

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

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

**27 May 2004  
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# CONTENTS

## THURSDAY, 27 MAY 2004

APPEAL COSTS AND PENALTY INTEREST RATES	
ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1187
DEATH NOTIFICATION LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1187
PETITIONS	
<i>Motor registration fees: pensioner concessions</i> .....	1187
<i>Corangamite: internal boundaries</i> .....	1187
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Angliss Hospital: asbestos</i> .....	1187
<i>Live music task force</i> .....	1187
<i>Police: corruption and organised crime</i> .....	1188
<i>Housing Week: Eumemmerring Province</i> .....	1188
<i>Building industry: warranty insurance</i> .....	1188
<i>Arena, North Geelong: funding</i> .....	1188
<i>Wind farms: Dollar</i> .....	1189
<i>Water: Farmhand Foundation</i> .....	1189
<i>Consumer affairs: chain letter</i> .....	1189
<i>Warranwood Primary School: centenary</i> .....	1189
<i>Creswick forest science centre: graduates</i> .....	1190
<i>Ambulance services: Craigieburn</i> .....	1190
STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS	
<i>Auditor-General: home and community care</i> .....	1190, 1192, 1194
<i>Auditor-General: public sector agency reviews</i> .....	1191, 1193, 1197, 1198
<i>Roads Corporation: report, 2002–03</i> .....	1194, 1197
<i>World Masters Games: report, 2002</i> .....	1195
<i>Petition: wild dogs — control</i> .....	1196
VICTORIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	1199
JUDICIAL SALARIES BILL	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	1201
MITCHAM-FRANKSTON PROJECT BILL	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	1202
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2004/2005) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	1205
<i>Third reading</i> .....	1218
<i>Remaining stages</i> .....	1218
APPROPRIATION (2004/2005) BILL	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	1218, 1229
ABSENCE OF MINISTER.....	1221
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Government: telephone system</i> .....	1221, 1222
<i>Consumer affairs: youth programs</i> .....	1221
<i>Consumer affairs: disadvantaged consumers</i> .....	1223
<i>Mildura hospital site: future</i> .....	1224
<i>Consumer affairs: Building Advice and     Conciliation Victoria</i> .....	1225
<i>VicForests: ministerial responsibility</i> .....	1226
<i>Consumer affairs: home buyers</i> .....	1226
<i>Australian Labor Party: government contracts</i> .....	1227

<i>Consumer affairs: product safety and trade     measurement</i> .....	1228
<i>Supplementary questions</i>	
<i>Government: telephone system</i> .....	1221, 1223
<i>Mildura hospital site: future</i> .....	1225
<i>VicForests: ministerial responsibility</i> .....	1226
<i>Australian Labor Party: government contracts</i> .....	1228
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE	
<i>Answers</i> .....	1229
SURVEYING BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1245
TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1245
TREASURY AND FINANCE LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1245
ARCHITECTS (AMENDMENT) BILL	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i> .....	1245
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Government: purchasing policy</i> .....	1245
<i>Housing: homeless youth</i> .....	1246
<i>Liquor: code of conduct</i> .....	1246
<i>Bemm River: beach access</i> .....	1246
<i>Parliament House: smoke-free policy</i> .....	1247
<i>Commonwealth Games: community     participation</i> .....	1247
<i>HM Prison Beechworth: closure</i> .....	1248
<i>Benalla Auto Club: funding</i> .....	1248
<i>Buses: Cranbourne–Dandenong</i> .....	1249
<i>Shepparton Golf Club: ground water</i> .....	1249
<i>East Gippsland Institute of TAFE: relocation</i> .....	1249
<i>Responses</i> .....	1250

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### TUESDAY, 25 MAY 2004

1251.	<i>Local government: ministerial staff</i> .....	1253
1253.	<i>Sport and recreation: ministerial staff</i> .....	1253
1263.	<i>Employment and youth affairs:   ministerial staff</i> .....	1253
1277.	<i>Planning: ministerial staff</i> .....	1254
1279.	<i>Corrections: ministerial staff</i> .....	1254
1282.	<i>Police and emergency services:   ministerial staff</i> .....	1254
1289.	<i>Corrections: bail advocacy and   support services project</i> .....	1254
1339.	<i>Health: ministerial staff</i> .....	1255
1410.	<i>Premier: Victorian public service staff</i> .....	1255
1438.	<i>Health: consultancy contracts</i> .....	1258
1454.	<i>Health: AKZ consultancy firm</i> .....	1258
1455.	<i>Health: AKZ consultancy firm</i> .....	1259
1456.	<i>Health: AKZ consultancy firm</i> .....	1259
1462.	<i>Health: Rural Northwest Health —   financial result</i> .....	1260

# CONTENTS

<p>1501. <i>Multicultural affairs: advertising budget</i>..... 1260</p> <p>1668. <i>Community services: facility at 299 Humffray Street, Ballarat</i>..... 1261</p> <p>1669. <i>Community services: facility at 3 Amaranth Avenue, Altona North</i>..... 1262</p> <p>1670. <i>Community services: facility at 1069 High Street, Reservoir</i> ..... 1263</p> <p>1671. <i>Community services: facility at 134 Princes Highway, Dandenong</i> ..... 1264</p> <p>1672. <i>Community services: facility at 11 Station Road, Deer Park</i>..... 1265</p> <p>1673. <i>Community services: facility at 86 East Road, Seaford</i> ..... 1266</p> <p>1682. <i>Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1268</p> <p>1683. <i>Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1268</p> <p>1684. <i>Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1268</p> <p>1685. <i>Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1269</p> <p>1686. <i>Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1269</p> <p>1687. <i>Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1270</p> <p>1688. <i>Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1270</p> <p>1689. <i>Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1270</p> <p>1690. <i>Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1271</p> <p>1691. <i>Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1271</p> <p>1692. <i>Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1272</p> <p>1693. <i>Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units</i>..... 1272</p>	<p>1557. <i>Transport: public transport fares</i>..... 1274</p> <p>1559. <i>Transport: CityLink toll gate fees</i> ..... 1276</p> <p>1560. <i>Transport: public transport concession card costs</i>..... 1277</p> <p>1573. <i>Transport: motor vehicle registration charges</i>..... 1278</p> <p>1574. <i>Transport: drivers licence and learners permit charges</i>..... 1278</p> <p>1578. <i>Transport: boat registration fees</i> ..... 1279</p> <p>1580. <i>Planning: certificate access costs</i> ..... 1279</p> <p>1591. <i>Major projects: Docklands film and television studios</i> ..... 1279</p> <p>1594. <i>Aboriginal affairs: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1280</p> <p>1595. <i>Aged care: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1280</p> <p>1602. <i>Commonwealth Games: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i> ..... 1281</p> <p>1616. <i>Local government: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1281</p> <p>1619. <i>Multicultural affairs: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i> ..... 1281</p> <p>1633. <i>Women's affairs: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1282</p> <p>1737. <i>Premier: WorkCover — workplace bullying</i>..... 1282</p>
--	---

## THURSDAY, 27 MAY 2004

<p>835. <i>WorkCover: Haystac Public Affairs Pty Ltd — payments</i>..... 1283</p> <p>1148. <i>WorkCover: Shannons Way Pty Ltd — payments</i>..... 1283</p> <p>1249. <i>Aged care: ministerial staff</i>..... 1283</p> <p>1262. <i>Community services: ministerial staff</i> ..... 1284</p> <p>1599. <i>Community services: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1284</p> <p>1611. <i>Health: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions</i>..... 1284</p> <p>1707. <i>Community services: Multiple Sclerosis Society respite house, Williamstown</i>..... 1285</p> <p>1767. <i>Financial service industry: WorkCover — workplace bullying</i>..... 1286</p> <p>1769. <i>Manufacturing and export: WorkCover — workplace bullying</i>..... 1286</p> <p>1783. <i>Aboriginal affairs: prisons — tailored programs</i>..... 1287</p>	
---	--

## WEDNESDAY, 26 MAY 2004

<p>1250. <i>Aboriginal affairs: ministerial staff</i>..... 1273</p> <p>1254. <i>Commonwealth Games: ministerial staff</i>..... 1273</p> <p>1502. <i>Multicultural affairs: multicultural initiatives</i>..... 1273</p>	
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**Thursday, 27 May 2004**

The **PRESIDENT (Hon. M. M. Gould)** took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

**APPEAL COSTS AND PENALTY  
INTEREST RATES ACTS (AMENDMENT)  
BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of **Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation).

**DEATH NOTIFICATION LEGISLATION  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of **Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation).

**PETITIONS**

**Motor registration fees: pensioner concessions**

**Hon. DAVID KOCH** (Western) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the Victorian government abandon the proposal to increase the cost of car registration for Victorian pensioners by \$78.50 as it will detrimentally impact upon those who are financially unable to pay by jeopardising their freedom of movement, removing their independence and diminishing their quality of life (163 signatures).

Laid on table.

**Corangamite: internal boundaries**

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying that the Victorian government support the current position of five two-councillor wards for the Corangamite shire (1764 signatures).

Laid on table.

**MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

**Angliss Hospital: asbestos**

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — In my members statement I want to draw the house's attention to the issue of asbestos at Chandler House at the Angliss Hospital. This is a very serious issue, an issue that puts at risk the lives of patients, doctors, nurses and other staff at the hospital and of members of the local community. I urge the Minister for Health in the other place and the Premier to step in and release the very necessary reports and documents surrounding Eastern Health's assessments of the asbestos risk. I for one do not trust the executives at Eastern Health, and I frankly do not trust the minister on this issue either. She needs to release those documents — and she needs to release them quickly — to support the hospital and to support the community. Only in that way can people be sure of the situation by assessing those reports properly.

We have evidence that those reports have not been completed to the highest standard and have serious deficiencies. Only through the full release of those reports can we as a community and the people of the outer east in particular properly assess the risks of the asbestos at the Angliss Hospital. It is clear there is a real risk. It is clear that the outhouses, the boiler and the roof of Chandler House are riddled with asbestos, and it is clear that the minister should act.

**Live music task force**

**Ms CARBINES** (Geelong) — I was pleased to be asked last year by the Minister for Planning in the other house, the Honourable Mary Delahunty, to chair the live music task force to find a way forward to balance the needs of Victoria's live music industry and the needs of residents living in close proximity to live music venues. Our task force included representatives of Fair Go 4 Live Music, venue owners, the building and development industries, local government, state government departments and the police. We looked at planning and building regulations and environment protection as well as health and liquor licensing laws to ensure that the live music industry has a viable future in our state and that residential amenity is protected. Our task force created much public interest, receiving over 220 submissions, and in December we made 13 recommendations to the minister for her consideration. I was therefore delighted to join the minister on Friday at the Rainbow Hotel in Fitzroy to announce the Bracks government's acceptance of all the recommendations of the live music task force. The major recommendation is for the adoption of the principle that the onus of responsibility for noise

management in the future will fall on the agent of change.

I commend the live music task force members and Minister Delahunty for their demonstrated commitment to finding a way forward to protect both our vibrant live music industry and ensure that residential amenity is protected.

### **Police: corruption and organised crime**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — Victorians would have been horrified to read the *Herald Sun* this morning with its headline ‘Police spy caught’. In particular they would have been horrified at the paragraph which says:

It’s a disgrace. It sends an appalling message to people who thought force command was serious about corrupt behaviour ...

It is of course talking about the situation where a detective was using inappropriate access to try and track down the home address of a Ceja task force member. We debated this issue in this chamber two days ago, and one of the things that has become very clear is that the police cannot police themselves, and now is the time for an anticorruption commission to be established.

One must ask the question: why will the government not go down that route? What has it got to hide? The government does not get it. There is widespread concern throughout the state about what is happening in the Victorian police force and it will not be helped by today’s article, which again shows inappropriate access of the police database. Members on this side of the house know that inappropriate access to that database was made in relation to members of Parliament and candidates at the last election. We know that something is rotten in the state of Victoria, and it is time this government acted to —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The member’s time has expired.

### **Housing Week: Eumemmerring Province**

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Eumemmerring) — On Saturday night I had the pleasure of attending a Housing Week celebration in the Doveton-Eumemmerring area. This event was organised by the Doveton learning centre and the neighbourhood renewal team in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and local residents. Over 200 local residents came along for this fantastic event, which

included a multicultural feast and an evening of splendid entertainment.

Congratulations must go to the following: the Ballam Ballam Dance Group; Bunjil Aboriginal Culture and Dance Club; the d’Silangan dancers Philippine-Australian Cultural Group; Samoan Dance Group; South Sudanese Group, representing the Nuer community; and the Maori Dance Group, Nga Tamoriki O Nga Hapu Katoa, which means children of the four winds. Those groups thoroughly entertained the crowd and gave everyone in attendance a great insight into the various cultures that exist in our local community.

I also acknowledge the great performers who took part in the short plays during the night. All of them are residents in the Doveton-Eumemmerring area. The performances were a great representation of everyday life for many local people and the hardships and pressures they often face. I would once again like to congratulate everyone involved in organising and participating in this event. The evening was a great credit to the local community and those working within it.

### **Building industry: warranty insurance**

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** (Higinbotham) — The matter I raise this morning is builders warranty insurance. It is clear that this is a flawed consumer protection product, perhaps nowhere more so than in the three-storey-plus unit market, where there is no builders warranty insurance at all. All this is happening at a time when the government’s planning policy, Melbourne 2030, is pushing more and more of our city’s growing population into high-rise apartments. Where is the consumer protection for these property owners? This is simply not satisfactory. I call on the government to act to see that these three-storey-plus building owners have builders warranty insurance cover either through an extension of compulsory insurance or by insurers and builders working to develop a voluntary product that would be available to owners who wanted to buy such cover.

### **Arena, North Geelong: funding**

**Hon. J. H. EREN** (Geelong) — I am pleased that the state government has provided funding of \$174 000 to install a sprung floor and to remodel the main court at the Arena sporting facility in North Geelong. This funding will place the Arena in good stead to have Commonwealth Games basketball played there. It will also be suitable for playing high-standard netball games and will accommodate the Geelong

Flyers, who currently play in Melbourne. It could also attract national and international games. The upgrade will also provide netball with an indoor venue in Geelong. The Arena has long been the home of basketball in Geelong, but this improvement will ensure that netball — by far Geelong's largest participation sport — will be able to grow and prosper. The Bracks Labor government has already worked with the City of Greater Geelong to improve the Arena, having given \$1 million to bring the facility into public hands.

As members would know, I have long taken an interest in netball, having met with many netball clubs in Geelong and with Joy Grubb and Barwon Netball, and I have facilitated meetings between them and the City of Greater Geelong. Netball has more than 10 000 participants in Geelong, not including coaches, parents and other volunteers who are interested in the game. I believe we should do all we can to ensure that netballers get their fair share. This funding announcement will be greatly appreciated by those who use the Arena in North Geelong.

### **Wind farms: Dollar**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — Country Victorians are really concerned about the disarray of the planning processes in the state, not least of all in relation to wind farm proposals. Last Friday night I attended a public meeting at the Dumbalk hall in South Gippsland where some 400 people were in attendance. That was an extraordinary turnout given the relatively small numbers in the Dumbalk community. The meeting was called because of the Meridian Energy proposal to establish a wind farm at Dollar. The initial proposal to have 61 turbines has been adjusted to 48 for the time being. There was a resounding majority view at that meeting that this project should not proceed. I bring to the attention of the house that the major difficulty being experienced by country Victorians with wind farm proposals is the Victorian government's exclusion of local communities from any meaningful participation in the planning process. Even in respect of this project at Dollar in the South Gippsland hills, which is valued at \$110 million, there is no capacity for the local community to express any view because there is not even an environment effects statement process under way.

### **Water: Farmhand Foundation**

**Mr SMITH** (Chelsea) — I wish to refer to an article I read this morning in the *Herald Sun* which refers to the Farmhand Foundation. It proposes to put together some sort of task force or similar body to investigate where our water supplies in this country are and how

we use them, given the state of the country's drought, which it referred to as 'the worst drought in 100 years'.

It reminded me of articles I have read in the last couple of years, one by B. A. Santamaria and another by Dick Pratt, which referred to big-ticket suggestions on how we could utilise the water that we tend to waste or that we see wasted in the north-west of this country. This could be done by either reversing the flow of the rivers, according to B. A. Santamaria, which is deemed to be a little impractical, or by piping the water back to the major centres in the country, according to Dick Pratt. When you consider we pipe oil and gas across the country it seems to me to be quite reasonable and feasible to pipe water as well. I wish the Farmhand Foundation well, and I hope whatever support it needs from governments will be forthcoming.

### **Consumer affairs: chain letter**

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — Constituents of mine in Traralgon last week received a chain letter advocating a very lucrative money-making scheme. There were claims in the letter guaranteeing that participating persons could make up to \$70 000 within a two-month period. Essentially the scheme involves sending out 200 letters with five names and addresses at the bottom, the sender's being the fifth name and address. The letter asked the recipients to send a \$10 note — not a cheque, a note — wrapped in a piece of paper saying it was a donation to the first addressed person and stated that this process made the whole process legal.

I do not know whether it is legal or not but in my mind it is certainly very immoral and dangerous. I intend seeing the Minister for Consumer Affairs in the house this morning to give him a copy of that letter and asking that his department investigate this with a view to either taking action against the people involved in this scheme or at least issuing the community with a warning about the follies of being sucked into such scams.

### **Warranwood Primary School: centenary**

**Hon. C. D. HIRSH** (Silvan) — I congratulate Warranwood Primary School on its centenary — its hundred years of existence. It was previously the Warrandyte South Primary School and it relocated to Warranwood eight years ago. I had the pleasure the other day of calling there and presenting the school community with a 100-year certificate. I was able to look through the school and found it fantastic.

The school has three rights, and these rights are formulated to make children feel happy about coming

to school and to feel safe. These rights have been put on the Internet by the grade 6 students. They have a right to learn, a right to feel safe and a right to be respected. As a basic set of rules for the school I find this a very useful and simple process which enables children to feel that school is a great place to be.

In fact it is the school that my future grandchild will be going to in about six years, so I have a great personal interest in it as well. I congratulate the deputy principal, Gayle Linsell, on her great job in organising the centenary week and wish the principal, Geoff Taylor, well on his return.

### **Creswick forest science centre: graduates**

**Ms HADDEN** (Ballarat) — On 15 May I attended the Creswick campus University of Melbourne forest science centre graduation, and I congratulate the 16 graduates of the diploma of forestry and the advanced diploma of forestry management. I also congratulate the 12 recipients of the dean's honours list award for 2004. The first six diploma students graduated from the forest science centre in 1910, and the campus has gone from strength to strength since then. I also wish to acknowledge the industry commitment to forestry and the forest science centre at Creswick. That commitment is in the form of awards: the Hancock Victorian Plantations award, the Willmott Forests award, the Department of Sustainability and Environment prize in silviculture, the New South Wales Forestry Commission's award for forest protection, the Firefighters award for fire protection and the Husqvarna award.

Mr Alan Darrell, one of the graduates, responded to the audience on behalf of the graduating class and spoke of the excellence of the courses and of the fact that they have no equal. He also spoke on behalf of himself and other graduates of their hope of leaving a tangible legacy for all who follow in their footsteps in forestry and forest management.

I congratulate the graduates again and wish them well in their future careers. I also wish to thank the course coordinator, Mr Peter Shepherd, the head of the campus, Associate Professor Leon Bren, and their wonderful staff at the Creswick forest science centre.

### **Ambulance services: Craigieburn**

**Hon. R. G. MITCHELL** (Central Highlands) — On 17 May I had the pleasure of attending the 10th anniversary of the Craigieburn and district ambulance committee, which was born out of the need to deliver an ambulance service to the growing area

of Craigieburn, which had a 40-minute waiting time for ambulances at that stage. The people who had the foresight to get together and start this committee were Nazio Mancini, Keith and Mary Herring, and the then shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr André Haermeyer. These people went out and organised a volunteer service to supply emergency first aid to the area.

The Bracks government has developed this process, and many community and emergency response teams are being delivered across Victoria. I also congratulate the likes of Steve Jones and Wayne and Marie Jordan for delivering 10 years of first aid emergency services to the area. It was great to catch up with old friends such as Trevor Fewsta from the Metropolitan Ambulance Service who delivered the training superbly during that time.

## **STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS**

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The question is:

That reports and papers tabled in the Council be noted.

### **Auditor-General: home and community care**

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) — I wish to make a few comments on the Auditor-General's report on *Delivery of Home and Community Care Services by Local Government*. In the introduction the report states:

HACC supports frail aged people over 70 and people with disabilities of any age to live at home who otherwise would not be able to do so, and would need to be admitted to long-term residential care. The program also supports their carers.

...

The Department of Human Services (DHS) manages the HACC program in Victoria. DHS is responsible for state-level policy setting, program management, service development, service approval and funding allocations. In 2002–03 the commonwealth and state governments funded the HACC programs for \$317 million. The program provided services to 204 450 clients in Victoria.

In Victoria, local government (councils) is the biggest single provider of basic HACC services. These are home care, personnel care, respite care, property maintenance, delivered meals and assessment and care management.

The report includes a chart showing how these services are delivered. According to the Auditor-General's report it takes 16 steps involving 16 departments or organisations to deliver the home and community care program to the target group — that is, the frail and elderly.

When I look at the chart of how the HACC system works, I think somebody at some stage needs to have a good look at the cost involved to get this delivery. As I said, it takes 16 steps to actually get to the client. Instead of 204 000 people receiving the service, which is fantastic, if we had a look at the management of the system maybe for the same amount of money we could target 300 000 people. It is a wonderful service out there in our community.

The home and community care service costs the Department of Human Services \$317 million, councils contribute approximately a further \$48 million and user fees total \$30 million. About 37 per cent of the service is delivered by councils. Looking at the figures in the report, it concerns me that local government's contribution seems to be increasing much faster than that of the state or the commonwealth. It went up by 9.3 per cent last year, and this year it has gone up by nearly 13 per cent. More and more responsibility seems to be placed on local government.

Home and community care services save the state and the commonwealth hundreds of millions of dollars, because a lot of the support comes from community volunteers. They are out there delivering the Meals on Wheels et cetera. This is a very interesting report on a fantastic service, but I would like the Auditor-General to see if the service can be streamlined a bit more so that the target group is where most of the money is spent rather than on a lot of the service providers and deliverers and people sitting in seats filling out forms. I commend the report to the house.

**Hon. C. D. HIRSH** (Silvan) — I commend both the Auditor-General's report entitled *Delivery of Home and Community Care Services by Local Government* and the actual program. It is an excellent program. As people age in the community and face the prospect of moving into residential care the program enables many older people to stay in their homes and have services provided by local government and volunteers in a tripartite program funded jointly by the commonwealth government, state governments and local councils. It is important that this continue because of the joint responsibilities for aged care that exist in our system. The amount saved by keeping people out of residential care is absolutely prodigious, and the sense of wellbeing imparted to people who receive the home and community care (HACC) service is also of great benefit to them.

A number of volunteers work in the program. Some people in my electorate deliver Meals on Wheels and have great pleasure in interacting with older people in the community. The scouts chop and deliver wood to a

number of older people who still have open fireplaces. This activity is not part of the program but is a volunteer service at the weekends and is another absolutely great part of enabling older people to stay at home. Our office recently got a heater for a person in Ringwood who lives in public housing and did not have adequate heating. That was a useful thing to do. He also benefits lately from the Meals on Wheels program.

As far as the councils go, they could probably tidy up their organisation to some degree, but generally speaking the Auditor-General found their programs to be very beneficial.

Some councils have perhaps not consulted with stakeholders as well as they should have. Certainly the majority have consulted with service users, service providers, community groups, primary care partnership members and regional Department of Human Services officers. They have consulted a lot less with neighbouring councils, and less than half the councils have consulted with the commonwealth Department for Health and Ageing.

As to the measurement of program performance by councils, about 70 per cent of councils benchmark their services against those of other councils, which is important. The Auditor-General found that 15 per cent of the councils did not have benchmarks but were partnering with other councils in the process of developing them. Another 15 per cent of councils had no benchmarks at all for their services. The Auditor-General has recommended that all councils that are yet to develop health and community care-specific performance measures for outputs need to develop them as soon as possible. They should publicly report against the program objectives and performance indicators. They need to publicly report the full details of the total cost of HACC services and the principal sources of funding, and they also need to report on the total quantity of services delivered by council, split between DHS-funded and council-funded services where appropriate and necessary because, as with any tripartite program, it can be tricky to work out where the money is coming from and where it is going to and to ensure that the best delivery of service as possible continues.

I congratulate local government on that service delivery. It is of great benefit to all in the older Victorian community.

#### **Auditor-General: public sector agency reviews**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I welcome the opportunity to make a few comments on

the Auditor-General's *Report on Public Sector Agencies*. There is a significant matter of concern with this document, and I believe it can lead honourable members to have real concerns about leadership in this state.

In the short time available to me I wish to talk about a couple of matters. The first is the Overseas Project Corporation of Victoria. Its problems are outlined in significant detail at page 74. What is really apparent is that this insolvent organisation, which is being propped up by the government, has made significant losses over recent years. In the executive summary, in the second paragraph on page 9, the report states:

The company is in considerable financial difficulty. Without the state providing capital injections totalling \$2.5 million up to June 2003 and deferral of the repayment of its commercial bank bills, the company would have been insolvent at that time.

We are talking June last year. It then goes on to identify that by six months later, on 31 December 2003, the company's solvency continued to be a matter of concern. The company determined that it needed support from the state to cover liabilities up to an amount of \$5.6 million. The government gave it an extra \$400 000 and a letter of comfort — but then there is this awful sentence:

The state's ultimate exposure in relation to this company remains uncertain and is dependent upon the outcome of the announced sale of the company.

Let me make the point about selling companies that are going broke that you do not get a very good price for them. That is the problem. What tends to happen in circumstances such as this is that you can buy them for bank debt or less. We now have a circumstance where this company — which was established, as honourable members would remember, under the regime of the previous Cain and Kirner Labor governments back in the 1980s — is now dragging the state down to a significant degree. This is a matter of real concern, and we will be looking to see whether there is leadership shown by this government in trying to sort out its problems.

One other aspect of this is really important, and it is also detailed in the report where it says:

Our audit identified a number of irregular cash transactions totalling \$17 800 ... representing a serious breakdown in internal controls by the company.

Not only is this company losing money; not only is the government bailing it out and keeping it solvent but its internal controls were lax enough to allow irregular cash transactions. That is a euphemism; I understand

the police are now investigating these 'irregular cash transactions' and I look forward to having those issues sorted out as well.

The other issue I want to touch on in the brief time available to me is the financial viability of TAFE institutions. I note that again the Auditor-General has said that:

... over the last three years there has been a substantial worsening in the TAFE sector's net operating cash flows, excluding capital grants. If this trend continues the sector's ability to meet future obligations on a timely basis may ultimately be affected.

This is an early warning signal the Auditor-General is giving about a significant sector of the state's education area, and the opposition will be looking to see what action the government takes. When the Auditor-General comes out and says — and the words are really important:

The sector's ability to meet future obligations ... may ultimately be affected —

that is a very, very stark message. I want to see some action from the government dealing with that warning from the Auditor-General. Nothing could be more important than ensuring we have a TAFE sector that is completely viable.

The Auditor-General also says in his report that ... one provider (Chisholm Institute) showed negative results in four key indicators of financial condition.

Yes, there is one specific organisation that is of significant concern at the moment, but overall the whole sector needs to be watched.

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

### **Auditor-General: home and community care**

**Mr VINEY** (Chelsea) — I wish to comment on the Auditor-General's report entitled *Delivery of Home and Community Care Services by Local Government*. In doing so I indicate to the house that I have had quite a long interest in home and community care services, having spent some time as a manager of community services with a local government authority, when about 50 per cent of our responsibilities was for home and community care services.

The report indicates a number of things. In particular it indicates that the planning, funding, review and audit of home and community care services delivery in Victoria by the Department of Human Services has been pretty sound. It indicates that in most of those areas the

Department of Human Services has sound practices and has conducted sound operations. However, it indicates that local government authorities, particularly some of the smaller rural authorities and more particularly in some of the planning and review areas, has been struggling.

One that I wish to particularly mention is the supervision of contractor arrangements in the delivery of home and community care services. As members are aware there are a range of ways in which home and community care services are delivered in Victoria. They are delivered both by volunteers, particularly in the Meals on Wheels program, and by paid staff in areas such as home care services, home maintenance and some other activities that are also part of the home and community care (HACC) program — and sometimes that includes contractors.

Contractors entered the delivery of HACC services area when the previous government required local government to enter into compulsory competitive tendering. This report found that in some instances the supervision and oversight of contractors in the delivery of this system has not been as good as it may have been. It is a concern.

Local government has a very important role to play as a planner and deliverer of community services at the local level. That has always been a traditional and important function of local government. It is ironic that the reforms the Kennett government put in place for local government provided an opportunity to both enhance and diminish that function of local government. Certainly the amalgamations provided some enhanced capacity for local government to plan and deliver things like home and community care services by increasing the size of local government authorities, but what absolutely decimated and destroyed local government's ability to plan the delivery of local community services, like home and community care, was the harsh and ridiculous compulsory competitive tendering system that required local government to competitively tender things like home and community care services — important services that are delivered to the local community.

I remember my late father being involved in such services in the former City of Oakleigh in the 1950s and 1960s. That council introduced Meals on Wheels and home care programs and was the second council in Victoria to employ a welfare officer. Those things have a long tradition in local government, and local government has been proud of that, but the compulsory competitive tendering introduced by the Kennett government made all of that planning of local

government services, particularly home and community care, much more difficult. Certainly it was done with less sensitivity and ability to plan the delivery of services because trying to plan services is much harder to do if you are not directly involved in their delivery. This report highlights that one of the flow-on impacts of the Kennett government's competitive tendering period has been to diminish the ability of local government to plan services. I think it is an important warning.

### **Auditor-General: public sector agency reviews**

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — I wish to comment on the Auditor-General's *Report on Public Sector Agencies* dealing with the results of special reviews of May 2004. I thank the Auditor-General for looking into the issue of parks charges. As background I will read out what he says about the park charges:

The 'parks charge' is an annual levy on all commercial and residential properties in the Melbourne and metropolitan areas. About \$80 million is collected each year through the levy. The Water Industry Act 1994 sets out how park charges must be levied, and requires that the money collected be spent on developing and managing the parks, waterways and bays within the metropolitan area.

I asked for this inquiry because there was some suggestion that this \$80 million was not being hypothecated for metropolitan parks but in fact being used to fund national parks. National parks are under huge stress because the national parks in Victoria are full of noxious weeds and feral animals.

Parks Victoria is a very bad neighbour. Indeed it needs as much money as it can get. It is limited in the number of rangers it has available. This government has put in a number of new parks but it has not funded them. Parks Victoria looks at this \$80 million with green eyes — literally green eyes — wondering how it could get its hands on it, so I asked the Auditor-General to look at the situation. I have to say I was pleasantly surprised to see that in response to the question, 'Were the parks charges properly levied and collected?' the conclusion was that the parks charge was levied, collected and paid into a parks and reserves trust account in line with the requirements of the act. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) accepted this as well. I was very pleased to see that.

However, another issue was asked about:

Were parks and reserves trust account activities adequately transparent and made public?

This is more worrying. First of all the Auditor-General examined the operations of the parks and reserves trust account and said it is:

... the largest trust account managed by DSE. DSE does not report specifically or regularly to Parliament about the trust account's operations, which are incorporated into DSE's financial statements.

I have major concerns about this. I have just come from a briefing on the new national park this government is putting into place between Anglesea and the Otways called the Otway Ranges national park. It is going to need proper scrutiny; its operations will need to be looked at closely. In the metropolitan parks, it is essential that the \$80 million collected from people living in metropolitan Melbourne is managed well and hypothecated to metropolitan parks, not swept into a fund for new or old national parks to get themselves organised.

The conclusion of the Auditor-General was worrying. He said:

Public accountability would be improved if DSE included details of the parks and reserves trust account's operations in its annual report to Parliament.

I charge the government to take up the recommendation made by the Auditor-General. I will be watching this closely to make certain that that is what happens.

Closer to home in my electorate is Albert Park where charges imposed on sporting clubs are outrageous. They are higher by a large degree than anywhere else in the state. The government is using this excellent facility to take more money from the Albert Park sporting clubs.

**Hon. B. N. Atkinson** — Outrageous!

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** — It is outrageous, my colleague the Honourable Bruce Atkinson said, because Albert Park is an excellent facility. Not only is none of the money that is hypothecated coming back to be used to manage these sporting fields but their rent is being increased. It is seriously not good enough and needs to be looked at. Hopefully when DSE starts to include details of its parks and reserves trust accounts in its annual reports, as has been recommended by the Auditor-General, then some of these anomalies will be cleared up and the people of Albert Park will then feel that they are definitely playing on a level playing field.

#### **Auditor-General: home and community care**

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I would like to make a contribution on the delivery of home and community care services by local

government. The report is very important because programs are implemented and funded by commonwealth, state and local councils. Local councils play an important role in the delivery of services for the frail and aged and people with disabilities.

During the last financial year about 200 000 clients in Victoria were serviced. Councils play an important role because they work closely with people and provide a range of services such as home care, personal care, respite care, property maintenance, delivery of meals and so on. The report also points out that the Department of Human Services should work closely with councils. The Bracks government is giving more power to councils so they can be more independent and can provide the best services to their clients.

The report makes mention of the delivery of services to the ethnic community. Many in the ethnic community have language problems and do not understand what services are available. Councils must work with the different ethnic communities, such as the Greek, Turkish, Vietnamese and Chinese communities, to find out what their needs are. Many in the ethnic community do not mix well with the Anglo-Saxon community; they rely on their own community networks and do not tend to ask councils for support. They get together in their own clubs. For example, some elderly people prefer to make their own nutritious meals rather than have Meals on Wheels because the culture of some does not allow for them, for example, to eat pork or other meats.

Councils offer services that will help identify the needs of the elderly, and those needs change year to year. Over the past few years the elderly population has changed. It is estimated that the number of people aged 70 to 84 years will increase by only 54.3 per cent, but the number aged over 85 years will increase by over 71 per cent. The report is based on Victoria's population change from 2001 to 2021.

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

#### **Roads Corporation: report, 2002–03**

**Hon. R. H. BOWDEN** (South Eastern) — I make my comments today in relation to the Roads Corporation of Victoria report 2002–03. My initial impression of the report was that it is a glossy public relations magazine which has something for everyone. The four main segments of business activity of the corporation, commonly known as VicRoads, is detailed in the report covered by the purpose, aims and

organisational values. It would be helpful for VicRoads to read page 3 of its own report.

As a member of a large electorate in the south-eastern sector of this city, I am concerned that VicRoads may have lost some of its focus because under the heading 'Aims' on page 3 it lists one as being to:

Assist economic and regional development by managing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the road transport system.

I have serious doubts about whether VicRoads is carrying that out in detail or in a focused way. Also under the same heading it states another aim is to:

Facilitate greater integration of road-based public transport with other transport modes to maximise choice, accessibility, safety and reliability for all users.

In the last decade there has been a lack of focus in VicRoads implementation of that aim. Under the heading of 'Organisational values' on page 3 the report says:

We put our customers' and stakeholders' needs first.

I suggest in a gentle way that VicRoads may need to reconsider some of the things it has not done in relation to that particular organisational value. I do not want to appear heavy-handed or too critical, but I am concerned that in the south-eastern part of this city there has been an obvious inflexibility and a lack of focus on real needs.

In the city of Casey and areas around Pakenham and the northern Mornington Peninsula it is obvious that VicRoads is not up to the task, that it is not truly focused on what it proudly says at page 3 of the report is an aim of the organisation. It should be putting a lot more immediate and visible attention into things that are truly needed.

On many occasions in this chamber during the past year or so I have detailed specific instances where VicRoads, the Roads Corporation, could have made a valuable contribution to road safety, road efficiency and improvement in transport not only in South Eastern Province but also in areas in that south-eastern sector of the city. When I look at the disaster that will certainly visit the Western Port Highway as a result of — I will use the word — connivance between the City of Casey and VicRoads in deliberately planning to put multiple sets of traffic lights on that highway, I see it as an example where VicRoads is not serving this community well and is certainly doing it a disservice.

It is well known that the intersection of the South Gippsland Highway and the Baxter-Tooradin Road is a

real death trap. It is a major hazard and a black spot, and what has VicRoads done about that? Nothing. And as far as I can see, it does not intend to be responsive.

One of the things that really concerns me is that VicRoads employs 2300 people, and according to this report it spent \$1380 million in 2002–03 — and how much did it spend on new roads? The answer is on page 52. Out of \$1380 million it spent only \$194 million on new roads. That is unacceptable. It is a completely unacceptable measurement, and I suggest to VicRoads that it ought to lift its game when it comes to the percentage spent on road investment.

### World Masters Games: report, 2002

**Mr PULLEN** (Higinbotham) — I will make some comments on the *World Masters Games Annual Report* for the period 1 July 2001 to 15 November 2002. The first thing I want to say is that this is a very clear and basic report. What I mean by basic is that obviously money has not been wasted on it. It concerns me when I get a number of annual reports that a lot of money has been spent on them — in fact one of the councils in my electorate received an award because its report was so good, and that was the Glen Eira City Council. It is good to get a report like this which outlines the facts but saves money, and I think more organisations should do that. I have prepared many annual reports in my involvement with sporting bodies over the years — in fact more than 30-odd annual reports — and when I saw this report I thought that this is the sort of thing I used to produce and that it was very good.

The 2002 World Masters Games were held in Victoria at 62 venues. Most of the world-class venues such as Melbourne Park, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Telstra Dome, the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre and others were located within 4 kilometres of the Melbourne central business district. The games operated within budget with strong support from the state government, government agencies, the City of Melbourne, many of the municipalities throughout Victoria and also the private sector.

You can get a lot of criticism of major sporting events, even with such things as the grand prix, but the economic impact they have is important. The economic impact assessment of the 2002 World Masters Games indicates a \$55 million boost to the Victorian economy and a \$69 million boost to the Australian economy; I think they are remarkable figures.

There were 24 886 participants in the games, including 6281 from overseas, who took part in 29 sports. About 30 000 people in total were involved, and there were

4000-odd volunteers, and I will talk about those in a moment. The World Masters Games are held every four years. I take a great interest in them, as I am getting up to that age now — they are for mature-age athletes. This was the biggest multi-sport festival held in the world at that particular time, with competitors from 97 different countries entering events. Of the 24 886 competitors, 10 970 came from Victoria. More than 70 per cent of the venues were located within 4 kilometres of the central business district, and the venues located outside of Melbourne were at Nagambie, Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat, and naturally the games provided good economic stimulus for those particular areas.

I must place on record the excellent work of the chairman, Mr Graham Duff, the president, Ron Walker, and the chief executive, Leanne Grantham, plus the other directors of the organisation. The opening ceremony was held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground before 50 000 spectators. Considering that that was about the capacity the ground could hold at that particular time, that was a tremendous attendance. The closing ceremony was initially booked for the Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton, where the organisers expected to have 8000 to 10 000-odd people, but it had to be transferred to Telstra Dome because 15 000 people came.

I must place on record the great work of the medical staff under Andrew Bacon — people from the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Rural Ambulance Victoria, St John's Ambulance, the State Emergency Service, the Red Cross and many other organisations.

The state government's host city agreement provided free public transport for the competitors, team officials, media and volunteers, and Mitsubishi provided sponsorship of 16 vehicles for volunteer drivers. It is important to mention the volunteers. These games were a great start for the Commonwealth Games, with something like 4000 volunteers making themselves available. I looked through the report and wondered why the medal winners were not mentioned. On reflection, I can understand why: that would have saved money, because something like 20 000 medals were presented during the games, which would have made the report rather large. Time is running out, but I will make the quick comments that the games employed 27 staff, it was a wonderful event, and the government put in \$2 438 000.

### **Petition: wild dogs — control**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I wish to speak to the petition which I presented to the house

concerning wild dogs. Members will know, because I have raised this matter in the house before, that there is a significant problem in alpine areas for farmers who live and farm adjacent to national parks and state forests, particularly now during the recovery process from the bushfires of early 2003. Wild dog numbers have increased significantly, and presumably because of a lack of access to native fauna for feed, the dogs are coming out of the bush in very, very large numbers.

I have raised the matter before, and while as a matter of course I would not necessarily raise this matter again, I am moved to do so and speak in relation to this petition because it reflects a very strong view in the community. Even though I have tabled this petition, I understand that there will be further petitions to follow and that very large numbers of citizens are highly concerned about the fact that stock losses are continuing at an incredible rate.

What really moved me to speak on this today was a coincidental discussion I had late last Friday afternoon with a woman from Ensay in East Gippsland. I was at a completely unrelated function in Sale — in fact it was a function associated with the Anglican Church — and this woman from Ensay sought me out. She came to thank me for taking up the case on behalf of her community in trying to get resources to control wild dogs, and what she had to tell me was absolutely devastating.

Last year on what is a comparatively small farm she had 800 ewes to lamb down, and by the end of lambing only 5 lambs survived from those 800 ewes. The only lambs which survived were 5 lambs that were bottle fed — they were not nurtured by the ewe — and were locked away underneath the house every night. Not only have all of the lambs been taken by dogs, but the dogs are now so confident they are around not just at night but in the daytime and even come close to the homestead during the day. The dogs are in such large numbers that people may well be concerned that not only will they continue to attack stock but undoubtedly eventually domestic animals other than sheep will be attacked. I imagine that inevitably domestic farm dogs will be attacked, and I have no doubt that farmers themselves may be intimidated by the number of wild dogs that are about. This is a very significant economic problem for the Alpine regions. It is a particularly horrendous issue in terms of animal welfare, and there is a degree of negligence on the part of the state government in failing to provide adequate control over what is quite clearly now a high priority problem for communities in both East Gippsland and north-eastern Victoria.

While speaking to this petition I urge the government to reconsider the frankly miserable approach to withdrawing dog trappers from those alpine regions at the end of this month and successively cancelling all of the resources which have been available over the last little while, which even in themselves are inadequate to control the problem.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The member's time has expired!

### **Roads Corporation: report, 2002–03**

**Mr SMITH** (Chelsea) — I want to comment on the Roads Corporation annual report for 2002–03 following the contribution of the Honourable Ron Bowden. We know in this house that Mr Bowden is almost fanatical about roads issues, and VicRoads in particular, and I refer to the fact that he complained about the so-called collusion between the City of Casey and VicRoads to install a number of sets of traffic lights on part of Dandenong-Hastings Road. What he did not tell the house was that the responsible minister in the previous government, Mr Maclellan, approved those traffic lights, along with a previous Liberal member in that area who helped the process. It would have been more honest of Mr Bowden to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

However, the fact remains that there is some concern over that stretch of highway with the increased volumes of traffic, particularly at the Thompsons Road roundabout. I note that in a previous contribution Mr Bowden suggested that we should put an overpass at that intersection.

**An honourable member** — Good idea!

**Mr SMITH** — Yes, and I just wonder what the newly established huge service centre would think of that and what it would do to its business? Perhaps Mr Bowden had not thought about the business side of it, I do not know, but the government certainly will. There is a real need to review that stretch of road, and I am sure it will be done, but down the track I think there will be an add-on a little further down the road called the Mitcham–Frankston freeway — —

**An honourable member** — Tollway!

**Mr SMITH** — No, freeway! By any measure it will be a freeway — there will be no impediment on that road. There will be no traffic lights on that road. It will be a freeway, and you will get a free run all the way down to Frankston.

The point I am making is that it will take an enormous amount of traffic off Dandenong-Hastings Road; therefore the traffic lights will only service local residents and will have a minimal impact. That is called forward planning, and we should be complimenting the Minister for Transport for his capacity, and VicRoads in particular for its vision. I do not say that they always get it right. In fact, there are some cases where you can demonstrate that they do not get it right. However, in my view it is unfair to criticise them on that particular stretch of road — or it is certainly pre-emptive.

The other thing I noticed in the report was the significant number of fines that have been levied against particular kinds of trucks — semitrailers et cetera — that are overburdened with whatever it is that they are carrying and are breaking the law. Fines and speed cameras are a matter of real contention amongst those opposite. What they refuse to accept is that the performance of those cameras has brought back the number of fatalities on our roads, and the government thinks that is a good thing. Opposition members obviously do not agree with that, but that is for them to live with. This is a good report. The Auditor-General has given it a tick, and I commend it to the house.

### **Auditor-General: public sector agency reviews**

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** — I rise today to make some brief comments on the Auditor-General's *Report on Public Sector Agencies* on the results of special reviews, and in particular on how well the Department of Infrastructure plans and manages the restoration of country passenger rail services.

As the house well knows, four regional areas were identified as those to have a passenger train returned to them. Those areas are Ararat, Bairnsdale, South Gippsland and Mildura. The Nationals support that thrust. We say it is good news that the passenger train has returned to Bairnsdale, and we will note with interest the patronage of that train as its operation continues. We also noticed there was a bit of a skirmish over scones at the opening of the line, which I thought was quite interesting. We know that Bairnsdale has been completed. We are not sure where the Ararat line is at, but we know that the South Gippsland and Mildura lines have not had any action on them at all. In fact, not one spike has been driven in. We notice from the Auditor-General's report there has been a nine-month delay and a 26 per cent overrun on the Ararat and Bairnsdale projects, and we think that that is an important issue to note.

We also note that freight continued to run on the Mildura line, and that freight started up on the Bairnsdale line in 1999. We ask why only the Bairnsdale line has been completed. There is no doubt that the government and the Independents have certainly played the blame game and blamed Freight Australia for most of the delays. The Nationals do not have any brief to support Freight Australia. We are interested in its performance because of the products it carries for our people and to ensure it can keep as much of that on rail and off our roads for the safety of our roads.

But where the Auditor-General's report talks about risk assessment — and time will not allow me to go through all of them — he makes the very important statement that risk assessment is absolutely essential. Another issue the report addresses is that the scope of the construction might be larger than estimated and that that had not been taken into account in the risk management process. He also said the project cost, expected passenger numbers and revenue estimates might not be accurate.

He also said that an important issue is:

... the department might not have the capacity to effectively manage relationships with the private sector agencies whose cooperation is required to implement the project.

That is probably the understatement of the year because there is absolutely no doubt at all that the government and the departments could not manage the interface between private enterprise and the department and anyone who had a bit of a look at it could see that there was an intense running battle between the government and the private agencies and particularly Freight Australia during that particular process.

We then turn our minds to what the Auditor-General finally said. May I commend the Auditor-General for his report and particularly the little book that goes with it, where you can find a quick snapshot of his findings. He says:

The Department of Infrastructure did not adequately plan for and manage the project. More could have been done to test the reliability of initial cost estimates provided by one of the private sector operators and specialists, and to address the risks to scheduled project delivery known to exist at the start of the project. These weaknesses contributed to the budget going over budget and over time. The department has since introduced rigorous guidelines and review processes aimed at improving its planning and management of major projects.

Quite clearly, the government and the Independents ought to cease the blame game — that is what has been said by the Auditor-General — and the government ought to face up to its responsibilities; it ought to

govern for all Victorians; it ought to bite the bullet and buy back the rail lease so that it has the full responsibility — —

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

### **Auditor-General: public sector agency reviews**

**Ms ROMANES** (Melbourne) — I also wish to speak about the Auditor-General's review of the Department of Infrastructure's planning and management of the restoration of country passenger rail services in the report on public sector agencies.

Members of this chamber will remember that the former coalition government under Mr Kennett delivered a major blow to country communities by closing a number of country train lines. This cut off what was a vital lifeline and connection to the capital city for many people living in the country. Not only did it cut off important connections between country and regional centres with the capital, Melbourne, but also the access within those regions themselves. At the time of the 1999 election the Bracks election commitment was to review the closure of these lines, and subsequently a decision was made after a feasibility study to reopen four of the lines.

The Auditor-General's report looks into what has happened with these lines and reports on the fact that two — Ararat and Bairnsdale — currently, at the time of the report, had progressed. We know that on 2 May the Bairnsdale line opened and was greeted with fantastic enthusiasm and a great welcome by the people of Stratford and Bairnsdale on that day. I joined the group that met at Spencer Street station at 5.30 a.m. that day and travelled on the train to Stratford and Bairnsdale.

**Hon. Andrea Coote** — Did they give you scones?

**Ms ROMANES** — I enjoyed very much the gatherings of hundreds of people at Stratford and Bairnsdale. The scones issue has been highlighted in the media, but I think it is important to put on the record that the train was later than expected when we got into Stratford and the speakers and performers took longer than anticipated. The official party was taken to view the fantastic murals done by the various schools of the area. Then, given the imminent departure of the train, everyone was rushed back onto the train so it was unfortunate that members who had travelled up on the train were not able to stay longer to mingle with the local community and enjoy their refreshments. The

reception from the people at Stratford and Bairnsdale was fantastic.

President, the Auditor-General puts very clearly on page 49 of the report the context in which the planning and management of these projects has taken place. It is no surprise to some of us who followed closely the privatisation of public transport in this state under the Kennett government that there have been consequences from the franchising and the fragmentation of the public transport system. The loss of central coordination, control and expertise in the transport department has had repercussions and the Auditor-General says that the difficulty is related to:

... little rail construction project management experience ...

but in particular:

... the complex rail privatisation and franchising arrangements ...

Which meant that the negotiations for these projects were much more difficult than they otherwise should have been. So it is not surprising that the projects have gone over budget and have run over time, but on page 47 the Auditor-General also says:

The department has since introduced rigorous guidelines and review processes aimed at improving its planning and management of major projects.

There have been cost estimating guidelines, a project review committee and a project government and review group that are now on the job looking at the business cases.

**Question agreed to.**

## VICTORIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (AMENDMENT) BILL

### *Second reading*

For **Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation), **Hon. M. R. Thomson** (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 in relation to the powers of the Minister for Planning to call in certain proceedings from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The Minister for Planning's power to call in planning proceedings is essential for responding to circumstances where the determination of the review may have a substantial effect on the achievement or development of state or regional planning objectives or which raises a major issue of state or regional policy or public interest.

A practice note on the use of ministerial intervention or call in sets out the circumstances in which the minister will consider exercising her powers of intervention or call in, and the principles that will apply in considering a request for intervention or call in.

Each time the powers of intervention or call in have been used, written reasons for each decision have been made publicly available, including an explanation of how the circumstances of the matter met the requirements of the guidelines and the legislative criteria for that action.

An annual report is provided to Parliament detailing the nature of each intervention or call in. This material has also been made available on the department's web site.

In the past 12 months five matters from the Victorian and Civil Administrative Tribunal have been called in. There were also five call ins from VCAT for the period May 2002–April 2003.

The overall number of interventions by this government is dramatically less than the number of times the Kennett government intervened in the planning process. The Bracks government has intervened an average of 77 times per year, including both amendments to planning schemes and VCAT call ins. This is well below the figure of 211 for 1998–99 and 284 for 1997–98 planning scheme interventions alone by the Minister for Planning in the Kennett government, the Honourable Robert Maclellan.

A ministerial call-in power was first provided for in 1978, in section 21 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1961. The first call-in power enabled the minister to direct the then Planning Appeals Board to hear an appeal, but not make a determination, but instead give the minister the board's opinion. The minister was then required to refer the matter to the Governor in Council for determination. These provisions were carried forward and enhanced in the Planning Appeals Board Act 1980 (which was later renamed as the Planning Appeals Act 1980). The 1980 provisions clarified that the minister's power to give a direction to the tribunal could be exercised at any time prior to the determination of an appeal.

In 1988 amendments were made to the minister's powers, to include additional provisions enabling the minister to direct the registrar to refer the matter to the Governor, and to invite the tribunal to refer the matter without hearing.

The 1988 amendments also provided that a direction to the registrar, or an invitation to the tribunal to refer an appeal without a hearing could not be made later than seven days before the date fixed for commencement of the hearing of the appeal. An invitation to the tribunal to refer the appeal without determination at the conclusion of a hearing could be made any time prior to the tribunal making a decision on the appeal.

The then member for South Eastern Province, the Honourable Alan Hunt, in introducing the amendments, affirmed that the minister should have a 'right to call in at any time prior to determination', and went on to say:

... but, if he calls in the matter less than seven days before the date fixed for the hearing or when the hearing is in progress, the minister should proceed with the hearing and obtain the advisory recommendation of the planning division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. People ought not to be deprived at the last minute or in the middle of a hearing of the benefits of the recommendation of the tribunal.

Up to seven days before the date fixed for the commencement of the hearing, where it appears that a matter should be called in, the minister has two options: firstly he can call it in and allow the hearing to go on and receive the advisory recommendation; and, secondly, he can call it in and determine if it is urgent and he believes the hearing would be mere charade. After that date has elapsed, the minister has only one option if he wants to call in: he can call it in but await the advisory recommendation of the planning division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The approach outlined in the second-reading speech for the 1988 amendment was not entirely replicated with the introduction of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act in 1998. This had the effect of altering the minister's power to make a call in so that no call in could be made if the tribunal had commenced to hear the proceeding. The ability to make a call in after the tribunal had commenced to hear the proceedings, and for the tribunal to refer the matter to the Governor with recommendations rather than determining the matter was omitted.

For many years it has been understood that when the tribunal held what is often referred to as a 'directions hearing', it would not be considered to have commenced to hear the matter. This view was consistent with the view expressed in the decision of *Venture Stores (Retailers) Pty Ltd v. Roper* decided in 1988 (1988 2 AATR 90) where it was observed that a directions hearing could not be considered to amount to 'a decision on an appeal'. However, this view was

overturned in May this year by the president of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal in *Buttigieg v. Melton Shire Council* (2004 VCAT 868 14 May 2004). In that decision, the president found that:

...where the tribunal hears from the parties to the proceeding, following notice being given of the time and place of that hearing in accordance with section 99 of the act, the tribunal is engaged in hearing the proceeding. This is so even if the hearing is solely for the purpose of receiving submissions from the parties and then, following receipt of those submissions, making directions.

In his term, the president of the tribunal has very properly, and successfully, sought to streamline the jurisdiction, and have the issues in contest before the tribunal, including substantive issues, resolved early in the course of a proceeding. These developments have been of great benefit to the management of proceedings before the tribunal, and to the parties concerned. However, the language of clauses 58 and 59 of schedule 1 of the act has not kept pace with the procedural developments, and it is now necessary to ensure that key strategic developments in tribunal administration and procedure do not bring about unintended effects in the operation of other substantive legislation.

Accordingly, in order to enable the minister to make a call in at any time prior to the final determination of a matter, it is now necessary to amend the act. The government needs to respond quickly to restore clarity and certainty for all users of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The amendments will confirm the general understanding about the role of the minister in the appeal system.

I turn now to the provisions of the bill. The bill substitutes new clauses 58 and 59 into schedule 1 of the act. Clause 58 deals with the exercise of the call-in power by the minister administering the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Clause 59 deals with the call in of proceedings for the review of decisions under other planning enactments. Clause 59 largely follows the scheme of clause 58.

New clause 58 provides that where the minister administering the Planning and Environment Act 1987 considers that a proceeding for review of a decision under that act raises a major policy issue, and the determination of the proceeding may have a substantial effect on the achievement or development of planning objectives, the minister may act to call in the proceeding. The options provided to the minister are largely unchanged, and continue to allow the minister either to give a notice to the principal registrar calling in

the proceeding, or to invite the tribunal to refer the matter to the Governor in Council without hearing it, or to refer it with recommendations after concluding the hearing.

There are several changes to clause 58. The minister responsible for the Planning and Environment Act 1987 may call in a proceeding by written notice to the principal registrar, rather than directing the principal registrar to refer to a proceeding to the Governor in Council. As in the existing clause 58, the minister may also invite the tribunal to either decline to hear or continue hearing the proceeding and refer it to the Governor in Council, or hear the proceeding and without determining it, refer it to the Governor in Council for determination.

Under new subclause 58(3), a notice or invitation has no effect unless given before the final determination of the proceeding and no later than seven days before the day fixed for the hearing. The new subclause 58(5) provides that a hearing does not include a hearing in the nature of a directions hearing, preliminary hearing or interlocutory hearing. Under new subclause 58(4), if the minister calls in a proceeding under clause 58(2)(a), the tribunal must not commence or continue to hear the proceeding and the registrar must refer the proceeding to the Governor in Council for determination.

The new clause 59 allows a minister administering another planning enactment to request the minister responsible for the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to call in a proceeding by written notice to the principal registrar, rather than directing the principal registrar to refer a proceeding to the Governor in Council. As in the existing clause 59, the minister may also invite the tribunal to either decline to hear or continue hearing the proceeding and refer it to the Governor in Council, or hear the proceeding and without determining it, refer it to the Governor in Council for determination.

A notice to the principal registrar or an invitation to the tribunal is of no effect unless given before final determination of the proceeding and no later than seven days before the day fixed for the hearing of the proceeding. As with clause 58, there is clarification in subclause 59(6) that a hearing does not include a hearing in the nature of a directions hearing, preliminary hearing or interlocutory hearing. Subclause (5) provides that, if the minister calls in a proceeding by notice, the tribunal must not commence or continue to hear the proceeding and the principal registrar must refer the proceeding to the Governor in Council for determination.

In order to achieve the government's stated aim of quickly restoring clarity and certainty for all users of Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal the bill also provides that the new provisions mentioned above will apply to all proceedings existing on or after the commencement of section 3 of the bill. In this way, the new provisions will apply to all matters currently on foot before the tribunal, or which commence after the commencement of the bill.

The bill also amends clause 61 of schedule 1 of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 to insert a new subclause (1A). This provides that, if a proceeding is referred to the Governor in Council under clauses 58, 59 or 60, the Governor in Council is not bound by any decision, determination, or order made by the tribunal in the proceeding.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) on motion of Hon. Andrea Coote.**

**Debate adjourned until Thursday, 10 June.**

## JUDICIAL SALARIES BILL

### *Second reading*

**Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated for Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) on motion of Hon. M. R. Thomson (Minister for Small Business).**

For **Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Sport and Recreation), **Hon. M. R. Thomson** (Minister for Small Business) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Victorian court system consists of the Supreme, County and Magistrates courts, and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Judicial officers in each of the courts and VCAT are constitutionally independent of the executive arm of government.

The independence of the judiciary is guaranteed by security of tenure and by secure and adequate remuneration. Secure and adequate remuneration not only attracts suitable candidates to judicial office, but also minimises the potential for litigants to exercise financial influence over the judicial decision-making process.

Until the 1980s, Victorian judicial salaries were determined exclusively by Parliament. Adjustments in judicial remuneration were made by amending the relevant act of Parliament. This resulted in long periods where judicial salaries were static.

From 1980 until 2002 Victorian judicial salaries were determined by the Attorney-General, initially by reference to

adjustments in national wage case determinations, and subsequently by reference to increases in federal judicial salaries and to recommendations of the Judicial Remuneration Tribunal (JRT). Under these models final decisions on judicial remuneration rested with the executive through the Attorney-General. In 2002 the JRT was given the power to make salary determinations subject to disallowance by Parliament.

Any system of judicial remuneration has to have careful regard to the principles of judicial independence. Judicial salaries should be adequate and commensurate with the status, dignity and responsibility of judicial office. Salaries should also be sufficient to attract suitable candidates to judicial office, particularly in the higher jurisdictions.

Over the past 20 years, numerous reviews of Victorian judicial salaries have taken place. It is apparent from these reviews that the work value of judges of Supreme Court of Victoria has been consistently benchmarked against judges of Federal Court and that movements in judicial salaries in the federal sphere have consistently informed the decision making of those responsible for fixing Victorian judicial salaries.

This bill recognises the significance of federal judicial salary movements to Victorian judicial salaries by implementing in a staged, ordered and responsible way a new salary structure under which Victoria's most senior judges will receive an equivalent salary to their Federal Court counterparts. The new structure will be phased in over four years. At the end of that period the salaries of Victorian Supreme Court judges will be linked to those of judges of the Federal Court.

The bill protects the work value relativities of less senior judicial officers such as County Court judges and magistrates by ensuring that their salaries move in line with those of Supreme Court judges. Judicial salaries will be adjusted regularly against recognised benchmarks.

These initiatives will create greater certainty in the process of determining the salary of Victoria's judicial officers and in the process enhance the independence of the state's judiciary. It will also create a more level playing field for the recruitment and retention of judicial officers.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) on motion of Hon. Andrea Coote.**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## MITCHAM-FRANKSTON PROJECT BILL

### *Second reading*

**Ordered that second-reading speech, except for statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act, be incorporated for Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) on motion of Hon. M. R. Thomson (Minister for Small Business).**

**For Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government), Hon. M. R. Thomson (Minister for Small Business) — I move:**

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Mitcham-Frankston Project Bill 2004 facilitates the delivery of the Mitcham-Frankston project, the largest urban road project in Australia and a vital step forward in continuing Victoria's economic growth.

The project is being carried out under the government's Partnerships Victoria policy. The project will provide a 40-kilometre continuous freeway link commencing at the end of the existing Eastern Freeway and connecting to the Frankston Freeway the gateway to the Mornington Peninsula.

The project includes the Mitcham-Frankston freeway, bicycle paths, road interchanges and ancillary works, and makes provision for future public transport developments.

The project will vastly improve the connections between major industrial areas, the ports, the airport, major freight routes and other commercial precincts, maintaining and expanding Victoria's position as the premier manufacturing state. The project will also unlock a range of transport options for the more than one and a half million Victorians living in the south-east corridor.

In the second-reading speech for the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority Act 2003, it was noted that that act was to establish the framework for government delivery of the project and foreshadowed that further project-specific legislation to underpin the delivery of the project as a public private partnership will be introduced in due course.

This bill provides that legislative support for the project.

The bill empowers the state to enter into an agreement for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and management of the Mitcham-Frankston project; provides for the collection and enforcement of tolls in relation to the use of the Mitcham-Frankston freeway; confers powers on the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority in relation to land required for the project; provides procedures to deal with the interface between the utilities and the freeway corporation as to the utility infrastructure affected by the project; confers road management powers on the freeway corporation and confers other powers on the authority, the freeway corporation and the minister administering the bill for the purposes of the project.

The agreement will be the key contractual document between the freeway corporation and the state, dealing with the commercial arrangements. It will contain details of the tolls and tolling products. As the government has stated, the tolling regime will be comparable to that of CityLink. The range of tolling products will offer flexibility and be customer friendly so that they are appropriate for different market segments, including matching the needs of casual users who do not use the freeway frequently and those who do not make prior arrangements for use.

The bill requires the agreement to be tabled in each house of Parliament within six sitting days of being made and gives Parliament the opportunity to disallow it, in whole or in part, within six sitting days of tabling. The bill allows the

agreement to be amended by the parties and requires amendments to be similarly tabled, providing the same opportunity for parliamentary disallowance.

The bill provides for the collection and enforcement of tolls. In this regard, the bill provides a significant improvement over the arrangements applicable to a number of other Australian toll roads including CityLink.

Under the CityLink arrangements, a person who drives a vehicle on the link or extension roads without making a prior arrangement with the toll operator for that use is guilty of an offence. The government believes that the original CityLink scheme, introduced by the Kennett government, was onerous, particularly as inadvertent offenders were subject to penalties.

The Bracks government negotiated improvements to the CityLink system to provide leniency, particularly by extending the period after use during which payment can be made from 24 hours to three days.

This bill furthers the government's desire to improve toll arrangements by providing a safety net for inadvertent users so that following travel on the Mitcham–Frankston freeway, they will be invoiced by the freeway corporation.

Where a vehicle is detected on the freeway that is not the subject of an arrangement with the freeway corporation, the freeway corporation will be able to send the user an invoice and enforcement action will take place only if the invoice is not paid within 14 days of service of the invoice. The invoice will be for the tolls and a modest administrative fee.

The freeway corporation will be able to send the invoice to the registered owner of the vehicle who will have the opportunity to pay the invoice or, if he or she was not the driver, to nominate the driver. The freeway corporation will then have the opportunity to invoice the nominated driver for the usage and that person will in turn have the opportunity to pay the invoice or nominate the driver.

The bill provides that enforcement action can be triggered by the freeway corporation. The freeway corporation will be able to request Victoria Police to issue an infringement notice against a driver who has been sent an invoice, but has not paid the invoice within 14 days of service. The enforcement system is intended to support the tolling of the freeway by operating as a deterrent to prevent toll evasion and imposing penalties on those who do not pay their tolls after receiving a reasonable opportunity to do so.

These provisions strike a fair balance between the need to provide support to tolling and giving users a reasonable opportunity to pay tolls before moving to criminal enforcement.

The bill adopts a land management regime analogous to that adopted for CityLink.

Significant amounts of land have been acquired for the project by VicRoads and the Secretary to the Department of Infrastructure. The bill contains a mechanism to transfer that land to the Crown for project use. The bill authorises the authority to acquire further private interests in land in accordance with the provisions of the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 if further land is required and provides a mechanism for land of public authorities and municipal councils to be acquired for the project.

It also makes provision for construction licences and leases to be granted over land.

The bill provides a project-specific regime for the interface between utilities and the freeway corporation during the construction phase of the project.

It facilitates agreement between the freeway corporation and the utilities in relation to works on utility infrastructure to be undertaken as part of the project. If an agreement is not reached within the specified time, the matter may be referred to the Minister for Transport and the minister administering the act under which the utility operates who may jointly determine the matter or refer it to an independent person for determination. That determination is final.

The bill also allows a utility to access its assets during the construction phase for maintenance, repair and construction. That access is subject to the consent of the freeway corporation. If consent is unreasonably withheld, the matter may be referred to the Minister for Transport and the minister administering the act under which the utility operates who may jointly determine the matter.

The bill amends the Road Management Act 2004 to provide that its utilities regime, modified to accommodate particular needs of the project, applies during the operational phase of the project.

The bill also confers powers on the freeway corporation relating to roads, including the power to open, close to traffic, discontinue or construct roads. As with many road projects under construction it is anticipated that some minor roads will be closed. However such road closures are only permitted during the construction phase for the purpose of facilitating the construction of the project.

Unlike the arrangements for CityLink, this bill expressly provides that roads cannot be closed to traffic for the purpose of increasing traffic on the Mitcham–Frankston freeway. This honours the government's commitment that there will be no road closures to direct traffic onto the Mitcham–Frankston Freeway.

Honourable members will be aware that the Legislative Council passed the third reading of the Road Management Bill on 4 May, but not by an absolute majority. The government understands that the lack of an absolute majority means that, by operation of section 18(2A) of the Constitution Act 1975, certain provisions of the Road Management Act 2004 have no legal effect.

Honourable members will also be aware that the government gave a commitment on 5 May to introduce legislation that will rectify this situation. In fulfilment of that commitment, this bill will amend the Road Management Act 2004. This Bill will repeal the affected provisions of the Road Management Act 2004 and insert corresponding provisions that will be legally effective.

Specifically, this bill will insert new divisions 2 and 3 of part 6 and sections 129 and 167(1) into the Road Management Act 2004, in substitution for the existing ineffective provisions. Part 6 and section 129 deal with civil liability in relation to the management of roads. Section 167(1) deals with the handling of planning disputes under the Road Management Act 2004 by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I refer honourable members to the second-reading speech for the Road Management Bill for

a more detailed explanation of the provisions that will be replaced.

This bill will also amend section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975 to limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to the extent necessary to give full legal effect to these amendments.

### **Section 85 statement read pursuant to sessional orders:**

#### **Statement under section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975**

I wish to make the following statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons why it is the intention of this bill to alter or vary that section.

Clause 257 of the bill provides that it is the intention of sections 83, 193 and 236 to alter section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975.

Clause 83 of the bill provides that no compensation is payable by the Crown or the authority in respect of anything done or arising out of part 4 of the bill (provision of public land and council land), except as provided in that part.

Part 4 of the bill enables a Governor in Council order to be made which requires public authorities and councils to surrender land in the project area to the Crown (or which divests them of such land) or which declares that any interests in unreserved Crown land held by public authorities or councils is surrendered to the Crown. Similarly, any Crown land permanently or temporarily reserved under the Crown Lands (Reserves) Act 1978 may have its reservation revoked.

When land is surrendered or divested or has its reservation revoked, it is deemed to become unalienated land of the Crown freed and discharged from all trusts, reservations, estates and interests. If the land was a road or river, all rights, easements and privileges held by any person are extinguished.

Division 4 empowers the authority to enter into possession of certain land. Notice periods are provided for but, in some circumstances, early entry into the land is permitted. Compensation is payable under division 5 for the abridgement of the notice periods.

Division 5 of part 4 provides for compensation to be payable pursuant to the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 for private interests in public land acquired where land is surrendered, divested or has its reservation revoked under part 4 of the bill. No compensation is payable in relation to estates or interests of public authorities that are extinguished. Councils are entitled to compensation for the acquisition of an estate in fee simple and pecuniary loss or expense (not including the value of the land) in respect of other acquisitions.

The reason for the exclusion of claims for compensation is that the compensation provisions in the bill have been designed to provide a statutory compensation scheme to provide compensation in appropriate cases. In relation to public authorities, it is considered inappropriate to pay compensation for the acquisition of land vested in such bodies where it is to be used by the authority for a public purpose.

Clause 193 of the bill provides that certain decisions made or purporting to be made under the bill are final and binding and

are not subject to appeal or other review by a court or tribunal.

These decisions are: an approval by the authority of a utility agreement under section 157, a direction given by the minister to a utility or to the freeway corporation under section 165, 166, 173, 174 or 175 to carry out works or a determination made by the minister and the relevant utility minister or their appointee on referral of a matter for dispute resolution. The matters that can be referred for dispute resolution are set out in sections 151, 153, 164, 184, 186 and 187.

Clause 193 does not prevent the freeway corporation from challenging the validity of a decision if the freeway corporation believes that compliance with the decision would place it in breach of the agreement.

Utility agreements only come into effect on approval by the authority under section 157.

The direction process provides a rapid mechanism enabling utility works to be undertaken in the circumstances specified in sections 165, 166, 173, 174 and 175. These are: where an approved utility agreement, a determination made under part 8, or a direction has not been complied with or to deal with unnotified utility infrastructure (where the owner of the unnotified utility infrastructure is not identified or does not respond to a notice within the prescribed time).

The determination process provides a rapid mechanism to deal with the matters specified in sections 151, 153, 164, 184, 186 and 187. These are: a dispute between the authority and a utility regarding the utility's access to land in the extended project area that is not licensed land and a dispute between the freeway corporation and a utility regarding the utility's access to licensed land; a failure by the freeway corporation and a utility to reach a utility agreement within the prescribed time; a dispute between the freeway corporation and a utility regarding the costs of relocation or rectification of utility infrastructure, and certain aspects of the process of certification by the utility of works undertaken by the freeway corporation.

The reason for excluding review or appeal of the specified decisions is that it ensures that once the relevant decision is made that there are no additional delays and associated costs in undertaking the relevant utility works permitted by that decision. The determination and direction mechanisms provide a balance between the interests of the utilities and the project. If authority decision to approve or not to approve a utility agreement were subject to appeal or review, that process could delay the date on which such agreements come into effect and utility works commence. Similarly, if a direction or determination were subject to review or appeal, delays could be experienced in undertaking the utility works.

Clause 236 provides that no proceedings may be brought against the independent reviewer seeking administrative review or the grant of declarations or injunctions in respect of his or her decision or purported decision to make (or cancel) an emergency order, or in respect of any other matter incidental to his or her decision.

An emergency order may be made where the independent reviewer believes there is a danger to life or property arising from the carrying out of works for the project on licensed land during the construction phase of the project. The decision

may require any person: to evacuate; to halt the carrying out of works on; to require the carrying out of works on; or to make safe and secure, licensed land or access to that land.

This clause provides that there is to be no appeal or review of a decision by the independent reviewer to make, fail to make (or cancel) an emergency order.

The reason for excluding rights of appeal or review is to ensure that the independent reviewer is free to act quickly in an emergency in the public interest without fear of litigation. In such cases it is clearly not appropriate to permit any person to instigate proceedings to argue about whether such an emergency order should have been made or whether it should continue to operate.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned for Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) on motion of Hon. Andrea Coote.**

**Debate adjourned until next day of meeting.**

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2004/2005) BILL

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance).**

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill, which provides for Parliament for the forthcoming year. At the outset I would like to draw the attention of the house to the fact that information about Parliament and its budget for the forthcoming years is to be found on page 250 and onwards of budget paper 3, which deals with the output measures and allocation of funds. Pages 305 and onwards of budget paper 3 deal with the output initiatives for Parliament. As honourable members would know, it is also dealt with in budget paper 4 from pages 212 onwards; and of course we have the bill before the house, which also details the appropriations. In particular I draw members' attention to page 4 of the bill before the house which gives the estimate summaries.

I note at the outset that if you want to compare some of the figures, you will find that the figures for Parliament, as shown on page 117 of budget paper 4, parliamentary authority for resources, show that for the forthcoming year the total parliamentary authority is \$126.1 million. If you look at the estimates summary, however, you will find that the estimate for appropriation is \$73.853 million, which is down of course from \$82.155 million last year — and if anyone is confused, I don't blame them!

The first point I make in relation to the summary of the estimates is that this year people will be looking at the Auditor-General's line and will see that the Auditor-General's appropriation has dropped from a bit over \$23 million last year to \$10.4 million this year. People will say why has that dropped by so much? The answer is that we have moved to a system of annotated receipts, which means that the Auditor-General, whose total budget this year is \$25.5 million, is getting the majority of his funds from fees that he charges to people that he audits. The difference shows that there are special appropriations this year of \$34.4 million which go on top of the appropriation of Parliament, and that is how we get to the figures that are before the house today.

Budget paper 3 deals with some of the reasons that Parliament needs the funds it is getting, and in particular I draw honourable members' attention to the output initiatives table on page 305 of budget paper 3, which shows that some of the funds, \$200 000, will be spent on the 150th anniversary of democratic government in Victoria in the forthcoming year. The next line, 'Parliament extended sitting hours and other operating costs,' shows \$700 000 in the forthcoming year and \$600 000 in future years. It is an odd category. It states:

This government has introduced changes to the sitting times for the Legislative Council. Funding is being provided to meet the operating of costs to support these extended sitting times.

The first point I wish to make is one made by my colleague Mr Clark in the other place: that in the first four years of the Kennett government Parliament sat 205 days, and in the first four years of the Bracks government Parliament sat 187 days, so do not give me any of this nonsense about the Parliament sitting more than it used to!

The interesting thing about this is that when I sought some advice on the amount of funds required to support the extended sitting hours of the Council I was told that the Council's budget was not increased in order to accommodate this but that it was the budget for Hansard in particular that needed to be increased because apparently we sit more Thursdays than we used to. But no-one would be able to tell that by looking at the budget papers.

I refer honourable members to page 4 of the bill before the house, which shows that last year the Parliamentary Library received \$2.342 million and Parliamentary Debates received \$2.484 million, and if you look at the column this year you will see that according to the appropriation bill they are not receiving anything at all.

That of course is not true; they will be funded, but there has been a change in the internal structure. That now makes it impossible for members of Parliament to keep track of the funds being made available to the Parliamentary Library and to Parliamentary Debates. This is a retrograde step of the highest order, and I have advised the bean counters over the road that each year I will be seeking from their internal accounts an analysis of the amount of funds that are being made available to the Parliamentary Library and to Parliamentary Debates.

What concerns me most about this is that there has been a diminution in the transparency of the way this Parliament operates. I refer honourable members to the corporate plan of the Council for 2002–05. Without putting too fine a point on it, I must say that I do not particularly value being called a ‘client’ of the Department of the Legislative Council. Leaving that to one side, the issue I wish to raise is the organisation chart found on the second back page. If you look at this diagram of how the parliamentary departments fit together you will find that in the past the Parliamentary Librarian running the Department of the Parliamentary Library and the Editor of Debates running the Department of Parliamentary Debates were responsible through the line to the President of the Council, as was the Council itself. So three departments of Parliament were the responsibility of the President. The Joint Services Department reported to the Speaker, as did the Department of the Assembly, as is appropriate.

Under the new structure — no diagram has as yet been drawn up that I have seen — the Parliamentary Library and Parliamentary Debates are now part of the Department of Parliamentary Services, and that is reflected in the budget. You will see from the bill that Joint Services last year received \$42.95 million. We now have a new Department of Parliamentary Services which will receive \$51.113 million, which comprises the \$42 million plus what used to be the separate votes for the library and debates. Those allocations have been wrapped up into that. Now we have this mega-department of joint services that is called the Department of Parliamentary Services. I objected at the time to the way this change was made to the operation of the Parliament.

No notification was given and no discussion was held with members of Parliament in relation to this. I subsequently discovered at the time this was done that an announcement was made late in one House Committee meeting that this was the way it was going to be, and it was a *fait accompli*. That raises grave concerns for me about the operations of the Parliament, to start with.

I am equally concerned to discover that Parliament has recently appointed itself a chief executive officer (CEO), by the name of Dr Stephen O’Kane. He calls himself the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services. One would have thought that members of Parliament would have been told that a chief executive officer had been appointed.

**Hon. Andrea Coote** — Never heard of him.

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** — And perhaps meeting him might have been useful. But the first I heard of Dr Stephen O’Kane was when I received an email dated 13 May in which he was pleased to announce that Clarisse Diesbecq had been appointed as his executive assistant, and the email continued with some more details. He says underneath:

We can be contacted on extension 18449.

Regards

Dr Stephen O’Kane.  
Secretary  
Department of Parliamentary Services

I want to read into *Hansard* my response which says:

Thank you for this notification. While I congratulate her on her appointment, I doubt it is nearly as important as yours which has (to the best of my knowledge) yet to be announced at all.

What is going on in this place when, firstly, we have a reshuffle done secretly with no notification given to members of Parliament; and secondly, we have a CEO appointed and members of Parliament are not notified?

I have made some inquiries, and I understand that again this matter was raised in a meeting of the House Committee on the 3 or 4 May, or thereabouts. I am pleased that at least the House Committee was given some notification, but I believe very strongly that if changes like this are to be made, members of Parliament are entitled at least to be informed, if not consulted, and I object strongly. Members of Parliament have been treated with contempt throughout this complete process.

I also want to say that I remain concerned about proposals that continually surface that the Parliament moves to a one-line budget. The Legislative Council is a separate department of the Parliament, and it must remain that way. Under this new structure the Speaker, who will always be a member of the government, has control of the joint services department. The Parliamentary Library and Hansard used to be independent and report to the President through that structure. They are now part of joint services, and in my

view they will come more under the influence of the Speaker.

Everybody knows that the time when the library is of most value is when you are in opposition. It is now possible for the Speaker, whoever he or she may be in the future, to influence, through the joint services department or the Department of Parliamentary Services, the allocation of resources to the library, and therefore affect the capacity of the opposition to behave in the way that it should — that is, to hold the government of the day to account.

As I said at the outset of my contribution, I will remain vigilant each year through an analysis of the internal working papers to ensure that the library and the Department of Parliamentary Debates are not in any way short-changed through this new structure. But the point I really want to stress is that after the next election we will be moving into a new relationship between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. The Council, as the Leader of the Government is fond of saying, will be a house of review. Members in this place will be elected on a different basis, and it is likely that in the future two things will happen.

Firstly, as has happened in the past, the President of the Legislative Council will not necessarily be a member of the government. Secondly, there will be disputes between the two houses, particularly if minor parties hold the balance of power. In those circumstances the Council must be ever vigilant about its own independence. It must ensure that it always has its own line appropriation, and is not wrapped up into a one-line appropriation output for the Parliament.

Honourable members in this place know that through the Financial Management Act it is possible for funds to be shifted from one output group to another. I am aware that in the past funds have been moved from the joint services department to the library or from the Council to the library, but we need to ensure that the capacity for the Council to function is always preserved and into the future the Council is resourced in a way that enables its members to continue to perform the role for which they were all elected.

I put on record that I, for one, remain very concerned about ensuring that the independence of the Council is not compromised through the back door because of any further changes to the structure of the accounts and the output groups that are prepared for us.

With those few words I want to put on record that we, of course, believe that a well-resourced Parliament is vital for democracy; that as we look into the future the

independence of the Council remains of real concern; that the resourcing of the Parliamentary Library and the Department of Parliamentary Debates must not be compromised through the new structure; and that in future, members of Parliament at least know when the phantom is appointed to take up the CEO's position. As I said earlier, it is an outrage that we were not informed that under the new structure, we have appointed a CEO. Frankly, I look forward to meeting him.

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** (North Eastern) — I congratulate the Honourable Bill Forwood on his contribution. I endorse every comment and remark that he made. He crystallised something that has been nagging at me for some time, but which I had not got around to putting into words — that is the fact that as members of Parliament we are increasingly being marginalised in this place.

When I came here, MPs were supreme. The Parliament was here to serve the members. I increasingly get the view, and the understanding, that we are no longer seen to be that. I get the impression that joint services considers us to be mere employees. Now I note from Mr Forwood's quote from the corporate plan that we are called 'clients' in line with this new jargon.

I am getting quite distressed about the way members of Parliament are being treated — not by the staff individually in this building but certainly in the attitude that emanates from across the road at 157 Spring Street. I am glad indeed that Mr Forwood has laid it on the line clearly.

I was fascinated by his quoting of the email advising of the appointment of the personal assistant to the chief executive officer, because I got that email too. When I noted that Dr O'Kane was the CEO I thought to myself 'This is obviously an announcement that I have missed'. I presumed Dr O'Kane had been appointed and members at large had been advised. But I now find from listening to Mr Forwood that that was a mistaken impression of mine. I had not overlooked the announcement. Clearly no announcement was made to members at all. I think that is poor as well. We do not know what his duties are going to be; there has been no explanation given, and of course it would be nice if we had some opportunity to meet the gentleman. So I endorse entirely what Mr Forwood has said.

It seems to me that this government is quite keen to demean the whole Parliament and to make it just a hurdle that somehow the government has to get over as it rushes to change the face of Victoria. The sessional orders, which we have commented on many times, just make debate in this place mechanical. They attribute

equal importance to everything we do and we get the same time allocations. So an amendment to the dog act is deemed as important as an amendment to the constitution of the state of Victoria. It is simply making this a sausage factory and a mechanical device that the government needs in order to place its legislation on the statute book. That is not what I think Parliament is, and I certainly want to resist going down that track.

Another example is the adjournment debate, which is turned into a farcical exercise now. I was here last evening and made a contribution to it as did half a dozen other members. Many of the matters raised were matters of some moment, yet they were responded to seriatim by the one and only minister here, who just simply made the comment that he would refer it to the appropriate minister. Well and good, but I, for example, raised a matter for a minister who is in this chamber, the Minister for Local Government. It might be nice if we still had a system where ministers were actually on hand during the adjournment to respond to genuinely raised issues and matters of some urgency and importance. So again the Parliament is being demeaned.

Another aspect — and I might be seen to be a bit finicky and pedantic about this — is occupational health and safety. I for one, and I am not alone, work in this building both early in the morning and late at night and on non-sitting days. I am absolutely amazed that the minute the house adjourns the place is in darkness. Many nights I have to feel my way down the corridor until I can find a light switch to put on so that I can get down the stairs. Certainly on Monday nights when The Nationals have their parliamentary meeting here we walk out of The Nationals party room in that corner of the building over there into total darkness.

**Hon. C. D. Hirsh** — Maybe that is because it is the National Party!

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** — That may well be, I do not know. But I do not see why we cannot have a modicum of light remaining on in this building and some note taken that some people actually work more than the standard 9 to 5, 38-hour week.

I also want to make comment about the refreshment rooms, which constantly come in for attention at budget time and which are being whittled away. I think the refreshment rooms are a very important part of the political process. I think they enable members to work through issues even within their own parties more than perhaps across party lines. You can have a real ding-dong blue with one or more of your colleagues at a party meeting or elsewhere and there will be a bit of

bad blood, but the dining room provides a vital mechanism for that to be exorcised and for relationships to be put back on track again. People outside who are not members of Parliament perhaps do not understand that, but I have learnt over the years that it can play a very important part in the political process in this place.

Similarly I cannot understand why the strangers corridor has a different menu to what is in the members dining room. I cannot believe that it is an economy of scale to be serving up a different menu in the strangers corridor, aside from the fact that it conveys to visitors that that is the way we eat all the time when in fact we have much more wholesome and plain meals in the dining room, which is all we need or require. I had guests in on Tuesday of this week and I was thoroughly disappointed with the meal in the strangers corridor — not in any way with the service, the attention from staff or with the presentation of the meal. But the meal simply was not up to scratch. My visitor from the Philippines and I had lamb, and I had to make the point to him that he was not tasting Australian lamb as a visitor to Australia should be able to taste it. I wish that in the stranger's corridor we could simply have exactly the same menu that we have in the members dining room. That seems to me how you would get economy of scale.

Why is the strangers corridor empty so much of the time now, particularly at lunch time? Because it is no longer attractive to people to have a meal. I simply believe we are not generating the highest possible throughput in the dining rooms as we could, and therefore we are not getting the best return on that investment. Everyone knows that it is very difficult to run the refreshment rooms because the manager cannot possibly know how many members are going to come in on each occasion. Sometimes it is not known what our sitting hours are going to be. All that has to be taken into consideration, and I do not criticise that. That is a fact of life, but it certainly can be run on the basis of looking for economies wherever we can, but not economies that disadvantage members and their guests to any great extent.

I also want to protest about the staff cutbacks being made to upper house members. The pooling arrangement ends on 30 June allegedly as some sort of economy measure or some way of the Parliament meeting its budget. I do not doubt there are pressures on meeting the budget, but simply cutting back staff is, in my view, perhaps a disguised way of this government reducing the resources that are available to opposition parties. The tenet of the Westminster system is that oppositions need to keep governments accountable. For

governments to be kept accountable by oppositions, oppositions need resources. Mr Forwood rightly referred to the resources of the Parliamentary Library. Similarly our staff are another vital element of that. We know that the government has staff laid on. One only has to look at the government directory to see the number of people on ministers' staffs. One only has to look at members of the government who are parliamentary secretaries or have an emolument of one sort or another. The government is very well provided for. This move to get rid of upper house pooling staff members is simply a means, in my view, to further limit and reduce resources available to the opposition parties so that they are less able to keep the government to account. That is a denial of democracy and the Westminster tenets.

Finally I want to note the point that Mr Forwood has already noted about the Auditor-General. On reading the bill one could be led to believe that the funding to the Auditor-General is being severely cut back. In fact, it is not because of the changed arrangements. The budget has regard to section 29 of the Financial Management Act which enables the Auditor-General to retain in-house the receipts he receives for fees and charges for the work he does for the bodies he audits. In a sense it is simply a bookkeeping exercise, one which I do not have any particular objection to.

It should be noted again on this occasion, because we hear members of the government rewriting history so often, that it was the former government that made the Auditor-General an officer of the Parliament and gave him the independence over the former situation where the Auditor-General had been for many years an officer of the Premier's department. It should be noted that it was the Kennett government that made the Auditor-General an officer of Parliament. That was a worthy initiative, one which this government no doubt applauds.

I look forward to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings when I am sure some of the issues raised by Mr Forwood and I will be further teased out. I certainly hope that the remarks made by Mr Forwood about the need to retain this place as having a deal of independence from the other place are regarded as a significant contribution indeed and one which all members of the Legislative Council should give their attention to before the next budget.

**Ms ROMANES** (Melbourne) — It is my privilege to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill. I consider it a privilege, because our Parliament in Victoria and its operations are at the centre of parliamentary democracy in the state, and our

parliamentary democracy contributes to provide stability, growth and development in the state. I am sure there are populist views in the community and some quarters that would run the line that the appropriation bill allocates far too much money to provide for 132 people to argue with each other for a few weeks of the year. However, we only need to read the international pages of the newspapers and watch television to reflect on the difficulty nations face when they do not enjoy the privileges we have of parliamentary democracy and where there is rule by force, or in countries like Somalia, unfortunately, where there is total anarchy where government structures have broken down.

Underneath there is a widespread view in our community that values our parliamentary democracy and sees it not only as an important forum for debate and passing of laws but also to provide for the opposition to keep the executive government accountable and to strengthen through that process our fundamental democratic processes.

The bill incorporates two major changes. Other members have already referred to the major decrease in the Auditor-General's appropriation and have explained that this is not a decrease in funding for the Auditor-General but reflects a change in the method of funding. A large part of the Auditor-General's income will come through annotated appropriations as fees are paid by departments and statutory authorities for financial audits.

The other major change relates to a reduction of six output groups from last year to four output groups this year as a result of the combination of the Parliamentary Library and the Department of Parliamentary Debates being incorporated into an overarching structure of a Department of Parliamentary Services.

Comments have been made and concerns expressed by Mr Forwood about whether this will compromise the independence of the library and Hansard in the future. My understanding is that this move has been undertaken with the intention of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of those sections of the Parliament, an attempt to break down silos, decrease administrative costs and to provide for a more strategic approach across those areas. There is no sense in which it should affect the capacity of any of those areas in the Parliament to do their jobs and no reason why there should be any diminution in the capacity and objectives of the library and Hansard working on behalf of all members of this Parliament to ensure that they deliver the services expected of them.

With regard to the possible lack of transparency in the way information is provided in summary form in the bill, there are many other means of gathering information. There is no way in which appropriation bills can carry all the detail of what lies behind each line item. Mr Forwood said that he will request information about the detail that he is keen to find out about, and it is highly appropriate for members to do so to seek information about every aspect of government and Parliament in order to understand how well we are being governed and how well our institutions are operating and performing.

There are other ways and means of gathering that information, such as annual reports and the estimates questionnaire that is provided to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. What Parliament and members should look forward to is the outcomes intended from that restructure for greater efficiency, coordination and in the breaking down of those silos.

I will refer to the matter that was raised by Mr Forwood in relation to the appointment of the chief executive officer (CEO) of the new Department of Parliamentary Services that has been created as a result of that restructure. I understand that all the leaders of the parties were notified of that appointment and that all the leaders of the respective parties represented in this Parliament were asked if they wanted to arrange meetings with the new chief executive officer. That is totally at odds with what Mr Forwood has represented, which was to suggest that members of this Parliament were denied notification of this new appointment. I understand that unfortunately there was no response from any of the party leaders in this Parliament, which meant of course that, like Mr Forwood, all we backbenchers who received the email he mentioned were surprised about the appointment and that we did not have earlier notification of that change.

I hope there will be a subsequent opportunity very soon for members of Parliament to meet the new CEO and to engage in conversation with him about the sorts of things we are debating here today, about the new Department of Parliamentary Services, and about his vision as CEO and the visions of others who are involved in the new department as to the achievements we all want to see in the Parliament over the next two or three years.

The output initiatives outlined on page 305 of budget paper 3 refer to one important initiative that the Parliament needs to be aware of — that is, the coming 150th anniversary of democratic government in Victoria. An allocation of \$200 000 in 2004–05 has been made for the appointment of a project officer and

for the preparations to be put in place to make sure that Victoria celebrates appropriately in 2006. I understand some of those activities will begin at the end of next year and will continue into 2006. Who knows, we might see another book written by our Usher of the Black Rod. It is being indicated that, no, we are not going to have a book written, but we will no doubt draw heavily on the previous work of Dr Ray Wright about the Legislative Council on its 150-year anniversary in 2001. Much interesting and some amusing information came forth on that occasion, and I am sure some of that will be used in the coming celebrations as well.

The provision for funding for extended sitting hours and other operating costs relates to the fact that the chamber has been meeting more regularly on Fridays over the last year or two. This bill makes proper provision for the expense involved in that exercise. I note increased funding is also needed for vehicle lease costs. At page 306 of budget paper 3 there are important allocations for asset replacement and capital works at Parliament House. That will continue the work that has been taking place over the last few years to keep up the maintenance and development of Parliament House as a secure place where the public of Victoria is able to come to enjoy the pleasures of this building in the same way that we who work here are able to utilise parts of it. Renovation and refurbishment are often needed to make that possible.

I refer to the information technology issue and the fact that at this time last year we were grappling with problems in that area. We have seen a lot of leadership and improvement in the IT area. Although we are not totally there yet, we have seen the IT unit take up a lot of the recommendations of the Auditor-General. The unit has diligently tried to work through those and deliver a very good service to members of Parliament and those who work for the Parliament. I urge the IT staff to keep moving in that direction so that we can reach the level of service we had before the end of 2002, which some of us who were in the Parliament during that period remember nostalgically, because it was so easy to use and was such an effective service.

As I said before, the parliamentary appropriation bill is a very important part of the annual appropriations. It goes to the Governor as an attachment to the main appropriation bill and represents the amount of funding Parliament can call on and draw down from consolidated revenue. A very important part of that process is the opportunity we have to scrutinise that bill and speak on it in the house as a separate bill. I reiterate the importance of the Parliament as the prime

democratic institution of this state, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** (Koonung) — It is with some trepidation that members of Parliament talk about the resources that are available to them to go about their work. However, I believe that when we come to this piece of legislation each year it is important that we consider the level of resources that are available to members of Parliament to go about their duties and to provide for their constituents, because it is my view that the expectations of constituents today are considerably higher than they have been at any time in the past and that the advent of the Internet and email systems has placed a great deal more pressure on members of Parliament, just as it has in any other area of work in industry or society, to be a lot more attentive to matters in a shorter period of time. That is good — that is excellent — and it ought to happen, but it places significant demands on the time and the resources that are available to members of Parliament to meet those expectations.

It is of a great deal of concern to me that members of the upper house effectively have the equivalent of one staff member in their offices. It is true that we have had an allocation which has been used by the parties to provide some pooled staff. However, that allocation is to be cut back by this government, and I personally think that is an absolutely outrageous situation because, apart from anything else, what that tries to do is reduce the ability of the opposition to go about doing the work that it does in the scrutiny of government.

We are looking at a situation where the number of staff available to oppositions has been substantially curtailed from what applied in the period when the Kennett government was in office as we approach this new formula that has been worked on for pooled staff. It is not appropriate, it is not in the best interests of democracy, and it does not recognise that oppositions, if they are to be competent and effective, need access to adequate staffing resources to enable them to properly scrutinise government and go about their business of consulting with community groups on the genuine issues that those community groups have.

In the context of our offices, I have the equivalent of one staff member. I happen to have two staff members who are outstanding women who job share and who do a job of work that is well beyond any of the requirements that would be established in any sort of job description. Their work on behalf of my constituents is fantastic, and I am very pleased with the level of service that they provide, not just on behalf of Bruce Atkinson but also on behalf of this Parliament.

What is interesting for me is that effectively I am only funded for that equivalent one-person staff member for 11 months of the year. If one of those staff members goes on holiday, I then have to pay for their replacement out of the part A budget. I have said on a number of occasions that if I wrote a letter to all of the constituents in the Koonung Province once a year using the part A budget of some \$23 000 I would have expended the entire budget allocation that I have to run my office. That is ridiculous. Obviously I could not pay electricity, and I would have to shut the doors after sending out that single piece of communication because I simply would not have any more money left in that part A budget. I believe that most opposition members subsidise their part A budgets, certainly if they have shadow or portfolio responsibilities, particularly ones that involve extensive consultation with industry groups or stakeholders in the community. They have a great deal of expense associated with postage and phone calls and other communications materials and so forth, which very quickly eats into their electorate office budgets. So inevitably they subsidise the amount of money that is available to them.

There is a very stark contrast between our budgets in the upper house and those of federal members of Parliament although they cover a constituency with a comparable number of people in a population sense. If you look at the staffing and communications resources, the postage allocations and so forth for federal members, we pale into the shade in being able to match any sort of service to the constituents, and that is what it is about. It is not about perks for members of Parliament; it is about providing adequate responses to our community. In the context of that federal analogy I am certainly not suggesting that we should have anything like the resources that they have. I understand that the work of a federal parliamentarian is quite different to the work of an upper house member here in Victoria. Their constituency load and the range of matters that they deal with are quite different. Areas like migration and so forth involve some of their staff in quite extensive work, which is clearly not work that we have to do in our offices. So their staffing complement is more appropriate to their profile. But I believe that the staffing profile that we have for our offices is inadequate for us to provide a proper level of service to people on a year-round basis.

More importantly, I also understand the issues of communications requirements for federal members, particularly given that they are based in Canberra. However, it is rather ridiculous that our entire budget is less than their postage budget, for the sake of argument, despite the fact that we have roughly the same number

of constituents — in fact a few more constituents than a federal electorate.

What particularly concerns me is that the government has now enacted legislation to reform the upper house — those are the government's words — and to substantially extend our electorates, so that rather than covering a geographic area equivalent to four lower house seats, in future we will cover a geographic area equivalent to 11 lower house seats. I am concerned that the government does not appear to have given any consideration to an increase in resources to our offices at the time when these changes will be made. It is true that that is still some two years away, after November 2006, but clearly that will need to be planned for, and I believe there ought to be proper debate on the level of resources our offices ought to expect and that we should have not just what our offices expect to have but also what our constituents expect us to have as we go forward under the new system of upper house elections.

Clearly in the future it will be impossible for members of this house to service those constituencies in any effective way. Some people might argue that the job will change and that there might not be the same level of responsibilities that many of us take on now and that we might not need to have that same level of communication with our electorate. That will be a very sad day because it would leave an upper house that had very little accountability back to its electorate. It would end up being a house of hacks, of party-list people who are elected as anonymous beings who have no contact with their community as a result of the resourcing issue. It has to be addressed, and I believe that it ought to be addressed by way of debate in this place.

We need to look more at the resources that are provided to members in the interim period as well to enable us to do the job properly. I am sure that some of the harder working government members also dip into their pockets and subsidise their budgets as far as activities in their electorates are concerned because inadequate staffing resources are provided. I know that these sorts of issues are often regarded as a matter of discussion of perks for members of Parliament, and I do not raise this in order to gain benefits for ourselves. I raise it — and I ask members to consider it — in the context of the services that we provide to our constituents and the expectations of those constituents in this day and age.

In reviewing the legislation before us, I want to record my high regard for the range of people who are involved with the services to this Parliament in quite a number of fields, particularly the Parliamentary Library staff who do an outstanding job in resourcing members

of Parliament. In many ways the opposition's call on the library is probably greater than that of government members because of the research aspects that are so important to opposition members. But the library is an outstanding department of this Parliament.

The information technology department has also done a very good job, again while constrained by limited resources for the work that has to be carried out. Like many members, I am concerned about the number of virus attacks coming through our computer system. Clearly there is a way to fend off many of those virus attacks, but it relates to the firewalls that you can build and to the amount of money that you have to fund and protect the system. I believe we are having to adopt bandaid solutions to some of the technology issues simply because the level of resources that are required to do the job properly are not being provided. Nonetheless, the department does a good job with what it has.

The attendants and people who serve this house of Parliament in particular, but the Parliament generally, including people in the papers office and so forth, are doing a terrific job. I refer to the remarks of the Honourable Bill Forwood. I think there are some issues in terms of the structure of staffing in this house that perhaps at times need some wider consultation, because while the house is run by the presiding officers, who invariably come from a government party, there is a recognition by those presiding officers, and indeed by all members of Parliament, that the Parliament has to function in a way where it supports every member of the Parliament, even if that member is a member of a party of one; in other words, an Independent. They need to be supported by the Parliament in much the same way as a majority party. So there is a need to consider some of the processes that we use when it comes to looking at some of the structuring and staffing issues associated with the Parliament. I think that was the matter that the Honourable Bill Forwood touched on in his speech today.

One of the interesting things that has been on my mind in terms of this Parliament is the suggestion of the former Premier Jeff Kennett that the Parliament building be completed and that we ought undertake the works to finish the job and upgrade the facilities that are here.

As members know there was a lot of discussion about that. Legislation was drafted to allow it to happen, but the bill was withdrawn because the Premier at that time did not feel he had a sufficient bipartisan approach to the project to proceed. I was amazed at that time at the number of people from the public — ordinary

Victorians — who expressed their disappointment that we did not proceed with that project. I thought it was really interesting. Those people were saying this Parliament is very much their house and not simply a place where politicians work. They by no means saw the project as politicians looking after themselves; they saw it as an important project for Victoria and for Victorians. It is unfortunate that that project did not proceed, and I think the attitude that people had at that time is something we should bear in mind when we make a range of decisions with regard to the resourcing and funding of this Parliament — indeed, the funding of the contest of ideas and policies that is so fundamental to our democracy.

Many people contribute to the effective running of this Parliament. They clearly do so in many cases with limited resources. Whilst this budget ought to pass, the government and particularly the Minister for Finance and the Treasurer should look more carefully at some of the issues about funding the Parliament and how members of Parliament and this Parliament can more effectively serve Victorians in the future. I am sure it would not result in a massive explosion in funding for Parliament, but it might well be that we can improve the representation dramatically by better resources being made available.

**Mr VINEY** (Chelsea) — In this debate on the parliamentary appropriation bill there is frequently furious agreement on the appropriation of funds to the operation of Parliament — —

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** — How surprising!

**Mr VINEY** — As Mr Davis said, it is not surprising that should be the case. I want to express the view that — I concur with a number of the comments that have been made by members of the opposition in this debate — the funding of the operation of the Parliament is vital and extremely important for the effective operation of the contest of ideas and of democracy in Victoria. I want to pick up on a couple of the issues that have been raised.

There has been some discussion during the debate about changes in staff resources for members of Parliament that are planned in this budget. It is fair to say that over time there have been increases and decreases in staff resources to members of Parliament. Not meaning to make a political comment, but during the Kennett period there was a reduction in the numbers of staff available to members of Parliament and then a subsequent increase; then there was another increase and another reduction. These resources have fluctuated over time and are generally a response to a variety of

either budgetary pressures from time to time or reassessments of the operation of the Parliament and the needs and requirements of members for those resources.

It is important to take up the point Mr Forwood was making in relation to the operation of this house as a house of review. I concur with him that it is extremely important that this house is able to operate in an independent way and is able to properly review legislation that comes before it; that is its proper role as a house of review consistent with the kinds of findings made by the constitutional commission. I remind the house that it was this government which put in place the reforms necessary to implement the findings of that constitutional review. Those reforms will take place in their full form after the next election, although some reforms have already occurred with some of the constitutional requirements in an amending bill early last year.

It is incorrect for Mr Forwood to suggest that the appropriation bill in any way diminishes the capacity of this house to act as a house of review. In fact, I believe the ability of this house to act as a house of review lies within the control of this chamber and the members in this chamber. It is a matter of the forms and practices, the committee systems we have put in place and the approach we take to legislation. It lies in the work of individual members of the house in their consultations in the community with business, trade unions, stakeholders and other interests. When legislation comes before the house it must be properly considered and members must be prepared to make suggestions and recommendations to the government of the day as to what changes, if any, might be needed.

The fundamental basis for having this house as a house of review is the way in which it is elected. The reform this government has put in place will ensure members are elected through a system of proportional representation. That is fundamental to making this a proper house of review and, with respect, I do not believe minor alterations to either the funding available to members through their electorate offices or to the structure of Parliamentary Services make any difference to the way this house can work as an effective house of review.

When members come into the Parliament it is strange sometimes to find something of an anachronistic structure which has properly derived from many hundreds of year of parliamentary practice both in the Westminster system in the United Kingdom and as has been adapted and developed here in Australia. It

certainly took me, and I think it would be true for most members, some time to adjust to those practices.

It does not make sense to say that there is no capacity to put in place proper processes and modern management practices in the operation of the Parliament, or that it would in any way diminish the capacity of members to do their work as members in the electorates and in this house reviewing legislation. I did not see the link between Mr Forwood's criticism of the presiding officers of Parliament and putting in place a modern management practice and structure to support members in terms of the operation of this Parliament — that is, the library, Hansard, the services provided out of 157 Spring Street and our electorate officers. Putting modern management practices in place will surely only help members to do their work more efficiently. If those management practices make savings from time to time, they can be ploughed into new and other resources for members.

The Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill is to be supported. I support the presiding officers for trying to modernise the management of the operations of the Parliament. I take the opportunity to put on record my appreciation for the fantastic work done by people in the library, the attendants around the building, the papers office, Hansard, the people at 157 Spring Street and, despite our problems with the IT system, the IT staff who work extremely hard to try to look after the interests of members.

I also put on record, because they are funded through the parliamentary appropriation bill, the support I get from my electorate officers. They often make — and I am sure it is true for other members — our jobs a lot easier and make it seem as if we are a lot more efficient than perhaps we are from time to time. This is an opportunity to support the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill and put on record how the bill resources the Parliament and its members to enable the proper debate of ideas and the proper operation of democracy in Victoria to take place. I commend the bill to the house.

**Hon. D. McL. DAVIS** (East Yarra) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill. I do not propose to make a long contribution; I will only make one or two small points to add to the debate.

The new parliamentary departmental structure contains significant risks for the future, and I want to place those on the public record. In particular it is my intention today to indicate my concern that the library will not have the independent status it had in the past. The

library makes a valuable contribution to the work of all members of Parliament, and thereby to the Victorian community. It is a remarkable library of which we can all be proud, and its independence has to be protected at all costs. I say that as somebody who in government and opposition has advocated for strengthening the library and for greater resources for the library, and anyone in the library would agree with me that during the period we were in government I also advocated in this mode.

I do not want to make a broad contribution. I place on record my concern that the new structure could in the future weaken the library's position. I want to ensure that proper reporting mechanisms are in place so that that is not the case. I want to ensure that proper systems are put in place so that the new head of the parliamentary services department, and his successors — whatever name it goes by in the future — is not in a position to unduly influence the library's decisions on resource allocation.

I will monitor the new parliamentary structure over the next year or two. I hope I will be able to report to the house that my concerns were not in any way fulfilled by the new structure, and that the independence and strength of the library and its allocation of resources is at the highest level.

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I wish to make a contribution to the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill. The bill is very clear and straightforward. I endorse some of the comments made by Mr Viney.

The staff of Parliament provide a great service to the community. They support the role of members of Parliament. When we come to this Parliament we rely on the service of the staff working in the building, and I thank them for the work they have done through many services, such as IT, the papers office, Hansard, the Parliamentary Library, the dining room — all services that are well serviced by staff. It makes our role easier when we come to this place.

From time to time we have guests who visit Parliament House. They rely on the staff who do a fantastic job to look after visitors. Groups of students and other groups visit Parliament, and they are well looked after. Over the past few years we have had to improve security because of the terrorist issue, but the confidence of the public is great. They trust the service given by our staff. Also many delegations from overseas visit our Parliament. They learn what we are doing, the service we provide, and what the staff do to assist us.

It is important that staff members are independent and that there are no party politics involved. They are public servants who make the Parliament more relevant to the community. The staff have been well trained. As a member of Parliament I am proud of what they are doing every day.

I make a comment about the library, which was criticised by the opposition. The library does a good job. It is independent and serves the members of Parliament and the public. I get a lot of service from them. If I ever have a problem I go to them and ask for information. It could be about my computer, how to research the Internet and many other things. They do a good job and I congratulate them. The bill is clear and straightforward. It has to do with staffing and resourcing.

The security has just been changed in this section. I hope it does well over the next 6 to 12 months. It brings one of the best services to the Victorian community. I commend the bill before the house.

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash)** — I have pleasure speaking on the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill. I acknowledge the excellent contribution made by my colleague the Honourable Bill Forwood and my other colleagues the Honourables David Davis and Bruce Atkinson. They have put the Liberal Party's case very well about some of the issues that affect the parliament appropriation. I note with great interest that Matt Viney's comments on the bill are bipartisan. I think it is probably the one and only time they will be, nevertheless it is somewhat of a record.

At the outset when we are talking about this Parliament we must remember that it is a seat of democracy, and it is very important that we value what happens here, how our money is spent — the accountability — and recognise what transpires here. It does not just happen only with those of us who are in a position to stand up and speak; it is about all of the people who work in the Parliament, and it is interesting to see that today, when we are talking about the allocation of funds to keep the Parliament running to its very best and highest quality.

I, and indeed the Liberal Party, appreciate the enormous support we get from all of the staff. We get huge support from the Hansard staff, the clerks, catering staff, especially the attendants and the gardening staff. The Parliamentary Library has been spoken about already, and I do not think that from our position in opposition we could work at all without the huge assistance that the library staff give us.

I particularly acknowledge the contribution made by Carolyn Williams and her staff of Hansard, because not only are they extremely professional, they are also so pleasant to work with, and I want to put that on the record — —

**Hon. Andrew Brideson** interjected.

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** — And, as my colleague has said, they make bad speeches look good — a true talent!

The Honourable Bill Forwood went through budget paper 3 in a lot of detail, looking at the allocations of funding and what the ramifications of this appropriation bill were going to be for the Parliament. He highlighted the issue with the Auditor-General, and he did that exceedingly well. It is important for us to continue to understand the importance of the Auditor-General. This week we have seen many of his reports being presented to the Parliament. It is also important that that high calibre of work is kept up and adequate funding is given to him to do just that.

I reflect on the Honourable Bill Baxter's contribution from last year, when he spoke about the information technology in this building. His contribution is interesting, because it is still relevant today. He was particularly concerned about why the new IT equipment that we have in this building is cumbersome, slower and less user friendly than the perfectly satisfactory equipment that it replaced. I am not so certain about the equipment that it replaced, but I would like to make some comment about the equipment we have at the moment.

After the Honourable Bill Baxter made those comments last year an excellent review was part of the tabled *Report of the Auditor-General on Parliament's Information Technology Upgrade — September 2003*. I commend that report to members. It has interesting and enlightening comments and some interesting recommendations, and I will go through those in a minute.

But I would like to comment on what the situation is with IT here. I cannot believe we work with a system which I do not think any other corporation or industry would put up with. We have a system that is totally inadequate. I happen to have an office above this chamber, and when everybody else is here working, we drop off the line. I give full praise to Grant Inwood and his team, because they are doing an excellent job in trying to make the equipment in the offices in the corridor above this chamber work better. I commend

them for going to every degree they possibly can to give us some online assistance.

However, we are dealing with a white elephant and a system that has well and truly passed its use-by date. The only way to come up to scratch to world best practice and to Parliament's best practice is to start again. I do not think any tinkering around the edges, any fiddling around with wiring or not wiring, plugging into phone systems or not plugging into phone systems is going to work at all. The system has to have a complete new review, and it has to be a strategy that is going to take us into the next decade and beyond. If we are to do our work effectively and in a professional manner, we need to have the proper tools. We do not have the proper tools. The system is totally inadequate.

There is a lot of new technology out there, but I do not for one moment pretend to be a technocrat on this issue. I have heard about technology whereby with the computer you have what I think is called a rabbit, not a mouse, and the rabbit goes with you — a little like a mobile phone. You can plug it into any system anywhere in any city in any part of the world. If we were to use this type of technology, which is totally wireless, it would add a dimension to places like this. That is just one thing that I had heard of recently from someone who I know is involved with the technology.

Here at Parliament we have one aspect of technology, but there must be hundreds out there. We must look at what we can use in this Parliament to enable us to do our jobs more effectively and professionally. It certainly is not good enough. I hope the President can take on board another review and have a look at this vital service that we all rely upon to such an extent.

I would like to refer to some of the comments made by the Auditor-General in the review of September 2003 because they are quite salutary and I do not want us to forget them. It is important, when debating the spending of money in this place, that we understand what we need to do and the tools we need to make this place work properly. For example, on page 20, dealing with the performance of the system, the review states:

We also observed some weaknesses in the security practices and controls over Parliament's IT environment.

I am not certain how many other honourable members have been getting some extraordinary emails. Aside from the pornography, I have been getting some extremely interesting emails from the Honourable Theo Theophanous. They are entitled 'Request'. I am sad to say that when I open this request there is nothing there, but I am getting them regularly. I have had them from the Honourable Elaine Carbines, from the member for

Melton, Don Nardella, in another place, and the President tells me that she gets them from me.

**Ms Mikakos** — I have had one from you, too, Andrea.

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** — The list goes on, as Ms Mikakos has confirmed. The reality is that this system is very distressing. We are talking about security on a system that we are all sharing. We need to have Chinese walls, we need to be absolutely certain that there are no crossovers, that we can feel totally confident about this system and about the information that we are sending through the system. This is a tool that we use every day, and it is imperative that it is safe and secure.

I have to put on the record that something just has to be done about pornography on our system; it is appalling. We get it regularly and it takes a long time to clear up this stuff every day. I made the fatal mistake of opening one initially, and for some reason it is there forever. It is just appalling.

**Hon. Philip Davis** — I am missing out!

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** — Don't be worried; it is really shocking. I urge that some of this allocated money be used to look at viruses, because this is absolutely not good enough. On page 20 the report also states:

The performance problems experienced, the use of non-standard applications and devices ...

We have to look at this, too. We have looked at palm pilots, which once again are there to make our lives easier. It is difficult to use palm pilots on our system; there must be a better way, and I ask that when the review I have suggested comes about that we look at having in this place some of the tools that can enhance our lives.

Under 'Conclusions and recommendations' on page 61 the report states:

We believe that the unsatisfactory outcomes of the Parlynet 2002 project were not only a result of poor project management but were also a product of wider issues related to the management of Parliament's administrative services.

That is a very clear warning, and it is imperative that Parliament, joint services and all the people involved with IT in this establishment have that ringing in their ears — that they continue to understand that it is imperative that project management and wider issues of management of the Parliament's administrative services are adhered to. The review recommends:

... reviewing the IT strategy ...

and:

... establishing forward plans for growth and future expansion.

I note that a new PABX system is about to be installed in this establishment and that we will all benefit from that. I am pleased to hear that, and I hope it does enhance our operations. However, I do not think it goes far enough; the IT in this building — indeed, in this whole organisation — needs to be looked at.

I commend the Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill. As I said before, we are seen to be and we must continue to be the basis of democracy in this state, and we need proper tools, proper financing and proper management in order to do that.

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I wish to make some points in particular about security in Parliament. The Appropriation (Parliament 2004/2005) Bill affords members the opportunity to raise a whole range of matters about how this place works. As a matter of course, in the past it has not been my practice to make many observations, but I have reached the end of my tether as regards my views about security in relation to Parliament.

We know that there is a need to significantly upgrade security, and that has been progressing effectively. However, one of the consequences which I guess we all understood and anticipated would be the inevitable restriction on members being able to move freely around, and in and out of Parliament. This is not a major problem for many members, because the majority have electorate offices proximate to their electorates which are not far away from Parliament House — in other words, they are either city-based members of Parliament or they are ministers, and their work at Parliament is primarily limited to being involved in parliamentary sittings, perhaps parliamentary committees, and from time to time other meetings requisite at Parliament House during business hours.

For country members in particular who, as a matter of course, use Parliament House as their primary base for undertaking their activities when away from their electorate, these restrictions on movement are very difficult. They cause enormous frustration because instead of it being relatively easy to have access to and egress from Parliament, to move in and out of the place at will, to be able to park their cars in front of Parliament House to move materials to and from their offices, to and from their cars — all of those things become frustrating. It means that access to the

Parliament building for members who work here after hours, given that the front doors are open only between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. each day, is limited to one entrance at the rear.

Raising that on its own would not be of concern if we thought that it was all in aid of improving the security of Parliament. However, because of my particular circumstances and the fact that I use my office here quite often on Sunday evenings and week nights, I have taken particular notice of the difficulties of moving around the building not just for me but also for other colleagues. What has come to light is that a number of functions are held at Parliament outside business hours and outside the hours when the protective security officers who ordinarily are on duty at the front door, and indeed the security contractors who deal with members of the community coming in and out of Parliament, will have left for the day or are not available over the weekend, and the only people who are in attendance are the parliamentary attendants. There might be one or two of them in the vestibule.

Yet there can be hundreds of people coming in and out of Parliament after 6.00 p.m., so that between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. we have this highly regulated security arrangement; then all of a sudden 6 o'clock comes, and what happens to the security? It disappears! There is absolutely no security for Parliament after 6.00 p.m.

I have seen hundreds of people walk up to the doors of Parliament, but none is checked off on any sort of list. People who are presumably invited to whatever public function is to be held that evening, whether it is an awards presentation, some celebratory drinks function or other activity often in Queen's Hall, come and go as they please. But what is more disturbing to me is that although it would be reasonable to expect that the hosts of such a function would reasonably know who their guests were, and although those people might not be individually identified, you would assume that the guests would largely be known to the hosts and therefore that would be reasonable; but there is absolutely no restriction on members of the public who have nothing to do with Parliament or nothing to do with the function coming in with that cohort of people, entering the building and having complete and unrestricted access and freedom to Parliament House.

It has been my experience to find people wandering through Parliament House out of hours, having come in either as part of a function or coincidental to a function occurring. I find it very disturbing that we are dealing so casually with the security of Parliament out of hours. I know people will say that if there are additional security arrangements put in place in respect of

functions held at the Parliament out of hours that will inevitably mean additional costs being passed on to the people organising the functions. Be that as it may, it is entirely unreasonable to impose arbitrary restrictions on the movement of members of Parliament in the name of security, but then for the sake of the Parliament generating revenue by hiring out its facilities totally abrogating its responsibility to put proper security arrangements in place. That is totally unacceptable.

Therefore, President, I call on you, and the Presiding Officer in the other place, to deal seriously with this matter. It is of great concern to me that we have restricted the movement of members. That in itself is a problem, and I have spoken to you privately about the difficulties it has already created and will increasingly create, but that is a separate matter. What I am really urging you to take note of, President, is the fact that we have a complete breakdown in the security protocol with respect to the Parliament after 6.00 p.m. and at weekends when functions are being held. There is no security provided at those times to ensure the continuance of the regime which has been introduced during business hours. This is not a criticism of the government per se, this is a criticism of our internal arrangements with respect to security, and the matter needs to be dealt with urgently.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** (Minister for Energy Industries) — By leave, I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

I am tempted to make a range of comments in reply with respect to members of Parliament, but being a minister I feel that I am not really in a position to represent the members of Parliament in that regard. I can say that over the many years I have been here things in Parliament have certainly improved, including the security we have, and it is probably a sign of the times more than anything else.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

*Remaining stages*

**Passed remaining stages.**

## APPROPRIATION (2004/2005) BILL

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance).**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Jika Jika) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the 2004–05 Victorian state budget. I am particularly pleased to note that in this year's budget there is a very strong emphasis on addressing social inequality in our community. It would be fair to say that despite record economic growth and success in Victoria in the business area, many Australians and many Victorians continue to struggle to survive in their daily lives. I am proud that, unlike the Howard government that has targeted its support at those people earning above \$52 000 per year, the Bracks government's budget offers significant support for low-income earners, including historic changes to concessions for pensioners and health care card holders.

By investing in the core areas of education, health, housing and community services the Bracks Labor government is showing its commitment to all the people of Victoria. Only a Labor government will be able to address the problems of those who are socially disadvantaged by funding areas of need, and the government has done this by demonstrating compassion and understanding while delivering sound financial governance.

I know that a number of my colleagues have admirably outlined to the house in some considerable detail the additional funding in the core areas of health, education, community safety and many other programs, so I do not propose to do that today in any detail. I do want to note, however, that people in my own electorate of Jika Jika Province, an electorate in which a great number of people are at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale and have a range of different disadvantages, will derive considerable benefits from this year's budget. They will, of course, benefit in the education area from the funding for an extra 250 teachers, and the extra school maintenance funding.

I note that 11 schools in Jika Jika Province will receive grants of \$5500 for the Schoolyard Blitz program. They are: Baltara School, Bell Primary School, Burbank Primary School, Croxton Special School, Findon Primary School, Greenbrook Primary School, Keon Park Primary School, Kingsbury Primary School, Lalor East Primary School, Newlands Primary School, Norris Bank Primary School, Penders Grove Primary School, Preston East Primary School, Preston North East Primary School, Preston South Primary School,

Preston West Primary School, Reservoir East Primary School, Reservoir Primary School, Thomastown East Primary School, and Thornbury Primary School. As members know, the Schoolyard Blitz program encourages local public involvement in school improvements by promoting community-driven projects and is part of the \$34 million investment in our schools maintenance system.

My local constituents will also benefit from the huge injection of an additional \$1.6 billion over the next four years in our public health system, which will enable more public patients to be treated in the hospital system. I have spoken in this house a number of times recently about how the Northern Hospital has the busiest emergency department in the state at the moment. It has experienced a considerable increase in people attending that department. This is in large part due to the introduction by the Howard government of a co-payment system for visits to general practitioners. Low-income earners, particularly those who have a number of children, are finding it impossible to attend their local GP and are having to attend the emergency departments of public hospitals to seek assistance. I am pleased that this extra funding will go towards allowing more patients to be treated in our hospitals. This will benefit many of my constituents.

I am also very pleased about the extra \$58 million over four years to treat an extra 131 000 concession card holders who need public dental care and to reduce public dental waiting list time. I know this will be of great benefit to my local electorate. I am pleased that recently the Minister for Health was able to announce that the Plenty Valley Community Health Service would benefit from \$340 000 to be spent on providing two extra dental treatment chairs, increasing to five the number of public treatment chairs available at that service. That will effectively cut waiting lists by up to 12 months.

The three local hospitals that service my constituents will benefit from equipment funding. The Northern Hospital will benefit from \$517 569 for a physiological monitoring system in the emergency department and \$84 705 for a replacement cardiac halter monitoring and exercise stress test system. The Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital will benefit from \$443 615 for a digital fluoroscopy and general radiology suite. The Austin Hospital and the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital will also receive \$415 095 for defibrillators and associated equipment. Additionally, the Austin Hospital will receive \$301 290 towards the purchase of 17 pieces of anaesthetic monitoring equipment. This builds upon the many improvements and the extra

nurses that the Bracks government has been putting into the public hospital system over the last five years.

Transport funding will also benefit my local constituents. The Bracks government is committed to building, revitalising and modernising our vital transport infrastructure system. I am very pleased that the budget this year commits \$14 million to duplicate a 1.7-kilometre section of Plenty Road from Centenary Drive to Bethany Court, seeing improvements to residents of Mill Park and South Morang who have experienced long delays on that road in peak times.

Many other things in this budget will benefit my constituents, including improvements in funding to community services, expansion of funding to public housing and many other arenas. I know that my colleagues have spoken about these initiatives in some detail.

I want to spend some time talking about the funding in this year's budget for programs in the justice portfolio. It is with particular pride that I welcome budget initiatives that will contribute to improving the lives of indigenous Victorians. We continue to face a distressing reality that indigenous people are 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-indigenous people in this state. I want to emphasise this to the Honourable Wendy Lovell because I took great exception to many of the comments she made in her contribution to the adjournment debate last night. The Bracks government is responding to this unacceptable state of affairs with an expansion of the Aboriginal justice agreement, with \$12.7 million over four years allocated for implementing its second phase. As members will be aware, the Aboriginal justice agreement was signed in 2000 by the responsible ministers, representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and other Koori organisations. Four years on it continues to be held up by both the community and across government as best practice in developing indigenous strategies and public policy.

The funding will allow the growth of a range of programs emanating from the Aboriginal justice agreement. The very successful Koori court program currently operating in Shepparton, Broadmeadows and Warrnambool will be expanded to include Mildura and Gippsland and the establishment of a children's Koori court. It is pleasing that the reoffending rate of participants in these courts has been reduced through the involvement of Koori elders and family members in the criminal justice process.

The night patrol program will be expanded beyond Mildura and Shepparton where it currently operates. This program attempts to address the issues of indigenous youth getting into trouble after hours by providing a pick-up service to deliver them home safely. The program transports hundreds of young Koori people to safe locations every weekend, and it is strongly supported by local communities, Koori organisations, local police and the Department of Human Services.

Budget funding will also go to several other important indigenous initiatives, including residential and diversionary programs for indigenous male offenders to allow more prisoners to meet their parole conditions. Also funded will be the Frontline program, which diverts young Kooris in the Gippsland area from risky behaviour, and the indigenous consumer protection program to assist Koori consumers to better protect themselves in the marketplace.

The timing of all of these announcements is pertinent following another successful Aboriginal justice forum held in Echuca on 28 and 29 April, which I had the pleasure of chairing as the chair of the Aboriginal justice forum. This forum, established under the historic Aboriginal justice agreement, brings together senior public servants, police and indigenous community representatives to discuss complex issues facing indigenous communities and the wonderful work that is being done to respond to these issues. Before the forum I was honoured to visit the Perricoota project, an innovative program that has employed and trained a number of at-risk indigenous youths at St Anne's vineyard at Perricoota. The success of the program is testament to the dedication of the vineyard manager, local police, training and Koori organisations and the trainees themselves. This particular program is a shining example of the success that the Aboriginal justice agreement is having.

It is timely that I am making this contribution, given that the Attorney-General has just delivered a significant justice statement in the other place where he has spoken about the commitment of the Bracks government to modernising our justice system, making it accessible to all and addressing issues of disadvantage. The budget provides additional funding to expand a range of very successful programs. In particular innovative diversion programs in our courts will benefit from this year's budget. From a total of \$12.4 million over four years, the court referral for evaluation and drug intervention treatment (CREDIT) program will receive \$7.2 million. This program targets non-violent offenders with drug problems and enables magistrates to make drug rehabilitation a condition of

their bail. Magistrates can adjourn a matter until a defendant has completed their participation in the program. By reducing offending and reoffending and minimising drug abuse and self-harm, the CREDIT program directly addresses the causes of crime and helps build a safer future for Victorian families.

Another initiative is the criminal justice diversion program, which has been allocated \$5.2 million. The program gives offenders the opportunity to avoid criminal convictions by undertaking court-imposed conditions that will benefit them, the victim and the community as a whole.

As chair of the women's correctional services advisory committee, I also have particular interest in measures being taken to reduce the number of women in prison. In this year's budget, \$19.6 million is allocated over the next four years to maintain 101 existing flexible beds at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower prison. Along with this funding, the Department of Justice is continuing the better pathways project which will strengthen prevention, early intervention, diversion, rehabilitation and transitional support initiatives for women at risk of offending or reoffending.

Victoria Police will receive an extra \$175.6 million over four years to ensure Victoria maintains its status as the safest state in Australia, and a lot of this money will go towards new equipment, better training, more access to information technology and enhanced covert surveillance capacity. There is extra funding to deal with the terrorist threat and, of course, there is extra funding to continue to expand a very significant new replacement police station program which will bring to 135 the total number of police stations that this government has committed to over its two terms.

There is a very extensive list of new police stations that will be built in the metropolitan area, such as Cranbourne, Springvale, and Carlton-North Melbourne, across regional Victoria in Torquay and Mildura and including rural police stations at Bethanga, Boort, Elmhurst, Gunbower, Hopetoun, Inverloch, Koondrook, Kyabram, Lake Boga, Lake Bolac, Leongatha, Nhill, Stratford and Timboon.

I am pleased that the budget also increases funding for emergency services of \$8.6 million towards the delivery of 190 new fire trucks for the Country Fire Authority, and additional funding for the CFA to upgrade its fire stations. There is also extra money for a range of other justice initiatives.

I commend the Treasurer and all the ministers involved in the preparation of the budget, a budget that provides

for better programs and services that will benefit all Victorians. I know it will benefit my electorate of Jifka Jifka, and I commend it to the house.

**Sitting suspended 12.59 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.**

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

### ABSENCE OF MINISTER

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I advise the house that the Minister for Aged Care, who is also the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, will not be present during question time today as he is not well.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Government: telephone system

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I direct a question to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology. I refer the minister to her media release of 1 April where she claimed that \$1 million a year will be saved through the new deal with NEC Business Systems to operate and update the government's central business district internal office telephone system as part of the government's telecommunications purchasing and management strategy project. Can the minister advise the house what will be the total cost of contractors, consultants, tender preparation and departmental costs for the changeover to NEC?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — Members will be aware that the Victorian office telephony services (VOTS) contract, which has recently been awarded to NEC Business Systems, is an innovative new opportunity for the state government to take advantage of the new technologies that are available which under previous telecommunications contracts were not able to be undertaken. We are looking forward to the opportunity to gradually move telephones over in a staged way across to voice-over Internet protocols, and we are looking forward to the opportunity that will bring to the efficiency of the way we communicate within government.

VOTS is part of the telecommunications purchasing and management strategy (TPAMS) project that is being put in place across government which for the first time is seeing the aggregation of our telecommunications spend. We believe this will bring greater efficiencies to government and will give us an opportunity to properly manage our

telecommunications systems and ensure the latest technology is available to government at the appropriate time.

We are looking forward to working with NEC and seeing the rollout in relation to VOTS. A very innovative program is being put in place. Nothing has been so innovative in this regard since the predecessor to StateNet FM was first introduced by the Cain Labor government. It is a very innovative exercise. We are looking forward to the \$1 million-worth of savings per annum, plus the additional technology available to the government on an ongoing basis.

This is not a one-off technology fix. It will be a staged and ongoing development for government, and the way in which TPAMS will operate will ensure that the government continues to get the technological advances as they are occurring.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I thank the minister for her answer, but I ask the supplementary question: is it not true that the TPAMS project has been badly managed by Multimedia Victoria and that the total cost of contractors, consultants, tender preparation and departmental costs to change over to NEC Business Systems has risen above \$1 million, completely wiping out supposed savings?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — The telecommunications purchasing and management strategy project team is working to budget. I have no reason to believe it is doing anything other than working to budget, and the outcomes for the government and the savings potential for the government have justified the TPAMS project and will benefit the government not just in the immediate years to come but on an ongoing basis.

#### Consumer affairs: youth programs

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Monash) — I address my question to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. In light of the justice statement delivered today which outlines new directions for justice in Victoria, will the minister outline to the house what is being done within the consumer affairs portfolio to empower and protect teenagers and young adults in Victoria?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank Mr Scheffer for his question and for his ongoing interest in consumer affairs which was evidenced by his insightful, measured and very good response in this house yesterday. As referred to by Mr Scheffer, the

Attorney-General launched today his justice statement in the Legislative Assembly. The justice statement, which addresses new directions for Victorian justice, is a very significant statement, because not only does it for the first time in the history of this state put in place a 10-year plan for where the justice system is to go but it also specifies 25 separate initiatives for this to happen.

Firstly, I am delighted to be in this house on a day when the Attorney-General has launched such an important new directions document; and secondly, in my capacity as consumer affairs minister, I am delighted to respond to Mr Scheffer's question as to how this applies to young consumers and the issues of protecting teenagers and young adults.

The relevance of this question to the justice statement is that one of the key areas in the justice statement is the Pathways to Justice program, which deals with a range of initiatives dealing with dispute resolution and also — and importantly — in consumer affairs, as I have mentioned to this house previously, our key objectives include empowering consumers to make informed decisions as well as obviously the issue of protecting vulnerable consumers. We are talking about how we go out into the community and empower consumers, particularly young consumers, to take action that qualifies them and puts them in a position to deal with the very big issues they face.

I have had the delight of going out to in excess of 20 schools to engage young students and talk to them about their rights and how we can empower and protect them, and it is a challenge. I see Mr Hilton is here, and I have been to a school with Mr Hilton; I have been with Mr Mitchell and a number of other members in this chamber to schools in their electorates talking to young consumers. It is a real challenge to engage years 10 and 11 students in consumer protection issues. One of the things we are very proud to have done in government — and it links completely back to the justice statement about empowering these consumers — is to find ways we can insert into curriculums in schools things that can be taught by teachers to assist consumers. We have that now happening in English, in maths and in commerce, and we are also finding ways of engaging with young consumers.

I was with Mr Scheffer and Mr Tony Lupton from the other house in the Prahran market a few months ago. We took groups of young consumers from two schools in their respective electorates through the Prahran market as part of a program called Money Stuff. It is a process whereby we try to encourage young consumers to look after their own hard-earned money, and we try

to go about it in a way that they are interested in. We do that because the message we get back from young consumers all the time is that they have difficulty with consumer issues when they leave home, whether it be signing a lease for a house, signing a contract to buy a car or negotiating a mobile phone contract. I often ask students how many of them have read the contract, and I am glad I am not asking this house, because if it is reflective of most schools I go to there would be 1 or 2 out of 44 people who actually read contracts. What Money Stuff and these other programs are all about is engaging young consumers and empowering them to make informed decisions to look after their hard-earned dollars so they are not exploited and so they have equal relationships. Through the Money Stuff program, through *Stuff* magazine, through our web sites and through a joint approach with New South Wales we are empowering young consumers to make informed decisions so they are confident and capable consumers. This government is acting for consumers as part of a broader justice statement.

### Government: telephone system

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** (East Yarra) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, and I refer the minister to her media release of 8 May 2002, in which she claimed that Victorian taxpayers will save \$9 million in the next 15 months after a new interim telecommunications deal was negotiated during the transition stage of the government's telecommunication purchasing and management strategy. I ask: is it true that these savings have not been achieved?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask the member to confirm the date of the press release he referred to. My note says that the member said 8 May 2002, but perhaps it should have been 2004.

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — No.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is 2002.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I would assume by the question that we are referring to negotiations that were done in the development stages of — —

**Hon. Richard Dalla-Riva** interjected.

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** — Yes, you are asking me in question time — a time when we are supposed to be talking about current matters — about a press release in 2002. This matter relates to negotiations over existing telecommunication services to put arrangements in place for a pricing regime for the telecommunications

panels to be set up in the interim stages. The opposition might not like this, but you, President, will love it, because Parliament House will be part of the telecommunication purchasing and management strategy (TPAMS) process as well. We will be the beneficiaries of the cost efficiencies that will come from TPAMS.

The telecommunications management system that will be put in place will be state of the art. It will be about proper telecommunications management; it will be about ensuring that we are gaining from the efficiencies that the new systems will bring and put in place; it will be about new technologies; and it will be about ensuring that it provides the best opportunities for the public service and for government employees to provide the best possible services to Victorians, because they will be utilising the best possible technology.

I will reiterate that the TPAMS project is not over budget. It is running within budget, and it will meet the needs of the government not only in the immediate future but also in ongoing years.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** (East Yarra) — Can the minister confirm that the government is spending more today than it spent in 2002 on telecommunications and that Multimedia Victoria has failed to meet the government's own time line on the telecommunications purchasing and management strategy?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — At no stage has anyone suggested that governments around the nation and businesses themselves will not spend more on telecommunications, because they use the technologies for more and more things. Whether it is the systems we put in place to access the Internet or whether it is by providing the community with telecommunications access that is funded from government, whichever way you look at it, yes, we spend more on telecommunications. But there is also the question of the unit price you pay for that telecommunication. Let me explain to the honourable member that the whole notion around the telecommunications purchasing and management strategy is to get the best possible unit price for the services that you expect from telecommunication companies. As we move across to voice-over Internet protocol and as we move across and utilise other technologies — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's time has expired.

**Consumer affairs: disadvantaged consumers**

**Mr SMITH** (Chelsea) — I refer my question to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. As I understand it, the justice statement outlines a plan for redressing much of the damage of the conservative legacy. Can the minister inform the house what action has been taken by the Bracks government to ensure that we know who are the vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorian consumers who were treated with contempt and ignored for much of the seven years of conservative rule in this state?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank Mr Smith for his question and for his ongoing interest in consumer issues and history.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr LENDERS** — Opposition members do not treat consumer affairs seriously, as can be seen by the barrage of interjections!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! It is impossible for Hansard to take down the minister's response, and I ask all members to stop interjecting.

**Mr LENDERS** — By their interjections Mr Forwood and others are clearly covering up and hiding from the fact that in their seven long, dark years in government they slashed consumer agency funding by 25 per cent and cut the regional offices.

This government has a new approach to consumer affairs, and under the leadership of my colleague Marsha Thomson we restored services when we came into government. In dealing with these issues a government needs to work out its goals for empowering consumers and looking after disadvantaged consumers, and those are two of our goals. The second goal, looking after disadvantaged consumers, is very important. It rolls easily off the tongue, and opposition members roll it off their tongues very easily and very often without knowing what it means. Looking after disadvantaged consumers means, firstly, that the government needs to have a commitment to doing something, and we have done that. This government has increased funding for consumer affairs, unlike those opposite, who slashed funding. Secondly, in response to Mr Smith's question, and on a day when we are talking about a justice statement which has 25 objectives and which looks at disadvantage, we have tried to identify what a disadvantaged consumer is so that we can more meaningfully go forward to identify those areas of need.

At the national consumer conference in March I released a discussion paper on disadvantage which asked, 'What is a disadvantaged consumer?'. If we are to reach out to vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers it is critical that we be very precise and targeted in how we find them. It might be someone whose first language is not English and who by definition does not survive as well in an environment where all documents are written in English. We will also look at people with disabilities and people at different ages or stages in their work. We need informed debate to make those decisions — we need a debate based on information and facts not on the platitudes, uninformed comment and drivel we have heard from Mr Olexander in particular. The discussion paper was launched at the conference in front of people such as Graeme Samuel and Louise Sylvan from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission; with Peter Kell from the Australian Consumers Association — at the time he was from Australian Securities and Investments Commission; and the doyen of the consumer movement, Professor Alan Fels, the former chairman of the ACCC.

The government wants informed discussion from stakeholders. We are absolutely committed to having an informed debate so we can target those with disadvantage and direct our resources to them, because that is what consumer affairs is all about. It is targeted, it is focused and it deals with disadvantage, whether it be for people whose first language is not English, people with disabilities or people who are at a stage in their life where they are disadvantaged. We want to assist them, and that is what consumer affairs and this government are about.

### **Mildura hospital site: future**

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — My question without notice is directed to Mr Lenders in his capacity as Minister for Finance. For about three years now the old Mildura hospital building and its surroundings have continued to stand unused and neglected, becoming more and more run down and costing a fortune in security costs. When will the minister make a decision to allow this excellent site to either be built on by a government department or cleared and developed to allow it to be useful in the future?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I thank Mr Bishop for his question. The Mildura hospital site is one that I have paid long attention to in that I have had representations from and meetings with the former mayor of the Mildura Rural City Council and on a number of occasions have had the member for Mildura

in the other place raise this issue with me. He has had a longstanding interest in this and with the local community has engaged the government — certainly in the government's last term and this term — on ways in which that site can be used.

As with many pieces of land the issue of the Mildura hospital site is complicated because of where the land came from. Part of it was Crown land in the first place and the property of the state government, so the state government clearly has an issue and should utilise its assets effectively. There is also the very important second factor — that is, that the construction and a lot of the work was contributed to by the Mildura community through fundraising and a whole lot of other areas, so I am certainly aware of the hospital. I think it was the late Ann Cox who came with Mr Savage to see me at an earlier time, and there has been a long dialogue between the property group of the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Mildura council and stakeholders in Mildura. We are certainly very aware that it is an issue of symbolic and emotional significance to a lot of Mildura people who have put their hearts and souls into it.

I have none of the details in front of me now, but I know there have been a range of plans for parts of that site to be used for various means — whether it should be used by the council or government departments or whether the land should be sold. I will take the balance of Mr Bishop's question on notice and get back to him on the state of those plans at the moment.

**Mr Smith** — And Russell!

**Mr LENDERS** — And Mr Savage, of course. Significantly, the government does not want to see a community asset go unused. That is first and foremost in our minds. Secondly, we want the government and the community to get value for its assets. Thirdly, we want to engage with the Mildura community to get its view on whether to add value to it or as a minimum to have its views put forward to us. From my recollection an offer was made to the council for it to purchase the site. I think the council declined that offer, but I am happy to get back to Mr Bishop with the details on that. As a government we are very interested in these community resources being well used for the purposes of the government and community, and particularly recognising that the community has kicked in a lot of money over time into building that asset and has a emotional view on how it should be used.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — I thank the minister for his answer. He is quite correct: the Mildura Rural City Council did consider purchasing the old hospital building and did not proceed with that. My supplementary question is: has the minister or his department negotiated with the Mildura Rural City Council on any other developments that they would see fit for the site, and could he give me some idea of the time lines in relation to those actions?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — As to the more immediate things, and my general response to Mr Bishop, I need to take it on notice because I do not have those details in front of me. But I know that as with the other 78 municipalities, the property group in the Department of Treasury and Finance is always conscious that it needs to talk with the relevant local government authority as the first stakeholder to get an idea of what is going on as well as to the numerous other people who have views. I will take that question on notice.

**Consumer affairs: Building Advice and Conciliation Victoria**

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I refer my question to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, John Lenders. The justice statement has clearly outlined the Bracks government's commitment not only to justice but the flow-on commitment to consumers. Can the minister please outline how Building Advice and Conciliation Victoria empowers and protects consumers?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank Mr Nguyen for his question and for his ongoing interest in looking after consumers. As I said earlier, the Attorney-General launched in the Assembly today the government's justice statement, and a very important part of the justice statement was through Pathways to Justice, the alternative dispute resolution processes which is something this government pays a lot of attention to and about which it is very serious.

Alternative dispute resolution is an area that is near and dear to the heart of consumer affairs. It is one of our core functions and fits into the justice statement with great importance, because by definition access to justice is a critical area and hinges on a range of areas. Certainly affordability is important as is resolving disputes before they become litigious. My colleague Ms Mikakos in this house would be aware more than most of these important issues that government keeps dealing with in these areas.

So Building Advice and Conciliation Victoria (BACV) was set up — this is an area Mr Strong would be very interested in — following the collapse of HIH and in light of the alternative ways that were available at the time of dealing with disputes.

What is the best way of dealing with a dispute between a builder and a consumer? One option is to simply wait for litigation in four or five years time and try to sort it out by litigation. Litigation has a role in every dispute, of course, but it should not be the first course of action.

**Hon. M. R. Thomson** interjected.

**Mr LENDERS** — It should be the last resort, as my ministerial colleague says to me. In the concept of alternative dispute resolution the government looked at how these hundreds of disputes between builders and consumers could be dealt with. Last year BACV dealt with 5200 phone calls alone, so there are a lot of disputes out there.

Government has said that the first step needs to be to try to get the consumer and the builder together to fix their problem. Everyone in our community would say that is the logical step. BACV facilitates that. Mr Nguyen asks how that is working. That is facilitating it because it is the important first step in alternative dispute resolution — because it is an alternative dispute resolution. Why should the builder and the consumer be in court when they can sort it out by dealing with it?

**Hon. B. N. Atkinson** — How are you going to deal with it?

**Mr LENDERS** — The second step followed when we set up a body to deal with it, which it does in a number of ways. I welcome Mr Atkinson's interjection, and I am pleased Mr Atkinson is following this through, because it deals with it in a number of ways. Firstly, 5215 phone calls were received by BACV last year. There were a further 345 written complaints in addition to the phone calls.

**Hon. B. N. Atkinson** — What about follow-ups?

**Mr LENDERS** — A very interesting point, because 376 of those were actually followed up with correspondence and finalised. Mr Atkinson will be delighted with that. Tens of thousands of dollars of actual money was put in place in settlements.

Now most of these disputes are dealt with by phone calls. A very efficient phone centre receives the calls, deals with most of these disputes on the phone — these calls come from all over Victoria, which could be Mildura or Sale and are dealt with by this phone

service — but only a small minority of disputes end up in a court. So this is alternative dispute resolution in action.

This government has listened to Victorians who said they do not want too much litigation but do want commonsense methods. We have acted by establishing BACV, and now most disputes are sorted out even before they get to a court. That is important; it fits in with the Attorney-General's justice statement; it assists Mr Nguyen's constituents and is a good outcome for government and the public.

### **VicForests: ministerial responsibility**

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** (Central Highlands) — My question is to the Minister for Finance, Mr John Lenders. I refer to the separation of VicForests from the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the fact that VicForests will be run on a commercial basis. Will the minister explain to the house his new role in settling financial disputes between VicForests and the DSE?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I thank Mr Stoney for his question. Ministerial responsibility for VicForests, as I understand the administrative orders set by the Premier, rests with the Treasurer as the shareholder, and ministerial responsibility for the policy and administration rests with the Minister for Environment in the other place, so in that sense of whether I have a role as a minister, a cabinet member, a member of the government — of course I would always have a role to facilitate and assist in any discussion or debate at a cabinet level. My understanding is that under the administrative arrangements, responsibility for VicForests is with perhaps the minister responsible for primary industries. Under the administrative orders, three other ministers, not the Minister for Finance, would have responsibility.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** (Central Highlands) — Would the minister assure the house that if in the future he discovers he does have a very important role to play in settling financial disputes, that all good commercial principles will be followed, including a realistic pricing of the logs, if there is any dispute between VicForests and DSE? Will any disputes and any process be transparent?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have difficulty with the question because it is prefacing the future in that if the minister has the responsibility in the future, will he do that, which means that he — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have difficulty with the wording, that it does not fall within the responsibility of the minister and is almost a hypothetical matter, which, under standing rules of practice 1.02 (j) is not allowed. I will give the honourable member an opportunity to rephrase his question.

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** — President, I believe the minister has the responsibility in the area I have nominated, and I stand by my question.

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — As I understand it, Mr Stoney's question is hypothetical because it deals with a bill that is still not through the Parliament, and in any case the administrative arrangements for that proposed bill under existing legislation rests with three other ministers and not me, so I do not think I am in a position to answer the question.

### **Consumer affairs: home buyers**

**Hon. C. D. HIRSH** (Silvan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. We have heard from other members of the house of the Bracks government's commitment to justice and also the minister's own belief in protecting and empowering consumers. Can the minister advise the house what action he is taking to ensure Victorians are empowered and protected when they make the biggest purchase of their life, their family homes?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank Ms Hirsh for her question. It gives me particular delight to respond to a question from Ms Hirsh on the justice statement regarding housing, because the house would be aware of her key and instrumental role in establishing the home interest association during the 1980s and how she was a strong voice and advocate for home buyers in times of high interest.

The justice statement deals with these issues of protecting and empowering consumers. As Ms Hirsh correctly and with great empathy said, the purchase of a home is the largest single transaction that any consumer would normally make, and in this day and age it is for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Dealing with protecting and empowering consumers in this environment is of critical importance.

This government comes from the starting point of how to engage consumers so as to provide this useful information to empower them. That is a challenge that again Ms Hirsh would have focused on during her

active days in the 1980s in the eastern suburbs with the home interest association. We dream of the days in this decade where hundreds and hundreds of consumers will come to a meeting to get information.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have called order a number of times during the minister's response on this question and the same members continue to interject. I ask them to desist. It is impossible for Hansard to record the minister's response.

**Mr LENDERS** — What we have sought to do in consumer affairs is to go out to our communities, particularly our communities in regional Victoria, with what we call our roadshows to provide information to consumers on this important choice. We have recently had roadshows in Geelong, Ballarat, Traralgon and Bendigo. These roadshows have been chaired by the likes of very good local members.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Enough! I ask members from both sides to desist from interjecting across the chamber.

**Mr LENDERS** — The sterling likes of Ian Trezise, Karen Overington, Geoff Howard and Brendan Jenkins, all members from the other place, have presided over some of these regional roadshows to inform consumers. It is not just them; there is more. Along with those members of Parliament, Consumers Affairs Victoria (CAV) has been present with the likes of Archicentre and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria working with government. Mr Atkinson and other members from the other side should take heed of our good working relationship with the real estate institute in providing information. In addition, we had the Law Institute of Victoria with us. So when people actually sign these big contracts, the people who draft the contracts, the REIV, the LIV and Archicentre, are present.

For consumers who are about to purchase their own homes we seek to provide information that they will find immediately useful to them. Anyone in this house who is thinking about buying a home — perhaps like Mr Olexander, if he is about to buy a unit in Docklands or whatever he is buying — could go to one of these forums, although it is a long way from Mr Olexander's electorate, and get immediate advice from Archicentre, the law institute, the real estate institute, consumer affairs, any of these people, to empower them to make a decision on purchasing a home.

This is the sort of information we put forward, because Consumers Affairs Victoria now understands and believes in the context of the justice statement, that to empower consumers we need to give them information. A good forum for information is in regional areas. It is far better that consumers get advice from the LIV, the REIV and CAV than from the likes of Henry Kaye and others who spruik.

We are listening to consumers who want advice; we are acting by bringing out the advice to them; and in doing so we are delivering an important service to consumers in Victoria.

### **Australian Labor Party: government contracts**

**Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON** (Waverley) — I direct my question to the Minister for Small Business. I note the Labor Party has adopted a policy in its national platform that requires Labor governments to award contracts to union-friendly companies, companies that support union policies, including the recruitment of union members as employees. Is the Bracks government implementing this Labor policy of preference for union-friendly companies and will small businesses whose employees are not members of unions be disadvantaged in competing for government contracts?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Small Business) — I do not have responsibility for the awarding of government contracts to business. In relation to the Bracks government's record on small business, I will reiterate once again for the house the commitment this government has to small business not only in the tax cuts during the last term of \$1 billion but the \$1.9 billion worth of tax cuts this term, and projects such as the Melbourne Convention Centre with the 5000-seat plenary hall, the channel deepening project and the moving of the wholesale fruit and vegetable markets. A number of projects have been put in place to assist businesses to do business in this state. Not only have we done that but we have put in place the Victorian industry participation policy, which is the responsibility of the Minister for State and Regional Development in the other place, to ensure we give an opportunity, where there is value for money, for Victorian businesses to be able to benefit from access to government contracts.

Let me reiterate again to this house: I know, as do members on this side, that the members opposite are anticipating and expecting the election of a Latham-led Labor government; otherwise we would not be getting so many questions about the federal Labor Party. They have given up on the Howard government. They know

that small business will support the election of a Latham government, and that is why they are asking these questions.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. ANDREW BRIDSON** (Waverley) — I note the minister's answer was not apposite to the question. As a supplementary question I now ask: what processes are in place to assure the public and businesses tendering for government contracts that any tenders or expressions of interest are evaluated on their merit and not according to what is best for Labor's mates in the trade unions?

**Hon. M. R. THOMSON** (Minister for Small Business) — As I said, I am not responsible for the issuing of government contracts, but there is a process in place for the appropriate tendering of government contracts, and I have no reason to believe they are not being met. We are now seeing contortion and distortion from the opposition in relation to federal issues because they expect a Latham Labor government. They need to start scaremongering in the small business community, because the small business community wants to support the election of a Latham government.

**Consumer affairs: product safety and trade measurement**

**Ms ROMANES** (Melbourne) — I refer my question to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The minister has shown his commitments to consumers throughout this question time. Other members in this house, along with the minister, have already indicated how important the area of justice is to the Bracks government. Can the minister inform the house how the areas of product safety and trade measurement also protect and empower consumers?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank Ms Romanes for her question. As she says, there has been a theme to questions in this place today about the government's justice policy, which is a very important statement. The fact that there has been a theme in both houses of the Parliament today is very important.

Ms Romanes raised the question of product safety and the issue of trade measurements. They are very critical issues. If we look at the three objectives in the Department of Justice report for consumer affairs I think members of the house will understand them. They are, first: the empowering of consumers, which is an important part of the objective; second, protecting vulnerable consumers; and third, making markets work.

They are all critical, interrelated objectives in how we go about protecting and empowering consumers. Making markets work is an important part of that.

This is where the issue of product safety becomes very important. I will not trivialise this by bringing out any of the exhibits of dangerous products that we have banned. There are thousands, and I have some in the kit bag but I will not show them. The important part of making markets work is that when dangerous products are out and about they need to be withdrawn, and they need to be banned. This year we have withdrawn almost 3000 dangerous products from shops in Victoria so that they are removed from the market. That is an important part of the role of consumer affairs.

The second part I would like to spend a bit more time on in response to Ms Romanes is the issue of trade measurement. It goes into the theme of making markets work to protect consumers. Members often —

**Hon. W. A. Lovell** interjected.

**Mr LENDERS** — Ms Lovell is not interested in this; she is just treating it with a degree of mockery. Trade measurement in places like Shepparton are of critical importance to consumers, because without the trade measurement inspectors being out there there is no certainty for consumers that the petrol that comes through the bowser is actually what they are paying for. There is no certainty for consumers if they think they are buying 20 kilograms of firewood that there are not actually 18 or 19 kilograms in the pack. This has happened in Ms Lovell's electorate, so she should pay attention to this. With trade measurement inspectors out there making markets work we are protecting consumers.

It concerns issues like a pensioner going into a shop and thinking they are buying 2 kilograms of mince and finding that it is actually 1.8 kilograms. Again, it is our trade measurement inspectors who are out there protecting consumers. They protect consumers and business, because a trade measurement inspector going out in that case means the consumer is being looked after, and honest businesses are being looked after because their rogue competitors are not undercutting them by not providing the product, which is important. They add certainty for consumers.

In all these areas I have mentioned today in the house the justice statement links right back to the fact that the government is interested in justice in consumer affairs — protecting vulnerable consumers, empowering consumers and making markets work — and we need to be proactive as a government. We need

to intervene as a government and we need to target as a government. We need to intervene when we need to intervene and target when we need to target, but above all we need to be focused, to have objectives and to have the courage to carry them out, because without that consumers and our community are left behind. This government has listened; this government has acted; and this government has results.

government — ‘sound financial governance’. I nearly fell off my seat. I immediately thought we should look at the great successes of the Labor governments. The first was the Cain and Kirner governments. What an absolute stellar performance! That was the achievement that we all have to make. That was a sound financial government? In fact it was a disaster. We were left with over a \$30 billion debt that had to be managed.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Answers**

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to a number of questions on notice: 835, 1148, 1249, 1262, 1599, 1611, 1707, 1767, 1769, 1783.

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — They interject because they realise that that was the case. We have even a better example of sound financial government under Labor — the federal Hawke and Keating governments. And what a fantastic stellar performance in financial and fiscal management they delivered! We had record interest rates. We had the recession that we had to have. They left us with a \$96 billion debt — —

**APPROPRIATION (2004/2005) BILL**

*Second reading*

**Ms Mikakos** — On a point of order, President, I have been listening to the member’s contribution for the last 4 minutes, and he is yet to utter one word about the appropriation bill and the budget that we are debating at the moment. I ask you, President, to draw him back to the budget.

**Debate resumed.**

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** (East Yarra) — I have pleasure in making my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2004/2005) Bill. In doing so I have been listening intently to the contributions made on both sides of the house.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The budget debate is well known as a wide-ranging debate. Almost any topic can be debated if it is of relevance across the state of Victoria, so I do not uphold the point of order.

A number of issues have come up in this bill, and there are some I have to comment on. The Honourable Bill Forwood raised the issue about the government’s budget submission being all spin. I note that in their responses government members took offence at that. In particular Mr McQuilten was quite animated last night when he referred to the fact that he was offended by the notion of government spin. But it continues on, and part of my speech today will outline a number of issues. However, I cannot within the allocated time go through the variety of issues that are necessary.

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — The reality is that we are talking about the budget. Earlier in this debate Ms Jenny Mikakos said we have sound financial governance, and I am countering her argument. The fact that she raised a point of order demonstrates that I have clearly countered her statement and hammered her back to where she needs to be, and that is that this government does not have sound financial governance, and this bill is another demonstration of that.

In the debate yesterday there was some conjecture between the Honourable Bill Forwood and the Honourable Theo Theophanous about the amount of time allowed for debate. Interestingly, now the government has control of the house, it gags and guillotines, and we as the opposition are restricted in our position to scrutinise. It is difficult to debate this bill and to outline the various areas, because we are essentially gagged and prevented from making a full and frank contribution to the debate.

The schedules that are outlined on page 5 of the bill demonstrate that the level of expenditure continues to grow within this state. It is astounding that in one year there has been close to a \$3 billion increase in the estimates outlined in the budget for next year — from \$20.8 billion to nearly 23.3 billion. I note that some of the members opposite were rejoicing in how fantastic they were in their delivery of nurses. That area is going up \$1.3 billion in expenditure, and most Victorians would say that the health system as we know it is in a worse position than ever and that this government is not managing it effectively.

I raise one issue that Ms Mikakos mentioned in her contribution earlier today. She said, ‘We deliver’ — and I assume she is talking about the Labor

Looking at other areas, the allocation for justice is going up nearly half a billion dollars in one year, and

again we have to ask whether what we are reading in the paper is being reflected across the state. It is disappointing that we seem to be throwing away money, similar to what I outlined earlier about the alleged unsound financial governance by Labor. The way this state is going is not looking too good.

I will bring up a couple of issues within the overall financial competency of this government that are of major concern. We know this government is without question the highest taxing government ever in Victoria. We know that it is now forecasting total taxes of nearly \$10.3 billion, 8.2 per cent higher than this year's budget tax take of \$9.5 billion, which in turn is 9 per cent higher than the \$8.8 billion in 2002–03. So in the space of two years we have gone from \$8.8 billion of total taxes to a grab — a severe grab — of \$10.3 billion.

Government members proclaim that things are going great. They say, 'We are going to give first home buyers \$5000!'. That is fine — until the home buyer has to pay the stamp duty component. I will make some simple comparisons. A person may buy a house in Victoria for \$350 000. If they are a first home buyer they will get \$5000, which I understand is a grant for any purpose and does not need to be put into the house. They will have to pay \$11 660 in stamp duty. They get a \$5000 grant, but the government still gets \$6660 back. What a fantastic comparison! Does it matter? In Queensland you get \$4500 off stamp duty and in New South Wales you get nil. The reality is that even on a base home of \$250 000 the Victorian first home buyer will take the token \$5000 and still pay \$5660 in stamp duty. The government will take \$5660 from the first home buyer! This government cannot get its grubby hands out of Victorians' pockets.

The total tax take for Victoria is growing exponentially. It is growing like it did in the late 1980s and into the 1990s as it did under the Cain and Kirner governments. They left us a \$32 billion-plus deficit, and they left the feds with a \$96 billion deficit. The fact is that members on that side cannot manage money. They stand here and all they do is continually take from the Victorian taxpayer to fund their incompetent management of this state. That is a real shame, because they put on the spin — this was the argument raised in the last two days — about the fact that they have a \$5000 grant component. But I have just argued — quite effectively I would have thought — that they do not give any money back — no money to the first home buyer and not even on a base \$250 000 purchase price. The government still reaches into their pockets and grabs 5660 bucks because it cannot get its grubby hands out of the pockets of the ordinary taxpayer. What a shame it is!

Let us look at the stamp duty situation in its entirety since 1998–99. Victorians were paying \$1 billion in stamp duty. They are expected to pay this year in this budget \$2.5 billion, which is an 87 per cent increase in stamp duty on typical Melbourne houses since September 1999. The Victorian taxpayer is now having to fund \$2.5 billion extra on one tax, and all the government does is provide a miserable \$5000 to a first home buyer which is totally and utterly stripped from their pocket even before they get it. The fact is that this government cannot manage this state, and it cannot manage the budget. We are without question moving back to the Cain and Kirner days. They had similar activities with high property values, and the same *modus operandi*.

The next matter I want to raise is land tax. In this state land tax is of monumental proportions. It is without question the highest taxation regime of any in the world.

**Mr Lenders** — That is Jeff Kennett's fault!

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — The minister interrupts that it is Jeff Kennett's fault. This government is in its second term — five years — and it is still Jeff Kennett's fault! I have just said the government has increased the take from the Victorian taxpayer and it is still Jeff Kennett's fault! I find it very difficult to sit over here and listen to members opposite say that it is the former government's fault. That is the way members of this government continue to spin and lie to the Victorian taxpayer that everything is rosy. They say, 'We will give you a little \$5000 grant but we will take it back from the other pocket'.

What was land tax when we in opposition left government? Land tax was something around \$378 million. Victorians were paying \$378 million in land tax when this government came to office. Now we are about to take this year a huge growth in land tax. It is set to grow to \$836 million, and that is up 9 per cent from the previous year. It is amazing. Every year this government is attacking the ordinary Victorian taxpayer, and it cannot see it. Members of the government believe they are doing it right. They think everything is all right and they can just keep pumping money into departments and things will magically improve. That is not so. Health, education, teachers and police — you can spin as much as you like and the Bracks spin continues, but the reality is that if you took into account the views of most people in the community you would see that they know that they are getting ripped off. Their pockets have been attacked so much that they are tattered; their pockets have been stretched beyond belief. The stitching is almost falling

apart because the government has its hand in their pockets so often. It does not realise how often it has its hand in the taxpayers pocket!

If that were not bad enough, the government then attacked the pensioners. I remember all the rhetoric about this being for the rich people who have all these fancy cars. It is typical spin coming out again, and the reality is that very few people actually used it. What the government has done is give itself a lot more money — millions of dollars — at the expense of taxpayers. Let us not forget that the government brought in a bill recently that enables it to increase taxes and charges across the board from 1 July; it can increase fees for boating licences, fishing licences, registration, whatever — and it can do it without scrutiny. That is what this government likes. It likes to get out, provide the spin and then do what it wishes.

I will comment briefly on the area in the budget papers dealing with prisons and corrections. One of the true prison performance measures has been dumped. It has been thrown out of the budget papers. It has gone. It was too hard. The number of prisoners was growing. At last report the capacity rate was at 119 per cent. I have raised this issue continually, and I have said that you cannot continue to put prisoners in bunk beds and in portable jails and expect the reoffending rate in this state — the recidivism rate — to fall. It is not falling; it continues to climb. What the government is now doing to avoid scrutiny is dump the performance measure. It has put in the budget papers a section headed 'Department of Justice — discontinued performance measures'. It is referred to in that section as the 'Average daily prisoners design capacity utilisation rate'. It was getting a bit too close to the bone. That demonstrates the capacity of the responsible minister in the other house.

**Hon. J. G. HILTON** (Western Port) — It always gives me great pleasure to speak about a budget that is both financially responsible and social progressive. The government had established a target for itself of a \$100 million surplus each year. That target has been realised this year, and it will be realised next year and the year after. The revised surplus for the 2003–04 budget was \$432 million and for next year's budget it will be \$545 million. This will obviously maintain our AAA credit rating.

A highlight of this budget was, of course, its record infrastructure investment. An amount of \$2.9 billion in this budget will fund significant investments in roads of over half a billion dollars; \$400 million in health, aged care and community services; and \$300 million in schools and the technical and further education (TAFE)

sector. This is adding to the capital stock of our state, and obviously produces benefits for all our community.

In this contribution I will concentrate on the areas of health and education. Without doubt, one of the most precious gifts we can give to the next generation is a quality education process that will enable our young people to compete, and compete with some confidence, in what is a very competitive world. Education obviously has two elements: there is the quality of the teaching process and there is also the quality of the facilities in which that education is provided. A school environment characterised by run-down, dilapidated infrastructure is hardly conducive to a feeling of confidence in our school community. In this budget \$174 million was provided to develop and build seven new schools and upgrade 65 schools, \$60 million was provided for school maintenance and \$30 million was provided for school and community facilities. The budget has not neglected the fact that we need to recruit more teachers to reduce class sizes and to enable students to receive the individual support they occasionally need. This budget will provide \$62 million over four years to recruit 250 new teachers.

In my electorate of Western Port Province, Koo Wee Rup Secondary College, Rosebud Secondary College, Pearcedale Primary School and the Somerville campus of Mount Erin Secondary College received substantial funding, as did Cowes Primary School. This funding was well received by the principals and the school communities of those schools. It will be used for a variety of purposes including new school administration areas, libraries, classrooms and in the information technology and commerce areas. It is always a great fillip for a school community to have new facilities, and I am sure these facilities will have a great impact on these school communities, parents; teachers; and of course, the students.

The other area I would like to comment on is the Bracks government's commitment to health. The Bracks government has committed itself to injecting \$2 billion into the Victorian health system over the next four years. This will meet the growing demand; and help to build new hospitals and other health and aged care facilities. Both increased capital and recurrent funding will enable more people to be treated, and ensure the financial sustainability of the hospital system. It is disgraceful that the commonwealth government, which is supposedly sharing health funding on a fifty-fifty basis with Victoria, has reduced its share of funding, and this is placing greater pressure on the state system. That the commonwealth government should continue to play politics with the health system, which is obviously one of the more

essential services that a government can provide, is totally inappropriate and worthy of the utmost condemnation.

Some specific initiatives in the health budget included \$18 million to upgrade cancer treatment services at Geelong, \$11 million to establish a cancer treatment centre at Latrobe Regional Hospital, \$5 million to develop aged care and acute facilities at the Seymour District Memorial Hospital, and \$2.5 million to create a drug withdrawal facility in Fitzroy.

There are many other initiatives in this budget, across a wide range of portfolios, including community services, transport, infrastructure, community safety, the environment, culture and communities, rural and regional Victoria and the information communications technology sector. As I said, this is a terrific budget. It maintains the government's commitment to a sustainable surplus, whilst at the same time providing money where it is most needed.

In conclusion I want to comment on a few of the contributions made by opposition members. In their contributions Mr Bill Forwood and Mr Dalla-Riva mentioned land tax. They queried why, if the government is claiming that land tax is being reduced, the actual sum of land tax raised is increasing. The threshold limits are being increased. The land tax rate is being reduced. But in all tax on the value of assets, if the value of the asset increases, the tax take increases. The value of the asset on which land tax is based is increasing, and we take great credit for the growing economy.

The Honourable Andrea Coote mentioned GST and said that the government's surplus is based on its take from the commonwealth GST. It is a fact that Victoria receives only 82 per cent of the contribution it makes to the pool of GST revenue. If we received our full and fair share there would be approximately an extra \$2 billion. We can think of all the things we could do with the \$2 billion — more schools, more hospitals and more infrastructure. I look forward to Mrs Coote leading a delegation of her Liberal colleagues to the federal Treasurer, Mr Peter Costello, and asking him to give Victoria its fair share. But of course that is not going to happen, because the Liberals have shown themselves time and again to be Liberals first and Victorians second.

I think I have listened to all the contributions that have been made by opposition members. I am happy to stand corrected, but I believe that I have not heard one new policy. It is very easy to be in opposition. You can always claim that the government should be spending

more money on this or that initiative or this or that project, but government has to work within its budgets. We heard from Mr Vogels that the government should have spent more money on libraries, but he did not tell us where he would raise the extra money or what other projects he would cut. Government is about priorities. This government has established its priorities in improving the wellbeing of the community, and I believe in that it has done an excellent job.

In my view the opposition is not serving the people of Victoria. It is not putting forward any new ideas. There is indeed at the present time no alternative government in this state, because there is no opposition putting forward what it would do if it became the government. Democracy can only function where there is robust opposition putting forward alternative views that the public can consider. This is not happening in Victoria. It is bad for Victoria, and it is bad for democracy.

Some weeks ago I was speaking to one of the opposition members and questioning him as to why the opposition thought it necessary for its speakers to spend an hour talking on bills they were not opposing. He said, 'That is what oppositions do'. I take issue with that statement. Maybe that is what this present opposition does, but surely a true opposition would spend less time speaking at great length on bills which it did not oppose and spend more time developing alternative policies which could be put to the people of Victoria. As I indicated in my contribution to last year's budget — and unfortunately nothing has changed — this opposition will never win the confidence of the Victorian people until it is prepared to put forward alternative views and not merely criticise the government. It will be forever in the political wilderness — not listened to, unloved and unwanted.

We have heard that the government is doing such a bad job in Victoria. We have heard people say we have got our hands in their pockets and that the pockets are straining at the seams. But the last opinion poll I saw said that the people were thinking exactly the same as they did in the landslide victory of 2002. There has been no change in public opinion because the opposition has not changed. Until it does the people can look forward to — —

**Hon. R. H. Bowden** — On a point of order, Deputy President, it is with a little reluctance that I raise this point of order because normally Mr Hilton is quite an easy member to listen to, but I suggest that this is a debate about the budget and for the last 5 minutes Mr Hilton has talked almost exclusively about his views on the opposition. I suggest that you might like to remind the honourable member that we want to hear his

contribution on the budget and not his views on the opposition.

**Hon. J. G. HILTON** — On the point of order, Deputy President, I have been responding to the contributions made by the opposition and pointing out in my view the irrelevance of those contributions. I believe that is totally within order.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The appropriation debate is a wide-ranging one. I have been listening to Mr Hilton. He has been responding to points put forward by the opposition and also talking in particular about taxation issues that are encompassed by the bill and involve federal-state relationships. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Hon. J. G. HILTON** — I was coming to the end of my contribution, and I will wind up now. I was referring to the fact that recent opinion polls indicate a similar position as pertained in the November 2002 election. I will conclude by saying that the absence of change in public opinion is due to the fact that the opposition has not changed, and until it does the people of Victoria can look forward to a Labor government for the foreseeable future. This is a terrific budget, and I commend to the house.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — One of the most difficult tasks that we have as members of Parliament is to try to interpret the budget documents each year. I am afraid to say that with the 2004 budget documents that challenge of interpretation has been as hard as ever. I thought I would try to simplify the way I approached the document this year. I thought I would look quickly for a table on the revenue and expenditure because that seems an obvious place to start to interpret a budget.

I went to chapter 3 of budget paper 4 and firstly looked at the revenues that were simply set out on that particular table. It told me that commonwealth grants to the state were up 6 per cent to around about \$13 billion; taxation revenue was up 1.4 per cent to approximately \$10.4 billion; fines and fees were up 27.7 per cent to \$617 million; and investment income was up 18.5 per cent to approximately \$1.225 billion. On that last amount of investment income being up by 18.5 per cent, one might think that that is a good reflection on the state in that it is investing money wisely, but when you look closer the majority of the increase is a recommencement of a dividend payable to the state from the Transport Accident Commission.

If you break those figures down in terms of the state taxation revenue, payroll tax is up 6.5 per cent and land tax is up 19.3 per cent, and I take on board the

comments by Mr Hilton about land tax — that it is true that the government has revised some provisions within the land tax component and, yes, values of properties increase and therefore the take increases. This budget is expected to increase by 19.3 per cent.

The other point that could be added to the other side of Mr Hilton's argument is, given there is a huge extra revenue collected from land tax, all things being equal then there should be greater capacity to lower the level of land taxes. However, the government has chosen not to do that, it has set levels where they are. I concede there are minor changes in land tax, but nevertheless the government will still collect 19.3 per cent extra in land taxes. It will also collect 3.6 per cent extra in gambling taxes; 8.4 per cent extra in insurance taxes; and 10.5 per cent extra in motor vehicle-related taxes.

The taxation increases have been most significant. It has been the largest input to an overall revenue budget increase by 4.5 per cent, to a figure now almost at \$29 billion. It must be said that Victoria is the highest taxing state in Australia. I refer to an article in the *Age* of Tuesday, 20 April, where it commented about the Commonwealth Grants Commission findings, suggesting that:

... Victoria's tax levels in 2002–03 were 7.2 per cent above the national average, up from 2.4 per cent under the Kennett government.

We could look at the whole article, particularly the expenditure side of things and see that with some of the expenditure items we are above average as well, but in terms of the taxation component, Victoria is now 7.2 per cent above the national average, up from 3.5 per cent above the national average in 1999–2000.

As I said before, one of the most difficult challenges we have is interpreting these budget papers. I found in chapter 3 of budget paper 4 a good table which spoke about revenues. It gave a quick assessment of the main areas of revenue collection in this state and how they have increased over previous years.

It was most difficult to find a similar table for the expenditure side of the budget. There was not, so far as I know, such a table. The nearest I got to it was on page 167 of budget paper 4 where there are tables on the consolidated fund. I understand the public account consists of both the consolidated fund and the trust fund, and therefore it is difficult to correlate the figures in the consolidated fund payments to those in the total budget and the conclusions the government draws.

For example, I found that revenues paid into the consolidated fund equalled \$25.6 billion whereas total

revenue received from this state, as I said before, was almost \$29 billion. You would perhaps look towards the trust fund to make up the difference, but when you look at the trust fund on page 173 of the budget, none of the figures in the trust fund could help make up the difference between what was the total revenue given in chapter 3 as opposed to those amounts paid into the public account by the consolidated fund and the trust fund. There was a huge difference with \$25.6 billion in consolidated fund receipts as opposed to almost \$29 billion in revenue collected by the state as outlined in chapter 3.

I was talking about expenditure and how perhaps consolidated fund payments were the best guide to expenditure in this budget. Total expenditures came to \$26.795 billion, an increase of 9.3 per cent on the previous year, the difference between those figures being in the order of \$1.8 billion, yet in the Treasurer's speech he tells us that there is a surplus of \$545 million. The point I am making is that it is difficult to find out exactly the basis for the overall figures in the summary document of the Treasurer's speech, and to try to interpret these is not simple.

I even looked through some of the newspapers of the day after the budget and noticed that some of the main newspapers had different figures. If I looked at the *Herald Sun* and the *Age*, in some cases the figures were different. I suggest that the media have as much difficulty as we members of Parliament have in interpreting those documents.

Where do we stand as a state? It is very hard for us to glean those figures from the budget documents. The best independent guide we as members of Parliament have are the reports submitted by the Auditor-General. Unfortunately, of course, the Auditor-General looks back on previous years and therefore he cannot tell us into the future how those budgets relate.

The most recent report on the state of Victoria's finances was provided in November of last year in the *Report of the Auditor-General on the Finances of the State of Victoria, 2002-03*. Two of the major findings by the Auditor-General in the report for the 2002-03 year were that:

While state revenues increased by \$1420 million ...  
expenditure increased by \$1973 million.

That is a difference of \$500 million in expenditure over revenue. The Auditor-General also found that:

Over the five-year period 1999 to 2003, revenue levels increased by 21 per cent, while expenditure increased at a greater rate, at 35 per cent.

That should set alarm bells ringing. This government inherited a position which any government would have been envious of — to come into government in 1999 when the economy was just starting to take off. During that time we had a very buoyant economy, we had a AAA credit rating and significant reduced debt. This government should have thrived and we should be in a far stronger financial position than even what we are now. It has been good times, and this government should have used those good times better.

I return to particular provisions in the budget. It has been mentioned in debate so far about spin, con and underhanded comments being made by the government in this budget. In the budget there was a \$402 million commitment for a range of concessions. I welcome the fact that concessions will be provided to people in need, but it failed to mention on the other hand that the bulk of that \$402 million will be new revenue collected from those who had a 100 per cent concession on motor vehicle registrations prior to this budget.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Hon. P. R. HALL** — Yes, something like \$280 million will be picked up by that reduction in the concession on motor vehicle registrations given to those people. The concessions are only available to those who are most in need. The majority of the \$402 million will be raised from people through new registration charges that they have to make.

The same applies to the announcement made prior to the budget about the \$39 million to buy new fire trucks throughout the state of Victoria. Those of us representing country Victoria welcome that — we think that is great news — but we were not told at the time that again the majority of that \$39 million will be raised through increased fire levy duties that people will be paying on their insurance. In fact the government contribution to that \$39 million is something like only \$6 million. People have talked about the spin and the con of the government, and there are two examples where there has been such spin and where the people of Victoria have been duped into believing this government is more generous than it really is.

I will mention a couple of things about education. The first thing I acknowledge is that some good things for education have happened in the Victorian budget. I refer the house to the flier that was in the budget edition of *Education News*, and I particularly want to mention while the Minister for Information and Communication Technology is in the chamber the increased amount allocated for information technology in schools. There will be an extra \$30.5 million boost for information

technology, including faster Internet connections to more than 300 schools. The minister would know that I have raised this in particular on behalf of Yarram in my community. Hopefully some of that money is going to go that way to improve Internet connections, because I know a school principal in Yarram who, when he receives an email with an attachment, has to set the computer to open the attachment, walk away for 15 minutes and then come back to find the attachment open. We really do need to improve Internet connections to our schools.

There are some good things happening in the education budget, but one of the things I am really disappointed about is the conclusion this year of the Star 6 program, 2004 being the last year it will be in operation. The Star 6 program provided for concession admission for all grade 6 students in the state to visit the Planetarium and Scienceworks, but more importantly it provided travel concessions. I am once again looking at the flier that appeared in the *Education News*, which shows that part of this program was to reimburse travel costs for rural and regional schools, enabling grade sixers to come down to Melbourne for an excursion to visit Scienceworks. But those grade sixers did not just go to Scienceworks; they often came here to the Parliament or visited the Melbourne Cricket Ground or the National Gallery of Victoria. They had a whole range of activities, and it was a great program. I know the funding for that program came from the Community Support Fund, but nevertheless that fund is part of government responsibility as well.

This was one of the best programs to help broaden the experiences of country students. Many of those kids did not get to Melbourne on a regular basis. I know of one kid whose trip to Melbourne as part of the Star 6 program was the first time he had ever been to the city. He is probably an exception, but for many kids it was a great opportunity to have a whole range of different experiences they would not normally get at home. Unfortunately this year is the last year this program will be in place, and I call on the government to come back to funding it. The program finishes at the end of this year, so in the remaining six or seven months perhaps we can find a means of funding it on an ongoing basis, because it is one of the important education programs for country students.

I also want to quickly mention in terms of education the allocation of capital works funding. While acknowledging that this government has followed on from the last government in terms of putting significant resources into capital works programs in schools, we are still struggling to keep up with need. Some of the schools in my area are now starting to question the

allocation of capital works funding. Notwithstanding my appreciation for capital works funding at some of the schools in my electorate, I know some school communities were rather concerned that schools like Glen Waverley Secondary College were the beneficiaries of \$7.8 million in funding, yet that school seems to be far better resourced than many of the schools in country Victoria. I am not questioning whether there is a need for that funding for Glen Waverley Secondary College and I am not criticising that funding, but I would like to know the process by which funding is actually allocated, because I strongly believe it should be based on need and not, for example, on an equal allocation of funding for every education region.

Unfortunately I have not had time to mention in 15 minutes some of the other things I wanted to talk about. I wanted to say some good things about health, but I also wanted to mention that in a \$2 billion boost to health over a four-year period there does not appear to be sufficient funding — or even \$1 million — to help out Bairnsdale Regional Health Service. I am also disappointed there is no provision in the budget for an extension of the multipurpose taxi program. That has been a farce, and if that program is not extended it will severely disadvantage many people in country Victoria.

**Ms CARBINES** (Geelong) — I am absolutely delighted to be able to contribute to the debate on the budget, with its Growing Victoria Together and Putting Families First initiatives. In doing so I would like to congratulate Treasurer Brumby on an excellent budget. It continues to build on the Bracks government's key priorities of education, health, community safety, community services and the environment.

As a member for Geelong Province, I can say that our province fared extremely well from this year's budget, to which I am sure my colleague the Honourable John Eren would attest, and I am very proud of — —

**Hon. J. H. Eren** interjected.

**Ms CARBINES** — Yes, I am very, very pleased about what has been allocated to the city and to the region in which I live.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms CARBINES** — Yes, I think it has a lot to do with the excellent members who represent Geelong in both the lower and upper houses. Of the \$1 billion allocated in the state budget for regional Victoria, one-quarter was allocated to Geelong, so the government is further delivering on its election promises in Geelong. In fact an article in the *Age* of

5 May, the day after the budget, was headlined 'Geelong a big winner in health, schools and road building'. I will quote a little bit from the article. It states:

Regional and rural Victoria will reap a \$1 billion windfall from yesterday's budget, with roads, education and health the key areas to benefit.

Geelong was a conspicuous winner after Treasurer John Brumby committed to funding major road and health care projects for Victoria's second city.

...

In a pre-budget briefing Mr Brumby agreed that Geelong was the obvious beneficiary of the government's largesse. 'Last year Geelong probably thought they were underdone (in the budget). This year they've done very well'...

My word, we have done very well. In fact the *Geelong Advertiser* — the voice of Geelong — of Wednesday, 5 May, had a headline on pages 6 and 7 which read, 'Geelong's turn, as Bracks spends up', and it went through every one of the budget items in relation to Geelong. I will come back to what it had to say.

The big-ticket item for Geelong in the state budget was the \$186 million allocated for the Geelong ring-road. This builds on the \$4.1 million that was allocated in the last budget for the planning and design of the road. This ring-road is much needed in greater Geelong. Latrobe Terrace, which is the main thoroughfare through Geelong, carries some 40 000-odd vehicles a day. It becomes a very choked arterial through our city, and we very much need a ring-road. The Bracks government has been the only government to put this ring-road on the agenda — the only government that has been prepared to commit to the people of Geelong and put its money where its mouth is. We are very pleased to see the allocation of this funding in the budget, and we are pleased to support the Westconnect campaign that is being run by five regional councils — City of Greater Geelong, Borough of Queenscliffe, Surf Coast Shire, Shire of Golden Plains and Shire of Colac-Otway — which are intensely lobbying the federal government to match the state government's commitment to the people of our region. I call on the federal government to match our \$190 million commitment to the Geelong ring-road. We have had the Prime Minister in Geelong twice in the last few weeks, and he has completely ignored this issue. Geelong residents will remember that when it comes time to record their vote in the ballot box later this year.

One of the major Geelong items in the budget was a \$50 million allocation to the Grace McKellar Centre, which is a very important aged care facility in Geelong. It is an aged care facility that Geelong residents care very deeply about. It played a major part in my election

and the election of Ian Trezise in the other place in 1999, because the Kennett government wanted to privatise the centre — it was ready to sell it off. The Geelong people said they did not want the Grace McKellar Centre sold off, as so many of the state's services were sold off under the Kennett government. They said, 'No, we have had enough. We do not want the Grace McKellar Centre sold off'.

Our government has set about renovating the Grace McKellar Centre to make sure it is up to accreditation standards, with an allocation of \$50 million to provide 153 new beds, a new kitchen, a community centre, a new cafe, new roads and a parking area. I record my thanks to Minister Jennings for his work in making sure that was in this year's budget.

In the budget we also saw \$18 million allocated to the Andrew Love Cancer Centre in Geelong. It was a 2002 election commitment and will provide two new radiotherapy bunkers as well as increased accommodation facilities and increased parking for patients and their visitors. It is a very important announcement for Geelong and has been extremely well received. I will quote from the *Geelong Advertiser* of 4 May. Professor Philip Bell, the head of the Andrew Love centre, is quoted as saying:

'I'm delighted, it's absolutely needed' ...

'It's recognition that we're doing a lot more work than we have done previously and that the refurbishment of the centre is needed to bring it into line for the treatment of the patients'.

That is fantastic.

I was also pleased to see an allocation for the building of a new school for Barwon Valley School. Barwon Valley is a very important school in Geelong serving some very disadvantaged students and their families. It has lobbied long and hard for a new facility because at the moment it is in very cramped, leased facilities down near the Barwon River, and prior to the last election the government committed to building a new school. I record my thanks to Peter Symons, the principal, for the hard work he does on behalf of his students and their families, and for the assiduous lobbying he has done over the last few years. He wrote me a very nice letter after the budget, which says:

On behalf of our school community I would like to thank you for your support in progressing our request and for being available when we needed to talk.

I was very pleased to receive that letter from Peter Symons and look forward to seeing that facility being constructed and the students and teachers being able to move in.

In the budget we also saw an allocation of \$7.5 million for the site acquisition and construction of the Torquay police station. Again this was an election commitment and very important to the fast-growing areas of Torquay and Jan Juc in my electorate. I know that local residents will be very pleased to see that constructed.

We also saw the announcement of upgrades for Lara Primary School, Bellbrae Primary School and Grovedale Secondary College. Over the last five years we have upgraded many of the schools in Geelong. I noticed from yesterday's *Hansard* that the Honourable David Koch accused the government of pork-barrelling Geelong because we are upgrading schools and building better facilities. It is rather ironic coming from a member of this place who has recently made an effort to advertise in the *Geelong Advertiser* as a member for Western Province, and I am not sure why. Then yesterday in the Parliament he bagged Geelong and the projects that the government has supported across Geelong. I think he needs to have a good, hard look at himself. Certainly the people of Geelong will be reminded of the statements in years to come, so I think Mr Koch ought to think twice before he makes such statements in this place because John Eren and myself are listening.

I was very pleased to see the allocation for the \$5000 first home buyers grant, which is very important to not only Geelong but first home buyers across the state. It will greatly increase access for them into the market. The price of a home is a huge cost. It is probably the biggest investment any one of us makes, and I know that this \$5000 is very welcome indeed.

We heard a little bit about concessions mentioned in various contributions today and yesterday. I applaud the government for its concessions package. The education maintenance allowance is very much needed, and the announcement on that will be very warmly received by schools and parents alike. The allowance has not been increased for about two decades.

The rates rebate issue has been very hot in my electorate. Constituents of mine have complained for a long time that the \$135 rebate was not enough, that no government had increased it since the early 1980s and that successive governments had ignored the issue. I was very pleased to see in the budget that the rates rebate will be lifted by \$25 to \$160, and the indexation of the rebate is very welcome indeed. An article from the *Geelong Advertiser* of 29 April headed 'Pensioner, veterans rates break' states:

Thousands of pensioner households in the City of Greater Geelong will receive increased concessions on their next rates bill.

We are increasing the concession from \$135 to \$160, and we received an endorsement from the mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Ed Coppe, who the article states:

... welcomed the move, which the city has been pushing for in recent years.

Cr Coppe said the government announcement was 'terrific news' for the 20 266 residents of the municipality listed as beneficiaries of the rebate.

'We've been lobbying the government for some time to have the rate increased', he said.

'This is very heartening and it's a tribute to the government that it has seen fit to extend a helping hand to this very deserving section of the community'.

That has been very warmly received in Geelong.

Another issue which has been warmly received in Geelong has been the government's addressing of the land tax issue, where we have provided land tax relief of \$1 billion over five years. I know that caravan park owners in my electorate have been very concerned about land tax. I have had a number of discussions with Mr John Wynn, who owns Wynndean, the caravan park in Ocean Grove, and when we announced the land tax relief he rang my office and left a very complimentary message for me thanking me for my work in this matter. He was quoted in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 21 April as saying that he was:

... forced to closed 100 sites because of land tax during the Kennett years ...

And that he —

... welcomed the announcement.

'They have not solved the problem, they have certainly taken a number of steps in the right direction,' Mr Wynn said.

He was very pleased to see our government addressing the land tax issue. I know that it is something that he has lobbied long and hard about, and I was very pleased that he took the opportunity to ring me and thank me for what the government has done in this regard. I know it will make a real difference to a number of the caravan park operators in the electorate of Geelong Province.

I am very proud of this budget. It builds on our very healthy record of managing the state's finances very well, of restoring services that were completely eroded under the Kennett government, restoring services to schools, putting teachers back into schools, restoring health services, employing nurses, building on community safety and making sure we have more police on our roads. We have a brand-new 24-hour police station at Ocean Grove which is up and operating

and which was an election commitment from the first election we won. We now have money in this budget for a second, brand-new police station at Torquay, which is very much needed. We have \$186 million allocated for the Geelong ring-road, which is a major issue in Geelong, and we need the federal government to commence it as soon as possible. It was very disappointing that in the federal budget a couple of weeks ago there was no mention of the Geelong ring-road. Geelong people will not forget that — Stewart McArthur is in danger of losing his seat over the issue. I predict that Mr McArthur will lose his seat, and we will have Peter McMullen as the next member for Corangamite.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** (Higinbotham) — In rising to speak on the budget I do not think you can go beyond putting on record that this is the highest taxing budget in Victoria's history.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** — Shame!

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — Although it is shameful, on the one hand I think it is doubly shameful because we have an anticipation that most budgets will be larger than the last — which is one of the things that happens because of two fundamental factors: revenue grows as a result of the velocity of the turnover or an increase in the activity of the economy through growth of gross state product (GSP), growth of population, and an increase in general activity. On the other hand the budget also grows through bracket creep. The Bracks government has been a massive beneficiary of growth from increased velocity, which has come from a growing budget that has been basically manufactured and husbanded by the federal government in Canberra.

If you look at what has happened throughout the world, there has been a very significant downturn in the United States of America — they are starting to pick up again but for a couple of years they were down. Europe was down and Japan has been down for a long time, but throughout all these combinations of cyclic slow-downs in other parts of the world the Liberal federal government kept Australia's economy booming at a fantastic level and the Bracks government has been a beneficiary of that boom — there is no doubt about that.

The result this year is that the extra take on the budget is something like 50 per cent more than the last Stockdale budget. This government is taking 50 per cent more than the last Liberal government, and there is no way that can be simply explained by an increase in velocity or an increase of activity. You cannot explain that size of increase through GSP, inflation or

population growth — there is no way that all those factors can add up to a 50 per cent growth in taxation. Therefore the impact is all about bracket creep. It is all about pushing people into higher levels of taxation. Victorian households are paying something like \$2200 more on average than they were at the time of the last Stockdale budget.

This is a real impost on Victorians, and it is not just reflected in increased activity. For example, the land tax estimate in 2004–05 is \$917 million, which is close to a 150 per cent increase in land tax since Labor took office, which is nothing short of a disgrace and can only be explained as bracket creep. Stamp duty for 2004–05 will be \$2.54 billion, which is an increase of 150 per cent since Labor took office, and some of that is a result of increased activity but most of it is bracket creep.

Stamp duty in Victoria is now 126 per cent more than the national average and these are facts. It does not matter to what extent members interject, these are the facts. The government is the major beneficiary of the economic growth of Australia. So what does a prudent government do when it has this level of money? It involves itself in tax cuts, to give some of that money back to the people — and there is plenty of money there for land tax.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — Yes, you can say you have given some measly reductions in land tax but not even in one year does the land tax take go back.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! I remind members that interjections are disorderly. Other members have been able to make their budget addresses without this level of interjection.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — There is no question that land tax brackets should be adjusted. No action at all has been taken to try to readjust the brackets in relation to stamp duty. You could argue that some of that has been given back in added benefits, and the government has made much of its \$400 million new concession packages as part of the budget, but let us look at that \$400 million. You take \$280 million out of that as cuts from existing programs, like the unconscionable reduction of pensioner rates for motor registration, and it leaves you with theoretically \$120 million of new money. That is \$120 million over four years — that is \$30 million per year increase in concessions. That will barely keep pace with inflation and population growth, that is all it will do, so there is hardly any new money.

You ask where the money has gone? Let us look at where it has gone: a lot of it has gone into employee entitlements plus superannuation. There has been about a 43 per cent increase in employee entitlements and superannuation since Labor came to office.

In terms of numbers, the latest report from the Office of Public Employment for 2002–03 shows a 23 per cent increase in the number of public servants. These are public servants, these are not people working in line like police, teachers and people working in hospitals. The Bracks government brags about the extra 900 police it has put on, but for each 100 extra police it has put on, it has employed over 600 public servants. That is why it has a corruption problem and its priorities are wrong. It should be putting on police, not public servants; that is what it should be doing.

The waste goes on and on, with \$60 million wasted on the ambulance royal commission; with \$70 million on Seal Rocks in trying to cut off — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! It is very difficult for Hansard to hear when those voices are yelling across the chamber.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — The minister is part of the \$80 million Melbourne Cricket Ground deal to appease the unions, to try to keep the unions — —

**Hon. J. M. Madden** interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister!

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — And Docklands studios is another waste of money which already is being subsidised. Given the budget surplus — —

**Hon. J. M. Madden** interjected.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — The minister asks if I want to close the state down. No, I do not. The point I am making is there are huge amounts of money. The revenue has gone up by 50 per cent since this government has been in office. I am saying that it should use it properly and not waste it. We cannot believe what the government says. It has huge amounts of money which it did not earn and it is about time some of it was given back to Victoria.

If we look at this year, 2003–04, at the reported surplus, we see that the government is not prepared to be honest. It cannot be believed. The government reports a surplus of \$432 million, but that is after it accrues \$1.25 billion

of expenditure from the smelter reduction levy. It has all been brought through into the current year and then taken off. If not for that amount the budget surplus would have been \$1.7 billion. Why is the government hiding it? Because it is not prepared to admit it has that amount of money because people will ask, ‘How are you using it? Why are you wasting it? Why not give some of it back in tax relief?’ If you were honest and said you had a \$1.7 billion surplus, the community would demand some of it back. You have hidden it; that is what you have done, and you cannot be believed.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Strong must address the Chair, and there is too much noise in the chamber. I ask the member to keep to his speech and address the Chair and not be distracted by — —

**Hon. J. M. Madden** — Settle down, Chris!

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Minister!

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — It is very hard to address the Chair when you are being yelled at by some sort of large idiot from across the way.

**Hon. J. H. Eren** — On a point of order, Deputy President, what the member just said is highly offensive. I do not normally raise points of order, but I ask the member to withdraw.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Strong, on the point of order.

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** — I am happy to retract ‘large idiot’. I will amend that to a large loud mouth; and we know he is a loud mouth.

The real risk to the budget is not the global economy. The point I have tried to make is that the global economy for Australia has been well managed by the federal government, and there is every indication that it will continue to boom along. If it continues to boom along then there is no potential risk, as I see it, to the budget from those external issues.

The problem for the budget comes from internally manufactured problems. The sad truth of the matter is Victoria is an older economy compared to states like Queensland. There is the sun-belt phenomenon which is a long-term issue and which has been going on for quite some time. It is where industries migrate north to the warmth, or in Europe they migrate south to the warmth. For a quick moment in time under the Kennett government we managed to reverse this internal migration. However, the long-term historic trend is now set in place. Unless we have the settings right, then we

will gradually grind our own economy into the dirt by our own efforts.

Let me highlight how I think this is happening. The truth of the matter is it is a constant fight to stay ahead. If we stand still we will go backwards. If we look at the latest Telstra Sensis survey we start to see a little bit of that. The survey found that the profitability for small and medium-sized businesses in Victoria has fallen to the lowest in the country, slipping 17 points below the national average. Business confidence in Victoria dropped 4 percentage points in the quarter — that is, 4 percentage points below the national average. The report goes on to say that Sensis chief economist, Steven Shepherd, said Victoria was below average on all indicators measuring the health of small businesses.

It is essential that if we are to maintain a healthy budget — and I do not think it matters on which side of the house we are, we want to do that — we have to do a lot more in our budgets to ensure the health of the economy, of small and large business in this state, because unless we have a vibrant economy and unless we are able to make sure that we can ride on the back of the growth and the well-managed economy given to us by the federal government, then we will kick an own goal and go backwards. I do not think we are at that point yet, but we are getting very close. We need to start to give some of that money back to taxpayers.

How can government members say in all conscience that in their five years in government they have not increased taxation by half again to what it was before? They simply cannot keep doing that. They will have to give some of that back, otherwise it will have a detrimental effect on this economy. If you slow up this economy then you have killed the goose that lays the golden egg. My plea is to not let that happen. You have a huge budget surplus, a real budget surplus of \$1.7 billion; give some of it back to business to keep the goose laying the golden egg. That way we will all be protected.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** (Geelong) — I am pleased to speak on the Appropriation (2004/2004) Bill. I start my contribution by quoting the Treasurer, Mr Brumby, who said in his budget speech:

Today's budget delivers real benefits for all Victorians — wherever they live and whatever they do, from the suburbs of Melbourne to our regional cities towns and communities.

**Ms Mikakos** — Especially Geelong.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — Especially Geelong, Ms Mikakos. Mr Brumby was spot on the money. This is a good budget for Victoria, particularly from my

electorate's perspective; this is an excellent budget for Geelong. It is the Labor government's fifth budget, and it again concentrates on and delivers major investments in schools, hospitals and services that Victorians value, need and use in their daily lives. It also generates new opportunities, higher standards of living and a better quality of life for all Victorians.

The proof is in the pudding when it comes to this government's economic performance and financial leadership, because there has been strong and consistent economic growth. This state's unemployment rate has been below the national average for the past 46 months; per capita business investment has been above the national average with a strong surplus in 2004–05 and the following three years; and importantly, we have had building approvals worth more than \$1 billion for 32 consecutive months, with approvals in regional areas at their highest level on record. It clearly demonstrates the Bracks government's commitment to regional Victoria, and we will continue to fulfil our election promises over the four-year term of this government.

I was particularly impressed with the achievements of our government last year in my first year as a member of Parliament. We achieved a great deal, but all things considered I believe this is an even better budget for the Geelong region. It delivers on a number of levels, which I will speak about later. It shows this government is committed to all Victoria and not just metropolitan Melbourne, which was one of the many failings of the previous Liberal-National coalition government.

One only has to point out that about \$1 billion is being spent in regional Victoria in this budget, and Geelong is receiving well over a quarter of this funding. It clearly demonstrates the government is governing for the entire state — a fantastic achievement indeed!

Other than the individual achievements in Geelong, which I will outline later, Geelong will also share in statewide commitments. The theme of the budget is putting families first. In the 2004–05 budget there is a great boost to children's health services, to protect vulnerable children and to assist families with schooling costs, health care and housing.

There is also a record investment in infrastructure. The total amount of money spent in 2004–05 is expected to be a record \$2.9 billion, with \$10 billion in infrastructure spending over the next four years.

The government is also investing in a healthier Victoria. As part of a \$2 billion-plus health boost, an extra \$1.6 billion will be injected into the health system

over the next four years to meet rising demand and put hospitals on a more sustainable footing.

I am delighted about the news that public dental funding will increase by a record \$97.2 million over the next four years to employ more dentists, install more dental chairs and expand a range of services.

The government is building a smarter Victoria. An extra \$486.3 million in education funding in the 2004–05 budget brings to \$4.4 billion the total additional investment in education since the Bracks government came to office.

In terms of the government making our community safer, a four-year, \$175.6 million budget boost will increase capacity at the Victoria Police forensic science department. It will purchase state-of-the-art surveillance and IT equipment, increase proactive street policing and boost counter-terrorism initiatives.

The government is driving business investment and fostering jobs growth. The Bracks government's major economic statement, *Victoria — Leading the Way*, released recently, sets out a practical blueprint to cut business costs, create jobs, drive investment and make Victoria more competitive.

Another important announcement is the first home buyers cash grant of \$5000 for people purchasing a home up to the value of \$500 000. This is in addition to the current \$7000 federal first home buyer grant, which is now funded from the state budget. The removal of stamp duty on mortgages saves an average home buyer around \$1000.

Other budget announcements include: funding for an extra 900 nurses and 250 new teachers; \$50 million for public housing; and the list goes on and on.

Health is a big winner in this budget, especially for Geelong, and I pick out three achievements: \$50 million for the redevelopment of the Grace McKellar Centre, with \$7 million to resite the kitchen at the Geelong Hospital to enable expansion of the emergency department — —

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** — That's a fudge!

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — It is not a fudge, Mr Davis. What is not a fudge is that \$50 million has been allocated to the Grace McKellar Centre. That is not a fudge. Under your previous government, Mr Davis — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT**

**(Hon. J. G. Hilton)** — Order! Through the Chair, Mr Eren.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — I am sorry, Acting President, but I am being seriously provoked.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** interjected.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — If the opposition were in government, the Grace McKellar Centre would not exist. And that is half the problem!

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT**

**(Hon. J. G. Hilton)** — Order! Mr Davis will have his turn.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — This government has allocated \$18 million for the Andrew Love Cancer Centre at the Geelong Hospital, and it has committed to fund the expansion of the Geelong ambulance station.

The opposition has tried to find fault with the budget, especially in terms of health care, but its attempts were futile. Deep down, opposition members know that it is a great budget.

The Geelong public have long memories, and they remember that the previous Liberal–National coalition was ready to sell off the Grace McKellar Centre had it been re-elected. That is why Geelong residents were so happy to hear that the Bracks Labor government had committed the funding for the centre, thereby ensuring its future as a top, state-of-the-art aged care facility in the region.

Cancer services also received a boost with the announcement of \$18 million for the Andrew Love Cancer Centre at Geelong Hospital. I have been to this facility and seen the great work done there. The top medical staff at the facility deserve to be praised for their work and this newly announced money for Andrew Love will mean that Geelong residents will receive good medical care when they need it.

Further budget announcements relating to Geelong — and these may take some time to list — include a new Torquay police station, part of a \$20.4 million statewide program; \$4.6 million for a replacement school for the Barwon Valley Special School; \$2.03 million for the modernisation of Lara Primary School; \$1.15 million for the modernisation of Bellbrae Primary School; \$0.88 million for the modernisation of Grovedale Primary School; \$0.76 million for the stage 2 modernisation of Iramoo Primary School; \$0.65 million

for the renovation of facilities in Belmont for vulnerable children; \$0.34 million for renovation of facilities in Newcomb for vulnerable children; and \$93 500 Schoolyard Blitz funding for schoolyard improvement projects across the whole region.

The biggest achievement in this budget, as my colleague Elaine Carbines said, and the one that has received the most attention in Geelong, has been the allocation of \$185.9 million for the Geelong ring-road project. Unfortunately Canberra has yet to meet its responsibility for the road.

**An honourable member** — Shame!

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — It is an absolute shame, and I call on the federal government to cough up its half of the money for the ring-road project. The Bracks Labor government is the only government that is willing to support the wider community in Geelong by committing that money to the Geelong ring-road, and I am very proud to be a part of that government. The Bracks Labor government understands that the west connect is imperative for the future not only of the Geelong region but the western districts of Victoria.

I do not understand for the life of me why the federal government is not living up to its responsibilities in western Victoria to fund this ring-road, but I must congratulate all those involved in the campaign, including all the councils surrounding Geelong, which are trying very hard to convince this federal government. I do not want to be a cynic, but I hope the federal government is not playing politics by leaving this announcement to very late this year so that we assume that it may fund this road once it calls an election — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — Absolutely. I do not think the Prime Minister had visited the good seat of Corangamite since 1984, yet he has recently visited it on two occasions in two weeks! That is an indication that all is not right in Corangamite. The Labor candidate in Corangamite is doing a terrific job. I hope he will be the new representative and that the people of Corangamite will see through the politics that are being played with this road. Even when the election is called, whenever that is, the people will see through that and they will still vote Labor.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** interjected.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — I will take up that interjection. I can assure Mr Davis that the only people who do backflips in this house are members of the opposition.

We saw many backflips during the Kennett years, and Mr Davis was part of that government. I can say right here and now that there will be no tolls for the Geelong ring-road, so I hope that answers Mr Davis's question. I also recommend that if Mr Davis has any influence over the federal government, he should put in a call to whichever faction he is with, whether it be the Costello faction or whichever. I suggest he call Mr Costello, the person with the purse strings, and suggest to him that the people of the Western District and Geelong desperately need this road.

**Hon. D. McL. Davis** interjected.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — I suggest if you want to be helpful on this occasion, Mr Davis, instead of — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT**  
(**Hon. J. G. Hilton**) — Order! Through the Chair.

**Hon. J. H. EREN** — I apologise, Acting President. I am being seriously provoked here. If Mr Davis wants to be helpful on this occasion to the people of Geelong and if other Liberal members down that way want to be helpful, then instead of whingeing about how much money Geelong is getting in this budget I suggest they get in touch with their federal colleague — namely, Mr Costello — and stress to him the importance of this road for the Geelong people.

Once again I would like to say that this is a budget that fully delivers for the Geelong region and I am very proud to support it.

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** (Koonung) — There are some aspects of this budget that are commendable. The government has provided in some areas a number of initiatives that the opposition welcomes. However, in some cases those initiatives simply seek to address areas that have been left lagging for some time.

A point I make to illustrate that is the forensic laboratory. It is interesting that the government has claimed that as one of its major initiatives in this budget. It is certainly a welcome initiative, but it is also a long overdue one. One of the issues to do with policing in this state is that a number of prosecutions were in danger of collapsing simply because the existing facilities and resources provided by the government for police forensic work were inadequate to do the job, and delays in the processing of the materials that were important to a number of prosecutions put the success of those prosecutions at risk.

While this government has brought down a budget with a number of very positive initiatives, there is no doubt

that we should all move away from the spin of the government in selling this budget and look at the longer term trend, because this government is spending like a drunken sailor. There is no doubt that the government's expenditure patterns are becoming a matter of serious concern, particularly if there is to be any change in the economic conditions of Victoria. I note that the government forecast anticipates a very strong economic climate, but I believe some portents suggest we need to be more cautious than those forecasts would suggest.

If there were to be any correction at all, this government would be in some difficulty because since coming to office in 1999 its total expenditure has risen by 48.8 per cent. State spending has risen by \$19 billion to over \$28.4 billion in this budget year. That is a matter of concern. Frankly, not all of that spending is in the areas of extra teachers or extra nurses and those sorts of services that the opposition would believe are valuable services for the community that were worth further expenditure. The problem is the government does not seem to be able to manage its expenditure in most areas because those very appointments of extra police, teachers and nurses were factored into forward estimates in each of the three years that this government has brought down budgets, but in every one of those years this government has exceeded those budgets.

In 2000–01 the government budgeted for \$21.6 billion of expenditure and it went up to \$22.14 billion of expenditure, a \$561 million blow-out in expenses, despite planning for those extra people in essential service areas. The following year, 2001–02, the government's blow-out was \$2.13 billion, a budget projection of \$22.9 billion or just on \$23 billion that blew out to \$25 billion in that single year. The following year, 2002–03, the government's blow-out was \$1.63 billion, up from a projection of \$24.7 billion or \$24.8 billion to \$26.4 billion. The government now expects in 2003–04, the financial year leading into this budget, that expenditure will run at \$27.3 billion, which is \$945 million higher than was forecast just a year ago in the budget for that financial year, that figure having been \$26.3 billion.

That sort of trend is unsustainable; there is not a single year when that budget has not blown out. The blow-outs are significant: \$561 million for 2000–01, \$2.13 billion for 2001–02, \$1.63 billion for 2002–03 and \$945 million for 2003–04. Whilst we have extra teachers, extra nurses and extra police the cost was — or ought to have been, if the government was prudent in managing the state's finances — factored into the budget estimates, and it should not be part of the budget blow-outs. So where is this extra level of spending by

the government? It is certainly not evident, for instance, in capital projects.

The economic statement that came out was designed to rescue the government's credibility as a do-nothing government; as a government that was facing a very significant fall in confidence in the business community in particular and more broadly in the Victorian community. But a Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry survey taken in the period immediately preceding the economic statement outlines exactly that — that there was a lack of confidence. A more recent survey suggests that small business is now suffering from smaller profits, from a decrease in profitability. That is a serious portent for this government, and particularly as it is a government that does not seem to be able to control its expenditure.

The government's income, as was mentioned by other speakers, has gone up by more than a third since 1999 — a very rapid increase in such a few short years. Obviously it has been fuelled by massive increases in stamp duty and land tax, and by increases in fees and charges. That might well have rescued the government given its spending patterns, but it is a matter of serious concern and it is unsustainable in the longer term. At this point in time most Victorian families are at least \$2200 worse off under Labor. Whilst this is said to be a family-friendly budget, I suggest that it has hit their hip pockets in a way that is anything but family friendly. Many pensioners are not enamoured with the government's claims about how it has provided extra benefits in this budget for them with the arrangements it has made on motor registration as a trade-off for the concessions it has made on local government rates.

Tax revenue is the highest it has ever been in Victoria. Notwithstanding some of the concessions in the economic statement that was brought down shortly before the budget, those concessions, that return of tax funding, represents an opportunity cost from the government in terms of further increases being returned to business rather than any attempt to reduce actual spending and income going to the government. The government continues to slug Victorians, and particularly businesses, with very high taxes and charges, and as we know from legislation that was passed through this house in this session, fees and charges will now be indexed and will automatically increase every year. This means that the government will continue to look for money to fund its drunken-sailor spending.

I am particularly concerned about some issues that affect my electorate, some of which are no doubt shared by members in other electorates. One issue specific to

my area is a promise by the government at the last election to underground the Middleborough Road crossover with the Belgrave–Lilydale railway line. In this budget the government has provided \$1.2 million for further studies of that particular proposal, but it has provided no funding for that proposal in future years. The government has been rather deceitful with respect to this project, because I do not believe it has anything to do with appropriate traffic movements in the eastern suburbs that might have an impact on other roads such as Blackburn Road or Springvale Road. I think this road project is designed by the government purely and simply as a ring-road proposal for the Box Hill business centre. That has significant ramifications for many residents who live in that area.

I am concerned about the impact of this budget, and in particular the government's failure to provide adequately for school maintenance programs. All the schools in my electorate are reporting a decrease in their maintenance funding under physical resource management system funding; and I am sure that other members who contact schools in their electorates will find that they receive similar complaints. I have a number of schools in my electorate with very serious maintenance issues that represent a danger to people using them. There is certainly a danger to students, but also to teachers and visitors to those schools. For instance, at the Springview Primary School concrete slabs are falling off the wall. The principal of that school has had to use witches hats to keep kids away from that wall during school hours in an attempt to avert a possible accident resulting from the deterioration of that wall. The school community has been told that the problem might be fixed as a temporary measure and not to the extent that is needed, but even then the school will have to come up with one-third of the funding from its existing maintenance budget. Considering the level of work involved in this project and how serious it is in a safety sense, that is simply not on. Nunawading Primary School has a similar situation with workplace safety issues as far as the students are concerned with the bitumen in its quadrangle area.

School global budgets are also being pinched by this government's management of its WorkCover policies. It expects schools to assume responsibility for WorkCover and for new regulations that schools are expected to deliver, such as the occupational health and safety requirements on the use of ladders and so forth in schools. This is all adding to the administration costs of these schools and yet their budgets are not reflecting any increase in that circumstance.

I welcome the increased support for dental services based in Box Hill in my electorate. That is a very positive initiative by the government and an important initiative for the local community, but I am generally dismayed by the level of funding for some other services within the area. The Angliss Hospital has a number of issues that might well have been addressed by this government in its budget funding, and that includes the asbestos problem that has already been raised by the Honourable David Davis, but there has been no provision in this budget for those matters.

In terms of my small business and sport and recreation portfolio responsibilities, I will continue to monitor the budget provisions and the government's outputs against those budget provisions.

I notice with alarm that one area of overspending by the government is in the small business department. The Minister for Small Business had an allocation in 2003–04 of \$6.2 million. She overspent it by 25 per cent at \$8.3 million. That is not a lot of money in the scheme of things in this budget context, but when asked in this house about that overspending, the minister could not even put a finger on why her budget had blown out by 25 per cent. Frankly at \$8.3 million I think she could almost have sat in her office and counted every one of those dollars to figure out where or what they were, because in budget terms that is not a lot of money but this minister has absolutely no understanding of the detail. While she has been happy to put out press releases on the IT initiatives of the government, as was pointed out in question time today, she has absolutely no understanding of cost overruns in those areas as well. So these budget allocations by the minister have not been properly administered by the government.

I certainly look forward to the Business Master Key program, which is going to be an important one for small business. I do not know whether, as the minister for IT and such an influential person in the IT sector, she has actually tried to use the government business web site. It is a fairly difficult web site to access. Certain current initiatives are posted on that web site and are fairly easy to follow and to access, but for information that is not part of the latest public relations campaign, when you try to access that web site you find it very difficult to find the information that you need from the department. I am concerned as many of my colleagues are about the lack of accountability that seems to run with that same presentation in the web site. So I look forward to the Business Master Key program and hope that it achieves the process of making it easier for small businesses to navigate

government services and to obtain more information about them.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. C. D. HIRSH (Silvan).**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

## SURVEYING BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Received from Assembly.**

**Read first time on motion of Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation).**

## TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Received from Assembly.**

**Read first time on motion of Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government).**

## TREASURY AND FINANCE LEGISLATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Received from Assembly.**

**Read first time for Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) on motion of Ms Broad.**

## ARCHITECTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Introduction and first reading*

**Received from Assembly.**

**Read first time on motion of Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation).**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

## Government: purchasing policy

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I have an issue I wish to raise for Minister Lenders in his capacity as the Minister for Finance. I wish to make a request of the minister. It goes to the Victorian government's ethical purchasing policy which was released in December last year. The guidelines are detailed and they are designed to ensure that assessments for tenders against the ethical employment standard are conducted fairly and consistently.

The ministers' foreword, because it was signed not only by the Minister for Finance but by the Minister for Industrial Relations who is also the Minister for WorkCover, states:

The government's ethical purchasing policy introduces checks on businesses that tender for government contracts. These checks will assess whether a business satisfies the government's ethical employment standard.

Given that this government does not understand the meaning of the word 'ethics', it is a bit rich that it is put onto the private sector. I know the Minister for Energy Industries would be well aware of this policy, given that it now applies to all tenders from 1 January onwards.

**Hon. T. C. Theophanous** interjected.

**Hon. BILL FORWOOD** — It is the Victorian government's ethical purchasing policy that applies to the purchasing of goods and services by departments from 1 January 2004.

My request of the minister is to make available to the house the work that was done on the analysis of how much this would cost in compliance, together with any other work that has been done in the four or five months since this ethical purchasing policy, designed to prop up the union movement, was introduced, and any other work that has been done to assess who has been stopped from selling goods to the government or who has been rejected in their tender because they failed to meet the Victorian government's ethical purchasing policy. As this paragraph makes clear:

... the Bracks government will provide minimum award employment standards to approximately 350 000 low-paid Victorian employees. This legislation, along with industrial relations initiatives by the government, means that the ethical employment standard can be assessed against compliance with legislated entitlements.

The request is that I want to know how many of the people selling goods and services or tendering to the state government are failing to meet compliance with the legislative entitlements?

### **Housing: homeless youth**

**Hon. S. M. NGUYEN** (Melbourne West) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing regarding the first stage report entitled *Youth Homelessness Action Plan*. The Bracks government is committed to the housing needs of homeless youth. The report was presented during Housing Week, from 16 to 23 May. The report's key outcomes from the first stage report identify 67 actions which are grouped under one of four key areas of improvement: developing preventive approaches; strengthening pathways to independence; developing the homelessness service system; and responding effectively to client needs.

The key outcomes from the first stage report include the rollout of new models to help young people make the move to independence, including an initiative targeted at young people leaving care; new approaches on family mediation that will focus on young people who have been out of home for more than six months; and targeted responses of housing support and other assistance to enable young people with high needs.

They are matters that will help many young people. The final report will be completed in 2004. The Bracks government is keen on helping people in need. In recent days the minister launched a scholarship for young public housing tenants. Will the minister report on how the report will help Melbourne West because my electorate has many people whose needs could be assisted by this report?

### **Liquor: code of conduct**

**Hon. B. N. ATKINSON** (Koonung) — I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. To this point there has been no move by the government to develop a liquor code of conduct as was promised by the government in 2001 when it introduced legislation to deal with changes to the liquor industry. At that time the then minister, the Minister for Small Business, indicated that the liquor code of conduct would be developed shortly thereafter following the passage of legislation and that it would be available to ensure a safety net, if you like, for independent liquor retailers.

That was in 2001 and we are now in the autumn session of 2004 — but no liquor code of conduct has been developed. Indeed, we have had other substantive legislation introduced to deregulate the industry further. A number of assurances have been given in regard to that. I wonder how confident we can be about the process for the acquisition of independent retailers by chains as outlined by the minister when we dealt with

the legislation in 2002. Is that legislation operating as expected in regard to making sure that the chains have an appropriate behaviour and are paying the right price when they look to acquire independent retailers in the process of the phased-out cap introduced by the legislation?

The legislation last year established a Small Business Commissioner who was to be responsible for overseeing the liquor code of conduct, yet at this point he has been in that position for 12 months but there is no code of conduct in place. Clearly he has had no review of the conduct of the liquor industry and whether independent retailers have been disadvantaged by government legislation or by the action of other competitors in that marketplace.

I seek the minister's urgent attention to the need to draft and then publish a liquor code of conduct so that the industry can be assured on where it should be going in the future, and the Small Business Commissioner can begin to — —

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

### **Bemm River: beach access**

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment in the other place concerning beach access at Bemm River. Bemm River is a coastal town some 450 kilometres from Melbourne. It is a small town that is completely reliant on tourism for its income and financial stability.

If anybody has ever been to Bemm River, they will know that it is not only a magnificent fishing venue which is very popular with recreational fishing people but that it is also equally popular for people who want to go and enjoy some of the natural environment of East Gippsland. It is bounded by the Croajingolong National Park to the east, Bemm River scenic reserve to the north, Bass Strait to the south and Cape Conran Coastal Park to the west. Cape Conran Coastal Park extends from Bemm River right through to Cape Conran.

While it seems that the western end of the Cape Conran Coastal Park is being well looked after and well managed and resourced by Parks Victoria — especially the Cape Conran cabins, which are a very popular holiday destination for people — it seems the same attention is not being applied to the east end of the coastal park at Bemm River. To get to some of the best and safest beaches around Bemm River you are

required to travel a distance of 11 kilometres from that small township to a place called Pearl Point, where there is a very safe family beach, and the access to that particular area of Pearl Point could best be described at the moment as a billygoat track. The track is totally under the responsibility and management of Parks Victoria as it goes through the coastal park, and the last maintenance on this track was done back in 2001. Some of us will know that dirt roads require a far greater frequency of maintenance than every three or four years. The condition of the track at the moment is deplorable.

The Bemm River community is renowned for its self-help. A couple of years ago I opened the local community centre, which had a very significant community contribution to its construction. The community is also actively involved in some improvement works at the moment. There is a youth initiative project about to be undertaken which will look at rehabilitating some of the sand dunes and the beach access around the Pearl Point area. Without a proper road to access these beaches, the people of Victoria are being denied access to one of the most beautiful and popular scenic and recreational locations along the east coast of Victoria.

My plea to the Minister for Environment, who is responsible for this area and for Parks Victoria, is to urgently consider the need for improving the access from Bemm River to Pearl Point. I urge him to make available the necessary funds to complete this very important work.

### **Parliament House: smoke-free policy**

**Hon. ANDREW BRIDSON** (Waverley) — I wish to raise an issue directly with you, President, and I have discussed the issue with you prior to the adjournment debate taking place. It is an occupational health and safety issue which I wish to raise with you, and it concerns smoking in the environs of Parliament House. Honourable members will know that this is the fourth time I have raised this issue. I am raising it for the second time this week because I have been encouraged by the response of colleagues from The Nationals, the Labor Party and my own party, and I have also been encouraged by members of staff; hence I am raising this issue today.

I request that you, President, and the Speaker, in consultation with Parliament's own occupational health and safety committee and with the heads of departments, implement a smoke-free policy and provide smokers with a designated smoking area. The area can be covered and it can be airconditioned or

whatever is necessary to make it as comfortable as possible for them, as long as it is away from the main building.

I have some fairly good people behind me who support the implementation of this policy. I refer to a decision made by the Australian Council of Trade Unions Congress in 2000, which adopted a position that no worker in Australia should be exposed to environmental smoke. I also take note that the hospitality union has had a smoke-free push for many years now for its members. I also put on the record that the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) recommended in December of 2002 that exposure to environmental tobacco smoke should be excluded in all Australian workplaces, and that this exclusion should be implemented as soon as possible. I would like the occupational health and safety committee to refer to the guidance note on the elimination of environmental tobacco smoke in the workplace, which can be downloaded from the NOHSC web site. That guidance note would be able to guide the committee in coming to a conclusion that it should adopt this policy, which not only I but many of my colleagues from all parties would like to see implemented.

President, I ask you to take this request on board, not just on my behalf but on behalf of all workers in the parliamentary precinct.

### **Commonwealth Games: community participation**

**Ms ROMANES** (Melbourne) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Honourable Justin Madden. The Sydney Road Brunswick Association represents retailers along Sydney Road. It has been very enterprising this week in putting a three-page supplement into the *Melbourne Times* which promotes the wonderful mix of cultures along Sydney Road, Brunswick, as well as the many features and shops that offer services to the public. It is very encouraging that the association and its members have recognised in this advertisement the potential of the Commonwealth Games in 2006. It states:

The games village for the Commonwealth Games in 2006 is going to be in close proximity to Sydney Road. The fact that the volume of tourists in this area is set to dramatically increase means there is a great opportunity for Sydney Road to steal some of the limelight when Melbourne takes centre stage.

The advertisement puts forward some ideas for changes that it might be worth while capitalising on as there will

possibly be that influx of visitors at the time of the games.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — Is it only possible?

**Ms ROMANES** — That will occur in Brunswick as well as the rest of Melbourne and Victoria. As a local member I am very pleased that the traders recognise the opportunity the games will provide. It is particularly pertinent because the games events will coincide with the annual Brunswick Music Festival, the annual Sydney Road community day and a whole lot of other things that will take place in the area. The local member in the lower house, the member for Brunswick, Carlo Carli, and I are keen to support these initiatives. I ask the minister to consider what special role there could be for the Sydney Road retailers, the Moreland City Council and other Brunswick facilities to play as a part of the Commonwealth Games festivities.

### **HM Prison Beechworth: closure**

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** (East Yarra) — I direct my query to the Minister for Corrections in the other place. It relates to the impending closure of the old Beechworth jail. We aware that the government is proceeding towards opening a new jail. I raise this issue in the context of concerns arising from the Auditor-General's report on public sector agencies, where the Auditor-General suggested there would be a delay in the permanent prison bed target until at least the middle of next year. He then went on at a particular point to suggest there would be a need to continue to operate prisons that are due to close — the old Beechworth jail, the old Bendigo jail and the Won Wron jail.

I raise this issue also in the context that we have since had the estimates hearings before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee at which it was put that the closure of these jails, and the old Beechworth jail in particular, would be substantially delayed given that there was a delay in the development of the new 600-bed remand centre at Ravenhall, or Deer Park, and the 300-bed correctional program at Lara until mid to late 2005. The minister indicated that there would be without question the closure of Won Wron and that the prisoners would be moved across to the new Beechworth jail — they would be transferred over. Will the minister take action by advising the people of Beechworth of the true date of the closure of the old Beechworth jail?

### **Benalla Auto Club: funding**

**Hon. R. G. MITCHELL** (Central Highlands) — This matter is for the attention of the Minister for Tourism in the other place, the Honourable John Pandazopoulos. The 2004 Australian Historic Motor Racing Festival is being held at the Winton Motor Raceway in October, and I urge the minister to take the necessary steps through Tourism Victoria to ensure the funding of the Benalla Auto Club to support various marketing activities associated with it.

The Australian Historic Motor Racing Festival is held annually at Winton motor racing circuit. This year it will include in excess of 200 cars competing in 30 events for over three days from 1 October to 3 October, as well as an exhibition of classic racing cars and a number of gala events. The festival program includes practice sessions, bus tours to the circuit and a gala celebrity function at the Benalla art gallery. There is also the official opening of the historic motor vehicles and memorabilia exhibition, an auction of sporting memorabilia, as well as the competition itself. The event is being managed by the Benalla Auto Club, which does a magnificent job in attracting both the participants and the crowds to attend. The club has certainly made the festival an excellent event that will bring people to the local community and provide a boost to the local economy, particularly for small businesses that rely on regional visitors.

The event has been identified as capable of attracting significant Melbourne and interstate-based visitation, as well as encouraging visitors to remain in the immediate region. The Winton motor racing circuit is an important component of regional tourism infrastructure, and we should provide every support to ensure that it remains the centre of local activity and that we do everything that we can to attract people to utilise it. This festival is expected to attract around 10 000 visitors.

The Benalla Auto Club requires assistance in the marketing of this event, and I commend its hard work in planning a strategy that will have a significant impact on this local and regional event. Funding of \$12 500 is required to support marketing, which includes the production of posters, advertising in the print media, regional television and radio in north-east Victoria, including in townships such as Albury, Wodonga and Shepparton, a comprehensive web site, information kits and a direct mail-out to specific populations.

Therefore I seek from the Minister for Tourism a reassurance for the communities in my electorate that he will take all necessary steps to ensure the funding of

the Benalla Auto Club to undertake all of these activities in support of this event.

### **Buses: Cranbourne–Dandenong**

**Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS** (Eumemmerring) — I would like to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport in the other place. It relates to the provision of bus services in the south-eastern suburbs. I have been approached by a constituent from Endeavour Hills regarding problems she has had with bus route 893, which is the Cranbourne–Dandenong service running via Hampton Park and Hallam.

Recently she was travelling on that bus with her three children aged 5 years, 3 years and 18 months, and I am sure members can appreciate how difficult it would be for a mother with three young children on a bus. She is complaining about the issue of overcrowding. On this particular occasion, because there were 20 to 30 people standing in the aisle and in the stairwell of the bus, as she and her children were getting off her five-year-old daughter had her arm caught in the door when the driver closed it, believing the passengers had got off the bus. The driver could not clearly see the door as there were so many people crowded onto the bus.

My constituent informs me that this is a regular occurrence, particularly with the afternoon services at around 3.30 p.m. or 4.00 p.m. because of the number of school students catching that service and also in the mornings for the same reason. My office has contacted Cranbourne Transit, which is responsible for running this service, and it has confirmed that there is an overcrowding problem, primarily because of students at school times. It has sought additional funding from the Department of Infrastructure for an extra service. I understand that one service was provided for St Johns College students in Dandenong to take off some of the load on that service, but because of the general growth in the area, the regular public transport services remain overcrowded.

I seek the Minister for Transport's assistance to have funding provided for an extra service to provide carriage for the school students so that some relief can be brought to the people using public transport services.

### **Shepparton Golf Club: ground water**

**Hon. D. K. DRUM** (North Western) — I address my adjournment question to the Minister for Water in the other place. In January this year I wrote to the minister seeking some assistance in implementing a ground water solution for the Shepparton golf course. Three months later I received a letter from the minister,

but he had missed the point. The minister says that because the golf club gets 100 per cent of its water allocation from the above-ground system, there is no need to look at other water systems.

In effect this whole project is based around leaving the water in the urban supplies and using the ground water that is seen to be available. So we are talking about saving water, which seems to be lost on the minister. In the minister's reply he said:

The government has supported the construction of ground water bores to provide community water (drinking water) supplies ... this assistance program does not extend to the provision of bores to water sporting facilities.

It does now. This government has done exactly that, and it made that decision about one week after I received this letter from the minister. He goes on to say that if the Shepparton Golf Club wants to raise some money so that it can invest in some ground water bores, maybe it should look at selling off its current water right to the system, therefore creating enough capital to invest in the ground water supplies. But again this is a very risky project. The club knows there is water there and that it is of a quality that needs to be shandied-up, and while it is hopeful and confident that there will be significant savings to the existing watering systems by using the ground water supplies, it does not know about the long-term security of that water. Therefore it would be ridiculous for it to sell off its natural and current water rights.

With this response I then went back to the minister. This group in Shepparton is very proactive. It wants some action and is prepared to meet the minister any time and anywhere. I hand delivered a letter to the Minister for Water and said I hoped he could give me an answer as to whether he would meet this delegation from Shepparton. I was told by his staff that he would get back to me immediately. That was nearly a month ago, and we still do not know whether the minister is prepared to meet with this group from Shepparton any time, anywhere. Will the minister give me an answer as to whether he will meet with the delegation from the Shepparton Golf Club?

### **East Gippsland Institute of TAFE: relocation**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place. The matter concerns something that is highlighted in the annual report of the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, which says in part:

A feasibility study was undertaken to relocate the Fulham campus into the city centre of Sale. The Wellington Shire

Council, through its port of Sale master plan, has set aside an area for an educational precinct.

This proposal on the part of Wellington shire and the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, meritorious as it is, has created a good deal of uncertainty for a significant number of people in Sale. This precinct happens to include what is currently the Sale netball courts. As we know in country Victoria, there is no more important activity to young women than netball. I must declare an interest in this. I have two daughters who play, coach and umpire netball, but the issue is more significant than my personal interest in it.

The Sale Netball Association has frankly been in a state of limbo for the last year while there has been a high degree of uncertainty as to whether or not it can continue to develop its netball courts. There have been no government or council grants to this association over 30 years. All the costs for the development of the courts and improvements have been met by fundraising activities. The Sale Netball Association has 1200 girls and women as members. As well as that most of the schools in the district use those facilities on a very regular basis.

Given the fact that netball touches the majority of families in Sale and district, I am concerned that this continuing uncertainty has not produced any meaningful progress in the last little while. I urge the Minister for Education and Training to advise me, and therefore the Sale community, as to the status of funding for the planning stage of the relocation of the Fulham campus of the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE to Sale so that there may be some certainty as to the long-term future of that netball court site.

### Responses

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** (Minister for Energy Industries) — Mr Forwood asked a question of Minister Lenders in relation to the Victorian government's ethical purchasing policy. He wanted some checks in relation to this. I am not sure what the honourable member is suggesting, but if he is suggesting that the Liberal Party wants to have an unethical purchasing policy as opposed to an ethical one, then I will pass those comments on to Minister Lenders for his direct reply.

Mr Nguyen raised a question for the Minister for Housing in relation to youth homelessness, particularly in the west of Melbourne in his electorate, and I will pass that on to the relevant minister for reply to him.

Mr Atkinson raised an issue for the minister responsible for liquor, Mr Lenders, the Minister for Consumer

Affairs, about some 2001 changes to the liquor industry arrangement in relation to a code of conduct which Mr Atkinson says has not yet been put in place. I will pass that inquiry on to Minister Lenders for response.

Mr Hall raised a question for the Minister for Environment in the other place in relation to Bemm River beach access and the need for urgent works. I have fished down at Bemm River and it is a very nice part of the world.

**Hon. P. R. Hall** — Did you catch anything?

**Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** — I did catch some fish so it is a very enjoyable part of the world, and I will be happy to pass on the request to the Minister for Environment.

Ms Romanes raised a matter for Minister Madden about Sydney Road retailers and the unique cultural mix that is present in that area and its possible utilisation during the Commonwealth Games. I will pass that request on to the relevant minister.

Mr Dalla-Riva raised a question for the Minister for Corrections in the other place in relation to a date for the closure of the Beechworth jail and delays in relation to those arrangements. I will pass that request on to the Minister for Corrections.

Mr Mitchell raised a question for Minister Pandazopoulos in another place in relation to the Winton motor racing circuit and a festival which is held on an annual basis. I know, with respect, that Mr Mitchell is seen as one of the petrolheads in this place, along with me sometimes. I know Mr Mitchell has a passion for this sport, and he has asked for assistance with marketing for the Benalla Auto Club. I will pass this request on to Minister Pandazopoulos.

Mr Rich-Phillips has put in a request to the Minister for Transport in another place. He highlighted an accident due to overcrowding involving a young woman on a bus. He asked for additional services to be funded. I will pass that request on the Minister for Transport for response.

Mr Drum raised a question for the Minister for Water in another place in relation to a ground water solution for the Shepparton golf course, and he wants a delegation to meet with the minister. I will pass that request on to the minister.

Mr Philip Davis raised an issue for the Minister for Education and Training in another place in relation to the development of the Sale netball courts and how that is dependent on the relocation of the technical and

further education institute down there. I will pass that request for further information to the Minister for Education and Training for direct response to the member.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The Honourable Andrew Brideson raised a matter with me, and I will take that matter up and discuss it with the Speaker in the other place.

**House adjourned 5.10 p.m.**



**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.  
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.  
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.  
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Tuesday, 25 May 2004**

**Local government: ministerial staff**

**1251. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Local Government: Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Sport and recreation: ministerial staff**

**1253. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation: Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Employment and youth affairs: ministerial staff**

**1263. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs): Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Planning: ministerial staff**

**1277. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

There are no consultants that have been employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment who are identified either in the Victorian Government Directory or who have replaced any officers.

**Corrections: ministerial staff**

**1279. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am advised that:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Police and emergency services: ministerial staff**

**1282. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am advised that / as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Corrections: bail advocacy and support services project**

**1289. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections):

- (a) What is the current status of the Bail Advocacy and Support Services Project in regard to the number of alleged offenders it has assisted in 2002-03, and the level of funding involved.
- (b) Did this program have a demand for prison beds; if so, what was the number of beds involved and what impact did this demand have on the prisons in 2002-03.

- (c) How was funding allocated for this program in 2003-04 and will there be specific targets and outcomes required to be met for the coming year.

**ANSWER:**

I am advised that / as follows:

This Government has provided the largest ever injection of funds into the Corrections System with the \$334.5 million Corrections Long Term Management Strategy. A key aim of this strategy is reducing re-offending. The Bail Advocacy and Support Program provides accommodation assessment and referral of defendants otherwise denied bail.

In 2002/03 547 defendants were assisted and the program saved 37 prison beds.

Funding allocated to the Bail Advocacy and Support Program was expanded to include additional court sites. There are specific targets for the financial year 2003/04.

**Health: ministerial staff**

- 1339. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to each financial year from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003, what are the details of expenses of the office of the Minister for — (i) staff salaries and on-costs; (ii) number of Ministerial staff (including driver); (iii) any other Ministerial office operating costs (recurrent expenses); (iv) Minister's and/or office international flights; (v) Minister's and/or office domestic flights; (vi) Minister's and/or office charter flights (vii) travel related expenses (international); (viii) travel related expenses (domestic); (ix) entertainment/hospitality expenses; and (x) alcohol costs.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Details of salary, salary related details and operating expenses for the Minister for Health are not available for the period 1999/2000 – 2002/2003, as during these financial years, the Minister for Health was also responsible for the Planning and Deputy Premier portfolios. Discrete Health portfolio related costs cannot be extracted from total office costs.

**Premier: Victorian public service staff**

- 1410. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier):
- (a) What were the numbers of Victorian Public Service full time equivalent staff employed as at 30 June 2003 in each of the 10 Core Departments and each of the 15 administrative offices referred to on page 14 of the 2002-03 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Public Employment.
  - (b) What were the numbers of Victorian Public Service full time equivalent staff moved as a result of the machinery of government changes following the 2002 State election from each core department and each administrative office as existing prior to those changes to each core department and each administrative office as existing subsequent to those changes.
  - (c) In relation to Figure 0.3 on page 14 of the 2002-03 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Public Employment, and the corresponding Figure 1.2 in the 2001-02 Annual Report, what were the principal reasons for the increase between June 2002 and June 2003 in the numbers of Victorian Public Service full time equivalent staff employed in the core departments and the reduction in the numbers employed in the administrative offices.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

**Part (a) Total FTE of Victorian Public Service Departments and Agencies as at 30 June 2003**

	<b>Departments</b>	<b>FTE</b>
1	Department of Education & Training	2100.1
2	Department of Human Services	11004.0
3	Department of Infrastructure	734.9
4	Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development	689.8
5	Department of Justice	4431.3
6	Department of Premier and Cabinet	316.9
7	Department of Primary Industries	2443.2
8	Department of Sustainability and Environment	2582.3
9	Department of Treasury and Finance	957.0
10	Department of Victorian Communities	553.7

	<b>Administrative Offices</b>	
1	Environment Protection Authority	361.7
2	Essential Service Commission	43.0
3	Office of Public Employment	16.2
4	Office of Public Prosecutions	195.1
5	Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel	31.6
6	Office of the Governor	63.9
7	Office of the Ombudsman	33.6
8	Office of the Victorian Privacy Commissioner	13.0
9	Victoria Police	2149.5
10	Victorian Auditor-General's Office	127.4
11	Victorian Electoral Commission	60.8
12	Victorian Government Solicitor's Office	77.6
13	Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria	67.6
14	Office of the Legal Ombudsman	13.0
15	Office of the Innovation Economy Advisory Board	6.0

*Source: Office of Workforce Development Workforce Data Collection June 2003*

**Part (b) Staff movements as a result of Machinery of Government (MoG) changes**

Core Departments:

	Pre MoG Department					
	Department of Infrastructure	Department of Justice	Department of Natural Resources and Environment#	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development	Department of Tourism, Sport and Commonwealth Games#
<b>Post MoG Department</b>						
Department of Infrastructure					73.8	
Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development						113.7
Department of Justice					100.4	
Department of Primary Industries*			2390.7			
Department of Sustainability and Environment*	210.0		2278.4			
Department of Victorian Communities	31.8	72.2	54.4	161.5	72.2	120.5

\* New Departments established post election

# Departments abolished post election

These tables have excluded those who commenced employment in an Agency after MoG changes were implemented.

Source: *Office of Workforce Development Workforce Data Collection June 2003*

**Part (c) Principal Reasons for differences in FTE numbers from June 2002 to June 2003**

Differences between totals quoted in 2001-02 Commissioner for Public Employment Annual Report and 2002-03 Commissioner for Public Employment Annual Report:

1. Improvements in the collection and compilation of the workforce data associated with the transfer of responsibility for the collection from the Office of Public Employment Commissioner to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, effective from the June 2003 collection.
2. An erratum was included in the 2001-02 CPE Annual Report that amended the totals in figure 1.2. The change related to a school based VPS staff that had previously been counted with teachers. This change increased the total FTE of the VPS by 427.
3. Between 2001-02 and 2002-03 the definitions of which organisations are included in “Core Departments” and which are included in “Administrative Offices” changed.
4. The June 2003 figures include the Sustainable Energy Authority that had previously not been counted in total VPS figures.
5. Subsequent to the publication of the 2001-02 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Public Employment, DHS amended its total staffing number for June 2002.
6. Based on the same definitions and allowing for the above changes, the comparison from June 2002 to June 2003 is:

	Core Departments	Administrative Offices	Total
June 2002	24372.2	2747.0	27119.2
June 2003	25813.2	3222.1	29035.1

7. A significant contribution to the increase in FTE is due to the conversion of agency contractors to permanent employee status. This was particularly the case at Victoria Police, the then Natural Resources and Environment, the Department of Justice and CORE. Contract staff employed through agencies are not on departmental payrolls and have therefore not been included in previous employment data collections.
8. A further factor in the increase in FTE is improved resourcing of service delivery, with analysis indicating that 75% of the increase in staff numbers occurred in the four large service delivery oriented Departments (Human Services, Justice, Victoria Police and the former Department of Natural Resources and Environment).

**Health: consultancy contracts**

**1438. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to the Department of Human Services for 2002-03:

- (a) What was the total number of consultancy contracts over \$100,000.
- (b) What was the total cost of consultancy contracts over \$100,000.
- (c) What was the cost of each consultancy contract over \$100,000.
- (d) What is the name of the company that each of the consultancy contracts over \$100,000 was awarded to.
- (e) What is the contract purpose and description for each consultancy contract over \$100,000.
- (f) What was the commencement day of each consultancy contract over \$100,000.
- (g) What was or is the expiry date of each consultancy contract over \$100,000.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Department of Human Services annual report lists all consultancy information for consultancies over \$100,000 in value, and I refer the honourable member to the report for the relevant period.

**Health: AKZ consultancy firm**

**1454. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to the AKZ consultancy firm and contract no. 9616 8487, referred to on the Government Contracts Website and the employment of Mr Andrejs Zamurs through this contract by the Minister for Health:

- (a) What are the rental arrangements for Mr Zamurs in undertaking his consultancy with the Department of Human Services with respect to office space at 555 Collins Street.
- (b) Are AKZ and Mr Zamurs provided with free or reduced rental as part of the consultancy; if so, what is the — (i) location of the office space; (ii) the size of the office space; (iii) the rental value of the office space; and (iv) has a lease been signed as part of the consultancy contract and what

are the terms and conditions of the lease; if not, what is the nature of the rental arrangement for AKZ and Mr Zamurs, the length of the lease (or informal leasing arrangement) and the rent paid to the government by AKZ and Mr Zamurs.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Where a consultant/contractor is required to regularly meet with DHS officers to perform duties required under their contract, it has been standard procedure for several years for the consultant/contractor to be provided with appropriate office space.

**Health: AKZ consultancy firm**

**1455. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to the AKZ consultancy firm and contract no. 9616 8487, referred to on the Government Contracts Website:

- (a) What are the arrangements for the provision of secretarial services, including computer, photocopying and office supplies for Mr Zamurs in undertaking this consultancy.
- (b) Is Mr Zamurs provided with secretarial, support, computer, office supplies and other support services; if so, what is their value (tabulated); if not, what arrangements are made by Mr Zamurs for secretarial support when working on departmental premises.
- (c) Is Mr Zamurs provided with a mobile phone by the Department of Human Services; if so, on what basis is it made available and what was the cost of the mobile phone provided and the cost to Department of Human Services of the mobile phone expenses to 30 September 2003.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Where a consultant/contractor is provided with accommodation to perform duties required under their contract it is standard procedure for consultants/contractors to have access to basic administrative support, for example the use of a computer.

**Health: AKZ consultancy firm**

**1456. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to AKZ consultancy firm and contract no. 9616 8487, referred to on the Government Contracts Website and the employment of Mr Andrejs Zamurs by the Minister for Health, has Mr Zamurs been asked to fill out a personal register of interests before undertaking the AKZ consultancy with Department of Human Services; if so, will the Minister make available a copy of this register of interests.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

When consultants/contractors are engaged, they are required to complete a standard DHS contract. This contract does not require a personal register of interests.

**Health: Rural Northwest Health — financial result**

**1462. THE HON. DAVID DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Rural Northwest Health for 2002-03:

- (a) What was the net financial result after ordinary activities.
- (b) What was the financial result after total changes in equity other than those resulting from changes in contributed capital.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The audited financial statements for Rural Northwest Health have not yet been completed for the period ending 30 June 2003. I am informed that the health service is currently working with the Victorian Auditor-General's Office to finalise the financial statements for 2002-2003. I suggest the honourable member review the Rural Northwest Health Service Annual Report for the relevant period, when it becomes available.

**Multicultural affairs: advertising budget**

**1501. THE HON. GORDON RICH-PHILLIPS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): In relation to each government department and agency:

- (a) What percent of the campaign advertising budget has each department and agency spent in the ethnic media for 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively.
- (b) Which departments and agencies have not yet met government guidelines as they relate to the requirement to spend a minimum of 5 percent of their advertising budget in ethnic media.
- (c) What action is the government taking in relation to those departments and agencies that do not spend the minimum amount of 5 percent of their advertising budget in ethnic media.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

(1) Data on departmental expenditure in the ethnic media was not compiled prior to January 2001.

<b>Department</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Department of Justice	6.8	9.2	10.9
Department of Infrastructure	3.1	1.1	1.8
Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development	1.7	3.3	2.9
Department of Primary Industries	N/A	N/A	12.6
Department of Premier & Cabinet	2.2	3.5	10.1
Department of Treasury & Finance	3.0	3.3	3.5
Department of Education and Training	3.7	5.4	3.3
Department of Human Services	7.8	5.8	4.3
Department of Sustainability and Environment (including Department of Natural Resources and Environment)	2.2	3.2	4.9
Department for Victorian Communities (including Department for Tourism, Sport and the Commonwealth Games)	N/A	3.5	10.2

- (2) Information on departments that have not met the target is contained in the above table.

It should be noted that the Government has made significant progress in achieving the target since coming to office (in 1999, the overall level of spending in the ethnic media was approximately 2%).

In the last quarter of 2003, the overall level of campaign advertising expenditure in the ethnic media was 5.2%.

- (3) The Government has undertaken a number of initiatives that will facilitate the target's achievement:
- The redefinition of the Multicultural Communications Policy in 2002, which clarified departments' responsibility to achieve the target;
  - The Multicultural Media Expo in March 2003, which highlighted the Government's commitment to communications with ethnic communities;
  - The recent Government Communications in a Multicultural World Seminar, held in March 2004, which reinforced to government communications practitioners the importance of achieving the target; and
  - Ongoing liaison and consultation with all departments and agencies to ensure that the target is met.

**Community services: facility at 299 Humffray Street, Ballarat**

**1668. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 299 Humffray Street, Ballarat:

- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.
- (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
- (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
- (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
- (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.
- (g) How many lounge areas are there in the building.
- (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) On what date did construction begin.
- (j) On what date did construction finish.
- (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
- (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.
- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The building size is 319 square metres. There are no disabled toilets in the building. In total there are three bathrooms (one of which is an ensuite for staff) none of which are specifically configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons, one laundry, one kitchen and two living/lounge areas and a dining room. Wheel chair access is available to the building. Construction commenced on 12 March 2003 and concluded 26 September 2003. The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is five. One residential staff member is required to operate the facility. Sleeping and living facilities are provided for staff which include one bedroom and ensuite for the primary carer and an office area for the relief staff member who is rostered on whilst the primary staff member is on leave/rostered days off. The cost for building this house under the construction contract was approximately \$1,425 per square metre.

**Community services: facility at 3 Amaranth Avenue, Altona North**

**1669. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 3 Amaranth Avenue, Altona North:

- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.
- (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
- (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
- (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
- (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.
- (g) How many Lounge areas are there in the building.
- (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) On what date did construction begin.
- (j) On what date did construction finish.
- (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
- (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.
- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that: In relation to the facility at 3 Amaranth Avenue, Altona North:

- (a) The size of the property is 194.5 square metres.
- (b) The facility does not have disabled toilets. The facility is not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (c) There is one bathroom in the building for client use. There is one ensuite attached to the staff bedroom for staff use.
- (d) The bathrooms are not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.

- (e) There is one laundry in the building.
- (f) There is one kitchen in the building.
- (g) There are two lounge areas in the building.
- (h) There is no wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) Construction commenced on 8 May 2003.
- (j) Construction was completed on 2 October 2003.
- (k) The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is three.
- (l) The facility is operated with one staff at all times with additional staff on duty at peak periods.
- (m) Staff areas comprise of one dedicated bedroom, ensuite bathroom and office area for confidential business. There is no separate living area for staff.
- (n) The cost for building the facility under the construction contract was \$1,711 per square metre.

**Community services: facility at 1069 High Street, Reservoir**

**1670. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 1069 High Street, Reservoir:

- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.
- (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
- (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
- (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
- (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.
- (g) How many lounge areas are there in the building.
- (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) On what date did construction begin.
- (j) On what date did construction finish.
- (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
- (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.
- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that: In relation to the facility at 1069 High Street, Reservoir:

- (a) The size of the property is 321.5 square metres.
- (b) The facility does not have disabled toilets. The facility is not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (c) There are two bathrooms in the building for client use. There is one ensuite attached to the staff bedroom for staff use.
- (d) The bathrooms are not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) There is one laundry in the building.
- (f) There is one kitchen in the building.
- (g) There are two lounge areas in the building.
- (h) There is no wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) Construction commenced on 20 March 2003.
- (j) Construction was completed on 2 December 2003.
- (k) The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is four.
- (l) The facility is operated with one staff at all times with additional staff on duty at peak periods.
- (m) Staff areas comprise of one dedicated bedroom, ensuite bathroom and office area for confidential business. There is no separate living area for staff.
- (n) The cost for building the facility under the construction contract was \$1,154 per square metre.

**Community services: facility at 134 Princes Highway, Dandenong**

- 1671. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 134 Princes Highway, Dandenong:
- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.
  - (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
  - (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
  - (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
  - (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
  - (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.
  - (g) How many lounge areas are there in the building.
  - (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
  - (i) On what date did construction begin.
  - (j) On what date did construction finish.
  - (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
  - (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.

- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The land size of the property is 919 square metres and the building area of the residence is 312 square metres.
- (b) There are no disabled toilets in the building.
- (c) There are two main bathrooms for client use, one ensuite for staff and an additional ensuite attached to a bedroom available for use by clients developing independent living skills.
- (d) The bathrooms in the building are not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) There is one laundry in the building.
- (f) There is one main kitchen in the building and a kitchenette attached to a bedroom available for use by clients developing independent living skills.
- (g) There are two independent lounge areas in the building.
- (h) There is no wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) Construction commenced on the 4 July 2003.
- (j) Construction finished on the 19 December 2003.
- (k) The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is four.
- (l) It requires one staff member to operate the facility plus an additional staff member on duty during peak periods (such as between 7.00am – 10.00am and 3.00pm – 10.00pm). The total staffing roster is 5 full time staff members and one half time member.
- (m) Staff areas comprise one dedicated bedroom, ensuite bathroom and office area for confidential business. There is no separate living area for staff use in the building.
- (n) The cost for building the residence under the construction contract was \$1,426 per square metre.

**Community services: facility at 11 Station Road, Deer Park**

**1672. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 11 Station Road, Deer Park:

- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.
- (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
- (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
- (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
- (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.

- (g) How many lounge areas are there in the building.
- (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) On what date did construction begin.
- (j) On what date did construction finish.
- (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
- (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.
- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that: In relation to the facility 11 Station Street, Deer Park:

- (a) The size of the property is 221 square metres.
- (b) The facility does not have disabled toilets. The facility is not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (c) There is one bathroom in the building for client use. There is one ensuite attached to the staff bedroom for staff use.
- (d) The bathrooms are not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) There is one laundry in the building.
- (f) There is one kitchen in the building.
- (g) There are two lounge areas in the building.
- (h) There is no wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) Construction commenced on 13 June 2003.
- (j) Construction was completed on 11 March 2004.
- (k) The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is three.
- (l) The facility is operated with one staff at all times with additional staff on duty at peak periods.
- (m) Staff areas comprise of one dedicated bedroom, ensuite bathroom and office area for confidential business. There is no separate living area for staff.
- (n) The cost for building the facility under the construction contract was \$1,528 per square metre.

**Community services: facility at 86 East Road, Seaford**

**1673. THE HON. WENDY LOVELL** — To ask the Minister for Community Services: In relation to the construction and operation of the facility at 86 East Road, Seaford:

- (a) What is the size of the property in square metres.

- (b) How many disabled toilets are there in the building.
- (c) How many bathrooms are there in the building.
- (d) Are the bathrooms configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) How many laundries are there in the building.
- (f) How many kitchens are there in the building.
- (g) How many lounge areas are there in the building.
- (h) Is there wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) On what date did construction begin.
- (j) On what date did construction finish.
- (k) What is the maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building.
- (l) How many staff are required to operate the facility.
- (m) Are there sleeping and living facilities for the staff; if so, how many rooms are allocated for this purpose.
- (n) What is the expected cost per square metre for building this residence under the construction contract.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The land size of the property is 1184 square metres and the building area of the residence is 346 square metres.
- (b) There are no disabled toilets in the building.
- (c) There are two client bathrooms and one staff ensuite in the building.
- (d) The bathrooms in the building are not configured to meet specifications for use by disabled persons.
- (e) There is one laundry in the building.
- (f) There is one kitchen in the building.
- (g) There are two separate lounge areas in the building.
- (h) There is no wheelchair access to the building.
- (i) Construction commenced on 2 July 2003.
- (j) Construction finished on the 9 December 2003.
- (k) The maximum number of residents that can be housed in the building is five.
- (l) It requires one twenty-four hour staff member to operate the facility, with up to three other support and relieving staff members as required.
- (m) Staff areas comprise one dedicated bedroom, ensuite bathroom and office area for confidential business.
- (n) The cost for the building works on this house under the construction contract was \$811 per square metre.

**Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1682. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Western Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2000 and December 2001.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1683. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Eastern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2002 and December 2003.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

DHS regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1684. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Northern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2002 and December 2003.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1685. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Southern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2002 and December 2003.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1686. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Western Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2002 and December 2003.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1687. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Eastern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2001 and December 2002.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

DHS regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1688. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Northern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2001 and December 2002.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1689. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Southern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2001 and December 2002.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: western metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1690. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Western Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2001 and December 2002.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: eastern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1691. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Eastern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2000 and December 2001.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

DHS regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: northern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1692. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Northern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2000 and December 2001.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**Community services: southern metropolitan region — community residential units**

**1693. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the number of residents living in Community Residential Units in the Southern Metropolitan Region where Disability Services is the service provider:

- (a) How many residents have lodged service level and quality complaints under Standard 7, Complaints and Disputes of the Victorian Standards for Disability Services between December 2000 and December 2001.
- (b) What was the reason for their complaints.
- (c) When was the dispute resolved.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Department of Human Services regions are responsible for monitoring and reviewing complaints at a number of levels. The breadth of this question is such that to provide a response would be an unreasonable diversion of the Minister's departmental resources. A response is therefore unavailable.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.  
 Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.  
 Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.  
 The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Wednesday, 26 May 2004**

**Aboriginal affairs: ministerial staff**

**1250. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs: Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Commonwealth Games: ministerial staff**

**1254. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Commonwealth Games: Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

No member of my staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, have been remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Multicultural affairs: multicultural initiatives**

**1502. THE HON. GORDON RICH-PHILLIPS** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs):

- (a) How much did each department and agency spend on multicultural initiatives in 2002-03.
- (b) How much do they expect to spend in 2003-04.
- (c) Has there been an increase or decrease in spending in multicultural initiatives between 2002 and 2004.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Total spending on multicultural initiatives is not readily available as Departments fund initiatives through a range of budget options including the incorporation of multicultural initiatives within broader policy and program delivery. Departments have reported on their achievements in multicultural affairs within their respective Annual Reports

**Transport: public transport fares**

**1557. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): As at 1 October 1999, what was the cost of the following public transport fares — (i) Daily Zone 1 Concession; (ii) Daily Zone 1 Full Fare; (iii) Daily Zone 2 Concession; (iv) Daily Zone 2 Full Fare; (v) Daily Zone 3 Concession; (vi) Daily Zone 3 Full Fare; (vii) Daily Zone 1+2 Concession; (viii) Daily Zone 1+2 Full Fare; (ix) Daily Zone 2+3 Concession; (x) Daily Zone 2+3 Full Fare; (xi) Daily Zone 1+2+3 Concession; (xii) Daily Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare; (xiii) 2-hour Zone 1 Concession; (xiv) 2-hour Zone 1 Full Fare; (xv) 2-hour Zone 2 Concession; (xvi) 2-hour Zone 2 Full Fare; (xvii) 2-hour Zone 3 Concession; (xviii) 2-hour Zone 3 Full Fare; (xix) 2-hour Zone 1+2 Concession; (xx) 2-hour Zone 1+2 Full Fare; (xxi) 2-hour Zone 2+3 Concession; (xxii) 2-hour Zone 2+3 Full Fare; (xxiii) 2-hour Zone 1+2+3 Concession; (xxiv) 2-hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare; (xxv) Weekly Zone 1 Concession; (xxvi) Weekly Zone 1 Full Fare; (xxvii) Weekly Zone 2 Concession; (xxviii) Weekly Zone 2 Full Fare; (xxix) Weekly Zone 3 Concession; (xxx) Weekly Zone 3 Full Fare; (xxxi) Weekly Zone 1+2 Concession; (xxxii) Weekly Zone 1+2 Full Fare; (xxxiii) Weekly Zone 2+3 Concession; (xxxiv) Weekly Zone 2+3 Full Fare; (xxxv) Weekly Zone 1+2+3 Concession; (xxxvi) Weekly hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare; (xxxvii) Monthly Zone 1 Concession; (xxxviii) Monthly Zone 1 Full Fare; (xxxix) Monthly Zone 2 Concession; (xl) Monthly Zone 2 Full Fare; (xli) Monthly Zone 3 Concession; (xlii) Monthly Zone 3 Full Fare; (xliii) Monthly Zone 1+2 Concession; (xliv) Monthly Zone 1+2 Full Fare; (xlv) Monthly Zone 2+3 Concession; (xlvi) Monthly Zone 2+3 Full Fare (xlvii) Monthly Zone 1+2+3 Concession; (xlviii) Monthly hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare; (xlix) Yearly Zone 1 Concession; (l) Yearly Zone 1 Full Fare; (li) Yearly Zone 2 Concession; (lii) Yearly Zone 2 Full Fare; (liii) Yearly Zone 3 Concession; (liv) Yearly Zone 3 Full Fare; (lv) Yearly Zone 1+2 Concession; (lvi) Yearly Zone 1+2 Full Fare; (lvii) Yearly Zone 2+3 Concession; (lviii) Yearly Zone 2+3 Full Fare; (lix) Yearly Zone 1+2+3 Concession; and (lx) Yearly Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

The public transport fares applying as at 1 October 1999 are shown in the attached table.

**Public Transport Fares Applying At 1 October 1999**

<b>Ticket Type and Zone</b>	<b>Fare</b>
(i) Daily Zone 1 Concession;	\$2.30
(ii) Daily Zone 1 Full Fare;	\$4.40
(iii) Daily Zone 2 Concession;	\$1.60
(iv) Daily Zone 2 Full Fare;	\$3.00
(v) Daily Zone 3 Concession;	\$1.60
(vi) Daily Zone 3 Full Fare;	\$3.00
(vii) Daily Zone 1+2 Concession;	\$3.60
(viii) Daily Zone 1+2 Full Fare;	\$7.10
(ix) Daily Zone 2+3 Concession;	\$3.00
(x) Daily Zone 2+3 Full Fare;	\$5.90
(xi) Daily Zone 1+2+3 Concession;	\$4.10

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Wednesday, 26 May 2004

COUNCIL

1275

<b>Ticket Type and Zone</b>	<b>Fare</b>
(xii) Daily Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare;	\$9.50
(xiii) 2-hour Zone 1 Concession;	\$1.30
(xiv) 2-hour Zone 1 Full Fare;	\$2.30
(xv) 2-hour Zone 2 Concession;	\$0.90
(xvi) 2-hour Zone 2 Full Fare;	\$1.70
(xvii) 2-hour Zone 3 Concession;	\$0.90
(xviii) 2-hour Zone 3 Full Fare;	\$1.70
(xix) 2-hour Zone 1+2 Concession;	\$2.00
(xx) 2-hour Zone 1+2 Full Fare;	\$3.90
(xxi) 2-hour Zone 2+3 Concession;	\$1.70
(xxii) 2-hour Zone 2+3 Full Fare;	\$3.20
(xxiii) 2-hour Zone 1+2+3 Concession;	\$2.70
(xxiv) 2-hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare;	\$5.30
(xxv) Weekly Zone 1 Concession;	\$9.50
(xxvi) Weekly Zone 1 Full Fare;	\$19.10
(xxvii) Weekly Zone 2 Concession;	\$6.50
(xxviii) Weekly Zone 2 Full Fare;	\$13.10
(xxix) Weekly Zone 3 Concession;	\$6.50
(xxx) Weekly Zone 3 Full Fare;	\$13.10
(xxxi) Weekly Zone 1+2 Concession;	\$16.10
(xxxii) Weekly Zone 1+2 Full Fare;	\$32.30
(xxxiii) Weekly Zone 2+3 Concession;	\$13.10
(xxxiv) Weekly Zone 2+3 Full Fare;	\$26.30
(xxxv) Weekly Zone 1+2+3 Concession;	\$18.30
(xxxvi) Weekly hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare;	\$39.50
(xxxvii) Monthly Zone 1 Concession;	\$36.00
(xxxviii) Monthly Zone 1 Full Fare;	\$71.50
(xxxix) Monthly Zone 2 Concession;	\$24.00
(xl) Monthly Zone 2 Full Fare;	\$48.00
(xli) Monthly Zone 3 Concession;	\$24.00
(xlii) Monthly Zone 3 Full Fare;	\$48.00
(xliii) Monthly Zone 1+2 Concession;	\$55.00
(xliv) Monthly Zone 1+2 Full Fare;	\$110.00
(xlv) Monthly Zone 2+3 Concession;	\$48.00
(xlvi) Monthly Zone 2+3 Full Fare	\$96.50
(xlvii) Monthly Zone 1+2+3 Concession;	\$63.50
(xlviii) Monthly hour Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare;	\$134.50
(xlix) Yearly Zone 1 Concession;	No Concession Fare

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Ticket Type and Zone	Fare
(i) Yearly Zone 1 Full Fare;	\$770.00
(ii) Yearly Zone 2 Concession;	No Concession Fare
(iii) Yearly Zone 2 Full Fare;	\$525.00
(iiii) Yearly Zone 3 Concession;	No Concession Fare
(liv) Yearly Zone 3 Full Fare;	\$525.00
(lv) Yearly Zone 1+2 Concession;	No Concession Fare
(lvi) Yearly Zone 1+2 Full Fare;	\$1,230.00
(lvii) Yearly Zone 2+3 Concession;	No Concession Fare
(lviii) Yearly Zone 2+3 Full Fare;	\$1,030.00
(lix) Yearly Zone 1+2+3 Concession; and	No Concession Fare
(lx) Yearly Zone 1+2+3 Full Fare.	\$1,525.00

**Transport: CityLink toll gate fees**

**1559. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): What was the cost of the various City Link toll gate fees in October 1999 and what is their current cost.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that the charge tolls for each toll zone of Melbourne City Link for the relevant periods, are recorded in the following table (Attachment A).

Category of Vehicle  Tollable Section	Car		Light Commercial Vehicle		Heavy Commercial Vehicle		Motorcycle	
	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004
Tullamarine Freeway Upgrade, between Moreland Road and Brunswick Road	\$ 0.99	\$ 1.34	\$ 1.59	\$ 2.15	\$ 1.89	\$ 2.55	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Western Link Section 1, between Racecourse Road and Dynon Road	0.99	1.34	1.59	2.15	1.89	2.55	0.00	0.00
Western Link Section 2, between Footscray Road and West Gate Freeway	1.29	1.68	1.99	2.68	2.36	3.19	0.00	0.00
Domain Tunnel and that part of the Southern Link leading into that tunnel between the eastern portal of that Tunnel and Punt Road, other than that part of Southern Link Section 1: (a) between Punt Road and the exit to Boulton Parade; and (b) comprising Boulton Parade	1.24	1.68	1.99	2.68	2.36	3.19	0.00	0.00

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Wednesday, 26 May 2004

COUNCIL

1277

Category of Vehicle  Tollable Section	Car		Light Commercial Vehicle		Heavy Commercial Vehicle		Motorcycle	
	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004	October 1999	April 2004
Burnley Tunnel and that part of the Southern Link leading out of that Tunnel between the eastern portal of that Tunnel and Burnley Street	2.24	3.02	3.58	4.83	4.25	5.74	0.00	0.00
Southern Link Section 1, between Burnley Street and Punt Road and including that part of Southern Link Section 1: <b>(a) between Punt Road and the exit to Boulton Parade; and</b> <b>(b) comprising Boulton Parade</b>	-	1.34	-	2.15	-	2.55	0.00	0.00
Southern Link Section 5, between Punt Road and Burnley Street other than that part of the Southern Link leading out of the Burnley Tunnel between the eastern portal of that Tunnel and Burnley Street	0.99	1.34	1.59	2.15	1.89	2.55	0.00	0.00
Southern Link Section 1, between Glenferrie Road and Burnley Street	0.99	1.34	1.59	2.15	1.89	2.55	0.00	0.00
Southern Link Section 5, between Burnley Street and Glenferrie Road	0.99	1.34	1.59	2.15	1.89	2.55	0.00	0.00
Exhibition Street Extension – Batman Avenue/Flinders Street to Swan Street	0.62	0.84	0.99	1.34	1.18	1.59	0.00	0.00
Southern Link – Punt Road to Swan Street	0.62	0.84	0.99	1.34	1.18	1.59	0.00	0.00
<b>Maximum Charge Tolls</b> Trips where the passage of the vehicle on the last Tollable Section comprising the Trip before exiting the Total Link occurs between 6.00am and 8.00pm	3.73	5.03	4.97	6.71	4.97	6.71	0.00	0.00
Trips where the passage of the vehicle on the last Tollable Section comprising the Trip before exiting the Total Link occurs between 8.00pm and 6.00am	3.73	5.03	3.73	5.03	3.73	5.03	0.00	0.00

**Transport: public transport concession card costs**

**1560. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): What was the cost of public transport yearly and half-yearly Tertiary Concession Cards and yearly and half-yearly Secondary/Primary Concession Cards in October 1999 and what is their current cost.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The cost of Student Concession Cards at October 1999 and their current cost are as follows:

	Current At October 1999	As at 1 January 2004
Primary / Secondary	\$6.30	\$8.00
6 Month State Tertiary	\$61.00	\$47.00
Yearly State Tertiary	\$111.00	\$87.00
6 Month Country Tertiary	\$12.60	\$15.10
Yearly Country Tertiary	\$24.20	\$29.00

Note: There is no half yearly Primary/Secondary Concession Card

**Transport: motor vehicle registration charges**

**1573. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): What was the level/rate of motor vehicle registration charges in October 1999 and what is their current level/rate.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

As at 31 October 1999, the registration charge for a light motor vehicle was \$140. The current level/rate for a light motor vehicle is \$157.

The registration charge for motorcycles and light trailers as at 31 October 1999 was \$28 compared to the current rate of \$31.40.

**Transport: drivers licence and learners permit charges**

**1574. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): What was the cost of drivers licence and learners permit charges in October 1999 and what is their current level/rate.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The table below provides a comparison of fees and charges for driver’s licenses and permits as of 31 October 1999 and the current charges.

	31 October 1999	April 2004
10 yr Driver licence renewal	\$133	\$136
3 yr Driver licence renewal	\$39	\$40
Learner permit application	\$9	\$10
Learner permit test	\$15.50	\$17
Learner permit issue	\$15.50	\$17
Driver licence application	\$9.00	\$10
Practical test for driver licence	\$29.50	\$31
Road Law Knowledge/Hazard Perception Test	\$12.00	\$13

**Transport: boat registration fees**

**1578. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): What was the cost of boat registration fees in October 1999 and what is their current cost.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The cost of registration fees for powered recreational boats in October 1999 was:

\$28.00 for powered boats up to and including 4.0 metres in length

\$58.00 for powered boats over 4.0 metres in length

The current cost of registration fees for powered recreational boats is:

\$29.00 for powered boats up to and including 4.0 metres in length

\$60.50 for powered boats over 4.0 metres in length

**Planning: certificate access costs**

**1580. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): In relation to Land Victoria, Land Exchange, Land Information Group, Land Registry, Title Registration Services, Land Records and Information Services and the Registrar of Titles and Registrar-General, what was cost in October 1999 of accessing — (i) property certificates; (ii) Land Title information; and (iii) any other services offered to the public, and what is their current cost.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The amount of information required to be collated to answer the Honourable member's question demands a significant diversion of resources by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

**Major projects: Docklands film and television studios**

**1591. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Major Projects): In relation to the film and television studios at Docklands:

- (a) Since 4 December 2003, what are the names of the consultants who undertook work in relation to the studios.
- (b) What are the details of the type of work undertaken.
- (c) What remuneration did the consultants receive.
- (d) On what dates was the work performed.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

<b><u>WORK UNDERTAKEN BY CONSULTANTS FOR MAJOR PROJECTS VICTORIA</u></b>				
<b>Consultant</b>	<b>Cost (\$) (Excluding GST)</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Coffey Geosciences	2,936.74	Dec 2003	Mar 2004	Environmental auditor advice and services during construction.
Ove Arup	22,552.50	Dec 2003	Mar 2004	Design advice and review services during construction.
Parsons Brinckerhoff	3,710.00	Dec 2003	Mar 2004	Environmental advice, soil classification assessment, report revisions.

**Aboriginal affairs: Shannon’s Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1594. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs: In relation to Shannon’s Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Since 20 October 1999 the Department for Victorian Communities has awarded no jobs to the firm Shannon’s Way Pty Ltd which were exempt from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

**Aged care: Shannon’s Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1595. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care: In relation to Shannon’s Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Since 20 October 1999, of the jobs awarded to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd by the Department of Human Services, none were required to be submitted to the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender website.

Therefore, no exemptions from submission to the VGPB for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender Website were required or issued.

**Commonwealth Games: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1602. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Commonwealth Games: In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Since 20 October 1999 the Department for Victorian Communities has awarded no jobs to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd which were exempt from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

**Local government: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1616. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Local Government: In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Since 20 October 1999 the Department for Victorian Communities has awarded no jobs to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd which were exempt from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

**Multicultural affairs: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1619. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Since 20 October 1999 the Department for Victorian Communities has awarded no jobs to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd which were exempt from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

**Women's affairs: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1633. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Women's Affairs): In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

Since 20 October 1999 the Department for Victorian Communities has awarded no jobs to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd which were exempt from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.

**Premier: WorkCover — workplace bullying**

**1737. THE HON. DAVID KOCH** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier):

- (a) How many cases of bullying in the workplace have been reported to each department or agency under the responsibility of the Premier between 1 January and 31 December 2003.
- (b) How many of these claims resulted in WorkCover cases being established.
- (c) What was the total cost of WorkCover claims for bullying in the workplace for each department or agency under the responsibility of the Premier between 1 January and 31 December 2003.
- (d) What has been the dollar increase in premiums for each individual Department or agency due to claims for bullying in the workplace.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

1. One case of bullying in the workplace has been reported between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2003 from the agencies and Department under my responsibility.
2. This claim did not result in a WorkCover case being established.
3. N/A
4. N/A

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.  
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.  
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.  
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Thursday, 27 May 2004**

**WorkCover: Haystac Public Affairs Pty Ltd — payments**

**835. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Minister for Workcover): In relation to Haystac Public Affairs Pty Ltd:

- (a) What payments have been made to the company by the Minister's Department, office or any agency or statutory authority, or any predecessor Department, office, agency or statutory authority, under the Minister's administration since February 2001.
- (b) On what dates were the payments made.
- (c) What are the details of the project for which payment was made.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Member should refer to information previously provided to the Opposition under Freedom of Information (FOI) on 17 May 2004 and on previous occasions in September to November 2002, in response to requests under FOI.

**WorkCover: Shannons Way Pty Ltd — payments**

**1148. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Minister for Workcover): In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) What payments have been made to the company by the Minister's department or private office since 27 March 2003.
- (b) On what dates were the payments made.
- (c) What are the details of the projects for which payment was made.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

No payments have been made.

**Aged care: ministerial staff**

**1249. THE HON. W. R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care: Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

No members of my staff listed in the *2003/04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, are remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Community services: ministerial staff**

**1262. THE HON. W.R. BAXTER** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): Are any members of the Minister's staff listed in the *2003-04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**ANSWER:**

No members of my staff listed in the *2003/04 Victorian Government Directory*, persons who have replaced those listed, or staff engaged since the Directory's publication, are remunerated by way of consultancy fees in lieu of salary and allowances.

**Community services: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1599. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.
- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Since 20 October 1999, of the jobs awarded to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd by the Department of Human Services, none were required to be submitted to the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender website.

Therefore, no exemptions from submission to the VGPB for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender Website were required or issued.

**Health: Shannon's Way Pty Ltd — exemptions**

**1611. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Shannon's Way Pty Ltd:

- (a) Since 20 October 1999, how many jobs awarded to the company were exempted from the Victorian Government Purchasing Board.
- (b) On what grounds were the exemptions given.
- (c) Was a certificate of exemption issued.

- (d) Who signed the documents granting exemption.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

Since 20 October 1999, of the jobs awarded to the firm Shannon's Way Pty Ltd by the Department of Human Services, none were required to be submitted to the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender website.

Therefore, no exemptions from submission to the VGPB for approval or for advertising on the VGPB Tender Website were required or issued.

**Community services: Multiple Sclerosis Society respite house, Williamstown**

**1707. THE HON. ANDREA COOTE** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the Multiple Sclerosis Society Respite House, Williamstown:

- (a) What financial support does the Department of Community Services give to ensure it remains open.
- (b) What alternative MS respite is provided by the Department in the Western Region
- (c) What are the reasons why the Department has not been allowed to conduct a re-development of service provision.
- (d) Why did the Department not provide for the provision of extra respite services to MS sufferers.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The Department of Human Services (DHS) funds MSSV to provide a range of specialist services for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) across Victoria. This funding includes the provision of facility based and in-home respite. The respite funding component includes the provision of six beds across the State. These are currently delivered via a four bed facility in Williamstown and the remaining two beds in Watsonia. These six beds are to provide respite for people with MS across Victoria.

DHS has not reduced funding to MSSV for the provision of respite services. As a statewide service, MSSV decides how to allocate these financial resources to best meet the needs of people with MS in Victoria. The Government supports services being delivered equitably and from locations that are accessible.

- (b) The respite funding allocation from DHS to MSSV also includes the provision of 7,900 hours of in-home respite for people with MS. A proportion of this would be provided to people in the western suburbs of the North and West Metropolitan Region.

DHS also funds MSSV in excess of \$150,000 for a Carers Program. This funding allows people with MS, who live in the west to participate in day programs operating from Footscray. This provides support for carers in the form of a break from their full time caring role.

MSSV has advised that it will continue to provide respite for people with MS in the West; this will initially be through maintaining one bed in Williamstown.

- (c) DHS has had regular meetings with representatives of MSSV to discuss the changes at the Williamstown respite facility.

It is the Department's understanding that MSSV decided to reallocate three of the Williamstown beds to other areas in the State to address issues of access and equity. The reallocation of beds will, in fact, increase the

amount of respite available for people with MS across Victoria. MSSV has advised that they envisage that the reallocation of beds will result in a 12% increase in available bed nights.

DHS supports a more equitable distribution of respite beds for people with MS in Victoria.

- (d) The Government has allocated \$8.76 million to the respite sector since 2000-2001. In the distribution of these funds consideration has been given to the provision of extra services to people with complex physical care needs, including people with MS.

In 2003-2004 MSSV was allocated additional non-recurrent funding of \$22,000 for more respite for people with MS.

Through the reallocation of the Williamstown beds to other areas in the State, there will be more respite available for people with MS. Alternative respite will be available in Pakenham, Beaumaris, and Ocean Grove. MSSV will also continue to provide respite in Watsonia.

**Financial service industry: WorkCover — workplace bullying**

**1767. THE HON. DAVID KOCH** — To ask the Minister for Small Business (for the Minister for Financial Services Industry):

- (a) How many cases of bullying in the workplace have been reported to each department or agency under the responsibility of the Minister between 1 January and 31 December 2003.
- (b) How many of these claims resulted in WorkCover cases being established.
- (c) What was the total cost of WorkCover claims for bullying in the workplace for each department or agency under the responsibility of the Minister between 1 January and 31 December 2003.
- (d) What has been the dollar increase in premiums for each individual Department or agency due to claims for bullying in the workplace.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) Three cases were reported to the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2003.
- (b) All three cases were successfully mediated and required no recourse to formal notification.
- (c) Nil
- (d) Nil

**Manufacturing and export: WorkCover — workplace bullying**

**1769. THE HON. DAVID KOCH** — To ask the Minister for Small Business (for the Minister for Manufacturing and Export):

- (a) How many cases of bullying in the workplace have been reported to each department or agency under the responsibility of the Minister between 1 January and 31 December 2003.
- (b) How many of these claims resulted in WorkCover cases being established.
- (c) What was the total cost of WorkCover claims for bullying in the workplace for each department or agency under the responsibility of the Minister between 1 January and 31 December 2003.

- (d) What has been the dollar increase in premiums for each individual Department or agency due to claims for bullying in the workplace.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

- (a) Three cases were reported to the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2003.
- (b) All three cases were successfully mediated and required no recourse to formal notification.
- (c) Nil
- (d) Nil

**Aboriginal affairs: prisons — tailored programs**

**1783. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

- (a) What programs linked within the prison system are specifically tailored for indigenous adult prisoners.
- (b) What level of funding was made available for such programs in 2001-02; 2002-03 and 2003-04.
- (c) What level of funding will be made available for such programs in 2004-05.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed as follows:

This question should be referred to the Honourable Minister for Corrections, who has portfolio responsibility for this matter.

