. Therefore, if the government has a rigid program and a time line that it needs to meet, then it needs to plan better right from the start. Parliament should have been brought back a week earlier to ensure that there was sufficient time for legislation to be passed through the Parliament.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — It could not. The lower house was not ready.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I say to the government: get your own act in order. The government should not assume that leave will always be granted. If there is some urgency on any bill, the government must ensure that Parliament sits an appropriate number of weeks to meet its time line.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — We are.

Hon. P. R. HALL — The government knew this legislation was important to it. The legislation was announced some time ago, and the government should have brought the Parliament back a week earlier if that was required to meet the time frame.

The other point I want to make is that the government could well have chosen to come back at 9.30 a.m. last Friday rather than 9.30 a.m. today.

Hon. J. M. Madden — Not under sessional orders.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Well, I go to this point. I agree with Mr Forwood that 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday is an inappropriate time to commence when members are required to come down just for an hour's sitting. Two of my colleagues have been prohibited from being here today because they happen to be in the furthest corner of the state and could not possibly make a time frame of 9.30 in the morning. If we had sat at 2.00 p.m., the appropriate Tuesday time, they would have been here.

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — We all know why we are here. We are here because the opposition decided to play some really stupid political games with a piece of legislation. That is the only reason we are here. We are here because the opposition chose to abuse, yet again, the processes of this place by denying leave —

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, President, I do not think there is any way in the world that a use of the standing orders can be described as an abuse.

Hon. M. R. Thomson — That is not a point of order.

Hon. Bill Forwood — It is a point of order. It is entirely inappropriate for any member to address the way this house operates in those terms, and he should be told that he cannot do it.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is not a point of order; it is a debating point. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr VINEY — What we are seeing over there is the Phil and Bill Show. It is a little bit like Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men — two people lobbying and vying and trying to outdo one another and show their testosterone off to the backbench. They are trying to see who can assert their authority and make a great exhibition of knowledge of the standing orders — only to have the President immediately and quite properly point out that what was raised as a point of order was inappropriate.

We are here today because the opposition chose to misuse this place to force the government to come back and read a second-reading speech when that could easily have been done on Thursday of last week. We could all have been saved this trouble, and in a couple of weeks time we would have been able to proceed with the debate properly after having given it some consideration and having provided some opportunity for the community to have seen the legislation and the second-reading speech and with all members of this place being given the opportunity to make some contribution on the legislation.

However, the opposition chose to play games and try to muck up the government's orderly process of business. The Leader of the National Party in this place suggested that we should have met a week earlier and that the government has somehow not organised its business program appropriately. That is clearly nonsense. The government had a clear business agenda and it brought forward a number of pieces of legislation, and leave for the immediate second reading of many of them was given.

What is the one piece of legislation the opposition chose not to give leave for — the one piece of legislation where there was some time constraint with the coming of Easter? Clearly it was a deliberate and conscious decision to play political games in this place, to abuse the processes of Parliament and to try, according to some sort of perverted opposition thinking, to embarrass the government. That did not work. The government said, 'Fine. If the opposition wants to play those games, we will come back next Tuesday'. That is the proper process. By coming back today we will be able to hear the minister's second-reading speech, the legislation will be properly introduced and the community will be able to provide appropriate input into this legislation for all members of this place to consider.

There is nothing unusual about delaying the address-in-reply debate and reordering government business. There is nothing unusual in that process. All of us who have been in this place or in the Assembly are aware of the process of deferring the address-in-reply debate in order to put forward government legislation. We will come back to it at a later time or on another day.

There is nothing unusual about that at all. The opposition is now pulling a stunt in this procedural debate to try to suggest that this is some sort of unusual tactic and is applying some gag. It is really grasping at straws.

In his contribution Mr Forwood raised the question of accountability — of the government being accountable to the people of Victoria. We had that accountability last November when Labor took an overwhelming majority in the Legislative Assembly and took a majority in this place as well, against most predictions. For the opposition to raise the question of accountability so early in this term is something of a joke. There was accountability last November when the Labor Party was overwhelmingly returned to government.

The reason the Labor Party was overwhelmingly returned to government was because it is this government that has dealt with the proper processes of democracy and accountability in Victoria. It is this government that has not tried to tie up and gag debate in this place; it was the opposition, and the Liberal Party led by Jeff Kennett, Mr Forwood and all the others — —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — We are beginning to see the pattern of this government. On two days last week we talked about sessional orders for some considerable time. What is coming through from the speeches this morning — with some more acting by the Minister for Aged Care and some more information from Mr Viney — is that there is now a sense of deep-seated arrogance from this government, which will curtail us — we will have the gag and the guillotine. We are seeing the hallmarks of an arrogant and hypocritical government; that is what it is showing here today.

The opposition does not dispute that the government has the numbers — there is absolutely no doubt that it has the numbers — but with its jackboot approach and the heavy-handed oppression it came in here with last week it has forgotten that leave is not a right, it is a courtesy. Judging from the way it came in here and bombarded us, this is the way it obviously intends to go through. The Minister for Aged Care, with his theatrical approach, did not give us the courtesy of speaking to us beforehand. I have to go back to — —

An Honourable Member — That's not true!

Hon. ANDREA COOTE — We spoke last week about the sessional orders, and from looking at the sessional orders I would have to ask: what precedent has been set here? We have all been dragged back, and Mr Hall spoke, as indeed did Mr Forwood, about the country members being recalled. What precedent is this? The next time we do not like a bill will we all be

called back again, curtailed in our speeches and not be given a question time? Will this be a hallmark of this government — arrogance, and using it at its will?

Opposition members are ready to debate; we are ready for a full day's session. We have come here to debate and to put in a full day on government business. May I remind this arrogant government that we are not here for its convenience; we are here for the people of Victoria, and the people of Victoria deserve a full day of Parliament. We need the opportunity to have question time to put the government under scrutiny. But no, we have been gagged — the guillotine has been applied. It did not take the government very long at all. The arrogance will be a hallmark of the government; we can see it coming through now. It will be very interesting. Mr Viney has already set the scene. He has put it firmly on the table, and we will be watching to see how this manifests as we go through.

As I said, country members have been recalled, and many have had to come from a long way away to put in a full day. What is it government members are afraid of? What sort of scrutiny are they concerned about? Why do they not want the people of Victoria to hear what it is this government is all about? The government is gagging and guillotining debate in the house, but we have not yet even heard from the Leader of the Government. Where has he been? We have heard from the Minister for Aged Care, with his theatrical approach, and from Mr Viney, but we have not yet heard from the leader. It will be extremely interesting to hear what he has to say. No doubt it will reinforce the arrogance and hypocrisy of this government. I think government members should all be totally ashamed of what they have been up to.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — The opposition has simply brought this house back unnecessarily today because of a fundamental thing: it has just not yet learnt that it is no longer born to rule in this house. That is a lesson it has to learn in order for this house to operate effectively.

The opposition comes in here and talks about gagging, yet it had the master of gagging, Jeff Kennett — who was the absolute master and gagged not only backbenchers but his front bench ministry — and its members are the absolute masters of gagging. In fact, it is the opposition which is gagging the public debate on this bill, because had it allowed the bill to be read a second time last week, which is merely a formal process, the bill would have been out in the public arena and would have been the subject of debate out there in the public — the people who count — and not by opposition members. This is simply an attempt by

the opposition to not allow this house to deal with bills in the appropriate way.

Far from this government running away from debate it is happy to have debate. But given that the people of Victoria have spoken it will not have this house run by an opposition which still thinks it is born to rule. The government will not allow that to occur; it is not afraid of question time. Let me tell you that anybody who came to the last two question times in this house would have said that it suits the government to have question time because of the appalling capacity of the opposition, as it has shown in those last two question times.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 24

Argondizzo, Ms	Madden, Mr
Broad, Ms	Mikakos, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Buckingham, Ms	Mitchell, Mr
Carbines, Mrs	Nguyen, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Pullen, Mr
Eren, Mr	Romanes, Ms
Hadden, Ms	Scheffer, Mr
Hilton, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Smith, Mr
Hirsh, Ms	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
Lenders, Mr	Thomson, Ms
McQuilten, Mr	Viney, Mr

Noes, 16

Atkinson, Mr	Forwood, Mr
Baxter, Mr	Hall, Mr
Bowden, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Koch, Mr
Brideson, Mr	Lovell, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Coote, Mrs	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Stoney, Mr
Davis, Mr D. McL.	Strong, Mr
Davis, Mr P. R.	Vogels, Mr

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND SHOP TRADING REFORM ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to introduce into Victoria fairer and more nationally consistent public holiday and shop trading arrangements over the Easter period.

In particular, the bill makes Easter Saturday a public holiday and generally requires shops to close on Easter Sunday.

The changes implement a key election policy and demonstrate the government's commitment to promoting a more balanced approach between work and family life and ensuring a competitive and fair operating environment for small business.

The changes also bring Victoria's arrangements over Easter more closely into line with those in other states. Victorians will now enjoy the same number of public holidays as other Australians.

While shops will generally be required to close on Easter Sunday, they are free to open on Easter Saturday and Easter Monday. In fact, apart from three and a half days in the year, shops in Victoria can choose to open whenever they wish — that is, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 361.5 days per year.

As occurs on other non-trading days, many types of small businesses employing fewer than 20 employees are exempt from the general requirement to close. This means that it is business as usual for small retailers such as milk bars, petrol stations, grocery and liquor outlets, pharmacists, restaurants, cafes and pubs.

The government recognises that there are several special events that are traditionally held over the Easter period. It is not the intention of this legislation to adversely affect those events by preventing shops connected with the event from being open. Local councils are able to submit an application to seek an exemption from the general requirement for shops to close where such an event is being held.

In determining whether an exemption will be made, the minister may have regard to a number of matters including the nature of the event, its history and tradition, the extent of community participation and the benefit that the event generates to the local community.

Before detailing the key elements of the bill, I wish to briefly outline the broader context within which the legislation has been developed.

In response to changing community attitudes and consumer trends, the regulation of shop trading hours in Victoria was progressively liberalised in an orderly manner during the 1980s and early 1990s. In contrast, the Kennett government introduced legislation in 1996 that deregulated shop trading hours overnight. There was no consultation with small businesses or affected employees and scant opportunity for the Parliament to debate the matter.

The impact of deregulation on small retailers has been enormous. Businesses such as small grocery stores and retailers operating in local shopping strips were

particularly hard hit and many were forced to close. Many small businesses that remained in the industry were forced to work seven days a week in order to keep pace with their major competitors, placing enormous strains on their family life.

The Bracks government is committed to creating a balanced and fair environment for small business by minimising the regulatory impact of legislation on small business.

Further, the Bracks government recognises that many consumers enjoy flexible shopping hours. The bill does not represent a move back to re-regulating shop trading hours. However, it does introduce some limited targeted measures that bring Victoria more into line with other states and ensures that many more Victorians can spend time with their families during Easter, which takes place during the school holidays. Many small businesses will also benefit from a trading day when the major retailers are closed.

I now wish to turn to the details of the bill.

Part 2 of the bill amends the Public Holidays Act 1993 to appoint Easter Saturday as a public holiday, while part 3 amends the Shop Trading Reform Act 1996 to generally require that shops close on Easter Sunday.

Clause 6 of the bill introduces a new provision that enables the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the minister, to make an order that exempts a specified shop, a specified class of shop or shops in a specified area from the requirement to be closed on Easter Sunday.

The bill also provides that the minister may issue guidelines setting out matters that may be considered by the minister in determining whether to recommend the making of an order.

The Governor in Council may grant an exemption subject to any conditions it thinks fit. A breach of such a condition may attract a penalty of up to \$10 000.

In conclusion, this bill provides Victorians with a more balanced work environment and delivers greater national uniformity by aligning Victoria's public holidays and shop trading arrangements with those in other states.

I commend the bill to the house.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I call the Honourable Bruce Atkinson.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill — —

Mr Lenders — Under standing order 9.05 Mr Viney should be now heard.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I noticed Mr Atkinson, and Mr Viney jumped up.

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — Pursuant to standing order 9.05, I move:

That Mr Viney be now heard.

Under standing order 9.05, at any stage in these proceedings when two members rise and the President recognises one and not the other it is appropriate for any member to move that the second member be heard, and I have moved that Mr Viney be heard.

The reason I do this is quite simple: we are here in this house today because the opposition would not give leave on Thursday last to proceed with the second reading of the shop trading hours bill, and there is no doubt in my mind that Mr Atkinson is about to go into an hour-long debate which will be all about stopping this government having control of its own legislative agenda.

The issue we have before us in this house today is that the government has as part of its legislative program that the Shop Trading Reform Act be amended. This is not an issue about whether the Parliament scrutinises that legislation or not; it is about a simple act of downright disruption by the Liberal Party by deciding not to debate the issue on its merits in this Parliament. It is an act to stop the legislation coming before the Parliament under the parliamentary rules so that the legislation cannot take effect by Easter. It is for those reasons that the government is moving this bill.

The Liberal Party preached to us last week during debate on sessional orders about how people in this house would work cooperatively to get a government business program through, about how much legislation matters, and about why we did not need sessional orders to do that.

The behaviour of the opposition last week and today is clear evidence that the opposition does not practise what it preaches. What the government has done is ask the Council to come back today for the sole specific purpose of remedying the Liberal Party's behaviour last week in not letting the Victorian public debate this legislation in time for it to take effect over Easter.

The reason this house was called back today by the motion last week was simply so that the second-reading speech could be read, the Victorian community could debate for the next two weeks the issue the Minister for Small Business has announced and this legislature will have the time available after that under the sessional orders for a long debate in the house and in committee — whatever is required for this issue to be discussed.

By coming in here and attempting to start the second-reading debate today, the opposition was trying to commence the debate in this house without the Victorian community even seeing the details of the bill the Minister for Small Business has proposed. That the opposition would endeavour to commence debate on this issue today by every tactic possible before the community has seen it is a gross contempt of the procedures of the Parliament.

The government had proposed that the bill be second read last week so that it would be on the table in an orderly fashion for the community to see it and that it would then be debated in Parliament in the proper process when we resume on the next ordinary day of sitting.

There are a couple of furbies in some of the issues that have come up in the procedural debates today which we need to address. First and foremost, this issue has not been about the government trying to gag debate; it has been about an opposition trying to gag debate by not letting the legislation come forward in time for the community to look at it. If this tactic had taken its logical course the government would have had no choice but to either abandon the prospect of regulating Easter trading or guillotine this legislation's passage through Parliament in an abnormally short time in a few weeks. From the government's perspective it is far preferable to bring this house back today to read the second-reading speech than it is to guillotine legislation in a couple of weeks.

We know the Liberal Party's agenda is to either stop the legislation going through the normal debate process in the Parliament under any pretext possible or try to force the government to apply a guillotine in a couple of weeks time.

Mr Hall raised a couple of issues. The cost of the Parliament coming back today is probably in the order of \$500 or \$600 if you do not measure members' time, so it is an enormous furbie to say that the taxpayers are being put to enormous expense by this Parliament's being called back today. Members' time has been taxed significantly, but as one would expect that members are

elected to the Parliament to come to the Parliament, I do not see that as a particular issue.

However, there are a number of issues that are absolutely critical in this. The course of action the government is undertaking will ensure that there will be an orderly debate on this legislation in this place when the house resumes. We are dealing with this petulant course of action or tactics of the opposition — whichever way you wish to describe it — to stop this Parliament debating the legislation before Easter, when Easter trading legislation was part of the government's election policies, it was an issue in the campaign and it is something which this government is committed to do for all the reasons the Minister for Small Business has announced.

It is also absolutely pertinent to know that the government wishes to facilitate parliamentary debate, but the entire tactics of the opposition have been to frustrate parliamentary debate by taking advantage of the fact that the house adjourned last Tuesday after debate on the condolence motions, which meant that we could not have got through the normal three-day process to get a bill up and running. The opposition has exploited that situation for whatever reasons it might wish to give and the government is not going to sit back and let its legislative program be thwarted. The opposition's action is not about allowing a debate in the Parliament and allowing the Parliament to have a say on it in two weeks time, when government members will listen to the debate and vote according to whether they are persuaded or not; it is about using the tactics of delay to stop a debate happening so this Parliament cannot discuss the legislation before Easter.

I urge the house to support the motion that Mr Viney have the floor now because I think he will act appropriately.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — In relation to the motion moved by the Leader of the Government, I have to say this is the first time since I have been in the Parliament that such a procedure has been used, and I find it an indication of the contempt in which the government holds the Parliament. The government has introduced a bill and the opposition is entitled to take on notice the motion and deal with it appropriately, and giving another member of the government precedence in speaking I find an absolute outrage.

Mr Atkinson was on his feet and speaking when this contrived attempt by the Leader of the Government was introduced to deny him the opportunity to speak — that is, the Leader of the Government attempted to apply the

gag at the very first instance of the opposition's dealing with this bill.

The government would argue that the bill in its own way is not contentious and that it has been announced as part of the government legislative program; if that is the case, we should get on and debate the matter.

All I can say on this issue is that, by moving this motion, the Leader of the Government is clearly attempting to gag debate in this chamber. It is an absolute outrage and I do not believe that members will stand for it.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — On the procedural motion, this is a very difficult position for you, President, because you recognised my colleague Mr Atkinson and he had started to speak. In those circumstances what we now have is a situation where the Leader of the Government has put you in the position where he wants the government's numbers to override your decision to recognise the first person who was on his feet.

This place has always operated on the basis that a member of the government speaks, a member of the opposition speaks and a member of the third party speaks. It has not operated on the basis that two people from the same party speak after each other.

In these circumstances, Mr Atkinson had been recognised by the Chair, he was on his feet and he had commenced his contribution before the intervention by the Leader of the Government. I put to you, President, that the government has put you in a very, very difficult position.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — I support the Leader of the Government's motion that the Chair recognise Mr Viney to speak on this matter under standing order 9.05. It has been a practice well and truly established in the rules and procedures of this place, I would imagine since its inception.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson — When was it last used?

Mr JENNINGS — It is a longstanding provision in the standing orders and was a device chosen by the Leader of the Government so as to not place the President in an awkward position, as was suggested by Mr Forwood, or indeed to deny Mr Atkinson the opportunity to speak on the second-reading debate. It is a device that will preserve Mr Atkinson's right to speak at length on the second-reading debate on the next day of meeting. It is a mechanism provided for in the rules of the house that has been adopted by the Leader of the Government to preserve the dignity of the Chair and to

preserve the right of Mr Atkinson to speak at length on this bill.

The logic that underpins the government's actions at this time is to allow for the appropriate adjournment of the second-reading debate so that a number of things can take place. The Leader of the Government has indicated that from the government's perspective it is important that this bill be printed, circulated and understood by the Victorian community and the various stakeholders and constituencies within the Victorian community before the second-reading debate proceeds.

Mr Atkinson has, by interjection, suggested that he is very knowledgeable on these matters, and indeed I defer to the fact that he probably is knowledgeable on these matters and would be able to satisfy the Parliament in terms of making a lengthy contribution to the debate. I argue that it will be a better contribution if he is able to be briefed by the minister in a timely fashion about the content and intent of the bill. A departmental briefing to Mr Atkinson and other opposition members will make them fully aware of the provisions contained within the bill.

Stakeholders and the Victorian community will also have an opportunity to express their views to other people — to Mr Atkinson and other members of the chamber — to enable a well-rounded debate on the matter. In fact other honourable members may be disadvantaged if the second-reading debate proceeded today. I do not want to be presumptuous, but there is a very good chance that other honourable members are not prepared to enter into the debate today.

Hon. Bill Forwood — After him, adjourn it.

Mr JENNINGS — The debate will be adjourned to enable all honourable members to make their contributions in a continuous debate. That is the mechanism that will be adopted by the government because it is not the intention of the government to gag debate. It is the government's intention to ensure that when the second-reading debate on this matter gets going honourable members will be able to speak at length. Mr Atkinson will have his day in court; all honourable members will have their day in court. Under the sessional orders adopted by the government there will be an opportunity for 9 hours of debate at the second-reading and committee stages of the bill.

It is on that basis that it is appropriate for this matter to be adjourned until the next day of meeting, and I believe that is the intention of the government. I support the Leader of the Government. I note the Chair did give the call to Mr Atkinson, but I contest the argument. The

Leader of the Government started his contribution with his motion calling on the Chair to acknowledge Mr Viney. I support the Leader of the Government in that action because it allows for the appropriate second-reading debate, and it preserves Mr Atkinson's right to contribute to the debate.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — President, in the first instance I congratulate you on not being part of this ambush by the government of the proper procedures and processes of this house, because you moved, within the conventions of this house and in accord with standing orders, to allow me to speak on this matter as the first honourable member on his feet and the honourable member who therefore had the call, and indeed a member of the opposition, who by convention has the opportunity to respond to the second-reading speech. Congratulations, President, because you stood by the proper process that is warranted by the Chair.

Sadly the rest of the government has not shared your adherence to the rules and procedures of this house. This is the most outrageous move that I have seen in this place in my 10 years plus here. The Minister for Aged Care said that this is provided for by the standing orders and has happened before. I charge any member of the government to tell the house the last time it happened — when there was any move by the government to stop an opposition member from responding to a second-reading debate, because I am not aware of any. This is an outrageous gag by a belligerent and arrogant government that is showing its absolute contempt for this house of Parliament.

Unlike the Leader of the Government, the Minister for Aged Care indicated that I did have the call; and indeed, President, there is no doubt that I had the call. The Leader of the Government suggested that I did not, but then went on to say, 'Well, he started a debate and was clearly going to debate it', which again was a concession that I had the call. To actually then try to stop a member of this Parliament from making a contribution to the Parliament and to enforce by the power of the numbers of the government one of its own to make some contribution — and we know not what contribution, whether it is to the debate or some other procedure of the Parliament because that has not been explained — is outrageous. It defies all the conventions of this place; it even contradicts the standing orders in place.

The suggestion is that somehow I will be compromised in making a contribution at this point. The house need not be concerned about that. Be assured that I am in a perfect position to comment on this legislation because

I have canvassed and consulted on this legislation very widely in the past three weeks. In fact, I put out a press release on this matter before the Minister for Small Business put out a press release, and I daresay her press release came out only because I put one out!

The minister says this is time-sensitive legislation, and I agree with her: it is time sensitive because this legislation provides for exemptions to the Easter Sunday trading position — to the shutting down of shops on Easter Sunday. The only problem is that the closing date for exemptions was last Friday — before this matter came before the house and before the legislation had any opportunity of passing through this house.

This is an outrageous use of the government's numbers. This government is really just looking to rubber stamp every executive decision in a way that we have not seen before. I believe I am about to be silenced by this house because the government, in showing its contempt for this Parliament, is likely to exercise its numbers in support of the Leader of the Government.

The Minister for Aged Care ought to reflect on his contribution last week during the sessional orders debate, and he ought to reflect on my remarks when I said that this minister stood before this house and said, 'Yes, we are changing the sessional orders but it will be all right in the wash — trust us!' I said last week that the minister has basically said to this house, 'Trust us'. The trust, were it given, was misplaced, because this government has shown that it does not deserve to be trusted on the procedures of this house. It is prepared to belligerently use its numbers to gag members of the Parliament, to stop contributions, to corrupt the processes of the Parliament and to stop debates from proceeding as provided for in the rules and standing orders of the house.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Small Business) — This is a bizarre set of circumstances where the opposition is still getting used to the fact that it no longer has the numbers in this chamber. I must agree with my colleague that they are suffering from the born-to-rule syndrome and having to deal with the fact that they no longer rule. They are trying to play tactics with a piece of legislation that is crucially important to the people of Victoria — and the timing of its progression is crucially important.

Then last week we saw the refusal by the opposition of leave for the first reading of the bill, which was not given because of the circumstance that we had come back for the first week of the sittings and had not been able to give notice. In fact, I can barely recall an

occasion in the past three years when leave has not been given for the first reading of a bill.

Leave was also sought for the second reading of the bill, and it was also not given. The reason it was not given, according to the shadow spokesperson, was that he had not received a briefing on the bill. The practice of this place in the time I have been a minister is that the briefing occurs after the second-reading speech has been made. If the second-reading speech had been allowed to proceed on Thursday, the honourable member would have had his briefing in time for the debate when the bill came back to Parliament, and that is our intention.

Members of the National Party have a right to be briefed on the bill. It is now being second read and it is appropriate that they get a proper briefing on the intentions of the bill and its detail. It is important that those in the community who have an interest in the details of the bill have an opportunity to look at the bill as well.

What we are seeing is a tactical manoeuvre — purely that — to refuse leave for the first reading and for the second reading, to delay the opportunity for those councils that seek exemptions to be notified of those exemptions in a timely way. It is a cheap stunt that does not benefit those communities for whom an exemption will be sought. They have a right to hear as soon as possible whether they will receive that exemption. What this government is doing is trying to ensure that they get that exemption notice as soon as possible.

But what is the opposition spokesperson doing? Delaying it! He has been trying to ensure that this bill does not have a timely passage through the house. We have seen game after game after game on a piece of legislation that was taken to the people in November. It was an issue during the election campaign, and the government is now implementing its commitment. It is an important piece of legislation. It will bring Victoria into line with other states. All we are seeing is the opposition, which has now lost the numbers in the Legislative Council, trying to play at tactics in this chamber — and failing.

Opposition members will have every opportunity to debate the bill when it comes back for debate — they will have every opportunity to put their points of view then. Until then we want the proper processes followed. Show some real courtesy about the first readings of legislation, show some courtesy for the process of second readings, and show some respect for the chamber and the people outside this chamber!

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I want to contribute to this debate about the procedure here, and I do so with great disappointment. As the Honourable Bruce Atkinson said, last week we were told to take the government's changes to sessional orders on trust. That trust has been badly misplaced and badly abused. I have never seen the like of it in the period that I have been in this chamber.

Essentially what has occurred here today is that the government has chosen to remove from Mr Atkinson the right to contribute to the debate at a time of his choosing. The discussions about the briefings and other matters, including when Mr Atkinson has the briefing, are irrelevant. He clearly wanted to make public comment on this bill at this time in this chamber. He clearly wanted to make a contribution to the debate on the bill at this time in this chamber today. He clearly wanted to place on record a number of his views and some of the feedback he had received from his constituents. Clearly what the government has tried to do is prevent him from making that contribution, prevent him from representing his electorate and prevent him from putting his views on the record.

It is an absolute abuse of the principles and the processes of this place. I certainly cannot remember such an occasion. Clearly the government's attempt to avoid the scrutiny and delay the occasion when Mr Atkinson would put on the public record certain defects in the bill and concerns that he may have about it is quite inappropriate. The government's attempt to prevent him from putting this material on the record is clearly designed to stop material appearing in the press and otherwise out in the public arena which would add to debate on this bill.

The point raised by the minister just a moment ago about the fact that members of the National Party had not had a briefing — and I am sure they can speak for themselves — is quite irrelevant. If National Party members or any other members of this chamber feel that they cannot make the contribution they need to make at this moment it is open to them to adjourn debate and to take up the debate at a later point. There is nothing to stop that occurring.

What should have occurred here, President — and I accept that you have been placed in an invidious and very difficult position — is that Mr Atkinson should have been allowed to make his contribution. He should have been allowed to put on the record the comments that he sought to make. He should have been allowed to represent his constituency. He should have been allowed to place on record the comments made by traders and others in his electorate, and he should have

been able to undertake his duties on behalf of the opposition and the people Victoria of scrutinising the legislation and actually making the proper contribution.

Mr Viney would have had his opportunity to speak next. If he needed more information and more time in the second-reading debate, he could have moved to adjourn debate until a more appropriate time, and that is where it should have rested.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a contribution to debate on this procedural motion. Really what we have seen here today are simply more stunts by the opposition — an opposition that is reeling from the fact that it is not only still the opposition but an opposition that does not have the numbers in this place. Last week the opposition had an opportunity to give leave for the first and second readings of this important piece of legislation. It could have done it. The opposition had that opportunity last week but it decided to be tricky and smart about it. It tried to push this legislation off — legislation that is very important to this government and has some tight time lines and time frames.

The opposition is aware of that, but what did it attempt to do? Members of the opposition said, ‘No, we will not give you leave. We will not let you proceed with this piece of legislation. We will not take the opportunities afforded to us under the new sessional orders, which give us and everybody in this chamber an opportunity to be involved and participate in the debate on the bill’. The opposition attempted to put that off to try to stymie the government’s efforts to meet its time frames and deal with this important piece of legislation. It is game playing. It is simply brinkmanship that the opposition has been trying to use, but it has backfired.

Government members are saying that we do want to deal with this legislation. We want the second-reading speech to be made. As the minister has already pointed out, we want to have an opportunity to inform the community — to take the bill out there so that everybody understands exactly what is involved with it.

Certainly Mr Atkinson might know all about it already — he might know enough to put out a press release about it — but I am sure there are others who want to hear more about the legislation, particularly given the second-reading speech and the debate that will follow it in this chamber. Certainly opportunities to speak will be afforded to the opposition during that second-reading debate. In fact, the lead speaker will get an hour to respond, and the National Party lead speaker will get 45 minutes.

And then the debate continues across the house, so there is more than enough time for everybody to be able to have their say and participate in this debate, but in a timely way that allows the community out there to truly understand the details of the bill and to participate around the details of the bill.

What has happened here today is that we have seen the opposition trip up on what it thought was going to be a cunning, sneaky plan to put off this legislation, and what it has tripped up on — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The time has expired.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 23

Argondizzo, Ms	Madden, Mr
Broad, Ms	Mikakos, Ms
Buckingham, Ms	Mitchell, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Carbines, Mrs (<i>Teller</i>)	Nguyen, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Pullen, Mr
Eren, Mr	Romanes, Ms
Hadden, Ms	Scheffer, Mr
Hilton, Mr	Smith, Mr
Hirsh, Ms	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Thomson, Ms
Lenders, Mr	Viney, Mr
McQuilten, Mr	

Noes, 16

Atkinson, Mr	Forwood, Mr
Baxter, Mr	Hall, Mr
Bowden, Mr	Koch, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Brideson, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Lovell, Ms
Coote, Mrs	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Stoney, Mr
Davis, Mr D. McL.	Strong, Mr
Davis, Mr P. R.	Vogels, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — I move:

That the debate be adjourned until the next day of meeting.

I move this for three reasons. I move it to ensure and allow that the community has time to consider the bill, in the first instance; secondly, to ensure that this house follows what is the proper process for consideration of bills in this place, where bills lie on the table for a couple of weeks to allow the community to consider them; and thirdly I move it to stand up to the abuse of the processes of this place by the opposition that we have seen last Thursday and today.

It is essential that the bill before the house be considered out in the community. It is essential that all members of this place get the opportunity to reasonably hear the views of their constituents and get some input

in order to be able to ensure there is a proper debate and a proper consideration in this place.

It is grossly against the procedures of this place for the opposition, immediately after a second-reading speech, to proceed with the second-reading debate.

An Honourable Member — No, it's not.

Mr VINEY — I hear the cries of, 'No, it's not', from Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men on the other side. We have Mr Angry Face, Mr Angry Voice and Mr Pious over there — all three of them vying for the leadership. I think we saw Mr Atkinson trying to make a contribution to vie for the leadership as well.

The only time a second-reading debate proceeds immediately after the second-reading speech of the minister is by agreement. There was no agreement in this instance. In fact, the agreement that was sought could have saved us the trouble of today. The time for an agreement to allow the minister to make the second-reading speech, to allow the community to consider the bill and to give Parliament time to consider the legislation in the normal and appropriate way was last Thursday.

However, the opposition chose to play political games. There is no longer an opportunity for agreement here because the third reason the government is seeking to have debate on the legislation adjourned until the next day of sitting is to stand up to this abuse that we see here today from the born-to-rulers — from the people who think they were born to rule in this chamber. Last November the people of Victoria demonstrated emphatically that they no longer have that born-to-rule right here, and the government will legislate to ensure that in future this chamber will be democratically elected so that we will never see this kind of abuse taking place again.

Amid the feigned anger of the opposition — with Mr Angry Face and Mr Angry Voice opposite — let us get Parliament back to the proper process of considering legislation. The process involves allowing this bill to lie over for a couple of weeks so that all members of Parliament will have an opportunity to consult with their communities and then be able to contribute properly to debate.

Mr Pious opposite was interjecting that the opposition spokesperson wants to make some kind of contribution today. He wants to put on the record what he wants to say. He told us he has put out a press release. He has already put his position on the record. We will have a look at that press release because that may be an interesting part of the debate. We think it is appropriate

for his community, for the people he represents, to have the opportunity to look at the legislation and perhaps to have some input towards Mr Atkinson's contribution. The proper process that the opposition is abusing but then crying foul about is for this legislation to lie on the table for a couple of weeks to allow community consultation.

On behalf of the government I am pleased and proud to have moved that debate on this bill be adjourned. I have no shame in that because it will allow the community to consider the bill. The proper processes will then be followed, and we will stand up to abuse in this chamber.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I move, as an amendment to Mr Viney's motion:

That 'the next day of meeting' be omitted with the view of inserting in place thereof '18 March 2003'.

The reason I have moved the motion is that while Mr Viney has been alluding to a need for this bill to lie over, the government having brought this house back on an unscheduled sitting day and then gagged debate and having gagged Mr Atkinson from speaking at all, I want to ensure that the government does not further abuse the processes of this place and on the adjournment motion to be moved later this day does not move to bring the house back at an earlier time than the scheduled next day of sitting.

The government has indicated that the bill will be a matter for debate on the next sitting day, whenever that will be. There is a scheduled program of sitting days. We expect the government to adhere to that schedule and not pre-empt the parliamentary sittings schedule again by bringing the house back before 18 March, which is the next scheduled sitting day.

I expect the government to agree to my amending motion because it does nothing other than entrench the position reflected in the comments from the government — that it does not seek to debate this bill before the next scheduled sitting day. If that is the case I am sure we will have cooperation about when that debate occurs.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — On behalf of the government I am happy to acknowledge that that is the intention of the motion moved by Mr Viney. I do not believe the government will have any difficulty in accepting the proposition in the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition because it would be useful for us to have some degree of certainty and cooperation about the way the second-reading debate proceeds.

As I said in my earlier contribution, I look forward to Mr Atkinson's lengthy dissertation on the bill. I note that he has an extensive array of press clippings and cuttings, and media statements that he has already made. By the time we reconvene on 18 March no doubt he will be even better informed and advised by stakeholders and constituents. By then all honourable members should have taken the opportunity to make sure they are apprised of the provisions of the bill and find out what their key stakeholders and constituents believe is the appropriate course for the passage of the bill.

On that basis, on behalf of the government I accept the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition and suggest the house should deal with the matter expeditiously.

Amendment agreed to.

Amended motion agreed to and debate adjourned until Tuesday, 18 March.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 18 March 2003.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Bushfires: timber industry

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I rise to raise a matter with the Leader of the Government on this basis: there are matters before the house that ought to have been considered this day but the government has pre-empted and adjourned that debate. There was nothing the opposition could do to change that fact because the government used its jackboot to gag Parliament. I make this observation, and I quote:

I am saying the jackboot approach of gagging debate in this Parliament is not acceptable.

Those were the words of the Treasurer, the Honourable John Brumby, when he was the Leader of the Opposition in the other place.

In relation to the adjournment matter I am raising, surrounding Parliament today are trucks representing a protest in relation to certain issues in the timber industry. The timber industry is significantly impacted by decisions or a lack of decision making in the government. I raise with the Leader of the Government the matter of the future management of our forestry industry in the context of the fires that occurred in the alpine parks and which are still burning in our state forests. There has been a huge impact on the rural areas of Victoria. I raise that as an issue with the Leader of the Government for the attention of the Premier because the Premier is responsible for ensuring that there is a full and comprehensive recovery program.

Already we have had much debate in this place about impacts on farming communities and on the tourism industry, but we have heard little to date and have virtually no response from the government about the future of the timber harvesting and haulage sector of the sawmilling industry.

The issue I raise with the Leader of the Government is that we need to deal with these issues expeditiously and there needs to be a comprehensive program put in place. The pity of it is that all of these matters could have been addressed and considered by the Parliament this day, but the government has come in here and used its numbers to gag debate. The government has not only gagged the processes of the house, under which when the Parliament returned at 9.30 a.m. we could have had a full day's sitting, when colleagues of mine have come from Hamilton, Mansfield, Warrnambool and Shepparton, and indeed I came — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis's time is up.

Queenscliff High School: site

Mrs CARBINES (Geelong) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Energy Industries for reference to the Minister for Education and Training in the other place. As the minister would be well aware, there has been much community concern in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale about the future of the site of the former high school. As an honourable member for Geelong Province and chair of the community advisory group heading the consultation with the community in relation to the site, I welcomed the minister's announcement in August of last year accepting the overwhelming local view that part of the site should be reserved as public open space and part sold for residential development, with the remaining section to be the subject of further consultation with the Borough of Queenscliffe and the community.

Since that time I have been pleased to chair the community reference group set up to assist the Borough of Queenscliff to explore possible public uses of the remaining section of the site. From the outset the borough has expressed interest in exploring the possible development of a multipurpose facility on the site. The community reference group has met regularly with representatives of the borough, the Department of Education and Training and Michael Henry, who has been appointed to conduct the consultation process. Over the past two months advice has been received from many diverse stakeholders — including the Queenscliff and district neighbourhood house, Lonsdale children's services, Queenscliff Lonsdale tourism, Bellarine community health and the Queenscliff Music Festival — in relation to their interest in and the specific need for a multipurpose facility in the borough.

I am pleased to advise the Minister for Education and Training that as a result of this process a detailed report has been prepared for consideration by the borough and the minister. In presenting this information to the minister I am seeking her further advice.

Buses: Casey

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport in the other place. May I say at the outset that I am amazed that we find ourselves here at 11.10 on a Tuesday morning having the adjournment debate. The Parliament has sat for less than 2 hours and we find ourselves shutting down for the day and going home. This demonstrates yet again how this government is willing to use Parliament as a rubber stamp for its agenda while truncating opportunities for members to raise issues of concern in their electorates.

This is the second week of sitting of this Parliament and we are yet to hear my new colleague in Eumemmerring Province raise issues of concern to the electorate; perhaps we will see him doing that this morning. I invite him to get up in here and raise some issues of concern to our electorate. There are few opportunities to do that in this Parliament now, and he is yet to take that opportunity up.

The matter I would like to raise for the Minister for Transport in the other place relates to the provision of bus and other public transport services in the City of Casey. As honourable members have heard me say before, the City of Casey is the fastest growing municipality in Victoria and the third-fastest growing municipality in the country. Currently there are more than 100 new residential estates under development in

the City of Casey, and they all need to be served by adequate public transport services.

My former colleague in Eumemmerring Province, the Honourable Neil Lucas, was a strong advocate for public transport services in the City of Casey and was very successful in getting additional bus services in the greater Berwick area. However, there still exists a great demand for public transport services and a great need for extra bus services in Casey, particularly on Friday nights and weekends and especially in Endeavour Hills and Fountain Gate to service the shopping precincts and the new estates developing around those shopping precincts. I seek the assistance of the Minister for Transport in ensuring that extra bus services are provided in the City of Casey, particularly on Friday nights and weekends.

Local government: ethnic communities

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Local Government. The issue of multiculturalism and cultural diversity is extremely important to the residents of the western suburbs, whom I have the privilege of representing in this place. It is a region that is very ethnically and culturally diverse — in fact, honourable members would probably find that it is the most diverse in Victoria.

The government is currently examining the manner in which local government responds to the needs of culturally diverse communities and is holding a series of public consultations in order to hear from ethnic communities regarding their expectations as well as their aspirations in relation to local government. It has been my experience that such public consultation can be of great benefit in informing communities about the role of local government and the services it provides while giving communities an opportunity to express their priorities for services and their vision for their local community. I ask the Minister for Local Government: what are her expectations of how this consultation process will result in improved outcomes for ethnic communities in Melbourne's west?

School buses: Picola–Echuca

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — I would like to raise an issue affecting constituents in the Picola and Barmah areas that involves school buses and accessing secondary education.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The honourable member needs to direct her matter to a particular

minister. I think in this case it is the Minister for Education Services in the other place.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL — Parents in this area are currently paying up to \$2000 in bus fares to send their children to the second-closest government school. Echuca Secondary College is one of two government-run secondary schools in Echuca and is a former technical college. This means that the school offers a curriculum that appeals to many children from farming families who are interested in learning skills that they can take home and use on the land.

To put this issue into perspective, the financial sacrifice these parents are making to send their children to Echuca Secondary College is the equivalent in bus fares of what many parents are paying to send their children to private schools. That shows how passionate these families are about getting the best and most appropriate education for their children. We are not talking about an enormous government commitment or the need to reroute a number of school buses — the issue relates to only a dozen or so families utilising infrastructure and services that are already available.

The Bracks government review of school bus arrangements and payments, conducted in 2001, makes it clear that a child is entitled to attend the second-closest government school and travel on a government-provided bus service as long as there is a seat available on the bus, and payments are capped at \$756 per annum. Unfortunately a state border lies in the middle of the route between Picola and Echuca Secondary College, meaning that students wishing to travel from Picola to Echuca catch one bus to Barmah and then cross the river to catch another bus to Echuca. They are being charged up to \$2000 for the New South Wales portion of that trip, even though the Bracks government's policy is that a student's financial contribution to travelling to their second-closest government school is limited to \$756.

These families are not asking for any favours or special treatment; they just want the letter of the law applied equally to them as it is to families across the state. So far they have been ignored by the Labor Party politicians and the bureaucrats they have been petitioning and meeting with to try to resolve this situation. The issue gained coverage in the *Weekly Times* and some other local newspapers during the election campaign, particularly when the then shadow minister for education and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the honourable member for Warrandyte in the other place, met with the affected families in Picola. He committed a Liberal government to resolving the anomaly and making sure that no parent had to pay

more than \$756 for their child to attend Echuca Secondary College.

In the interests of fairness and equity the new Minister for Education Services must immediately order her officials to allow students travelling on the Picola–Echuca bus the same cap — —

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

Timber industry: restructure

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I wish to raise a matter of utmost urgency with the Premier of this state and ask that the Premier intervene immediately. The issue I raise concerns the desperate plight of members of the harvesting and haulage sector of the timber industry, many of whom have come to visit us here at Parliament House over the last week and a half. They are friends of certainly the National Party, and I would think friends of at least some members of the Liberal Party who represent their constituencies, but they have no friends in the Labor Party because not one of them has even gone out there and spoken to them about the reasons why they are out there. Not one government minister has bothered to entertain a deputation from those very good, hardworking people who have been camped outside Parliament House here for the last week and a half.

The timber industry has been bashed and battered by this Labor government. Its members have been the sacrificial electoral lambs exploited by the Bracks government. As soon as it came in, the Bracks government decided to rip the heart out of the timber industry by cutting back sustainable yields by more than 30 per cent across the state, and in some cases it has taken away 100 per cent of the sustainable yield. We all know the electoral prank that was designed to get Green votes down in the Western District with the complete banning of logging in the Otway Forest — it was just a pure political stunt designed by this government to gain Green votes.

It is absolutely hypocritical that when the government wanted the timber industry to help it during the recent bushfires it turned immediately to the industry. All its dozers and workers were out there fighting the disastrous bushfires at the government's request — it can even requisition their equipment to help fight the bushfires — but when these people outside Parliament House want the ear of government to listen to some of their concerns about the harvest and haulage sector, no, the government absolutely turns its back on them and does not give them one ear.

Many of these poor people will not have a job to go to in the next few months because of the cutbacks in the timber industry. They now need a bit of help to sort out some of the financial difficulties they have in terms of the viability of the harvesting and haulage sector. They make some good points. I have been out there this morning and the National Party leader in the other place, Peter Ryan, has been out there and discussed some of their issues with them. They have points to make and are looking for a bit of help from the government to work out how best harvesting and haulage can be worked through in the future to give them an opportunity to make their businesses ongoing and viable.

I now ask the Premier, because to date the Minister for Sustainability and Environment has not met with them, nor has any other government minister —

An honourable member interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — ‘He is meeting them today’, came from the back. It is about time, is it not? How long have they been out there? I call on the Premier to take charge of his ministers and for him to intervene and meet these very good people from the harvesting and haulage sector today.

Public sector: financial audits

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — It might be disorderly to clap, but I agree.

Mr Smith — Get on the bandwagon.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Of course I am on the bandwagon. That is the bandwagon Mr Smith should be on.

The issue I wish to raise is for the Leader of the Government in his capacity as the Minister for Finance. But at the outset let me also add my words about what a sham today has been. That we have been called back in this manner to do this work and the manner in which it has been done reflects no credit on the government and no credit on the Leader of the Government. In particular, the last stunt of his was an abuse of the processes of this house.

The Minister for Finance, of course, has responsibility for many important aspects of government administration. He, like many honourable members, would have been concerned about some of the comments made by the Auditor-General in his report on public sector agencies. In a bipartisan way since the late 1980s considerable work has been done by all governments on reporting and accounting, particularly

on transparency, and improving the way that government departments and agencies address issues of reporting. In fact, when I was on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee we had an inquiry into accounting and reporting issues and annual reporting at that time.

I am sure many honourable members would have been really concerned at the comments the Auditor-General has made about the financial audit process, where he said that, while some agencies are doing things pretty well, opportunities exist for agencies to further improve the effectiveness of their management and internal control processes. He particularly went to the issues of: inadequate arrangement for audit committees; absence of effective risk management, including fraud prevention; concerns over the financial viability of various public hospitals, and — an issue of real concern to me — the fact that some hospitals in the department think that by changing the way they report they might be able to solve their financial problems; particular issues of inadequate asset management practices; deficiencies in information technology management processes; and inadequate account reconciliation and review processes.

All honourable members rightly should be concerned when the Auditor-General raises these issues, which come absolutely into the minister’s area of responsibility. On behalf of the people of Victoria I ask the minister to outline to the chamber what action he proposes to take to ameliorate some of these problems.

Road safety: toll

Ms HADDEN (Ballarat) — I raise an issue with the Leader of the Government for the attention of the Minister for Transport in the other place. The issue is an urgent and important matter to do with road fatalities, particularly in country Victoria.

The recently released 2002 road toll statistics show that the country road toll has risen for the fifth consecutive year, this time by 11 per cent. Country road users continue to be overrepresented in those statistics and fatalities. Of the 211 fatalities on country roads in our state last year 152 people — or 72 per cent — were country residents. That figure is 7 per cent higher than for the previous year. This certainly puts to rest the myth that city drivers are dying on our country roads. The official statistics show that unacceptable levels of country drivers are killed on country roads.

The statistics show the major causes of country accidents. They show that 40 per cent involved a collision with a fixed object and that 25 per cent of all

country fatalities involved semitrailers or other heavy vehicles. In January this year 22 people died on Victorian roads, compared with 32 in January 2002. A major collision occurred on Woodmans Hill at the entrance to Ballarat in the middle of January, which resulted in a tragic fatality. Then in the first 12 days in February some 12 people died on country roads, pushing the total to 34 deaths. Between last Tuesday and last Saturday another four people were tragically killed in truck accidents on the Western Highway in country Victoria. The most serious accident occurred last Tuesday on the Western Highway in the vicinity of Dimboola. That collision involved three heavy vehicles and resulted in two tragic deaths. While I appreciate that coronial inquests into these tragic deaths will take place in due course, I ask the Minister for Transport to advise what measures are being considered now to warn motorists about the rising road toll, especially the rising country road toll.

Maribyrnong: Saltwater ward candidate

Hon. ANDREW BRIDSON (Waverley) — I have an issue I would like the Leader of the Government to raise with the Minister for Local Government, who is also the Minister for Housing; it is a double-barrelled issue. I would like the Minister for Local Government to immediately investigate the eligibility of Saltwater ward candidate, Cr Cuc Lam, to stand for the Maribyrnong council.

According to the information I have, Cr Lam's enrolment is at 14 Palmer Street, Footscray, which is a one-bedroom Office of Housing flat. According to the records of the Maribyrnong council, Cr Lam actually lives at 26 Vista Drive, Keilor East, in a two-storey home that she and her husband own. According to the council's 2002 register of interests, Cr Lam also owns property in Kingsville and West Brunswick. In addition I am advised that Cr Lam works full time at Centrelink and, in addition to her wages, receives an amount of \$15 000 as an allowance for being a councillor. According to the Office of Housing:

... public housing is for people on 'low incomes' and those who 'cannot find suitable housing to rent privately'.

'You must not own or part own a house, unit or flat ...

Neighbours of Cr Lam in Palmer Street, Footscray, only see the Lams when they empty their mailbox. It is quite clear that Cr Lam does not live in Saltwater ward — indeed, does not live in the City of Maribyrnong area. It is of utmost urgency that the Minister for Local Government investigate this aspect of what I have put on the record, and I think it is also of complete urgency that as Minister for Housing she

investigate the eligibility of the Lam family to take up public housing, given that there is a gross shortage of public housing for residents who live in the western suburbs.

Moreland: social housing project

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — I would like to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing. One of the important initiatives of the Bracks government's first term of office was the social housing innovations project, otherwise known as the SHIP program. A total of \$94 million was allocated in the first term of the Bracks government and a further \$70 million has been committed in the election period for further projects under the SHIP program over the next four years.

The SHIP program is successful because it enables partnerships to be formed between the state government and a range of community organisations, local government bodies and church agencies. Those partnerships have assisted in the supply of housing for people on low incomes who have a range of needs — people with disabilities, young people, the elderly and many others.

Two SHIP projects that I have followed closely are the House of the Gentle Bunyip in the City of Yarra and the building of 12 units on a site in Fawkner on land provided by the City of Moreland. However, although funds have been allocated for a second SHIP project in Moreland, the council has failed on two occasions to issue a planning permit for social housing on two different council-owned sites because of local opposition to those projects. This is very disappointing as Moreland City Council has in the past actively lobbied for and worked to retain and expand public and social housing in the area. There is a great need to provide opportunities for public and social housing for low-income people in the inner city in the face of gentrification and because of the need to maintain diversity in the inner areas of Melbourne.

Given the demands made by many organisations on SHIP funds, is the minister prepared to be patient with the City of Moreland and to allow the council time to find a new site for its second social housing project?

Hospitals: funding

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Finance.

Hon. Bill Forwood — Today!

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — It is today, in fact. I am used to doing this at night. My point is that last week the Auditor-General submitted to this chamber a report on public sector agencies which dealt extensively with the financial viability of hospitals. He made a number of points about hospital overspending and stated that cash payments made by hospitals in the last financial year rose 15.2 per cent while receipts rose by 9.8 per cent, meaning that Victorian metropolitan hospitals spent \$46.8 million more on operating activities than they received.

He also pointed to other serious issues — financial irregularities with respect to public hospitals and other public health institutions in Victoria. At 5.285 the report states:

In the course of our review, we identified the following —

I will not name them —

public hospitals that had entered into borrowing arrangements without obtaining the appropriate approvals.

In particular I want to make it clear that the opposition is concerned that public hospitals may have sought financial accommodations with banking and other institutions and may have leveraged their assets so as to leave their communities and Victorian finances exposed to or at risk. In this context I believe this is part of the government's underfunding of public hospitals and other health institutions. We have heard of many in country areas — Ballarat and others came to my attention as recently as yesterday — where serious financial issues are emerging.

I seek from the minister today an assurance that this squeeze on hospitals until they pop and this forcing of hospitals to desperate measures will not continue. In particular I seek from the minister today an assurance that as of today no public hospitals or other government health institutions have borrowed money without proper government authorisations. If he cannot give me that assurance, can the minister inform the house of the names of all the hospitals or other health institutions that have borrowed money without full and proper lawful approvals?

Hume Freeway: Bandiana link

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I raise a matter this morning for the attention of the Minister for Transport in another place. It goes to the issue of the bypass of Albury-Wodonga by the Hume Freeway, a federally funded road. This has been a matter of considerable contention now for many years, especially the last five or six years, because of debate as to

whether it would be an internal or an external road. Fortunately a decision has now finally been taken and we will see the bulldozers out fairly soon to build the internal route, which I have always supported.

At one stage when an external route was to be constructed it was proposed to build what was referred to as the internal relief route through Albury and Wodonga, which was to be a state-funded road. The Victorian Labor government, to its credit, agreed to make \$35 million available for the funding of its share of that road. Unfortunately its New South Wales colleagues were somewhat more reluctant and did not come to the party. Be that as it may, that has now become redundant with the decision to abandon the external freeway and build the internal freeway, which will be fully funded by the commonwealth government.

My plea to the minister is that he use \$11 million of the \$35 million he previously agreed to provide — which now will not need to be provided because the federal government will pay for the whole of the road — to construct what is known as the Bandiana link. That will link the Murray Valley Highway from Bandiana to the new internal fully federally funded freeway. It will be an important link for Albury-Wodonga, particularly for agriculture and the Wodonga saleyards, in that it will facilitate and attract a lot of stock from New South Wales to those saleyards. It will go to road safety issues and the like.

It might well be argued that the federal government should pay for this as part of an on-off ramp for the new freeway. That has some attraction for me, and it certainly did when I was Minister for Roads and Ports, but I have to say that if it were to be federally funded it would be, as the federal government claims, the longest freeway ramp in the world. I can fully understand the federal government's reluctance to consider it as part of its project. However, the state government having previously generously agreed to provide \$35 million for these main roads in Wodonga but now not having to expend that \$35 million, I make an earnest plea that at least \$11 million be allocated so that we get the Bandiana link built simultaneously with the new freeway. That will be the cheapest and most efficient solution for all concerned.

Responses

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — Responding to the adjournment matters raised this morning, I respond firstly on the issue raised by Mr Philip Davis regarding fire recovery in the timber industry. I will refer that to the Premier as requested.

I will certainly refer the question from Mrs Carbines regarding the Queenscliff school site to the Minister for Education and Training in the Legislative Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs Carbines on her fantastic effort there. At times in my capacity as Minister for Finance I have been with Mrs Carbines at the Queenscliff site. She has taken a significant role with the local community in chairing that reference group, and I pay tribute to her in this place for that effort. I will refer the further questions to the minister.

Mr Rich-Phillips raised an issue for the Minister for Transport in the other place regarding bus services in the City of Casey, and I will certainly forward that to the minister.

Ms Darveniza raised for the Minister for Local Government an issue regarding multicultural issues in the western suburbs, and her expectations of consultation. Again, that is an area she is very passionate about, and I will certainly forward that through to the minister.

Ms Lovell raised an issue for the Minister for Education Services in the other place regarding bus services to the Echuca Secondary College, and I will certainly pass her request on to the minister.

Mr Hall raised for the Premier an issue regarding timber harvesting workers. He was quite impassioned on that issue and on the government meeting with the timber harvesting workers. I can assure Mr Hall that a number of government MPs have already met with the timber harvesting workers and that the Deputy Premier, as the responsible minister, will be meeting formally with them this afternoon, but I will certainly pass Mr Hall's request on to the Premier.

Mr Forwood and Mr David Davis both raised the issue of finances and the Auditor-General's report on government sector agencies. Both those gentlemen are obviously passionate about those issues, and so am I.

Mr Forwood asked me to outline what action the government would take to fix the problems, and I will take this opportunity to remind the house about that action. First and foremost, the action the government was taking was to enhance the powers of the Auditor-General, which it has already done in a range of legislative measures and which it will continue to do in a bill that did not pass this house last year but which the government will introduce again later this year.

It is very important to reflect on the fact that both the gentlemen opposite who are very concerned about the Auditor-General's powers voted for legislation that

actually gutted the Auditor-General's powers. I am pleased to see that they have both changed their view and that they respect the importance of the role of the Auditor-General as part of enhancing democracy in this state. I welcome their enthusiasm and congratulate them for now supporting the Auditor-General's role. It may have been a long road to Damascus, but they have finally got there!

They raised a number of specific queries about what the government is doing in those areas. First and foremost, an Auditor-General's report calls on the government to take action in certain areas which he has addressed and where he believes action should be taken. Of course the government will respond to all these reports with the seriousness they deserve and the seriousness with which this government has consistently addressed any particular problems that the Auditor-General may alert it to. The relevant ministers in those portfolio areas will certainly follow those through.

An ongoing role we have as government which comes under my area as Minister for Finance is to make sure that the Auditor-General is equipped to deal with these areas, and to deal with the Auditor-General when he makes requests for improvements to his important role.

The government certainly supports the role of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. As Mr Forwood would well know, it got a huge tick from its peers as one of the best public accounts and estimates committees around.

The action the government will take will be to continue to support the Auditor-General in his good work, and to take on board recommendations he makes and respond to them appropriately and accordingly.

Ms Hadden raised an issue for the Minister for Transport in the other place regarding country road tolls. She has been very passionate about those issues, and she has been tenacious in pursuing them as part of her ongoing commitment to looking after people on roads in her electorate. I will refer those issues to the Minister for Transport.

Mr Brideson raised an issue with me for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, who is also the Minister for Housing, regarding eligibility for public housing and local government investigation into a certain case in the western suburbs which he mentioned. I will certainly refer those to the minister.

Ms Romanes raised with me the issue of the social housing innovations program. Again, Ms Romanes has been passionate about this over many years both in her time as a councillor with the former City of Brunswick

and certainly in her time as a member of this place. One area she is very passionate about is social housing and partnerships between the public and private sectors to achieve that very honourable objective. I will with pleasure pass that issue on to the Minister for Housing, with the request that the minister be patient while a new site, as described by Ms Romanes, is being negotiated.

I have touched on the issues Mr David Davis raised and mentioned them in general terms. Some of the areas he raised are specific, and I will refer them to the Minister for Health in the other place.

Finally, Mr Baxter asked me to raise with the Minister for Transport the issues of the Bandiana link and its history. Mr Baxter, as a former Minister for Roads and Ports, obviously has a deep understanding of these issues, and his genuine interest in this is something that I have certainly noted.

I will pass on to the Minister for Transport in the other place the issue of the bypass on the Hume Freeway, and Mr Baxter's suggestion that \$11 million of a former \$35 million appropriation be allocated to building that bypass. I am sure the minister will consider it in a general context with all other portfolio matters.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 11.44 a.m. until Tuesday, 18 March.

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