

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

**21 April 2005
(extract from Book 3)**

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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(*Assembly*): Mr Cooper, Ms Marshall, Mr Maxfield, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells.

Economic Development Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables B. N. Atkinson and R. H. Bowden, and Mr Pullen. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Mr Jenkins, Ms Morand and Mr Robinson.

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(*Assembly*): Ms McTaggart, Ms Neville, Mrs Powell, Mrs Shardey and Mr Wilson.

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(*Assembly*): Mr Harkness, Mr Langdon, Mr Mulder and Mr Trezise.

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Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Hansard — Chief Reporter: Ms C. J. Williams

Library — Librarian: Ms G. Dunston

Joint Services — Director, Corporate Services: Mr S. N. Aird

Director, Infrastructure Services: Mr G. C. Spurr

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FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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The Hon. ANDREA COOTE

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The Hon. P. R. HALL

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Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin	North Western	NP	Smith, Mr Robert Frederick	Chelsea	ALP
Eren, Hon. John Hamdi	Geelong	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	Eumemmerring	ALP
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Hirsh, Hon. Carolyn Dorothy	Silvan	ALP	Vogels, Hon. John Adrian	Western	LP

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Thursday, 21 April 2005

The **PRESIDENT** (Hon. M. M. Gould) took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITION

Harness racing: Hamilton

Hon. **DAVID KOCH** (Western) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the Minister for Racing withdraw his support for the V3 scheme and do his utmost to reinstate harness racing at Hamilton (258 signatures).

Laid on table.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS REPORT

Report 2002–04

Mr **GAVIN JENNINGS** (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), by leave, presented report for 2002–04.

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Ballarat University — Report, 2004 (two papers).

Deakin University — Report, 2004.

La Trobe University — Report, 2004.

Melbourne University — Report, 2004.

Melbourne University Private Limited — Report, 2004.

Monash University — Report, 2004.

RMIT University — Report, 2004.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Heritage Act 1995 — No. 18.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — No. 17.

Swinburne University of Technology — Report, 2004.

Victoria University of Technology — Report, 2004.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Banyule: councillor

Hon. **BILL FORWOOD** (Templestowe) — I wish to advise the house that yesterday I wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Police in these terms:

I refer to the attached document, handed to me in my office on the 4 March 2005 by Cr Dale Peters of the City of Banyule.

Cr Peters informed me that an eyewitness is willing to give evidence at an inquiry, where judicial protection exists, in relation to this matter.

ALP members, including the Minister for Local Government, suggested in Parliament today that I refer the issue to the police.

Despite the appalling handling of the last matter I raised with you which was forwarded to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services who took no action whatsoever and which, subsequently, required the intervention of the Ombudsman before any action at all took place, I provide this information in the hope that justice will not only prevail but be seen to prevail.

Last night I also spoke to the eyewitness whom I had spoken to before in relation to the matter of Cr Brooks receiving funds and a pizza from La Porchetta restaurant in Greensborough. The eyewitness stands by his story despite the denials which were issued by other people, and he looks forward to the government having the guts to call a judicial inquiry so he can come forward and give evidence to the effect of the corruption which has been taking place in the City of Banyule, and in particular —

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

Alfred Deakin innovation lectures

Mr **VINEY** (Chelsea) — I would like to advise the house of the Deakin innovation lectures, which were announced by the Minister for Innovation on 6 April. The lectures will be titled 'Innovation — Everyone, everyday, everywhere' and include 20 lectures in inner Melbourne, 3 in outer suburban Melbourne and 5 in rural and regional Victoria including Bendigo, Mildura, Wodonga, Geelong and Warrnambool. The outer metropolitan lectures will be held in Frankston, Meadow Heights and St Albans.

Thanks to the Bracks government, the Seven Network, the City of Melbourne and other sponsors, entry to all lectures will be free. The lectures will build on the successful inaugural lectures of 2001 fostering debate on our society's views and actions in an increasingly

creative and innovative global economy. A number of world-renowned experts in various fields — from scientists to artists to academics and businesspeople — will speak. The series is part of the Bracks government's initiatives to create an innovative economy in Victoria. I encourage all members to participate.

Mansfield-Mount Buller business awards

Hon. E. G. STONEY (Central Highlands) — Last night I attended the Mansfield-Mount Buller business awards, together with the Honourable Robert Mitchell and Deputy Mayor Anthony Maxwell-Davis. The *High Country Times* reports that:

120 people gathered at Mingo's restaurant for the awards which saw 36 entries in a variety of categories.

...

President of MDEDA —

that is, Mansfield District Economic Development Association —

Rick Lindsay said of the first awards, 'We've come a long way. It takes a lot of guts to actually sit down and fill out all the questions.'

Gary Gaffney of the Mansfield Shire Council said that the Mansfield shire has a really exciting development future. He said that council and the community needed to look further at job opportunities, further developed care facilities, support emerging agricultural businesses and promote and develop education and training.

Anthony Maxwell-Davis said they do tourism well but they need to do more development well. Judges were Adam Furphy from Shepparton and Joan Tehan. Mrs Tehan presented the awards and said she felt excited about what was happening in Mansfield. She joked that having come to the region in the 1960s, now you can get a 'skinny, decaf soy latte' and said that the awards reminded her of how much Mansfield had changed. The awards won were: retail, Mansfield Hotel; tourism, Norm and Helen Hookey; primary industry, Mark and Fenella Ritchie of Delatite Grazing; industry, Mansfield Veterinary Clinic; and environmental, Bells Earthmoving.

Spencer Street station: open day

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — I wish to remind members of the opportunity that they, their families, friends and constituents have to preview the rapidly changing Spencer Street station at the open day planned for this coming Saturday, between 10:30 a.m. and

3:30 p.m. Members of the community on that day will have the chance to take a behind-the-scenes tour of the station and inspect the new V'locity V/Line train, the new Siemens train from Connex, and a rebuilt XR557 Pacific National freight locomotive.

Spencer Street station is being transformed into a world-class transport interchange symbolising the biggest rail revitalisation program in this state in 120 years. It will improve passenger and freight services across Victoria. The station, with its wave roof, is even now a spectacular structure. On completion at the end of this year it will add further interest and inspiration to Melbourne's built environment, adding to Melbourne's attractiveness for the growing number of tourists and Commonwealth Games visitors to Victoria.

Ministers: absence

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — In the six weeks between 24 March and 3 May the Parliament sits for only one week — this week — so it is an example of outrageous contempt towards this Parliament and the people it represents that the Premier, Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Manufacturing and Export, all from the other place, chose this week to be absent from Parliament. The Premier has gone to India and now to Europe. Having been in India promoting Victorian exports, he would be embarrassed by the announcement this morning that Indian fashion houses have signed a communiqué that they will not use Australian merino wool.

The Minister for Tourism has also gone to India and China, and the Minister for Manufacturing and Export also has gone to China to open an office. None of these visits needed to be conducted this week. The government controls the sitting timetable of this house and when ministers travel overseas. It should not have had the Premier and two ministers overseas on the only week that Parliament is sitting in this period. This is a deliberate effort by the government to avoid scrutiny in the Parliament, and it again demonstrates just how arrogant this Premier and this government have become.

Nagambie: rowing regatta

Hon. R. G. MITCHELL (Central Highlands) — I advise that on 2 April I went to Nagambie to watch the Associated Public Schools Head of the River rowing competition. I was there with Bill Sykes, the member for Benalla in the other place, and a number of local Strathbogie shire councillors, including the mayor, Cr Robyn Machin.

The one notable absentee was Mr Robert Doyle, the Leader of the Opposition in the other place. Members may remember that Robert Doyle was critical of Nagambie holding the rowing regatta. On 18 February he was quoted in the *Geelong Advertiser* as saying ‘Nagambie! ... do me a favour’. Mr Doyle obviously has no idea where country Victoria is. He prefers to stick to Geelong; even after getting an invitation he could not be bothered turning up. The weather was perfect and it was a great day. Scotch College stormed home to win from Geelong Grammar and Haileybury.

In the girls first eight event Carey took the honours ahead — —

Hon. Andrea Coote — Who won the third, tell us?

Hon. R. G. MITCHELL — As I was saying before the member rudely interrupted, Carey took the honours ahead of Geelong Grammar and Geelong College. As I said, it was a fantastic event. It is one of the biggest events held in Nagambie, and it is typical that Mr Doyle could not come because he had Liberal Party commitments. It just goes to show what we always say: they are Liberals first and Victorians second.

Drought: north-west Victoria

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I was going to talk about something else, but I will simply intervene and say that it just goes to show how ignorant the honourable member who spoke before me is, because Robert Doyle, I and all of my colleagues were with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer at the annual conference of the Liberal Party. Let us be clear that the honourable member could not name the members of the Associated Public Schools that competed at that regatta.

With respect, my comments today are about drought and the failure of the Bracks government, and the Minister for Agriculture in the other place in particular, to deal with the fact of the drought in north-west Victoria, where people are in despair. The failure of the Minister for Agriculture to commit to reforming a drought policy at a national level indicates clearly that the government has gone missing. The best it can do is to offer money for streetscape schemes when north-west Victoria is in a desperate plight without the government’s support. I recently visited farming communities in Ouyen, Charlton, Wycheproof, Donald and Horsham, where people are in an incendiary mood about the government’s failure to do anything but offer money for streetscape schemes when the farmers are in dire straights and the communities are in abject — —

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

Geelong: Sharland Oasis display home

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — Recently I had the pleasure of opening on behalf of Barwon Water the Geelong region’s first ecologically sustainable display home, Sharland Oasis, in the Sharland Park estate. This Barwon Water initiative will show how average residential water and energy costs can be reduced by up to 80 per cent through the use of the latest technologies such as tank-to-toilet rainwater systems, solar energy and environmentally friendly construction materials. Importantly Barwon Water and the Plumbing Industry Commission will work together to collect and analyse data to measure room-by-room water usage, the performance of individual appliances and the long-term effectiveness of alternative water sources such as grey water usage in the garden. Sharland Oasis will be an important showcase for boosting sustainability in the Geelong region. It provides a practical example of how water and energy savings can be made inside and outside the house.

I encourage Geelong residents to visit Sharland Oasis to see at first hand how efficient appliances coupled with innovative design and construction techniques can not only protect the environment but also help their households to save money on water and energy bills. I congratulate Barwon Water, and in particular the chair, Stephen Vaughan, and the chief executive officer, Dennis Brockenshire, for once again through this project demonstrating their leadership in our region in the environmentally sustainable use of our resources.

Footscray Mall: future

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — I would like to raise the issue of the Footscray Mall. The council has launched a study into the reopening of the Footscray Mall. The mall in Footscray has been closed to traffic for more than 30 years. That has helped Footscray residents to reconsider whether or not the mall should be open. Footscray is the centre of business in the west and there are a lot of business people from many different ethnic backgrounds, including Asians, black Africans as well as Australians and Anglo-Saxons, and the council is interested to look at how to improve trade in the area. This is good news. I would like to congratulate the council on trying to improve and working with — —

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

Housing: affordability

Ms MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — I want to place on record my support for a new \$20 million package of construction projects designed to boost Melbourne's stock of affordable housing that was recently announced by the Minister for Housing, Ms Broad. Minister Broad unveiled a \$20 million investment to build 100 houses and units in strategic locations across Melbourne. I am particularly pleased that funding from the package will enable 31 one-bedroom to four-bedroom homes to be built across Melbourne's north, in suburbs such as Preston, Reservoir and Lalor. Families in my local area are really struggling to get a decent place to live because of the Howard government driving up interest rates and private rental becoming increasingly unaffordable. These construction projects are really important for the local economy as well, because they will provide jobs to local builders. The new homes will be available for rental from later this year and will be targeted to people on low incomes who meet public housing eligibility criteria. The Bracks government unequivocally supports the provision of affordable housing for the more disadvantaged members of our community. I particularly welcome this announcement, as it will benefit low-income families in my electorate.

Skilled Stadium: redevelopment

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — Since the election of the Bracks government Geelong has never had it so good. We in Geelong are very happy. In the last budget we received close to a third of the \$1 billion regional budget, and we are very happy. One of the investments that we made through the budget was in Skilled Stadium, where the government provided around \$13 million. A story in today's *Geelong Advertiser* by Sarah Bieske says:

Skilled Stadium's redevelopment is expected to inject more than \$190 million into the Geelong region over the next 10 years.

That was confirmed by an independent study done by KPMG, which, as reported in the article, found that:

each of the Cats' seven or more home games a year will bring \$1.2 million into the city and its surroundings.

It also says:

The study also found the redevelopment would create a further 80 full-time jobs in Geelong as well as an extra 200 casual jobs on match days.

With 10 days until the official opening —

and I will be there on 1 May to see the Cats take on the Bulldogs in the new stadium — —

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

Racing: fallen jockeys memorial

Mr PULLEN (Higinbotham) — On 5 March I attended the unveiling of a monument at the Caulfield racecourse by the Minister for Racing in the other place, John Pandazopoulos. The monument honours 298 Australian jockeys who lost their lives through a riding incident from 1847 to that day. It was unveiled before the Futurity Stakes. The monument features Jennifer Mann's magnificent bronze sculpture of famed jockey Hughie Cairns, who was killed in a race fall at Moonee Valley in 1929. George Marsden, who is recorded as having been killed following an accident at Homebush in 1847, is the earliest casualty listed on the memorial. The establishment of the fallen jockeys monument is due largely to the vision and persistence of Australian Jockeys Association honorary secretary, Ned Wallish.

Since then, two young jockeys unfortunately died in separate accidents on the Labour Day holiday weekend. That dual tragedy highlights the ever-present danger faced by riders. Adrian Ledger, 25 years old, lost his life following a fall at Corowa on March 13. Gavin Lisk, 23 years old, an apprentice to Caulfield trainer Mick Price, suffered fatal injuries following a fall at Moe the following day. I consider jockeys the bravest sportspeople of all. They put their lives on the line every day for entertainment in this industry.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Primary Industries: report 2003–04

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I wish to make a statement on the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries 2003–04. The secretary, in the introduction, cites the relocation of the Melbourne wholesale markets as an important feature of the work of the department. The report titled *Growing Victoria's Future* states:

Substantial consultation is being undertaken with the market community to explore and maximise opportunities for Victoria's future fruit, vegetable and flower distribution.

I note the secretary's comments because the opposition has been undertaking extensive consultation of its own. Over the course of this week alone, members of the opposition have visited Melbourne Markets on two

occasions — on Tuesday morning and this morning. Beyond these discussions we have had extensive consultations with the transport industry, flower growers, vegetable growers, wholesalers and retailers. We also had a briefing from the chief executive officer of Melbourne Markets this morning, which I gratefully acknowledge.

Hon. Andrea Coote — At what time?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — We started a bit late — at 6.00 a.m. today. It is interesting that that briefing could have occurred on Tuesday as had been arranged if it were not for the incompetence of the Minister for Agriculture's office which arbitrarily cancelled it at the last minute. This meant that the opposition members of Parliament and other stakeholders at the market were put to the inconvenience of having to arrange two separate meetings. Apart from that being a disgraceful action and contempt being displayed towards the operators in the market, the exercise in itself was useful because we had more time out at the market this week than would otherwise have been the case.

We are yet to find anybody who would articulate the position that the markets should relocate to Werribee. We found a great deal of concern about the relocation project. Because of the government's process we found that people are very uncertain. This has created an environment where leases cannot be extended, investments in infrastructure cannot be made by market operators, and no leases will be issued beyond 2008 which is the expected timeframe in which the project will have been completed by the government. In question time yesterday the Minister for Major Projects made it clear that we are at the first stage of a six-step process of decision-making by the government and therefore there is going to be no resolution to this matter soon.

As to the need to urgently relocate, the argument has been put quite well that there is the capacity to further develop the market on the site albeit with the requirement of a significant capital investment to achieve it. The case has been made that in terms of the broad logistics any move from the site, whether it is in the short, medium or long term, ought to be to the north of Melbourne.

That view has been put consistently by all of the market stakeholders. What I am interested to note through the processes of the government's consultation is that it is unable to recognise the need for providing the market community with any certainty of outcome. I dare say the opportunity exists, coincidental with next week's budget, for the Minister for Major Projects in

association with the Treasurer's budget statement to make it explicitly clear to the market community what the time lines for a determination and relocation are so that the important business of the market can further develop. I understand the turnover of the market is in the order of \$1.6 billion. This is a very considerable business, the scale of which is demonstrated by the 2700 different businesses that operate there. Indeed I understand there are as many as 700 forklift drivers employed there. Many people have a desire to see certainty come — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Adult Parole Board: report 2003–04

Ms MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to make a short contribution on the 2003–04 annual report of the Adult Parole Board. In particular I wish to note the excellent initiatives that are in place to ensure that offenders are properly reintegrated into the community. I note that often we get elements of the media making uninformed comments about prisoners being placed on parole, which seems to indicate to me a lack of understanding of what the parole system is all about.

As the report notes, the Adult Parole Board has been in existence since it was established in 1957. The principal purpose of the parole board is set out admirably by the board's chairperson, Justice Murray Kellam, at page 5 of the report. He says:

... the principal purpose of granting parole is to serve the public interest by closely supervising the offender during his or her period of reintegration into the community.

In many cases, onerous conditions of parole, include imposing:

a curfew; strict conditions about place of residence; requirements to attend programs; and random substance testing.

The point made by Justice Kellam, which I also wish to make, is that the system of parole serves the public interest in that it seeks to reintegrate offenders into the community on release, obviously with a view to reducing the recidivism rate and making the community a safer place in which to live.

In its report the board notes its continuing trend of taking a more interventionist role in managing offenders on parole. This is reflected in the increased activity of the board, which met on 115 occasions in 2003–04. It considered 7061 matters, an increase of 4.9 per cent over the previous year. It is also reflected in

the fact that the number of parole orders successfully completed rose from 887 in 2002–03 to 1066 in 2003–04, which constitutes an increase of 20.2 per cent. There was an increase in parole cancellations from 379 to 472, an increase of 24.5 per cent. We can see from those figures that we have more parolees successfully completing their orders, and that the parole board is taking breaches very seriously and cancelling parole in a number of circumstances.

The report also notes the findings arising from the first six months of operation of the innovative home detention program, which was introduced on 1 January 2004. This program allows the board to release to home detention non-violent, low-security offenders who have been convicted of specific offences after they have served two-thirds of their sentence and who will be eligible for parole within six months. The board is responsible for considering and making a determination on all applications for the revocation of a home detention order. As of 30 June 2004, the board had received 233 applications from prisoners seeking a home detention order, with 26 orders being made by the board and a further 3 being made by the courts. I am sure we will see a lot more detail about the successes of the home detention program in the next annual report.

The board also comments positively on the delivery of intensive drug programs to prisoners by Corrections Victoria. In particular the board notes the ongoing expansion of the opiate substitution therapy program, which assists prisoners at risk of drug misuse to avoid illicit drug use upon release. This is an excellent program which assists in reducing the rate of low-level reoffending.

I take this opportunity to put on record my thanks and congratulations to members and staff of the Adult Parole Board, in particular the chairperson, Justice Murray Kellam, for the very important work that they continue to do on behalf of the whole community. As I said at the outset, the intention of the Adult Parole Board putting people into the parole system is to reintegrate offenders back into the community with a view to making our community much safer.

Human Services: report 2003–04

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — My contribution today to this debate relates to the Department of Human Services annual report, in particular page 27, which is the acute health services output measures. In particular I draw the attention of the house to some of the output measures relating to bypass and emergency patients admitted within the recommended period, which was less than 12 hours. I

note that the government's target was 95 per cent and the actual achievement in 2003–04 was 86 per cent. I know the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has tabled an important report this week, and that report on the 2003–04 budget outcomes summarises some of these issues relating to a those output measures.

Yesterday in this chamber I talked about the Alfred, Dandenong, Monash, Royal Melbourne and Goulburn Valley hospitals and their failure to achieve their 2003–04 targets with respect to 12-hour waits. Indeed those patients at those hospitals were among almost 27 000 patients who were left waiting on trolleys in the emergency departments of our public hospitals for 12 hours. I note the government's announcement in the last few days of a plan to alter the measurement system that is applied to the long waits in emergency departments, and those long waits are becoming increasingly long. The Auditor-General in his recent report on managing emergency demand pointed to the raising of new categories of long-stayers — the ultra long-stayers, people staying more than 72 hours in emergency departments — and those long-stay patients are becoming increasingly common.

We know from considerable clinical evidence that patient health is compromised by long stays in emergency departments, but my concern today is that —

Mr Viney — You did not care about that when you were in government.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — They are worse, Mr Viney. I make the point that they are worse, and that is why you changed the measures. They are much worse.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! Mr Davis will direct his remarks through the Chair. Mr Viney should stop interjecting.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — The fact is that the government has changed these measures but not to achieve better patient outcomes. Of course the opposition strongly supports moving closer to the national measures — moving towards the 8-hour standard, the Australian Council on Healthcare standards and what the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine recommends. We support that move, but we do not support the ripping away of established measures that enable comparison with previous times and previous years. These new measures will be instituted by this government, but there is no commitment on the part of the government to maintain

parallel reporting in these budget measures, as your government promised, Mr Viney, when it signed the Independents charter. You promised when you signed that charter that when you fudged and changed budget measures you would continue parallel reporting of the old measures.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! Mr Davis, through the Chair.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — I challenge the Minister for Health to come forward and indicate that there will be parallel reporting, that she will continue to report on a quarterly basis and that she will continue to report also those 12-hour waits. We know the real reason she has moved those waits. We know she has fudged those waits because they are becoming increasingly embarrassing to the government. The fact is that the government is embarrassed about the result and the blow-out in the number of people waiting. The government is embarrassed to the extent that it has now sought to change the measures in an attempt to hide the embarrassing statistics.

I make the point, as I said a moment ago, that in the Independents charter Labor promised parallel reporting. That charter ought to be honoured. The government ought to keep its commitment to put parallel reporting in place. We ought to be able to compare the government's performance against the performance of the Kennett government. We know the Kennett government performed better on ambulance bypass. We know that it performed better on the issue of 12-hour waits — the Auditor-General made that clear. We know that the introduction of the hospital early warning system is another fudge. The early warning system is just a different form of ambulance diversion without declaring a bypass. Bypasses should be declared. We want open and accountable government. We do not want fudges and hiding of the facts.

Road Safety Committee: crashes involving roadside objects

Mr PULLEN (Higinbotham) — I notice that Mr Bishop is also listed to speak on this report, and so he should be because he is a member of this committee. I want to talk about the report of the inquiry into crashes involving roadside objects. I congratulate the committee on an excellent report. I notice that the chair of the committee is my very good friend, Ian Trezise, the member for Geelong in the other place. There are three very good representatives on the committee from this chamber in Mr Bishop, Mr Eren and the deputy chair of the committee, Mr Stoney. This is a large

report, but I would like to pick out a few things. The first two terms of reference were to inquire, consider and report on:

... the incidence, causes and appropriate means of addressing road crashes involving vehicles leaving the road and colliding with roadside objects —

and —

... the liability and accountability issues relating to roadside utility poles, trees and other fixed objects ...

The three members of the committee from this chamber come from rural electorates and they would understand what happens on rural roads. I lived in the bush for two and a half years and as a young person one of the things that used to go through my mind was why the trees were not on the other side of the boundary fences. I think this has been covered pretty well by some of the recommendations in this report. I was amazed that 75 fatalities in Victoria were caused by cars running off the road and hitting trees; that is a large number. The Bracks government has done a magnificent job of attempting to reduce the road toll, particularly with the latest initiative of drug testing. These things might be experimental at the moment, but it is important that we do every single thing we can to attempt to cut the number of road deaths.

I want to touch on a couple of the recommendations which I thought were excellent. The summary states:

Road improvements that can help keep vehicles on the roadway include devices, such as audio-tactile line marking, which can also improve delineation so drivers can see where the road is heading.

That initiative has been very good. It comes under recommendation 30 in the report and I think that is good.

I also want to touch on a few recommendations in the report. I had better watch how I say this, but I think sometimes the environment movement can go nuts when looking at replacing trees. Recommendation 32 states:

That VicRoads, in conjunction with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and municipalities, develop a code of practice for roadside safety zones based on the principle that the safety of road users should always have precedence.

Recommendation 33 states:

That VicRoads and municipalities be exempt from a planning permit for the clearing of roadside trees and hazardous native vegetation within defined distances from the edge of the road and heights above the road.

Recommendation 34 states:

That the Department of Sustainability and Environment remove the vegetation replacement requirements for trees removed because they are a roadside safety hazard.

Another very good recommendation in this report was recommendation 39, which says:

That there be more use in Victoria of new types of plastic or aluminium light poles and that a comprehensive program to replace hazardous poles with safer types be investigated by VicRoads and municipalities.

I congratulate the members of the committee. It is a far-reaching report. I note that the committee travelled overseas and in particular visited France. We were in France last week and how anyone can drive around the Arc de Triomphe amazes me. Cars were going in different directions. I would not have driven there for anything because the traffic situation was madness. I commend the report, which was well done by the committee.

Statements interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The Chair acknowledges a former member of the Legislative Council, Mr Giovanni Sgro. Welcome.

Statements resumed.

Community visitors: report 2003–04

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — I would like to speak on the Community visitors annual review report for 2003–04. At the outset I congratulate all community visitors in this state, who do an excellent job. It is something that all of us in this chamber can be most appreciative of. There are 587 volunteer community visitors in this state who visited over 10 000 Victorians who have disabilities in the period 2003–04. If we look at volunteerism and how much of their free time volunteers put in assisting the community by visiting the disabled last year, we find it is a staggering \$2 million worth of time. That is utterly commendable. I put on the record the thanks of the state for the work they do.

In particular I thank Jo Carter from Gippsland, who has put in an enormous amount of time in Gippsland doing terrific work. She has given me some wonderful feedback, some heart-rending stories and some positive stories. I am very pleased to have the comments she has

given me and for the time she has taken to contact me about those reports.

Julian Gardner, the Public Advocate, oversees community visitors. Section 5 of the report states:

The core role of the community visitor is to safeguard the interests and rights of people with a disability. Community visitors are independent of service providers and through regular visits to facilities are able to assess whether the service is observing the rights and needs of individual residents, meeting quality assurance standards demanded by the Department of Human Services to demand and expected community standards.

The report also says that what has arisen this year is the vexed issue of young people in nursing homes. It states:

Allied to this is the vexed question of the inappropriate placement of young people in nursing homes because of the lack of suitable accommodation which provides high levels of support, particularly for people with an acquired brain injury.

I received a letter on 18 April from Alicia Ridsdale, who has a friend Christopher Nolan. This is what she says about him:

I am writing in regards to my close friend Christopher Nolan who having lived in the aged care nursing home Harold McCracken House for the past eight years in Fitzroy ...

...

Chris has lived in an aged care nursing home for eight years because he has no other options. This nursing home in Fitzroy was chosen to be close to family, friends and the medical and health services Chris needs.

...

Chris acquired a severe brain injury in 1996 while working overseas, and has been in a coma ever since.

Her particular concern is that the Fitzroy service is going to be relocated to Eltham and Chris will have to be moved. She says:

With appropriate care and support, Chris has a normal life expectancy. As a young person who, having suffered a catastrophic injury, is trying to re-engage again with life and people, Chris needs appropriate care and environment.

We have to do better for Chris. A group of Chris's family and friends have been working on a solution to this problem for nine months ... They have ideas as a group on how to develop a solution to Chris' situation, but they need a voice to champion Chris's plight.

...

The ideal situation would be for a small, group house or facility with 5-8 beds for Chris and others in a similar situation.

I have heard this from community visitors, and I advocate on behalf of Chris Nolan and other young

people in nursing homes. I urge the Minister for Aged Care, who I know is an advocate for young people in nursing homes and is doing very good work to try to alleviate this problem, to again approach his colleague the Minister for Community Services in the other house, particularly on behalf of Christopher Nolan.

Young people in nursing homes is a disastrous situation. I also visited someone in Kilmore. What happens is that their young friends no longer wish to go and visit them. They are often in dementia areas, and it is very uncomfortable for young people to go into nursing homes and visit these people who are housed inappropriately there. It is not comfortable for the older people either because they are not accustomed to the loud music and some of the other things that young people have.

I am pleased that Julian Gardner has recognised the issue of young people in nursing homes, but I again urge the government to address this concern as a matter of urgency.

National Environment Protection Council: report 2003–04

Mr SCHEFFER (Monash) — I think it is fair to say that the existence and work of the National Environment Protection Council is not as well known as it should be. The report explains that the 1990 special Premiers Conference decided to set up a national body that would set national environment protection measures to ensure a national consistency in the level of environmental protections from air, water and soil pollution and noise.

The 1990 Premiers Conference also sought to ensure that decisions by businesses are not distorted and markets not weakened by differences among the states regarding major environment protection measures.

The National Environment Protection Council was established to put these aspirations into practice, and its two functions are to set national environment protection measures and to assess and report on the implementation and effectiveness in participating states.

The report describes a national environment protection measure as a framework-setting statutory instrument that outlines agreed national objectives for protecting or managing particular aspects of the environment. A national environment protection measure can consist of environment protection goals, standards, protocols or guidelines.

The report has a very useful explanation in appendices 4 and 5 of how the national environment

protection measures are made and developed. National environment protection measures may relate to ambient air quality, noise, site contamination, impacts of hazardous wastes and the reuse and recycling of used materials.

National environment protection measures may also relate to motor vehicle noise and emissions that are developed in conjunction with the National Transport Commission.

In making national environment protection measures, the National Environment Protection Council must have regard to the measure's consistency with agreements that states, territories and the commonwealth have made concerning the social, environmental and economic impacts, relevant international agreements and the implications of regional environmental differences.

The 2003–04 report states that during the year air toxics national environment protection measure was made together with a review of the movement of controlled waste national environment protection measure.

The National Environment Protection Council lists among its major activities in 2003–04 its support for the implementation of the code of practice for the management of plastic shopping bags to be developed by the Australian Retailers Association, the preparation of the draft variation to the ambient air quality national environment protection measure and related impact statement for public consultation.

As well as air quality and plastic shopping bag management, the council cited support for a national water efficiency labelling and standards scheme, recognised the work done by the tyre industry on the recycling of scrap tyres, approved a work program for the chemicals industry to look at developing a risk management framework, a national information framework and information dissemination strategies. The council also established a working group to examine options to address the decline in Australia's significant rural heritage places. The council also looked at packaging, waste management, information dissemination across the chemical industry as well as noting progress on the implementation of the indigenous reconciliation action plan. I found this a very useful report on an important national body.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: budget outcomes 2003–04

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I rise to make a statement on the Public Accounts and

Estimates Committee's report on the 2003–04 budget outcomes. As a member of the committee I start by recording my thanks to the executive officer, Michele Cornwell, and to the secretariat for their work in the preparation of this report which runs to just under 400 pages. I have been on that committee for almost six years now, and throughout that entire time the preparation of Public Accounts and Estimates Committee reports has always been a torturous process. In some respects that has become more so over the last two years, and this report was no exception. I am very pleased to finally see it tabled in the Parliament, and in doing so thank the secretariat and in particular Michele for getting it here.

I would like to pick up on a couple of areas in the report, and two relate to the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development. The committee has made a recommendation — recommendation 45 — with respect to the department and its investment facilitation and attraction areas so that it develops performance targets which enhance continuous improvement. The reason for this recommendation is that the committee felt that although the department had consistently exceeded its targets for the last number of years, it had not in fact lifted those targets. Although the target for the number of jobs created in regional Victoria was 1000 for 2003–04 and the performance was just under 1700, the target had not been subsequently lifted for 2004–05, and that was the case with a number of targets that were set. The committee believes the government should set more ambitious targets to ensure that there is further improvement beyond the levels achieved in previous years, rather than merely aiming to achieve the same level.

The second area I would like to pick up on in the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development relates to Tourism Victoria and its claim of marketing leverage. The report includes a table provided by the department which indicates that Tourism Victoria spent \$2.2 million on international marketing campaigns, and claims to have received leverage of \$17.5 million through partnership campaigns with other marketing agencies such as the Australian Tourism Commission, and therefore claims that the leverage ratio was 8 to 1 in marketing impact for each dollar spent. This ignores the fact that a lot of money spent with the Australian Tourism Commission is not spent promoting Victoria. It is a reality that most of the Australian Tourism Commission promotions of tourism are New South Wales and Sydney-centric, and it is a very long bow for Tourism Victoria to draw to say that because we were a minor participant in an Australian Tourism Commission program that we benefited in proportion to the total expenditure. So I

reject the claim that for every \$1 that Tourism Victoria spends it gets \$8 in benefit because most of the money spent in partnership is not spent on promoting Victoria.

Two other areas I would like to touch on relate to the Department for Victorian Communities and both relate to the Commonwealth Games. The first relates to the use of contingency funding. The Minister for Commonwealth Games informed the committee that there is a \$21.8 million contingency in the Commonwealth Games budget allocated to 2004–05 and if that is not spent it will be carried forward. The committee has expressed great concern that the Commonwealth Games budget has contingency funding in it and believes the budget should be appropriately set for the necessary expenditure on the games, and that any excess that is required should be funded through a Treasurer's advance, so there should not be more than \$22 million built into the budget for contingency which is then available for the department to spend freely.

The other area I would like to touch on is the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. The report finds that although expenditure to 2003–04 was budgeted to be \$26.9 million — almost \$27 million — in reality only \$7 million was spent, which indicates that that project is well behind schedule, and indeed the Department for Victorian Communities has confirmed that. That is of great concern as we are now only 10 months away from the Commonwealth Games.

Dandenong Development Board: report 2003–04

Mr SOMYUREK (Eumemmerring) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the 2003–04 report of the Dandenong Development Board, which is the board's first annual report. The establishment of the board is a powerful symbol of the importance that this state government places on the rejuvenation of Dandenong. Dandenong has gone through some pretty challenging times over the last decade or so, but there is now a sense of vitality returning to Dandenong. The fact that the government has made it a priority to buttress Dandenong and to try to rejuvenate it has certainly helped in the atmosphere of the place. It is starting to turn around, but there is certainly much more to be done: I am cognisant of that fact. I ask that the people of the region and the community of Dandenong stay focused and disciplined. The most important thing is that they stay positive. The positive energy that the community manifests will be very important in investment coming into the area.

During its first year the board worked closely with the City of Greater Dandenong, VicUrban and other

stakeholders in promoting, facilitating and encouraging the development of Dandenong as part of the government's Transit Cities project. According to its chair, Mr David Cowlshaw, during those early stages the board set about developing an understanding of the dynamics of Dandenong's central area. The report lists a myriad of projects that the board was involved with, including — and I will name a couple although there is a comprehensive list — a commercial feasibility study to assess the commercial viability and sustainability of transit city development and land-use change in central Dandenong, and that is very important before people go at it hammer and tongs. That was one of the problems in the past with the Dandenong central activities district (CAD), in that development was ad hoc. The CAD developed in an ad hoc way, and I will refer to that in a moment.

Another very important review which the board, together with council, commissioned was into the operation of the retail sector in the city centre to determine opportunities for retail and commercial revitalisation. That is probably one of the biggest issues facing the CAD at the moment in that the volumes of people are just not there. People have been bypassing Dandenong and the regeneration of the CAD is very important for attracting other people and businesses into the area.

The other economic issues faced by Dandenong are the result of the economic restructuring that the whole country went through over the last 20 years. I do not have to lecture this house on the shift in the base of the Australian economy from manufacturing to more of a service economy, and Dandenong and a 15-kilometre radius around it provides about 42 per cent of the manufacturing output of the state. It really is a manufacturing hub for Australia, so the shifting in the economy away from manufacturing to the service industry really has hurt Dandenong. I must also say that the highest concentration of — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Road Safety Committee: crashes involving roadside objects

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I would like to make some comments on the report of the inquiry into crashes involving roadside objects. I had an opportunity when the report was tabled to say a few words, but it was very limited. I would like to firstly recognise the committee, which is chaired by Mr Ian Trezise, the member for Geelong in the other

place. The deputy chair is the Honourable Graeme Stoney from this house. The other members are the Honourable John Eren; Mr Alistair Harkness, the member for Frankston in the other place; Mr Craig Langdon, the member for Ivanhoe in the other place; Mr Terry Mulder, the member for Polwarth in the other place; and, of course, me. I commend Mr Ian Trezise for the way he allowed the committee to work through some tough issues. He did an excellent job, as did our staff, headed up by the executive officer, Ms Alexandra Douglas; the research officers, Graeme Both and Peter Nelson; and the office manager, Beth Klein. Beth has left the committee and now has a position here at Parliament. The staff did an excellent job. They were professional and committed to the task.

It is interesting to note that this inquiry was conducted in conjunction with another inquiry, the report on which we shall table shortly — that is, the inquiry into the country road toll. We found as a committee that as many of the issues were similar it was a good idea to combine the inquiries so we could use the same research facilities and make an easier job of writing two very complex reports.

The first job we had to do was acknowledge there was an issue in relation to roadside objects. That is very clearly stated in the executive summary of the report:

Vehicles which leave the road and strike roadside objects are a major source of road trauma on Victorian roads, accounting for more than one-third of the total road fatalities in 2003. The committee notes that the issue is given little prominence, yet the number of fatalities was greater, by more than one-third in 2003, than the combined total of pedestrian, motorcyclist and cyclist fatalities.

The committee found that vehicles colliding with roadside objects represented almost one-fifth of all crashes resulting in a fatality or an injury in a recent five-year period. Sixty per cent occurred in the metropolitan area and 40 per cent in the rest of Victoria.

That issue was quite readily identified.

One of the major issues we addressed was trees on roadsides. We found that the municipalities, VicRoads and the police in the community were strongly involved in this issue, as was the Department of Sustainability and Environment. We found it was absolutely essential on these crucial issues to have a strong balance of the interests across all those areas.

In my view and that of the committee that balance is not there now. While we found the municipalities, the communities, VicRoads and the police have been quite practical and sensible about trees on roadsides and road safety, we also found the Department of Sustainability and Environment intractable, difficult and out of touch,

particularly during the public hearing process. Therefore recommendations 33, 34 and others that address this particular issue — and I commend Mr Pullen for his support of the committee's findings — were not made lightly. Recommendation 33 looks at an exemption from the requirement for a planning permit for the clearing of roadside trees, and recommendation 34 looks to the removal of the vegetation replacement requirements for trees that are removed because they are roadside safety hazards.

These are practical recommendations that the committee has put forward. We believe that roadside safety is not being fully addressed whilst we have in place these draconian rules where in most cases the Department of Sustainability and Environment makes it difficult for our municipalities to address the issue of roadside safety. We think that the rules we have at the moment are ridiculous and basically unworkable. We urge the government to pick up the recommendations, and there are many of them in this very good report, which deal with roadside objects.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Road Safety Committee: crashes involving roadside objects

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — As a member of the Road Safety Committee I too would like to contribute to this debate on this report of the inquiry into crashes involving roadside objects. I would also like to congratulate the committee members: the Honourable Barry Bishop; the deputy chair, the Honourable Graeme Stoney; and Mr Craig Langdon, Mr Alistair Harkness, Mr Terry Mulder and the chair of the committee, Mr Ian Trezise, the members for Ivanhoe, Frankston, Polwarth and Geelong in the other place respectively. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the committee staff, who have been tremendous in putting this report together. They are Alexandra Douglas, Graeme Both, Peter Nelson and Beth Klein.

I will start by saying that it is very rewarding to be on a committee that seeks to make our roads safer for the whole community. Hopefully some of the recommendations that we have made will contribute towards safer roads. I am a parent of teenagers and my eldest son who recently got his licence is driving on the roads. Any parents out there who have teenagers who drive would relate to what I am saying in that every time he gets into the car you hope he comes home safely and nothing happens to him. There are so many

deaths on the roads it is unbelievable and the message that the government clearly tries to portray is that speed is one of the biggest killers, as is, obviously, drinking and driving. Nevertheless we still see a huge number of accidents where people are injured or killed.

I would like to point out that the upgrade to the Princes Freeway has seen that road become a lot safer to drive on, and it is often quoted throughout the country as one that authorities should consider as a benchmark and state-of-the-art road. I drive on that road regularly and no doubt it is much safer. It has three lanes, the lanes have good widths and you are not worried about trucks overtaking on the right or whatever. You feel quite safe driving on the road, and yet we have still had three deaths on that road since it was constructed. One of those deaths involved a van which had three occupants in it. The van went off the road and hit a pole and subsequently two people died as a result of that accident. The other single fatality that occurred was when another car careered off the road and hit a massive pole on the side of the road. These are the sorts of things we looked at — roadside objects that are very dangerous — because if cars collide with them, the car comes off second best. Even though it is a state-of-the-art road we still have deaths on that road.

One of the interesting things that we saw during our overseas trip was in Sweden where they have collapsible, aluminium, lightweight poles in a lattice form which are not a solid construction at all. If a vehicle hits the poles there is minimal damage to the vehicle, but the occupants would be quite safe. We should go down that path of making sure we look at other countries and how they deal with their roadside objects and how they could eliminate some of the risks that are involved, and I think that is one of the recommendations we have made. I wish I had more time — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Auditor-General: management of occupational health and safety in local government

Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western) — I would like to make some comments on the Auditor-General's report *Management of Occupational Health and Safety in Local Government* of April 2005. It is an interesting report and it starts off in the foreword by saying:

This audit found that local government has managed OHS at a compliance level and focused on meeting legislative requirements, rather than striving for excellence. While, on

balance, local government is a safe place to work, there is substantial room for improvement.

At page 12 under of the report under the heading 'Is local government a safe place to work?' it states:

There was a general level of agreement between the views of local councils, their staff and what we found during our visits. On balance, local government is a safe place to work and staff feel safe, but there is substantial room for improvement.

If you look at local government, risk management must be one of the most complicated issues it has to deal with. According to this report there were seven deaths related to local government over the last seven years, which is one per year — and, of course, seven deaths too many. Local government across Victoria employs tens of thousands of people and is responsible for about \$38 billion worth of infrastructure. The whole of Victoria's 5.5 million population uses its services regularly, and therefore it has a huge responsibility.

In relation to risk management, local councils tell me they spend more time doing paperwork these days than being out in the field doing their work. If you look at their risk management they have to do occupational health and safety competency renewals regularly, there are always changes to legislation and regulations, and there are occupational health and safety responsibilities for traders and contractors who work in their local communities. Every aspect of work is now risk assessed, and you only have to imagine home and community care workers, for example, who have to go into people's homes who may be frail and elderly. They have a 'no lift' policy which makes it very difficult when they go into a home where they may not previously have visited and find perhaps an 80 or 90-year-old person who needs to be showered and who has to be helped.

Local government does face lots of problems with occupational health and safety and risk management. I think it is a good report. Local government needs to have a look at it. My time has been cut short because other members want to speak on reports. I commend local government officers for the work they are doing in meeting their obligations to the community they are servicing.

National Environment Protection Council: report 2003–04

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — I rise to speak about the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) report for the financial year 2003–04. The report is very comprehensive. Members of the National Environment Protection Council included the former commonwealth environment minister, the

Honourable David Kemp, the Victorian Minister for Environment in the other place, the Honourable John Thwaites, and ministers from other states. These are very important meetings because all the ministers involved are working in the national interest so that individual states work together with the national council for the benefit of Australia. The council, in working closely with all states and also with other organisations around Australia, ensures that the issues discussed and decided will be implemented at a national level.

According to the annual report, the objectives of the national environment protection measures (NEPMs) are to ensure that, firstly:

the people of Australia enjoy the benefit of equivalent protection from air, water, and soil pollution and from noise wherever they live.

And secondly:

decisions by businesses are not distorted and markets are not fragmented by variations between jurisdictions in relation to the adoption or implementation of major environment protection measures.

They are the two key issues. The executive officer's report states:

The air toxics NEPM was made, together with the review of the movement of controlled waste NEPM ... —

including setting a standard, and —

a tighter 1-hour ozone standard in the ambient air quality NEPM.

It talks about working with the new National Transport Commission, formerly the National Road Transport Commission, whose responsibilities include air, rail, roads and ports. It also refers to acts being amended to provide for minor variations of NEPMs and five-yearly reviews of the NEPC acts.

I turn to the NEPC's major activities. A council meeting on 2 October 2003 dealt with air quality and water, and it was agreed that water efficiency labels should be placed on all showerheads, washing machines, dishwashers and toilets sold in Australia, and that other products, including taps, urinals and flow regulators, will be covered on a voluntary basis. It was noted that the scheme would conserve around 87 200 million litres of water per year — about 5 per cent of total household water use — and save consumers about \$620 million per year in water and electricity bills.

The meeting also talked about plastic bags and how to reduce them. These are important issues, and I would like to support the report.

Community visitors: report 2003–04

Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) — I would like to thank the Honourables John Vogels and Sang Nguyen for their assistance in this session.

I would like to take note of the annual report 2003–04 of the community visitors in relation to the Health Services Act. The core role of community visitors is to safeguard the interests and rights of people with a disability. Community visitors are an independent group of service providers, and through regular visits to facilities they are able to assess where the services are observing the rights and needs of individual residents and meeting quality assurance standards and the expected community standards demanded by the Department of Human Services.

They go out in various groups. These groups are almost exclusively for-profit organisations in the supported residential services sector, which was originally developed to cater for frail, older people. It has recently had a real shift in its demographics and is supporting people who have acquired brain injury as well as people with a whole range of disabilities, including mental and often dual disabilities.

Over the last four years there has been a distinct decrease in the number of beds that are available. I do not know whether we should be saying that beds are being closed down because effectively these beds represent people who are unable to get hold of accommodation. That figure is now in the vicinity of 500 people who had accommodation since 2002 being no longer able to have that accommodation.

The community visitors draw attention yet again to the crisis in accommodation for people with complex care needs. Many of these have challenging behaviour related to their disability, and they have nowhere else to go. The no. 1 recommendation stated in the executive summary is:

That the government takes urgent action to address the acute shortage of appropriate supported accommodation options for people with complex care and support needs.

To stress that point further, the report notes that 3186 people are awaiting shared accommodation, including 1068 categorised as urgent. This number is growing, having been at 2949 only 18 months earlier.

In addition, the community visitors also report a lack of access to beds designed to accommodate people for

respite, because the beds that were being used for respite are now being occupied on a long-term basis. There are other recommendations within what is an excellent report.

It also states it is important that the Department of Human Services accept responsibility for fire risk for people who are in shared residential services, and compliments the government on its pilot program —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! The time for statements on reports has expired.

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY RESOURCES BILL

Third reading

For **Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS** (Minister for Energy Industries and Resources), Ms Thomson (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — By leave, I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

MITCHAM-FRANKSTON PROJECT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 20 April; motion of Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government).

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) — The bill before the house is, quite frankly, a bill that has to be totally opposed in the interests of the community. The Liberal Party is absolutely and totally opposed to the imposition of tolls on this particular stretch of road.

This project is important. It is a vital piece of additional infrastructure for not only the eastern and south-eastern part of Melbourne but indeed the economy of the entire state and, of course, Australia. It is a vital link in a part of a major city in Australia that just simply has to be built. Not only should this infrastructure be built, but it has to be efficient, and the economic contribution of this vital road is so important that, in the estimation of the opposition, it should not be tolled.

The opposition is appalled at the performance and attitude of the present state government. Prior to the 2002 state election the Bracks government went to the people of Victoria, particularly in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Melbourne, and said there would be no tolls. The present state government, the Bracks government, knowingly lied to the people of Victoria in order to get their votes as part of the pre-2002 election campaign. A very short space of time after its re-election in 2002 the Bracks government announced that there would be tolls.

We have had it presented in the other place and in this place that many months prior to the campaign for the 2002 election the Bracks government at cabinet level had already considered there might be tolls, and proposals were put to cabinet prior to the 2002 election to provide information that would assist in its consideration of tolls. It was unconscionable for the state government prior to the 2002 election to say to the constituents of Victoria, 'There will be no tolls' given the impact of that statement.

Prior the 2002 election there were statements made by the Premier in the media that there would be no tolls on the Scoresby freeway, as it was then called but after the election the promise was broken. That is a simple matter of fact. The reaction of the community, particularly of those affected along this lengthy stretch of planned tollway, is predictable. When members, particularly opposition members, move around the state, we are told that people do not want tolls. I will give a suggested figure as to the impact of tolls later in my contribution. The simple fact of the matter is that the road has to be built, and it should be built.

The commonwealth government recognises the importance of this road and has made a generous offer towards the necessary cost to build it. This particular government, the Bracks government, has pushed the federal government's generous offer aside. The Bracks government stands condemned for refusing to accept a generous contribution by the federal government towards the cost of this vital piece of roadway. The opposition is implacably opposed to the concept of tolls on this particular vital piece of infrastructure. The opposition is appalled and outraged at the cavalier way in which the Bracks government went to the 2002 election and promised the people of Victoria there would be no tolls. As soon as it was back in office it reversed that decision — in other words, it lied to the electorate prior to the election, broke that promise and confirmed its lie in the context of the 2002 election.

It is quite evident to those who are constantly on the roads across wide sectors of this great state that since

1999 the state government has had minimal interest in road infrastructure and improvements. I have been known from time to time to express views and concerns about aspects of state government neglect of road efficiency. I suggest to honourable members that the record of the Bracks government as far back as 1999, when it took office, is a poor one. Its focus on, interest in and performance on delivering improved efficiency and access to good road usage for the people of Victoria is not good.

The Mitcham–Frankston tollway will be a vital piece of infrastructure that will assist not only metropolitan motorists and users but will have a logical and important role to play in the consideration of the total transport facilities that affect many aspects and activities within the community. Essentially it will run roughly from north to south, from towards the Scoresby and Ringwood areas to the Seaford area. It will run parallel to Stud Road, a road that most honourable members would know, and other north–south roads. If someone came from the Latrobe Valley and headed north into the Boronia and Ringwood areas it would be logical to go through the Dandenong area and then go on to the Mitcham–Frankston tollway. It was to be a freeway, but it is now to be a tollway.

Whilst it is understandable that some journalists, commentators and watchers of the activities of the government may mistakenly think this is a road for only metropolitan Melbourne, it is not. It has been designed, is intended to be and will be an asset for both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. It will be an additional link on the north-south axis in an important growth sector of the Melbourne metropolitan area that will give improved access for people coming from the south-east, east and north-east. I suggest to honourable members that whilst it is often portrayed as a Melbourne metropolitan situation, this particular piece of infrastructure is going to be crucial and valuable in its ability to deliver efficient access to parts of the state that are not within the metropolitan area. My electorate of South Eastern Province is south of the Mitcham–Frankston tollway path. I am very conscious of the positive contribution that this infrastructure will bring.

I suggest to honourable members that there has been significant investment by business in the north, north-western and south-western — towards Geelong — parts of the city because of the delivery of good roads to those areas of Melbourne in the last decade. That is good. I have no complaints about that, but I am concerned that if the economics of moving goods and providing services in the eastern and south-eastern areas of Melbourne continue to

deteriorate through congestion and cost imposts, such as the Bracks government's unconscionable plan to put tolls on this road, that will create a further bias in investment and jobs towards the northern and western parts of the city. The concentration of the population of Melbourne may vary a little, but to my knowledge the actual centre of its population is somewhere around or a little east of Warrigal Road on a north-south axis. Therefore for the state government to try by either negligence or design to shift jobs, opportunities and resources to the north, the west and the south-west is totally unacceptable — but I will be generous.

Perhaps it is not the deliberate intent of the Bracks government to take away opportunities from the east and the south-east of the city, but that is what is happening, and it will accelerate. Later in my contribution I will give honourable members some suggested examples and other information about the impact of this regrettable situation the Bracks government is foisting on the Victorian community, particularly those who live in the south-eastern parts of the state, on the Mornington Peninsula, in Cranbourne and in other parts of the city. I am very concerned about employment and investment drift from the east and the south-eastern part of Victoria, which will translate into limited opportunities for people in the eastern region of the state because of cost.

I listened very carefully a few minutes ago to very interesting contributions by several honourable members on the joint parliamentary Road Safety Committee's report into crashes involving roadside objects. I would like to think, to believe and to be convinced that an opportunity is taken by the designers and the constructors of this particular project to incorporate the very best international and safety designs into the road. I am not saying that is not the case, but I would like to suggest they use the Swedish information, which is that lightweight poles are used so that if a car does crash into them, there is less chance of damage to the vehicle and injury to the occupants. I would like to feel that advanced technologies — road surface technologies, spatial technologies on lane width and the use of poles and collapsible construction techniques — are being used.

I am not terribly impressed with efforts over recent years by VicRoads if they are a measure of the advice and design guidance it gives. For instance, if you are driving away from Melbourne in the Dandenong area and you are heading south towards Hastings, when you get to the intersection with the Hallam bypass and want to leave that road people say, and I agree with them, that you must veer and make lane changes. The logic is not there, and I think a close examination would show

that the engineering and design concepts of some of the higher capacity roads we have been presented with by VicRoads in the last 10 to 15 years leave a lot to be desired from a motorist's point of view and from a safety point of view.

I am not too happy at all about the ability of councils to apply to VicRoads for permission to decrease the efficiency and safety of our higher capacity roads. Honourable members may quickly recall that I have spoken often about the Western Port Highway in the Lyndhurst area, which is a classic example of a place where fatalities will happen.

On the technological side, this project gives us as a Parliament a great opportunity to adopt, to ask for and to insist upon the very best, newest and safest technology and design criteria.

I am also particularly concerned about the cost of the Mitcham–Frankston tollway and its cost impact on the inevitable use of Hastings and the Hastings area as a future port for Victoria. It is simply not true that in future the Mitcham–Frankston tollway will be a sensible and viable way to move goods from the future port of Hastings, which will be a volume freight situation. There is this constant attack on the efficiency and the safety of the Western Port Highway and its ability to move goods from the Hastings area up towards the northern section of the south-eastern part of the city, and to naively believe that the Mitcham–Frankston tollway will solve the problem of efficiently moving goods from Hastings into the eastern and inner metropolitan areas of Melbourne is simple fantasy. It cannot be done under the present plans that are available to us, because 20-foot and 40-foot containers and multiple container loads would have to be carried by trucks from Hastings and through the Frankston area before they even got to Seaford to join the southern extremity of the Mitcham–Frankston tollway. That idea is fanciful; it is not there.

The real route into Melbourne from the future port of Hastings with its real volume potential has to be the Western Port Highway, and the cavalier, arrogant and unhelpful attitude of the City of Casey is absolutely mind boggling. Those people deserve the strongest condemnation for their uncooperative and short-sighted efforts.

Also, VicRoads deserves a caning for its allowing the City of Casey simply to pollute the Western Port Highway with unnecessary incursions onto it. The minister, VicRoads and the City of Casey have a great deal to answer for in their short-sighted, simplistic and

unhelpful attitude towards the transport situation in the south-east.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Acting President, about the relevance of the contribution from the honourable member, whilst I understand the issues he is raising about the Western Port Highway, this is a bill about the Mitcham–Frankston project. Of course his criticisms of the City of Casey and the current minister have nothing to do with the bill before the house. My understanding is that those lights were approved by the last Liberal minister in this Parliament. I fail to see how these issues have anything to do with the bill before the house.

Hon. E. G. Stoney — On the point of order, Acting President, Mr Bowden is the opposition's lead speaker. He has been going for 20 minutes and has got an hour in total to make his contribution. He is demonstrating his wide-ranging knowledge of the area, and I believe the points he has made have been a spot-on part of this debate.

Hon. Andrew Brideson — On the point of order, Acting President, Mr Viney in fact did not raise a point of order. He used it as a debating issue to put a further point to contradict Mr Bowden.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. H. E. Buckingham) — Order! Mr Bowden is the lead speaker, and it is the practice of the house to allow a certain amount of leniency in content. However, I ask Mr Bowden to keep as closely as he can to the bill before the house.

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — Thank you, Acting President, I appreciate that. I am aware of the scope for a broad-ranging debate and the need to confine my comments to the contribution I need to make, but in setting the context of this Mitcham–Frankston or Frankston–Mitcham tollway, I believe it is helpful to honourable members to look at the broad geography and the impact of this road and other nearby major carriageways. That is why I was doing that, and I again thank you for your ruling, Acting President.

I notice Mr Viney's discomfort. He does not do very much to help the traffic situation out our way, where there are a lot of opportunities, so I will be listening very carefully to any contribution he cares to make. Mr Viney is very protective of this negligent state government, but he has done nothing to help the people in his electorate drive their cars or operate their businesses efficiently. All he can do is sit there and criticise.

The bill is a direct result of a broken promise by the Bracks government prior to the 2002 election. The Labor Party's promise was 'There will be no tolls! Vote for us', and a lot of people did. And boy, were they burnt, because as soon as the Bracks government was re-elected it broke its promise and said it would impose tolls on those people who supported the Labor Party at that time. At the next election people will have the opportunity to express their thoughts very clearly.

Several features of the bill are cause for concern. Apart from the general context of being another machinery piece of legislation that will facilitate the imposition of tolls, there is also provision for the opportunity for new and multiple charges for users of the roadway who do not already have a prior tolling arrangement with ConnectEast. It will be provided, as is clearly stated in the bill, that there will be at least two opportunities for invoices to be sent out for which there will be charges, there will be toll administration fees and there will be a VicRoads look-up fee. We do not know what that last fee will be, and there is no sign that it will be capped. It could well be that people in business or tradespeople who need to regularly move across the road network could be up for substantial multiple invoices and other imposts and charges which could quickly mount up on what should be a free road. This is cause for great concern.

In my broad-ranging approach to the subject I shall give another insight into the opportunities for exemption from land tax on leased or licensed land that will be available to ConnectEast. If ever the word 'insensitive' applied to anything it would apply to the actions of the Bracks government in giving ConnectEast a very valuable land tax exemption at this time, which I say is disgraceful. Land tax is causing an enormous amount of trouble in our business community, and I shall provide honourable members with an insight into the impact of land tax to show how insensitive the Bracks government is on the land tax question. I is taking enormous amounts of money from the small business and business sectors while at the same time it is giving what are calculated to be huge advantages to ConnectEast on land tax in respect of this project. That is at the very best insensitive and a poor move by a government you would expect to be concerned about its image and ethics in doing that at this time.

We have no problems with the private sector building this road, none at all; it is good, fine and completely acceptable. What is not acceptable is tolls. Frankly if the government is to be consistent about giving fair and equitable treatment to business in this state then the insensitivity of the land tax arrangements provided for in the bill require a further look. A letter dated 11 April

from David Russell, senior manager for government and public affairs at the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, expresses concern about this. It states:

A VACC survey of members revealed that land taxes paid by members had increased by as much as 900 per cent and by an average of 170 per cent over the past four years.

I also have a copy of a VACC letter dated 6 April sent to the Treasurer. It gives much more specific information, but it supports the information I have just presented to the house. That is a very poor example of government action on land tax. I call it insensitive.

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — If Mr Viney wants to be so noisy and interrupt, I ask what his position on land tax is. Mr Viney is saying, 'Let them pay land tax, more tax'. There is not a word from Mr Viney suggesting he cares about land tax and the devastating effect that the state government's position on land tax is having on business. The level of land tax in this state is enormous, and Mr Viney and the state government do not care. All Mr Viney wants is the money so that he can spend it on his own schemes.

Returning to the bill and ignoring Mr Viney's uncaring land tax attitude, there are other concerns we need to consider. We need to look at being efficient in moving goods and citizens across the Melbourne road network, especially the eastern and south-eastern sectors. We have to compete as a state with other states. We have to also be mindful that the economy of Victoria is a major component of an integrated national economy.

We need to move our citizens and goods and provide services efficiently. It is a factor of the geography and the design of Melbourne that while we do have a public transport network it is an inescapable feature of the development and the construction of this city that we simply have to have efficient roads. We have to have high-capacity roads and above all we have to have a cost profile for our goods and services that enables us to be competitive in the domestic Australian national market. We must be sure that the movement of goods and services, particularly physical goods, across the Melbourne metropolitan area makes us and keeps us competitive.

I am particularly concerned that as a toll road this road will have a detrimental and serious negative effect on our ability to provide increased employment, job opportunities and training and efficient movement of heavyweight containers and freight, particularly from the south-eastern and southern portions of the city to the

inner metropolitan, northern and north-eastern sections of the city.

Let me explain to honourable members some aspects of that. The past decade or so in the Scoresby and Boronia areas and the north-eastern sector of the city has seen the development of many businesses, and many fine small businesses, which are very competitive, high-tech and efficient. These are very desirable businesses for our state and our economy. That is great; it is absolutely terrific. We have also seen two things occur, particularly in the last decade, in the eastern and the south-eastern parts of the city. In the Seaford-Carrum Downs area we have seen the establishment, the opening and the operation of many small businesses. That is wonderful, that is fine. We have seen good, natural growth, and that is to be supported and applauded. We have also seen the establishment of large domestic housing suburbs and the expansion of areas such as Cranbourne, Carrum Downs in particular, Lyndhurst and so forth.

We are looking at a situation where because of the crowding and the expansion of the city people are moving to the outer areas. Pakenham, Berwick, the Narre Warren area, Cranbourne through to Pearcedale, Carrum Downs and Seaford form an arc which has received a lot of domestic housing. A lot of them are first homes, and that is easily supportable. It is fine that we are having all these people move into these areas because it is developing the economy and providing a lot of very good dynamics in those regions. We also have the benefit of the establishment of the many small businesses that go along with that population base which is increasing and being developed. Here is the problem: if you were to examine the traffic patterns in the morning or the evening, you would find from the south and the east a lot of people transit to their jobs by car and other vehicles to the north and the north-east. There is this north-and-south flow of people travelling from their homes to their workplaces.

I have spoken many times about my increasing concern about the congestion on the east-west roads serving this area — the principal one being the Monash Freeway. However, if the state tolls the Mitcham-Frankston freeway and makes it a tollway, it will have a significant number of negative and unfortunate effects on the varied circumstances of people who are in small business and depend on a viable, efficient north-south connection. For instance, if someone lived in the Cranbourne, Frankston or Seaford area, or on the peninsula which is part of my electorate, and their employment was up around Scoresby, near Boronia or north of the Monash Freeway, logically they would want to use the Mitcham-Frankston tollway, but they

would do so at a cost. Apart from not being fair, this is an additional cost on families which could be avoided.

In addition, if you are looking at employers who are considering where to locate a business, our major airport at Tullamarine is in the north-western part of the city. We have the Western Ring Road in the north-western part of the city. We have the Monash Freeway, once you get clear of the car park that exists between Dandenong and Warrigal Road of a morning, serving the western part of the city, although there are major problems with the West Gate Bridge. Essentially someone looking to establish a business and provide employment will have to seriously question whether they will locate that business in the south or the east because every time they get onto this road, they will be sluggish.

The development of Stud and Springvale roads over many years has meant that there is a set of lights at nearly every major intersection. I suggest to honourable members that people wanting a north-south route are not able to use Springvale or Stud roads, as they do now. That leaves a lot to be desired. However, on a cost basis, to load the costs onto the business community and the commuting community is unreasonable. It is not even fair. I know fair is a strange word to bring into politics, but it is not fair because people in the western part of the city do not pay tolls. People in the Broadmeadows area moving down towards Geelong or from Werribee up to Broadmeadows and using the Western Ring Road do not pay tolls. The thinking of the Bracks government is to penalise the eastern and south-eastern suburbs with this proposal for the Mitcham-Frankston tollway.

I am very unhappy that we as drivers in the south-eastern part of the city will be lumbered with a substantial amount in tolls for travelling to the city on two tollways. For instance, someone coming from Frankston, the Mornington Peninsula, the Seaford area or anywhere like that and going to town and wanting to use those tollways at certain times of the day will have to pay a toll if they join this road from Frankston or Seaford up to the interconnect with the Monash Freeway and they will be hit with a second toll when they get to the CityLink portion of the Monash Freeway. Someone who wants to use the tollways will be hit with two tolls — the ConnectEast toll on the Mitcham-Frankston tollway and the existing CityLink toll.

I notice that performance standards, as established in the bill, will be placed on the provider of the services. According to the second-reading speech:

The concession deed imposes a performance regime on the freeway corporation, with penalties for non-performance.

I would like to know what those aspects of the performance regime are. They are not detailed in any great way. I would like to know what the times are, what volume flows have been guaranteed and what the speed expectations are over a given sector because I can tell members that on average performance on CityLink is poor. As a paying motorist I am not happy with the performance of CityLink. If we cannot get a better result with this one, then I am going to be very concerned on behalf of my constituents. It is a good thing that the bill provides for a performance guarantee, but if the performance guarantee does not produce a better result than what appears to be the declining performance of CityLink, I do not know why it has been included. I am not happy with CityLink. In my opinion we are paying more and more for less and less — but back to the bill!

I could go on for a long time discussing in detail the integration of the geography, the north-south axis of this Mitcham-Frankston tollway and about the lack of opportunity that will result from tolling in terms of employment and the cost impost on small, large and medium businesses through extra costs for freight and the movement of goods and services — but I have already spoken about that at length.

I have a real concern about that. It disadvantages and penalises those people who live in the eastern, north-eastern, and south-eastern parts of our great city. I think that is regrettable and a shame; it is not a matter that should be tolerated, but the Bracks government is committed to it and is blinded by the prospect of appeasing the situation that it has got itself into. It just broke its promises.

The major concern about this bill as it is presented to the community comes back to a fundamental — that is, that the Bracks government promised the people of Victoria, and specifically the people in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Melbourne, that it would build this road and have no tolls. That was a firm promise by the Premier and his government. They said, 'There will be no tolls' and that promise was broken.

I know it is said from time to time that members of the political profession do not enjoy very high regard by members of the community in terms of their professional standards, but if there was ever an act that should not have been done, it is this. This broken promise will affect so many people over so long a period that it is no wonder that from time to time the general community regards people in our profession poorly. A promise was made that, 'There will be no

tolls'. That was clear prior to the election and the people who voted for Labor Party candidates expected, and had the right to expect, that there would be no tolls.

A short time — not long — after the election the Bracks government broke that promise. That was a regrettable incident not only for its impact on the community in terms of cost but also because it denigrates our profession. Every one of us in the profession of politics is denigrated by the action of the Bracks government. It toyed with the trust of the people of Victoria in relation to this, and it denigrated itself and our entire profession. It is a philosophical point that could be discussed further, but I use the word 'regrettable'. Breaking that promise denigrates this profession and diminishes the level of trust that we should enjoy as elected representatives of our constituents. The Bracks government broke the trust it was given and that makes us less worthy in the eyes of a lot of people.

The impact of this broken promise and the imposition of tolls will be shown to be very negative in terms of the economy of the city, the state, and to an extent the nation. As honourable members know, I am the opposition spokesman for ports, and late last year I was very pleased to see the Bracks government recognise the future benefit of using Western Port. That is sensible, logical and very much supportable. As time goes by and the Western Port area starts to be used with volume movements of goods, services and freight, there are two major entrances by road into the metropolitan area of Melbourne.

One is the Western Port Highway, and I will not take the time of honourable members on that because there will be future opportunities for me to talk about it. The other will be the Mitcham–Frankston tollway. Given the broken promise and record of mismanagement of infrastructure projects by the state government, I cannot understand the logic of loading and handicapping our import and export businesses with this toll. I am not aware of any serious plans — and if there are plans, let me see them — for freight movement and improved efficiency south of the termination point of the Mitcham–Frankston tollway at Seaford towards the Hastings area. The idea of bringing volume goods and services as well as trucks and heavy equipment from a wharfage and freight situation, which will inevitably happen in the Western Port area, into Seaford through the existing network of roads around Frankston is very questionable. There are bad designs and not much capacity for this extra heavy load.

Looking at the inadequate infrastructure now and the lack of planning that appears to be the case between the

Hastings and the Seaford point of commencement of this project, I cannot quite believe that the Bracks government is now going to load the Victorian community with a cost adder such as substantial tolls on this entry point in order to use the Mitcham–Frankston tollway. It discriminates against the people who live in the east, the north-east and the south-east. I believe it is totally discriminatory not only in cost but also in its timing. It is going to take longer than imagined. It was supposed to have been opened earlier than 2008, but now it is supposed to be opened in 2008.

I was listening to ABC radio this morning — sorry, I was listening to a commercial radio station — —

Mr Smith — You wouldn't listen to the ABC!

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — I occasionally listen to the ABC, Mr Smith, but this morning I was listening to a commercial radio station. They were saying something about a rumour file. A lady on this rumour file said, 'I want to make a point about the Mitcham–Frankston project.' — I had nothing to do with this; I was just driving the car — 'Where are all these jobs?'. She said that applications had been made but that no-one was aware of any jobs being created so far. As a coincidence I thought that was quite interesting.

The point I am making is that if we are on to jobs, this will not be a job generator after construction. After construction the Mitcham–Frankston tollway will be a handicap because it is going to increase the costs of moving goods and services from the south to the north and the other way around. My major concern is that the Bracks government has the naive belief that the community will forget the broken promises it made.

The Bracks government believes it can go to an election, make a promise and then break it without penalty. That is inexcusable. In the context of this project it will pay the ultimate penalty and lose office, which is good. The government's attitude seems to be that this road is necessary but the government does not really want to understand and take responsibility for it in a fiscal way. I suggest that the state government has been absolutely irresponsible in not understanding or not accepting the commonwealth's contribution. There is a great deal of money available from the commonwealth; the figure I have is \$565 million. The Bracks government is refusing to accept that federal contribution towards the road. The taxpayers of Victoria are being short-changed by the Bracks government by \$565 million. Any way the Bracks government wants to dress that up, it cannot do so.

Whether we are talking about the Boronia, Scoresby, Mount Waverley or Dandenong areas does not matter. It all comes back to the Bracks government breaking its promise. It is not prepared to give the people of Victoria the benefit of federal money to the extent of at least \$565 million. The Bracks government is willing to load up the cost profile of businesses in the north and south of the city, in the eastern, south-eastern and north-eastern sectors of the city with extra cost imposts for moving goods and services. It is almost something one cannot understand.

There is one faint glimmer of hope and one positive aspect of this bill, though. There will be the Southern Dandenong bypass. It is good to see that that will not be tolled.

Honourable members interjecting

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — I am surprised because of the arrogant attitude of the Bracks government in relation to tolls. It beats me why it was not tolled, but I am glad it did not toll it. It is good that the Dandenong bypass will be constructed as part of the project.

Over a period of time since 1999 the Bracks government has illustrated interesting characteristics in relation to surface transport, road transport and the use of vehicles in this state. Firstly, there appears to have been very minimal investment in construction of major highways and freeways from 1999 until now, yet the government has received a great deal of money through the various taxation programs and regimes. If you live in the east and south-east you have to wonder why there has not been more done to date.

Secondly, looking at the planning for roads and construction of roads in the east and south-east in particular, the Monash Freeway is a classic because there has been very little, if any, increase in capacity over a long time.

Thirdly, I come back to the Monash area. As I understand it, in the original design where the Mitcham–Frankston freeway crossed the Monash there was to be no interchange. There is now.

Lastly, in looking at the big picture you get the feeling that there is no real interest, thrust or general desire by the Bracks government to improve transport in the northern or southern sectors and accommodate the growth in traffic, freight and movements. I would call it neglect by the Bracks government for the road transport needs of the people of the north, east and south-east. The neglect is manifestly underlined by the breathless arrogance of the Bracks government by promising to build this much-needed road — the

Mitcham–Frankston or the old Scoresby freeway — and then lying to the electorate by saying, ‘We will do it but there will be no tolls’, and then immediately putting tolls on. Having neglected the transport road needs of the city in this sector since 1999 it compounds that error through its arrogance and dumps tolls on to the electorate at large.

Whether you live in the north, the Dandenong area, the southern area or the Mornington Peninsula it comes to the situation where you have to form a conclusion. The conclusion is the Bracks government does not care for motorists other than as taxation providers. The government’s record at managing infrastructure is poor, and it does not care about improving road capacity or efficiency. You have to conclude the Bracks government will continue its tax take. And when it has the opportunity to do something worthwhile for the constituents in the sector of the city we are talking about, and for the eastern regional people, too, the government dumps it into a financial model that involves taxation and tollways. I am just appalled at that. It is regrettable and reprehensible and proves that the Bracks government, when it comes to road transport issues, cannot be trusted. The Bracks government cannot be trusted; it lied to the electorate; it told people there would be no tolls and yet there are tolls to be put on this roadway.

This bill is one that should never be before us. The Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Mr Robert Doyle, on 23 March issued a press release under the heading ‘Labor’s tollway of shame’, and I think that is a very good description of what this situation is. It is a tollway of shame. It should have been a freeway of pride, but it turns out that it is going to be a tollway of shame. If any government members would like a copy of Mr Doyle’s announcement I would be very happy to provide it because in that press release there is ample evidence and reasons as to why the Labor Party cannot be trusted when it comes to road construction. It cannot be trusted on quality, quantity or cost.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I rise on behalf of The Nationals to make a contribution to the debate on the Mitcham–Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill. The Nationals have a position on this bill of not opposing it. We see this bill as a bill of work in progress and a facilitation bill. I am not going to attempt to go through the purposes of the bill which are quite substantial if you list all of them. However, again I make the point that we in The Nationals see it as a work-in-progress bill and one that facilitates the process of this particular project.

As usual we have consulted widely amongst a large number of people and we have received some comments back. One of the most pertinent responses was from David Cumming from the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. David Cumming is always quite reliable in giving the views of the RACV to The Nationals and, of course, they are the views of a large number of people in Victoria because of the RACV's large membership base. The Bracks government has taken quite a tortuous track in the lead-up to discussing this particular project today.

Mr Viney — You are going well, Mr Bishop!

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — I could not really help it, could I? But if Mr Viney listens carefully I am sure he will gain some information from my contribution. I thank him for giving me the opportunity of repeating it once more.

The Bracks government began trumpeting and posturing on this particular project and, as we all know, there was no suggestion of a Bracksflip at that particular stage. If my memory is right, the bill that we talked about in May 2003 was the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority Bill. Again, if my memory is right, it must have been around about this time of the year because it was budget time when the bill was introduced in a fair sort of a rush.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — If members listen intently I am sure they will get the position of The Nationals. I invite interjections because that will make our contribution even more understandable. As I said, that particular bill was introduced in a rush and the timetable failed, and the government had to let on in the budget processes that it was going to toll this particular project.

Our position in 2003 was not to oppose the bill, but to wait for more detail which we thought and still maintain was a very reasonable position. We then had the introduction of the Mitcham-Frankston Project Bill last year. We opposed that bill on a matter of principle, firstly, in relation to the backflip by the government on tolls and, most importantly, because we had no details. We had no detail in that bill about this particular project. We had no concession deed; the concession deed was tabled later. When the CityLink project was being established and the bill was debated in this place, all of the concession deed was in the bill. Every member of Parliament had an opportunity to closely examine that particular issue and debate it in the Parliament.

I remember well, as if it were yesterday, sitting here during the committee process, when the Honourable Bill Baxter, who was the responsible minister at the time, sat in that chair at the table. I believe it was 18 hours of committee work that we went through. The then shadow minister for transport in the other place, Mr Batchelor, who is now the Minister for Transport, was sitting in the gallery running messages down to then opposition members of this house so that they could put the Honourable Bill Baxter to the test — and put to the test he was. I am sure my memory serves me right that he did not fail once. He did a magnificent job during that committee process and that was brought about because the Parliament itself had the opportunity to overview the concession deed in this place, had a chance to talk about it and had a chance to suggest amendments to it, whereas this time around we have not. It resides somewhere else; you have to go and read it and it is a much more difficult process to get it changed.

Hon. P. R. Hall — Mr Baxter was very open, honest and accountable.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — Thank you, Mr Hall, for that interjection. There is no doubt that this government could learn a great deal from the way the Honourable Bill Baxter and the government of the day treated that process as we debated it. It is interesting that many of us think, as these projects come up, that what goes around comes around. However, we did not get the chance to debate the concession deed either in the other house or in this one.

It is interesting to note that on the subject of major projects — of course, this is a huge project — the government has not done too well on major projects. In fact, we have seen a change of ministers responsible for major projects, and we in The Nationals welcome the fact that the Leader of the Government, Mr Lenders, has now picked up responsibility for major projects, because we in this house can now engage him on various issues that we did not have the opportunity to do before.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — As Mr Hall says, he can hardly do worse than the past Minister for Major Projects; I think that is true. We welcome our capacity to talk about major projects in this place.

I will come back to discussing this bill. We have been through most of the broken promises, and I listened to the Honourable Ron Bowden as he made his contribution. This has not been the only broken promise

perpetrated by the Bracks government. It is a major one, we understand that, but for the electorate that I share with the Honourable Damian Drum the government promised a return of the passenger train. I think it is fair to say that the member for Mildura in the other place would have won that seat on the promise of the return of the passenger train — but we are still waiting.

There has been no sign of the passenger train; we are still waiting for it. Perhaps we cannot get that back until the railway line is fixed up! The announced promise in 2001 was that the railway line would be fixed up by 2002. In fact, the government allocated \$96 million to that task — but I wonder where it is now? I hope the \$96 million is still available because it was allocated specifically.

There are a couple of broken promises. Promises to my electorate have been broken — I cannot let this go past; and I am sure Mr Viney would understand why not — and my examples are just a couple of them. What do we have instead? The promise of a toxic waste dump right in the middle of our food bowl is hardly fair treatment by way of major projects from a government.

In relation to the Mitcham–Frankston tollway, we in The Nationals believe we have made our stand in principle against the government's backflip — the Bracksflip, as we call it — and we have also made it very clear that we have no in-principle problems with tolls. I am sure, and we as a party are sure, that the people of Victoria will remember those broken promises. It does not matter which ones they are; we have just talked about them, and the list goes on and on. I am sure, and my party is sure, that the people in the Scoresby corridor will well remember these broken promises — and so they should.

In an aside just a few moments ago the house was reminded that the Scoresby or Mitcham–Frankston freeway has now been turned into the EastLink motorway. We do not know whether that is a name from the people who are doing it or whether the spin doctors have suddenly decided that that is to be the new motorway's name. Perhaps in his contribution Mr Viney might be able to enlighten us, which I am sure will shortly follow.

I come to the position that the government is going to build this particular road as a toll road. We have some real reservations about how this will work, and in our previous contributions to debate on bills passed we have raised this issue. Should it be tolled? Some people would argue it should not; some would argue it should. We also would ask the question on and would

challenge the viability of the tolling of the road simply because it will be a different structure than CityLink and will offer much more opportunity for people to use alternate routes and roads than does the CityLink tollway. In fact, that is the issue we are concerned about: how will the government viably manage to toll the road? But that is the government's decision to make. It is in government and has made its decision. I will be interested to see how it does that.

The concession deed that we are concerned about was tabled in November 2004. We still strongly believe that that should be part of the bill. It is a huge document; I think it is in three volumes. Some people have trolled through it, and we have lifted some information from it. I will not go into detail about that today, because it is available for people to look at if they wish.

How the tolls are established are in the concession deed, if anyone wishes to look at it. The length of the concession deed — 35 years, as we understand it — and how toll increases are to be managed are also disclosed there. There is a lot of other information in the concession deed, if you are prepared to troll through it. But The Nationals again make the point that the concession deed is not available in the Parliament; it is not available for us to debate as we consider legislation dealing with a major project for the state of Victoria.

We have noted the documentation in the concession deed. Most of it and the assumptions in it will be tested in history, and a lot of that will revolve around the usage level of the tollway the subject of the bill. We want to ensure that in the process of it being built the Bracks government does not pump prime that tollway to make it a viable concern. We want to ensure that the government does not channel funds from our country roads into this particular project so that we would lose out — simply because of its attitude on how it will manage this project.

As I said, a few questions have been raised with us in between briefings over this issue. One was from David Cumming of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. David is always quite reliable in bringing forward the views of the RACV and handing them on to us so that we can put them on the public record.

One of the RACV's first concerns was that it has some difficulty with the privacy issues concerning the ability to access personal information on road users in order to seek the payment of their tolls. It asks:

What is the reason for the change from the system that applies with CityLink?

And:

What privacy safeguards will be put in place?

In the processes, which I am sure all of us go through, we went back to the department and it gave us the response on that. The response from the government is:

The usual privacy safeguards apply to the use and disclosure of personal information for the purpose of seeking payment for tolls. In Victoria the relevant piece of legislation is the Information Privacy Act 2000.

It further states:

The use of personal information by EastLink is covered by the information privacy principles to the extent that they apply.

It further advises:

The bill provides that if EastLink becomes bound by a code of practice under the Commonwealth Privacy Act, the Information Privacy Act 2000 does not apply to EastLink.

The EastLink model is fairer —

the government suggests —

than CityLink as drivers may be issued with two invoices, giving them more opportunities to pay the toll, before the matter goes to enforcement. To implement this model, the company must obtain a driver's name and address from VicRoads prior to the enforcement regime ...

The second issue the RACV raised was the issue of the administration fee that will be charged by VicRoads. The response from the government is:

The VicRoads look-up fee will be a pass-through of costs only. This amount will be itemised on all invoices issued, as required by the act. The amount of the look-up fee has yet to be determined.

So we are a bit in the dark on that still, but no doubt that will be established further down the track. It further says:

Under the EastLink model, road users will have two opportunities to pay the toll plus administrative charges, that is, the invoiced amount. A summary of the total cost to a user of EastLink for non-payment of a toll, including penalty amounts, is set out below.

It then states that if the toll is not paid, the owner is issued with a first invoice for the toll plus a \$4 toll administration fee and the VicRoads look-up fee. If the first invoice is not paid in 14 days, the owner is issued with a second invoice for the toll. The toll administration fee is doubled to \$8, plus there is the VicRoads look-up fee. If the second invoice is not paid in 14 days the owner is issued with an infringement notice for a penalty of \$100. There are still a few details to be tidied up.

At least the department and the government have come up with the answers to the questions asked by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. The RACV was also uncomfortable with the cap on poor performance. Once the cap is reached there is no incentive to improve performance. The response from the government was:

The performance incentives regime is described in schedule 5 of the concession deed.

You would have to slog through the concession deed to find that. The government also said:

This regime is a strong improvement on the CityLink model, with significant incentives to meet target performance in 51 separate categories. Key performance indicator (KPI) 'points' are amassed for failure to meet those targets. The points are totalled annually and a 'KPI credit' sum becomes payable based on the total number of points. KPI credit can range from \$2.5 million (500 points) to \$15 million (2000 points). These numbers are subject to annual indexation as from 2008.

It was considered that \$15 million per annum was adequate to deal with non-performance. Non-performance that would cause the 'cap' to be exceeded would likely constitute breaches of the contract.

That fulfils our responsibilities following the request to us by the RACV, and I have put that on the public record.

There has been substantial media play in relation to the Liberal Party's view of looking to buy back the contract. From The Nationals' point of view, we understand that the Liberal Party is doing substantial research on that issue. That is its decision, and we understand its position. As a party we would be very interested to see what it ends up with from that research. We also consider this bill, which as we have said before we see as a work in progress, an enabling bill, would not preclude the Liberal Party from proceeding if it wishes to buy back the project. Our stance today is a practical one. Over time we have strongly objected to the backflip of the Bracks government. We believe people will judge the government on that issue quite hard. As I said before, we have no objections to tolls in principle provided our people in rural and regional Victoria can get easy access to those particular facilities without too much trouble. We ought to remember that during all this process the Bracks government tore up a contract with the commonwealth, as Mr Bowden also referred to in his address. The government let a substantial amount of money slip — well over \$500 million. I can remember the debates we had on that. The Bracks government had a fair bit of cheek in saying, 'You can give it to us anyway, and we will spend it where we think we

should'. That was not acceptable to the commonwealth and that position remains where it is.

We in The Nationals believe we have made our point on this particular issue. The government has made a decision to toll the road. That is its responsibility. We note that there has been a cost blow-out on this new road. We understand it is now out to \$2.5 billion. We suspect that over time the government will struggle to make tolls work on this facility. I have been through all of that before in contributions I made in this house in days gone by. We will closely watch how the government manages this process, particularly the interface between itself and the private sector. It is fair to say it has been hopeless in the past in managing that interface. The Spencer Street project has blown out in cost unbelievably. We have seen other projects like the regional rail project — the slightly faster rail project — blow out hugely in its cost structure with very little gain for the people in our communities. Although we are aware this facility has a different structure from those other projects we still think it will test this government. The government has been found wanting in the past. From our position it is simply a pragmatic and practical decision by The Nationals not to oppose this bill. We will watch the progress of this huge infrastructure project in Victoria with a great amount of interest.

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — I am very pleased to speak in support of the Mitcham-Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill. I will pick up on Mr Bishop's contribution first. As he pointed out, it is fair to say this project has a long history. It has a much longer history than Mr Bishop pointed out. As I have mentioned in this house before, I visited the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne some months ago and had a look at the old copies of the *Melway* street directory. The first time this project appeared in the *Melway* was in the 1967 edition, when Henry Bolte was Premier of this state. Henry Bolte did not build it, nor did his successors Dick Hamer, Lindsay Thompson, John Cain, Joan Kirner or Jeff Kennett.

No funds were allocated to this very important project, but the Premier is going to build it. After all those years of promises across many governments, several premiers and countless transport ministers — including the Honourable Bill Baxter, a former roads minister — this government is finally going to deliver this project for the people of Victoria.

During that time probably many prime ministers have participated in making such promises, so when members of the opposition come in here and start talking about broken promises, let us look at the litany of promises to build this road. This must have been the

most promised road in the history of this state. Since 1967 it has been in every edition of the *Melway*, and in that time every Premier has said, 'Yes, it is a good road; we should build it', but not one of them has had the courage to put up a project that can succeed. Not one of them, until the Bracks government arrived, had spent a single dollar on delivering this project.

Opposition members can go on and talk about broken promises, but this government is delivering on the fundamental commitment to deliver this road. We have all acknowledged our regret over the change of commitment as to how it is funded. In the first contribution I made in this chamber to a debate on this project after the change of policy I said I was sorry, as the Premier has done.

The point is that the bigger promise was to deliver this project, and an even bigger promise was to deliver to Victorians a more financially responsible state — and that is the major promise. It's a bit rich for opposition members to come in here and talk about broken promises after their federal colleagues had made rock-solid or iron-clad guarantees on Medicare. This government is delivering this project for the people of Victoria, and it will provide benefits.

I want to touch briefly on the contribution made by the Honourable Ron Bowden, which, frankly, was just silly. He put forward propositions that somehow building a new road, a new freeway or a new major motorway from Mitcham to Frankston was going to make travelling on Stud and Springvale roads more difficult; that was the logic of his argument. Many members sat here listening but struggling with that logic. How on earth can building a brand-new road make existing roads more difficult to travel on?

He also put forward an argument that somehow or other delivering a much more efficient system of transport along the eastern corridor was going to add to the cost of business in Victoria. He argued that providing a brand-new road through the biggest road project in the country, a far more efficient system of delivering goods and services and a more efficient means of transport — which would reduce fuel consumption and give people faster access to their workplaces and across an area of Melbourne that has a population larger than that of Adelaide — would add to the cost of doing business. It was a completely illogical argument.

Then he put up the supposed criticism of this government on the land tax decision — that is, that land tax will not apply to this project. I am not quite sure of the position he took on CityLink because it does not pay land tax. When opposition members were in

government they set up the CityLink project, and it does not pay land tax. We all understand that if land tax were to be applied to this project, it would result in higher tolls. Mr Bowden's contribution was the most illogical presentation that this chamber has had so far on this very complex project.

Mr Bishop also talked about the need for country projects, and he listed a number of them. The fact of the matter is that if this project had not been tolled, given the federal government's absolute and shameful withdrawal from the agreement we had reached of 50 per cent of the total cost of this project — the federal government's shameful broken promise! — this government would not have been able to deliver any projects in country Victoria. The Nationals well understand that, because they have announced they do not support the Liberal Party's current position of a \$7 billion nationalisation of a private project. It is a little bit unusual that the Liberal Party is proposing the nationalisation of a private project.

The Nationals well and truly understand that it is not possible to nationalise this private project and to buy it back. If any future Liberal government — God help us! — were to get back into office in Victoria and attempt to buy this project back, it would mean the end of all investments in country and regional Victoria. It would mean we would not be able to invest in our schools and hospitals. Government members know that opposition members are true to form, because that is where they would find the savings to buy back this project. They want to buy their seats in the eastern suburbs by running down all our facilities and services across health, education and police — all the things they did during the seven years they were in government between 1992 and 1999. That is what would happen if the Liberal Party came in on this matter, and The Nationals well understand this.

I want to pick up on one point raised by Mr Bishop in his contribution. He raised the issue of the look-up fee and the question of what it might be. He quite accurately outlined elements of this bill that relate to the tolling and the means of charging a fee. This is a substantial improvement on the original CityLink project. People were issued with \$100 fines if they had not paid their fee by midnight of the night they had travelled on it. That was changed through some negotiations with CityLink once the Bracks government came into office. People now have three days to pay and can only incur a lower fine.

However, the tolling system to be put in place for this project, which is the substance of this bill, will be significantly better than that of CityLink. It will be the

cost of what would have been the toll charge. If someone does not have a tag system, it would be the cost of that plus a \$4 administration fee plus a look-up fee. People will have 14 days to pay those fees, and there will be an additional \$4 administrative fee if it is not paid within 14 days. It is only after 28 days — that is, the expiry of the 14 days after the second notice — that any fine will apply.

Mr Bishop brought up the issue of the look-up fee, and whilst I am not able in any way to advise the house of what that fee is, it would be a matter of cents rather than dollars. I am advised the look-up fee by VicRoads in relation to this matter will be minimal.

The legislation before us, as Mr Bishop quite accurately pointed out, facilitates this project. It is process legislation that facilitates this project and makes sure that it is able to proceed in accordance with the agreement reached between the government and the ConnectEast consortium that bid for the project.

The project will deliver great benefits to Victoria, and particularly benefits to people in the eastern suburbs. Although its principal function is the moving of vehicles, cars and trucks along the very important eastern corridor, which of course in turn will deliver economic benefits to the people of that corridor through increased economic activity and jobs, it will also deliver improved public transport benefits, with \$20 million allocated for the upgrade of four railway stations and SmartBus operations within that region.

It is a project that is delivering; it is a project that is delivering the important additional infrastructure in the Dandenong southern bypass; it is a project that will provide a significant economic benefit to the people of Victoria; it is a project that the people of Victoria will get behind; and, of course, it is a project that the means of payment for its construction has changed. It has changed because of a number of factors: firstly, because the federal government reneged on its agreement to pay 50 per cent of the project as a road of national importance; and secondly, because the Kennett government's privatisation of public transport in Victoria, particularly the rail system, was a total disaster — such a disaster that one of the companies involved simply walked away from its contract and agreement. That left Victoria with a \$1 billion hole in public transport costs — I think the updates are more than that — in the operation of our public transport system in Melbourne.

The federal government reduced its contribution from what would have been 50 per cent of the project, which should have been around \$1 billion to \$1.25 billion, and

capped it at less than \$500 million. I think it may have increased its offer a little now, a minor increase from the \$425 million at which it was capped at first, but it is still less than 25 per cent of the total cost of the project. That issue together with the failure of the Kennett government's privatisation of our public transport system in Victoria were the two key factors that drove this government to look at the arrangements for delivering this project and the way it would be paid. As I said at the outset, numerous governments have made promises and not delivered on this project since the publication of the 1967 edition of the *Melway* directory when the project first appeared. They were the Bolte government; the Hamer government; the Thompson government; the Cain government; the Kirner government and the Kennett government. None of them delivered it. The Bracks government is delivering it — it is delivering a long-promised, probably the most promised, road project in the history of this state. It is delivering the most significant road project in Australia, and it is delivering it with tolls.

Although the Howard government is prepared to fund toll roads in Sydney, it is trying to punish the people of Victoria and is not prepared to return to the people of Victoria the road funds they pay in taxes. It ought to do so and should honour its commitment to the people of Victoria as the Bracks government has done in delivering this project.

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER (Silvan) — Whichever way you look at it and whichever way the Labor Party tries to paint it, this is a very bad piece of legislation and very bad news for people in my electorate in the outer east of Melbourne. It is a shameful piece of legislation for the reason that it represents what has to be one of the most incredible hoaxes that has been perpetrated on an electorate in living history. People in my region are incredibly angry about the legislation and incredibly angry about the Bracks government's position on the Mitcham–Frankston tollway, not only because of the obvious financial penalties that they will have to pay for at least the next 30 years, not only because it is bad for families, bad for business and bad for the family budget bottom line, but because they were lied to. They were held out a promise, a solemn pledge, by the Bracks government in 2002 that the road would be built by 2008 and that it would be toll free.

That was the specific promise that came from the lips of the Premier of this state to people in my region, and the people in my region took the government on trust and returned a very large number of Labor MPs into this Parliament both in the upper and lower houses who would not ever have been elected, not in a million years, unless people had taken the Premier on trust.

That is exactly what they did. That trust was most cruelly betrayed very shortly after that election campaign when the Premier blithely issued an apology by saying, 'Sorry, we had to have a change of plans on this, we regret it'. That regret has been echoed in this chamber today by Mr Viney. People on that side of the chamber should be ashamed of themselves for their performance on this issue and of the great hoax that they perpetrated on Victorians, particularly people in the outer east and the south-east. It is a disgrace and it should not have happened.

We know now that it was not just a change in policy because of financial pressure that led the government to this position. We know it. Even as the Premier was singing loud and long during the election campaign about no tolls, and even as every Labor candidate was printing their brochures promising 'No tolls — solemn pledge' to people and asking for their votes in return, we know that the Premier was secretly planning toll options for this road. It is a fact that freedom of information documents show that before that promise was made the Department of Premier and Cabinet was investigating several different options for tolls. What did the government do? It told a lie. The promise was never meant to be implemented. The government always knew that it was going to impose tolls on this road and perpetrated an incredible lie on those people who trusted it and took it on trust.

People who were elected in this Parliament increased the government's massive majority, and that was a very dishonest and deceitful act perpetrated upon the people in the outer east and south-east. We will not forget it. For that reason we oppose strongly this shameful legislation. It is shameful that the government has the temerity to come into this place and accuse the federal government, which has been the honest broker all the way through in this deal. It had a memorandum of understanding with the state government, signed by the Minister for Transport in the other place, and the federal coalition government, signed by the federal transport minister, John Anderson. That agreement was very specific that the commonwealth would fund half, 50 per cent — not \$200 million, \$420 million or \$565 million, the figures bandied around by the government. The actual memorandum of understanding says 50 per cent of the cost of that road if it is not tolled, if it is built as a freeway.

Hon. Andrew Brideson — That is still on the table.

Hon. A. P. OLEXANDER — That is still on the table, Mr Brideson. The federal government has been the honest broker in this regard. Mr Viney's claims in this chamber that the federal government was

responsible for renegeing on this deal are shameful and false. He should be held to account for those comments because history and the agreement itself show that is completely untrue. Paragraph 2A of the memorandum of understanding regarding commitments on the parties says that the commonwealth will provide financial assistance to Victoria with a maximum of 50 per cent of the government costs for its construction. It is a maximum of 50 per cent, so the commonwealth was clearly committed to fund half of it no matter what its cost was, whether it was \$700 million, \$1.4 billion or \$2 billion. That 50 per cent was given on the basis that the road would not be tolled. When the government shamefully went back on its word about the no tolls pledge, when it decided that it was going to charge people in the east and south-east for the next 30 years to pay for this project, the commonwealth rightly said, 'Hang on a minute, we have an agreement with you and the agreement was a toll-free freeway; we are not providing you with that money until you live up to your word, until you keep your word'.

To this day the Bracks government has refused to keep its word on this project. Those are the facts of the matter. For government speakers to come into this place and try to tell us that it is the federal government that renegeed on this deal and necessitated the imposition of tolls is an absolute and utter disgrace. It is a lie, and it should not be tolerated by any right-thinking member of this chamber.

Probably five or six names have been applied to this tollway. We have had the Eastern Freeway, we have had Scoresby, we have had the Mitcham-Frankston tollway, and now we have EastLink. It really does not matter how many spins the government puts on this or what it calls it. It should probably more appropriately call this road Pinocchio link, because Pinocchio was another character who decided to tell porkies throughout his life. One of the things the government has done here is tell a massive lie about how this project came about and why it is being tolled. We oppose this legislation on that basis. We oppose Pinocchio link! Upon our return to government we will work with interested parties to renegotiate this contract and ease the financial burden on families and businesses in the east and the south-east. That is a firm commitment and a firm pledge. Unlike this government we will keep our word to Victorians.

Many Labor members representing areas in the eastern suburbs and who were the beneficiaries of this lie have tried to tell communities in the east that the tolls are a good thing. They say, 'Tolls are good, prove us wrong'. I will never forget the brochure and the invitation to a meeting that was extended to people in the eastern

suburbs by the members for Bayswater and Kilsyth in the other place, Mr Lockwood and Ms Beard. How insulting it was for the government to promise people one thing while knowing it was never going to deliver on this and for it to then break its promise and turn around to those same people — the aggrieved people who took the government on trust — and say to them, 'Tolls are good, prove us wrong'. It has been an amazing performance on this issue from this government and those Labor members in the outer east. Those members will pay the price on this issue. They know there will be a consequence for the incredible hoax they helped the government perpetrate on their constituents. Their constituents will not forget. It is not just the fact that under this government they will be required to pay tolls for the next 30 years; it is the fact that they were betrayed and their trust was broken in the most incredible way. To add insult to injury, they were then told that they should not feel aggrieved about it. They were told, 'Tolls are good, prove us wrong'. This is the most disgraceful performance I have seen from a government.

Those Labor members in the outer east would be experiencing a great deal of trepidation about what is going to happen in November 2006, and so they should. It is not just the southern and eastern corridors, but there are probably about 10 seats there. The constituents of those 10 seats will come to the conclusion that it is not worth returning a Labor member at the next election. However, I think the implications of this go much further. This crystallises the Bracks government's approach on so many issues — that is, break your word, do not tell the truth, misrepresent the facts. It does this in so many policy areas. People are awake to this after six years of it in a range of policy areas, not just on the Mitcham-Frankston tollway. People know that this is the form of this government, and it will be held accountable for it. Every time the government brings legislation of this nature into this place, it reminds people yet again. Every time we see the sort of spin coming from the government that we have seen in our local region another flood of protest and another flood of objection comes from our constituents. They will not forget, and they will support the Liberal Party's commitment to renegotiate this contract upon assuming government in November 2006, as we will do.

This is basically machinery legislation making arrangements for the payment of tolls — 30 years of them for people in my electorate. For a 20-year-old living in my region who was beginning work and who would use the tollway during the week in a normal working life this represents about an \$80 000 bill over the course of their lifetime. It is a similar story for a

new student coming out of university or for a family if dad has a car to go to work and mum has a car to ferry the kids around. The government does not seem to understand that the outer eastern suburbs will not be a better place for families under this tollway; it will be much worse.

Businesses in our region have already indicated that they are moving out and relocating to where the roads are free and better, and where they have closer access to the airport. They are moving to the west and to the north. Investment has been lost from the eastern suburbs to places where it is cheaper, quicker and easier to do business. Business does not want these tolls either. The consortium building Pinocchio link probably wants them because it is going to make a lot of money out of a lot of people for a very long time. Mrs Holmes a Court and her Labor Party friends in the business world might like this very much but none of the small and medium-size businesses in my electorate like it. They hate it. They know it will add to their costs. They know it will add to their bottom line, and that is the problem.

We will have a community lumbered with paying for this when it should never have been lumbered with paying for it. We will have a situation in Ringwood alone where you will pay half of the total toll for the 24 kilometres of this road when you travel 2 kilometres in Ringwood. That is a completely unfair situation. The way the tolling will be set up means people who live in Croydon, Croydon Hills and Ringwood and want to use the tollway to get to and from Ringwood and those areas — 2 kilometres — will pay half of the total toll for the whole 24 kilometres. It is completely unfair. People in the Ringwood area are aghast at this. They cannot believe this will be the situation that faces them under the tollway proposal. Of course people are going to avoid that road. It will create rat runs out of a range of alternative arterial roads. This in turn will place enormous pressure on local government, which will have to pick up the slack.

We oppose this legislation on the basis that it is bad for our economy. It is bad for people's faith in the democratic system. It represents an insult and a lie to the people of the east and the outer east. We will make sure that we remind our constituents time and again about the great hoax perpetrated upon them by the Labor Party. We in the outer east look forward to November 2006 because that is when the electorate in our region will be vindicated. We will throw these Labor members out.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — This is the one that will not go away for the government. The Scoresby freeway is a development — —

Hon. Andrew Brideson — Acting President, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — I find it quite extraordinary that government members do not all sit in on a debate such as this, given the importance of this particular issue to the eastern and south-eastern suburbs in particular — indeed, a project that I would have thought was at the very core of this government's credibility. You would expect that members of the government would be sitting in the chamber trying to express some degree of support for a position that certainly we on this side would argue is almost unsupportable.

As I said at the outset, this is the issue that will not go away for the government. This is the government's nemesis. Indeed, the Scoresby freeway has dogged this government from the time it was elected in 1999, when its policy was to not build that freeway at all. I find it rather contrived that someone like Mr Viney has talked today about how wonderful it is that this government is going to build the freeway.

One needs to look at major infrastructure projects as a sequence of projects. There would have been no point in building the Scoresby freeway ahead of the Eastern Freeway, which the Liberal government had built to Doncaster. It is interesting to note that the Cain and Kirner governments, as a matter of policy, then stopped construction of the Eastern Freeway at Doncaster and said, 'We will not build any more freeways'. That became the end of the road.

Indeed, Labor also established what was then called the South Eastern Freeway and created a project which was totally inadequate in terms of a road that was supposed to be part of the freeway network — a freeway with traffic lights! It provided no traffic solutions for the eastern and south-eastern suburbs. It was an absolute joke! But it was very much a testament to the Labor Party's commitment to policies on freeways and transport movement — indeed, it failed to recognise the economic importance of our road infrastructure to start with.

It would have been an absolute nonsense to build the Scoresby road ahead of the Eastern Freeway. Who built the Eastern Freeway extension to Nunawading? The coalition government. When the Honourable Bill Baxter, a member of this house, was the minister

responsible for roads he had a great deal of work to do in re-establishing those plans to extend the Eastern Freeway and to actually start to make some sense of our road network. He also, of course, had issues to confront with the traffic lights and so forth on the South Eastern Freeway.

The then coalition government undertook significant development and invested a lot in the planning of not only that freeway, which was delivered by the Kennett government, but, more importantly, we made a commitment at a very early date to build the Scoresby freeway. We had planned it, so it is absolutely cute for Mr Viney to come in here and say, 'Nobody else built it. We are the ones who are going to build it'. Indeed, as I said, the Labor Party went into that 1999 election with the policy that said, 'We will not build the Scoresby freeway'.

What changed the minds of members of the Labor Party was the steadfast position of members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals that that freeway needed to be built — that it was a road of significant economic importance to the state of Victoria and needed to be built. We finally convinced the Labor Party that the government ought to build it. It vacillated and played with the plans. My colleague the Honourable Andrew Olexander and I well know the promises members of the Labor Party took into the 1999 election about the extension of the Eastern Freeway as well, including the tunnel that would allow that freeway to connect with the Scoresby. What happened? In that time, absolutely nothing!

In the whole exercise is the dishonesty of propaganda. I do not know if members of the government simply do not question the propaganda that is provided to them. This morning Mr Viney told the house that the Kennett government had not provided any money towards these freeways.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — That's a lie as well.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — It is an absolute and outright lie. In fact money was provided for the Eastern Freeway extension. There was a plan to extend it, and the government was committed to extending it and to building the Scoresby freeway. The wherewithal was put in place to do that.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — There was \$250 million.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — Where did the money go? It did not go to the roads. It got lost. In fact when this government added up its sums and said, 'We could not afford to build the Scoresby freeway, we cannot afford this infrastructure project that is of such

importance to Victoria' it left off the sums the \$270-odd million that the Kennett government had put in. It was not there; it had disappeared — because they had used that money for other purposes. It has also refused to take up federal government money for this project — again, it was being cute.

The Honourable Andrew Olexander took up one of the key points I was going to make, about the constant changes in the name of this project. I can tell members of the government that it does not matter how many times they change the name or what names they choose — the people out there know exactly what they are talking about. We know that any name they choose is just a continuation of the absolute deceit and dishonesty of the Bracks government when it comes to this freeway project — a freeway project on which this government has been absolutely deceitful! Members of the Labor Party went to the election in 2002 and gave a total commitment to building that freeway without tolls.

Members of the opposition know — and documents have been provided in the other house that have demonstrated that beyond any doubt — that the government was already talking about tolls before it went to the March 2002 election. In other words, members of the government had already decided that tolls were the preferred option. We had the absolute charade of government members saying, 'Well, we've got problems in public transport, and with National Express'. The interesting thing is that National Express lodged documents on the London Stock Exchange to show that it had actually made a profit on its Australian operations — at the very time the government was announcing that there were problems with the public transport franchises and saying that is why it really had to bring in the tolls.

I argue that in fact one of the major reasons for the tolls is again that idiotic project of the not-so-very-fast trains! Five years down the track we have had one train that has left a station — and bits fell off it! It went down along the Gippsland line and bits fell off the train! So they had to take it back to fix it. That was the only train that has actually gone out — and it was not even going at a fair clip when it went down past Gippsland.

Mr Somyurek — What have you got against Australian workmanship?

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — I just hope that none of it hit you on the head, Mr Somyurek, as it went past — because it went through your electorate. But it has not been seen in your electorate since.

Mr Somyurek interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — Indeed, it has not been seen on the way to Ballarat, Bendigo or Geelong. Yet this project is chewing up money for this government and is a major embarrassment to it. I dare say that it is because of the very fast train project, an absurd commitment that the government made which it has not been able to deliver on, that it has had to introduce the tolls on the Scoresby freeway and the Eastern Freeway extension.

We have had the stupid situation where the government has tried to combine the Eastern Freeway with the Scoresby freeway. The government did it before the 2002 election because nothing had been done on the Eastern Freeway work and no work had been done to deliver on the promises that it made in 1999. It was scared about the public relations damage and the prospect that voters would punish it for that. The government rolled it into a whole new project and gave it a different name. It then had the audacity to say that the federal government should pay for that bit as well. Despite the fact that the Kennett government had left money in the budget for that project to be done and despite the fact that that was never part of the Scoresby project, the government tried to play games with that project.

On a number of occasions the voters have spoken on this issue, and I daresay that voters will speak on this issue again when the Bracks government comes up to — —

Hon. Andrew Brideson — Deputy President, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Sitting suspended 1.02 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Gas: regional supply

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Energy Industries and Resources. In the 2002 election campaign the Bracks government travelled throughout Victoria promising natural gas connections to rural and regional towns as part of its \$70 million pledge. In a joint announcement on 12 November 2002, the

Minister for State and Regional Development in the other place, the Honourable John Brumby, together with the member for Ripon in the other place, Joe Helper, said Labor would deliver for the Avoca and Smythesdale communities if it won the 30 November election, but just yesterday the minister's press release said reticulation is not possible for Avoca. Therefore, I ask: with the Scoresby-like broken promise and Avoca no longer to be connected to gas, can we expect Wandong to be next, given that the member for Seymour in the other place, Ben Hardman, has been unable to confirm whether his joint pre-election promise with the Minister for State and Regional Development will also be dumped by the Bracks government?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries and Resources) — We know that the opposition simply hates the fact that we are connecting 70 000 to natural gas who were not connected to natural gas before, when its record is to abandon country Victorians. That is the difference. Opposition members hate the fact that we are delivering to country Victorians, and they continue to go around and misrepresent the facts in relation to these cases. Of course it is the case that the Minister for State and Regional Development and I went to towns in country Victoria and encouraged councils to make application in relation to the \$70 million gas extension program.

President, we very carefully chose our words in relation to those programs. We very carefully chose words of the sort where we said that towns should make application, that there was an independent process — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — If members opposite do not want the answer, I will sit down. We asked councils, following the launch of the program, to make expressions of interest on behalf of their communities nominating towns to be considered for the program and detailing the residential, commercial and business profile of each town, including potential natural gas usage. Avoca was one such town amongst a large number of others. Qualified bidders were invited to participate in a tender process. The centralised tender process provided all towns in regional Victoria with an equal opportunity to be considered and to bid for the gas distribution business and ensured competitive tension between potential bidders. That is what we did under the tender process, which was overseen by a probity auditor. Bid submissions were received in mid-June 2004 and were then subject to rigorous assessment involving technical experts by the managers

of the RDD — research, development and demonstration — program.

To date 28 towns not previously connected to natural gas were successful and will be connected under the program. Unfortunately not all towns in the tender process, including Avoca, attracted bids from gas distributors. It is the case that with the privatisation of the gas industry by the former government delivery of the natural gas extension program is reliant on a partnership between the privatised gas industry and the government. The government can only respond to bids received under the natural gas extension program tender process.

Of course we are disappointed, as is Joe Helper, the member for Ripon in the other place, that no gas distributor saw fit to bid to connect Avoca, We are disappointed about that, but that does not take away from the fact that 28 towns will be connected. Our score is 28; the opposition's score is zero!

Supplementary question

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I thank the minister for his answer. It goes to show that there is no way the minister can be embarrassed. It is true that yesterday the minister mentioned 26 towns that had been announced or re-announced for gas reticulation since the 2002 election. Not one of these towns has yet been connected. What will be the fate of towns like Smythesdale, Terang, Heywood, Myrtleford, Bright, Beechworth, Nathalia, Yea, Bonnie Doon, Alexandra and Wandong, which were promised natural gas by the Labor Party — its ministers, candidates and members of Parliament — before the 2002 election, but have not received any further commitment since?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries and Resources) — The Leader of the Opposition continues to misrepresent what I say. What I said yesterday and reiterated today is that construction has commenced for about half the 28 towns, and yesterday I listed the towns where construction had commenced. Members can go back and look at *Hansard*. We also said that the government remains committed to exploring further options for connecting Avoca and other towns in regional Victoria beyond the 28 that have been announced. We are about delivering to country Victoria and we will continue to deliver. I look forward to visiting every one of those towns when the opening of the natural gas extension occurs. I look forward to the opposition supporting them.

**Information and communications technology:
purchasing strategy**

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — I refer my question to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology. Telecommunications services, especially broadband, are vital for the government to do business. Will the minister indicate how the Bracks government is leading the way in how it purchases telecommunications services?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I thank the honourable member for his question. Many governments are talking about the benefits of aggregating their telecommunications spend. It has been a topic on the agenda of governments for some time. They talk about the way they can lower telecommunications costs and how with the aggregation we can deliver better infrastructure benefits for the community. Many people within governments talk about it but few actually achieve it. In Victoria we are leading the way with the telecommunications purchasing and management strategy (TPAMS).

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — Just wait, you will hear. Through TPAMS the Bracks government has delivered the smartest and most comprehensive aggregated purchasing model of any government in Australia. I have previously informed the house of the first tranche of TPAMS tenders, which succeeded in lowering the cost of telecommunications services to government by around \$100 million over five years and which will also deliver \$60 million in telecommunications infrastructure for Victoria. That is just tranche one.

I am now pleased to inform the house that the second tranche of TPAMS has been finalised and that the Victorian government has achieved the best overall commercial terms in telecommunications procurement in Australia. That is not just within government but within Australia. Through TPAMS we have led the way by lowering the cost of telecommunications to the Victorian government by almost \$200 million over the next five years. The infrastructure benefits obtained for Victoria through TPAMS will now be greater than \$80 million. TPAMS is a great example of the Bracks government leading the way not only in telecommunications policy and strategy but also in project management and financial responsibility. Lower telecommunications costs will allow government to invest in the next generation broadband networks to access the newest technology and continue to lead the

way in providing the best possible services to Victorians.

The telecommunications infrastructure component of TPAMS will increase competition in the telecommunications market and lead to improved services for the broader community, especially in regional areas. This will provide regional businesses and regional towns with the latest technology for which they would otherwise have to wait a very long time. Victorian towns and businesses are vitally important to the Victorian economy. This will help them lead the way in growing the Victorian economy and continue to make Victoria the great place it is to raise a family.

Melbourne Markets: relocation

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I direct my question to the Minister for Major Projects. I refer the minister to his advice yesterday regarding the proposed relocation of Melbourne Markets. He referred to the gateway review process, the Bracks government's major projects bizarre blueprint. He said the government is now working on stage 2, the business case for the move. According to the government's own department, the business case was due in December 2004, and the operators of the market are in a state of uncertainty. They cannot make informed business decisions because they are not being told if, when or where they are forced to relocate and when, or even if, they will receive relocation compensation. Will the minister advise why the business case proposed for Melbourne Markets is still being worked on when it was due five months ago?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Major Projects) — I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition has got up two mornings this week to go to the market. Although he rose an hour later this morning than he did last time, I am sure he and his colleagues would have enjoyed going to the market.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to go back to *Hansard* of November-December 1969, when Sir Henry Bolte was asked a similar question by the opposition about the then relocation of the Queen Victoria Market from Melbourne to the Footscray site; and also when Sir Gilbert Chandler in this place, then the agriculture minister, was asked a question by the opposition — I think by The Nationals, or the Country Party, as they were at the time — on a similar matter. Those answers are quite illustrative in showing how some of this process works and how, no matter what their political persuasions may be, governments, if they are serious about this process, deal with it to get some answers in place.

As this place will know, over a period since December 1841 the history of the wholesale market is that it was first in the AXA building; then it moved to the eastern market site, which later became the site of the Southern Cross Hotel; it moved to what is the Queen Victoria Market location; and finally it moved to Footscray. Now it needs to move somewhere else.

Hon. Bill Forwood — What's the relevance?

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mr Forwood's interjection about relevance, because with each of those moves there were serious considerations by the state of Victoria and the agricultural community about how to go forward, from one step to the other.

Hon. Philip Davis interjected.

Mr LENDERS — For the Leader of the Opposition's benefit, we are actually at gate 3 and not gate 2 — but I will leave that aside.

The important thing is how we progress logically through the relocation of a site as critical as the market as it affects the thousands of users, the people who work there and the state's economic interests. So we will do it logically and move forward.

In making the same decisions and using the same processes to get it right — testing how things are working, consulting with the stakeholders and in the government making informed step-by-step decisions — this government is in a sense doing nothing different from what Sir Henry Bolte and Sir Gilbert Chandler did in 1969 in last moving the market. We will remain focused on getting it in place. We will keep going through this in a logical sequence. We will move through all of these things.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — I am told Sir Henry Bolte did this two years after he first promised to build the Scoresby freeway, but let's leave that aside for another debate.

At the end of his reign and with the accumulation of 16 years wisdom, Sir Henry Bolte had a staged process, but the serious analogy with what happened with Sir Henry Bolte and Sir Gilbert Chandler is these are major economic decisions that have happened several times in Victoria. You come to the conclusion that a site has outlasted its usefulness, and you have an informed process about how you get to the next stage.

We welcome the excitement or the urgency shown by the fact that six opposition MPs have gone to the

market yet again this morning. I welcome the fact that they did that twice this week, and we welcome the discussion on this, but we will move forward with the community in an informed, staged process, getting the business case and the procurement stages right, doing it right so we make a correct decision for Victoria. We are not into cheap political stunts. We will move in a measured way and get it right. That is how this government makes Victoria a better place for families to bring up children.

Supplementary question

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I thank the minister but his sources of information are incorrect. In relation to matters he has just spoken of, I might point out that yesterday the minister was talking about stage 2 involving consideration of options at Werribee, Epping and the existing Footscray site. Will the minister advise why he is still considering the Footscray site as an option when he has said the market must move? Does this entirely contradict the government's position?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Major Projects) — Absolutely not. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday asked me a series of questions involving whether or not the stakeholders agreed with the view, and whether or not there was a need for the market to move. Between yesterday and Tuesday he asked a whole range of questions about what our processes were. He was fishing as you would expect a member of the opposition to do. He was doing all things to all people without a consistent line of questioning.

In the process of responding to that I did say to the house and to the Leader of the Opposition that not everybody at the market agreed there was a need to move forward — and we are talking with them on that — but I also said to the Leader of the Opposition that the government believes we need to move forward and take people with us, to explain why we need to move forward to the next step. And, in the context of our deliberations, we need to be canvassing with them the two options that remain on the table about where we move to and get their views on the most appropriate location in the context of our deliberations. We are doing all those things. We are open, transparent and accountable. We are talking to people, and we will make the correct decision.

Consumer affairs: price clarity

Ms ARGONDIZZO (Templestowe) — My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The house has previously discussed the need for clarity and fairness in the display of prices on goods and services.

Can the minister advise the house how Victoria is leading the way in achieving fairness for consumers?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank the member for her question. I think the whole house would be unanimous about the need to ensure that there is clarity in pricing for consumers. Tomorrow consumer affairs ministers are meeting in Melbourne. Victoria has placed on the agenda the issue of how prices are displayed and advertised.

This has been an issue for some time. In fact, in 2003 a case was taken to the Federal Court by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission against Signature Securities. In Justice Stone's decision he allowed a price to be displayed that said \$295 plus \$29.50 GST.

This is in stark contrast to the position of the then chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Professor Allan Fels, who said:

We do not want the USA system where the price at the cash register is different from the price on the good or shelf.

I think we would agree with that sentiment, and I believe consumers would too. As a matter of fact the Bracks government in 2003 raised that matter with the federal government. It is now five years since the introduction of the goods and services tax, and the federal government has failed to take action to ensure that consumers are not misled. Clearly, like members opposite, the federal government does not care enough to take any action.

Members would be aware that since that court case the practice of not showing the final price has actually increased; we are now seeing far more blatant uses of not putting in that final price. As a matter of fact airlines — and you will have seen it if you are looking to fly anywhere cheaply — offer \$29 tickets, those being prominent examples, but say there are fees and charges and surcharges 'from', and they list a price. It means consumers cannot actually work out easily what the real cost is to them. For this reason we are suggesting that the federal government adopt a model that requires all prices to be displayed, including the total price being displayed as prominently as the base price. In other words, traders can still list separately if they want to and put the base price plus taxes and surcharges, delivery charges or whatever, but they must show the final price and cost to consumers.

I will give a couple of examples. This would stop airlines, for instance, listing their price, as Jetstar has done, as being \$29 plus surcharges, fees and taxes from \$39, where the total price turns out to be \$89 rather than

the \$29 plus \$39, which is \$68. To find the real price you have to try to book. We can take a similar flight on Virgin as a further example. A fare listed as being from \$29 plus \$39 in surcharges, fees and taxes in this case turns out to have a total price of \$179 and not the \$89 or whatever it could possibly be. This is unfair to consumers, and we intend to ensure that we are doing our best to see that the federal government does not allow this to continue to occur.

Commonwealth Games: tickets

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — My question is to the Minister for Commonwealth Games. I ask the minister to outline to the house how the Bracks government is leading the way in the delivery of major sporting events through Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Commonwealth Games) — I welcome the member's question, and I welcome her interest in the Commonwealth Games. As people in the chamber today would know, the Commonwealth Games is the biggest event that will ever be staged in Melbourne. To put it into perspective, it is as big as having the grand final, the grand prix and the Spring Racing Carnival all happening at the same time every day for almost two weeks. It is an enormous job. We will see 4500 athletes from 71 nations and 1500 officials for 11 days of competition. It will be a spectacular event.

I take this opportunity to remind members that the ticket ballot — hopefully members will have seen a copy of the ticket ballot book, and I would encourage all members of Parliament to take up the opportunity to register their interest in the ticket ballot — —

Hon. D. K. Drum — What about you?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I take up Mr Drum's interjection, because he will be pleased to know that I have nominated for a number of events for my family. We are looking forward to going to the opening ceremony, if we can get through the ballot. We are looking forward to going to the netball final, and we are also looking forward to the first and last days of the athletics. I know the Leader of the Opposition has nominated himself and his family to go to the event too. I hope Mr Drum takes up the opportunity.

There are a lot of great sports on offer. Some are probably more applicable for members of the opposition than others. I look across the range of sports, and, whilst golf is not involved, I know Mr Forwood is pretty good with the hockey stick and might be

interested in going to the hockey. I know that we have a few pugilists on the other side who might be interested, like Mr Drum, in boxing, because I think Mr Drum's face has seen a little bit of it in his time. I know that Mr Bishop is on the verge of retirement and might be interested in pursuing a career in lawn bowls. There are opportunities for all members to take an interest in particular sports. For the more delicate of us there might be badminton or table tennis, and I know on the opposition side there is a whole range of members capable of any sort of gymnastics they may wish to pursue. There is plenty of opportunity for any member of the chamber to find a particular sport they might be interested in. I would encourage everybody in the chamber to take up the opportunity.

I understand that there are ticket ballot books in the papers office for those who have not had a look recently or might be a bit worried about getting their ballot forms in at the last minute. The ballot closes at midnight tomorrow night. Applications can be submitted online. I encourage all members to take up the opportunity.

It will be a spectacular event, and let me just remind members why. We wanted to make these games affordable and accessible for everybody in the Victorian community, particularly families. The ticket prices start at \$15 and over 50 per cent of tickets have been priced at \$60 or less. In fact more than 70 per cent of tickets are under \$100. What we will see is a great opportunity.

Hon. P. R. Hall interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — We have seen Victorians and Australians expressing their interest in the ballot process with an uptake for nomination through that process of more than 100 000 every week. We are expecting more than 100 000 this week, with a spike in the last few days. I encourage all members, particularly those who have an interest in specific sports — and even those who do not may be interested in the opening or the closing ceremonies — to put in their expressions of interest because it is the last opportunity they will get to get the best tickets possible.

Prospecting: miners rights

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — Belatedly I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Energy Industries and Resources. The minister will recall that in the spring sitting last year the Parliament passed legislation to regularise the sale of miners rights by agents located in country towns. Why then can tourists not buy miners rights in places like Beechworth

more than six months after Parliament gave the go ahead?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries and Resources) — As the honourable member indicates, I was pleased to make some announcements in relation to miners rights. Indeed I also announced the special miners right that we put out in relation to the Eureka celebrations. I can tell members that that commemorative miners right was very well received in the community by people who pursue miners rights and continue to prospect around the state. I should also indicate to the member that I received quite a considerable amount of mail from people who were very appreciative of receiving that commemorative miners right. I think that was probably made known to some members in this house as well. It was appropriate for us to do that.

As part of that policy we had to deal with the issue of how to get access to miners rights for people right throughout Victoria. Getting access was not easy because we had received legal advice that there was a legal issue in relation to the agencies that were dealing with miners rights being able to hand out those rights. We sought to rectify that, as the member has indicated, through legislative change. That has proceeded. But it was not just a matter of legislative change; we needed also to put in place the administrative arrangements that were required in order for us to pursue being able to have the service available for issuing miners rights. We made miners rights available on the Internet almost immediately. People can apply for a miners right immediately by going to the Department of Primary Industries site, and they have been able to do so for a considerable period of time. We also made miners rights available through agencies of DPI around the state that had been there in the past.

However, that did not cover the entire state, so we pursued the policy of seeking to get miners rights made available through other agencies — the previous agencies, if you like — that had been the subject of a legal issue. That was pursued by the department for a considerable period of time. My understanding is that that issue was resolved a few weeks ago, and that miners rights are available through the agencies that had previously been able to provide them on the basis of new arrangements that have been brought into play.

I believe we now have a situation where miners rights are available right throughout country Victoria through the agencies that had previously been able to provide those miners rights. I am happy to take up the individual situation which the honourable member has identified, and if there is an issue in relation to the

availability of miners rights in that particular location, I am happy to pursue that with him.

Consumer affairs: Easter trading

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Ms Thomson. As the Minister for Small Business, Minister Thomson introduced legislation that has severely restricted the rights of consumers to choose to shop on Easter Sunday. As the Minister for Consumer Affairs the minister is now responsible for enforcing these trading restrictions. Can the minister please advise the house how many Consumer Affairs Victoria compliance and enforcement officers were on call on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and how many incidents of illegal trading they were required to attend?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — The shop trading legislation is still the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business and remains the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business.

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, President, the issue that the member raised was a question asking how many consumer affairs officers were on duty. I put it to you, President, that consumer affairs officers are not the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business but are absolutely the responsibility of the minister in the chamber, and therefore she should answer the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. As the member would be well aware — and he has been here long enough and sat through a sufficient number of question times to understand — the minister has responded to the question saying that it is not her responsibility. She has answered, and that is the end of it.

Hon. Bill Forwood — Well that is a lie!

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The honourable member has accused a member in the house by stating that that is a lie. I find that unparliamentary, and I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. Bill Forwood — I withdraw.

Supplementary question

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — The Minister for Consumer Affairs is responsible for

enforcing these trading restrictions, and I am sure if I know that there were 16 officers on duty that day, she also knows there were 16 compliance and enforcement officers on that day. I ask her how many will be on duty on Anzac Day.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — The arrangements in relation to shop trading hours are the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business. The arrangements are with the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development, by agreement, for consumer affairs inspectors to be available for that purpose. But the arrangement and reporting of the details and outcomes of that are the responsibility of the Minister for Small Business.

Ordered that answers be considered next day on motion of Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe).

Productivity Commission: ageing population report

Mr PULLEN (Higinbotham) — My question is to the Minister for Aged Care, Mr Jennings. Can the minister please advise the house of the impact on the Victorian community of the release of the Productivity Commission's report last week on the economic implications of an ageing Australia?

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — I thank Mr Pullen for his question and his interest in the wellbeing of the Victorian community, particularly as it ages. This issue is discussed on many occasions, and most recently that has culminated in the report produced by the Productivity Commission for the federal Treasurer which outlines the impact on and the implications for the cost structure of service provision for our ageing population in the years to come.

I would not want to take the Productivity Commission's report head on. I certainly do not want to treat it as gospel, but I would not perhaps be as vigilant or rigorous as Tim Colebatch was on 12 April when in an article headed 'The trashy truth about Costello's report on ageing' he described the report effectively as a piece of garbage. In fact he said that economists have a phrase the acronym for which is GIGO — that is, garbage in, garbage out — which explains the false premise that underpins this work. In fact, there are some substantial reasons why Tim Colebatch argues this. I think it is important for us all to learn some lessons.

Why does Tim Colebatch say this? It is because, despite the view of the head of Treasury, Peter Costello's own department, that the issues that arise in dealing with ageing need to be resolved through a combination of policies directed to address population, participation and productivity, the report is silent on those issues — profoundly silent. It is silent because Peter Costello did not want the commission to report on this issue. Peter Costello asked it to estimate what the cost might be in the next 40 years, on the current projections of the fiscal gap in providing those services. The Productivity Commission came back with its best guess, saying we may be short somewhere in the order of \$55 billion each and every year — 6.4 per cent of gross domestic product — in terms of funding services.

But what are the prescriptions for dealing with this matter? The Productivity Commission has failed to deliver important advice to this nation about how we can address this issue. If you take some of the assessments of Australia's productivity and, most importantly, participation, we have some of the lowest rates of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. In the most productive age group — that is, between 25 and 54 — Australia has 15 per cent of men in that age bracket who are unemployed and 31 per cent of women in that age bracket who are currently not participants in the work force.

However, if we model our economy on best practice and we get in the top five of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries in terms of work force participation, researchers in the commonwealth Treasury estimate that 740 000 jobs could be generated between now and 2050 and bridge that fiscal gap. We need to do something about this. The commonwealth is not learning something about this because in regard to its mix of policies the federal Treasurer responded on that day and said, 'We want to make sure we increase two things: participation in the work force and the reliance of our system on private carers who stay at home to look after their family'. This is a laudable thing which should be supported, but if you look at the rise in carer payments compared to residential aged care and community care payments and the support for labour market programs, the only payment that is going through the roof is the carer payment.

The Treasurer, who is responsible for macro-economic policy for employment generation, is deficient because his eye is not on the ball in generating employment and participation which will bridge the fiscal gap.

Consumer affairs: product safety

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — My question is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs. I direct the minister's attention to the activities of Dr T. J. Sprott who claims a mattress cover for babies is purported to prevent cot death in babies by preventing exposure to toxic gases released by the mattress. Senior medical authorities do not believe these claims are accurate, particularly his promotion of a so-called baby-safe mattress and a so-called campaign against cot death. Is the minister able to produce any scientific evidence to support Dr Sprott's claims? If no scientific evidence is available, will she ask the director of Consumer Affairs Victoria to investigate?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I do not walk around with scientific evidence in my pocket that supports individual claims nor do I have a responsibility to provide such supporting evidence. We are very committed to investigating any issues that fall within the jurisdiction of consumer affairs.

When I was the Minister for Consumer Affairs members opposite who had genuine issues concerning consumers and complaints about matters that fell within the jurisdiction of Consumer Affairs Victoria — for example, whether or not what was being advertised by someone was what they said was being advertised — often would quietly approach me and say, 'I have this issue, and it is really important. I am thinking of raising it during the adjournment debate'. Or they might hand it to me and say, 'Can you follow it up and let me know what happens with it?'. I am sure Mr Lenders had the same experience himself when he was the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

If there is a genuine complaint or issue that needs investigation and which falls within the jurisdiction of consumer affairs, it will be thoroughly pursued. If it is found after an initial investigation that it falls within another jurisdiction or another authority's preserve, we will certainly pass that on, with all the information we have gathered, to the authority to pursue. We take the job of consumer affairs seriously. The people who work within consumer affairs are very committed to the role they play in protecting consumers.

If the member has a concern and has something to produce in relation to that, I suggest that he brings it to me with the amount of information that he has. I will ask Consumer Affairs Victoria if it is something which it can deal with or look into, or it may rightly belong somewhere else.

Supplementary question

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — This is a serious matter. The evidence appears not to support some in the series of claims that have been made this month in a significantly circulated magazine in Melbourne. I will direct those materials to the minister. I will look forward to her investigating them thoroughly.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is no supplementary question. The minister is not required to respond.

Housing: affordability

Mr SMITH (Chelsea) — My question is to the Minister for Housing. Can the minister please inform the house how the Bracks government is leading the way and boosting affordable housing in regional Victoria?

Ms BROAD (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and his continuing interest in the Bracks government's considerable efforts to expand social housing to low-income Victorians, including those in regional Victoria.

The Bracks government believes that everyone deserves a decent home. That is why, since coming to office in 1999, this government has invested in expanding the supply of affordable housing to all Victorians, including families in regional Victoria.

Yesterday I advised the house about our efforts in the Melbourne metropolitan area through Melbourne 2030. Just as importantly the Bracks government is also delivering for regional Victorian families. Recently in Mildura I launched the housing for regional Victoria initiative. It was a \$10 million initiative of construction projects — —

Mr Smith interjected.

Ms BROAD — It was \$10 million! It was designed to tackle the growing problem of housing affordability in regional Victoria. This initiative will provide more than 50 homes across Victoria to families on low incomes as well as giving them a fresh start in life and a decent place to live. These homes will be spread right across the state. They include 10 in Ballarat, 11 across Geelong and Warrnambool, 11 across Bendigo and Mildura, 10 across Seymour, Shepparton and Wangaratta, and 12 in Gippsland. This \$10 million initiative is only part of the government's substantial efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing. We know that many families, including those in regional

Victoria, are finding it increasingly difficult to find a home they can afford in the current housing market.

Slabs are being poured and frames are being put up for these brand new homes which are being built in regional Victoria, and that is an aspect of this initiative I would like to draw attention to. When the Bracks government came to office in 1999 only 30 per cent of Office of Housing's acquisition program was through construction. This government has turned that around, and today nearly 90 per cent of the acquisition program is through construction, with all of the benefits that has for the Victorian economy, including regional Victoria.

These new homes will become available for rental later this year, and, of course, they will be targeted to Victorians on low incomes who meet the eligibility criteria. With the Howard government now driving up interest rates and taking no action at all to increase the supply of affordable housing, it is left to the Bracks government to take the lead to ensure that more homes are being made available to Victorian families — homes that are affordable for families on low incomes, including those in regional Victoria.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 1407, 1408, 4524–28, 4589, 4593, 4655–62, 4674–88.

MITCHAM-FRANKSTON PROJECT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — It is interesting that members of the government again leave at the first opportunity when this debate is on the agenda, because they are very concerned about it. They do not like hearing about this particular issue, and they are always embarrassed when legislation on this issue comes before the house. As I said before the lunch break, the Scoresby freeway project is their nemesis — their Waterloo. There is no doubt they are very quick to try and escape from this one, but, as I have said before, it will dog them all the way up to the next election and beyond because of the duplicity of the Premier.

In turning to the legislation before the house, I want to raise another question, which I would be very keen to

hear Mr Somyurek answer in his contribution to the debate on this legislation, because I think there is a matter that will be of considerable interest to members of the public. What concerns me is that the legislation brings in a process of forwarding out invoices to people who have used the government's tollway, and, of course, we in the Liberal Party would expect that this will not come to pass at any rate. Once we are elected to government the circumstances will change, but under this legislation the government would propose that people will receive invoices for travelling on the tollway without having had an agreement with ConnectEast, which presumably means a tag or whatever other device might be used in the context of the tolling procedures. What concerns me about this is that there is absolutely no decision in this legislation, and as I understand it there has been no discussion in the briefings, about how people might obtain a ticket if they have actually travelled on the tollway and wish to pay subsequently. With the CityLink process people are able to go to a post office or other retail outlets, and indeed CityLink offices, and obtain a day pass for the trips they have made in retrospect.

Under this system are opposition members to assume that in this legislation the government is bringing in an entirely different system? Are we to understand that there is going to be some coordination between the two freeway systems and the tolling systems that are to be used? The worst possible thing under this legislation would be for members of the public to have to face a circumstance where they have a different tolling regime on ConnectEast to the one on CityLink. The government may well have worked out this detail, but it is certainly not evident in the legislation, in the second-reading speech and, as I understand it, it has not been touched on in any of the briefings. But it is a matter that will be of considerable concern to the people who use the toll road. If they had used the toll road most of them would hope they would have an opportunity to buy a pass at a subsequent time — perhaps later that day or the next day, as they can with CityLink — without having to face this process where an invoice comes at a later date. That is an entirely different tolling regime to the one we understand now, or it would seem to be. I would hope one of the government members might touch on that and enlighten this house, and indeed the public, as to what the government's and ConnectEast's intentions are as far as that is concerned.

The one good thing about this legislation, as was mentioned by the Honourable Ron Bowden, was the fact that the Dandenong southern bypass is at least mentioned, and hopefully has prospect of being constructed, because that is also another important

piece of road infrastructure in the south-eastern suburbs, and members of the opposition would welcome that. This legislation will be opposed by the Liberal Party and it certainly will be opposed by me with the continued vigour I have shown in the past on the Scoresby issue because this particular project represents — —

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

Mr SOMYUREK (Eumemmerring) — I rise to make a contribution in support of the Mitcham-Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill. I will preface my comments by responding to the query made by Mr Atkinson, and I hope my response answers his question. Drivers will have 72 hours from the time of making a trip to make an arrangement for that trip. This could include purchasing an electronic tag or establishing a video account, or it could involve the purchase of a trip pass. The benefit of making an arrangement or purchasing a trip pass is that no toll administration fee will be payable. A trip pass will apply to one single one-way trip on the freeway. There is presently no plan for an equivalent to the CityLink day pass. I am not sure if that answers Mr Atkinson's question, but let us hope it goes some way towards doing so.

The main purpose of the bill is to amend the Mitcham-Frankston Project Act 2004. The bill continues the work of the Bracks government in getting on with the job of building EastLink. It gives legal effect to a number of features of the project agreed to in the concession deed between the Bracks government and ConnectEast, which was signed on 14 October 2004. The focus of my contribution will be on the positive effect the Dandenong bypass will have on Dandenong.

As I have said on numerous occasions, Dandenong has been pretty badly affected by the economic restructuring that Australia has gone through as a nation in the last two decades or so. It is an area that is driven by manufacturing output. It is a manufacturing output hub of Australia, producing about 42 per cent of the state's total manufacturing output, or rather the region within a 15-kilometre radius of Dandenong does. The Dandenong community has gone through some very challenging times over the last decade. However, the Bracks government made a commitment at the last election to rejuvenate and regenerate Dandenong, to bring life back into Dandenong and to make sure it reclaims its place as truly the second city of Melbourne.

Part of that promise was to establish a special board — the Dandenong Development Board — to work closely with the City of Greater Dandenong, VicUrban and other stakeholders to attract investment into the area. The economic spin-offs from the Mitcham-Frankston project are already expected to be a fillip for the local economy, and I do not think anyone has any doubt about that. Mr Neil Lucas, the mayor of the City of Casey — —

Hon. Andrea Coote — An excellent person.

Mr SOMYUREK — He is doing quite a good job, actually. Even he was out there last week espousing the virtues of the Mitcham-Frankston project for the city of Casey, and I am sure the city of Greater Dandenong people are also raving about it. They are very upbeat or sanguine about the prospects of the economic spin-offs for the Dandenong area.

The feedback I have received from local real estate agents, local businesses and the council is that demand for industrial land has increased exponentially, notwithstanding the land tax issue, which I will not get into. The Dandenong southern bypass will give further impetus to this trend. The bypass, a four-lane duplicated road between the Southern Gippsland Highway and Perry Road, and connecting to Cheltenham Road and the Mitcham-Frankston project, will be 5 kilometres long.

The bypass will include an overpass on the Cranbourne rail line and a grade separated full diamond interchange at the Mitcham-Frankston freeway. The bypass has enormous potential to precipitate further economic growth in the region and to help the development of the Dandenong transit city project. The Mitcham-Frankston project and the Dandenong southern bypass dovetail well into the state government's Dandenong transit city project.

My office is located in Dandenong, as is that of my colleague the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips, and I am sure my colleague will agree with me — —

Hon. A. P. Olexander — What is the address?

Mr SOMYUREK — Princes Highway, Dandenong. Driving down Lonsdale Street, Dandenong during peak hour is a nightmare. It is bumper-to-bumper traffic, especially turning up Foster Street or down Cheltenham Road — there is a myriad of traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and the like. Congestion in that area is terrible. Also, a lot of heavy vehicles travel along Lonsdale Street, Foster Street and Cheltenham Road. I am sure Mr Bowden would also agree with me about that situation.

The bypass will reduce local road congestion and divert heavy transport vehicles away from the centre of Dandenong. And do you know what?

Hon. A. P. Olexander — What?

Mr SOMYUREK — There are no tolls on this road, and I guarantee that — it is an ironclad guarantee. Since the opposition has waxed lyrical about tolls during debate on the Mitcham–Frankston project I will wax lyrical and also touch on the issue of tolls.

I cannot believe that the opposition has the temerity to argue against tolls when it presided over the CityLink project; when its federal colleagues are funding toll roads in other states; and when its botched privatisation project was a significant contributing factor to tolls being imposed in the first place.

The federal government is sitting on \$540 million of Victorian motorists' fuel taxes. Members opposite should pick up the phone to their federal colleagues in Canberra and ask them to lobby the Howard government.

Mr Pullen — Tell them!

Mr SOMYUREK — Mr Pullen says you should tell them — be assertive, pick up the telephone and tell your federal colleagues to lobby for Victorian motorists! I will not say that those opposite are Liberals first and Victorians second because it is not my style. I do not partake in sloganeering politics because that is not my style. I prefer to see myself as a man of substance, and I have put on a couple of kilograms so there is increasingly more substance as time goes by!

I request opposition members pluck up the courage and face up to their federal colleagues. They will earn the respect of their constituents and perversely earn the respect of their federal colleagues, the Prime Minister; the federal Treasurer, Mr Costello; and the federal health minister, Mr Abbott.

Opposition members should pick up the phone and say, 'Hang on, we are not getting a good deal here; Victorians are being duded; my constituents are being duded; we demand a fair share for Victorian taxpayers' motoring taxes; we want the money that is currently going into roads in New South Wales, Tasmania and other states to come back to Victoria'.

I turn to the issue of misleading. What audacity the opposition has to come into this place and start waxing lyrical about misleading! What sassiness after last week's performance by the Prime Minister, Mr Costello and Mr Abbott! It was so devious that

Mr Abbott even considered retiring because he could not live with himself.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Mr Rabbit?

Mr SOMYUREK — Mr Abbott.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Mr Abbott! I thought you said Mr Rabbit?

Mr SOMYUREK — No, Mr Abbott.

Mr Pullen — The same hare!

Mr SOMYUREK — I will not go on with that, but he is known as rabbit Abbott, too, but for other reasons. Mr Abbott could not live with himself so decided to retire last week.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — He did not.

Mr SOMYUREK — I am informed that he did because he found it very difficult to live with himself, and he was persuaded to stay on. It was a devious act, you have to admit. I would drop all this lying, backflipping and misleading the public because your constituents will say to you as soon as you mention the words 'backflip', 'lie' and so on, 'Well, what about the Medicare threshold?'. You will have to answer that question. With that comment, I commend the bill to the house.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I am pleased to speak on the bill this afternoon and follow my Eumemmerring Province colleague, Mr Somyurek. It is clear from his concluding remarks that he has been on the telephone to his colleague the member for Holt talking about Mr Rabbit. The relevance of that to this issue is not at all clear.

Mr Somyurek — Lateral thinking.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Extremely lateral, Mr Somyurek. One thing I will say about Mr Somyurek's contribution is that I am in fierce agreement with him as to the importance of the Scoresby freeway and the Dandenong southern bypass to the city of Dandenong. For the last six years I have had my electorate office in Dandenong. Dandenong is Melbourne's second-largest city and the most significant industrial centre in Victoria.

It has significant traffic problems. It is my hope that the eventual construction of the Scoresby freeway and, importantly, the Dandenong southern bypass will alleviate those problems. In his contribution Mr Somyurek spoke about the problems in Lonsdale Street, which is the local name for the section of the

Princes Highway running through the centre of the Dandenong. There is currently no Dandenong bypass and therefore there are a lot of heavy vehicles moving through the centre of Dandenong. As Mr Somyurek said, there are pedestrian crossings, intersections and a number of impediments to traffic flow through the heart of Dandenong. The construction of this freeway will alleviate that.

Mr Somyurek did not touch on one thing that has made this problem worse — and I am sure he agrees with me — and that is the recent construction of bike lanes in Lonsdale Street. In an absolutely bizarre move around six to eight weeks ago we saw a VicRoads crew widen the northbound section of the Princes Highway through Dandenong by roughly half a metre. The government went to great expense to have a VicRoads crew come out to add a thin strip of bitumen to the Princes Highway. This involved digging up the existing channel kerbing, laying a new channel kerb and then putting down a 50 centimetre-wide strip of bitumen. Subsequent to that we saw the entire Princes Highway through Dandenong re-marked so we could have a bicycle lane on the northbound side of the highway. This has further compressed the space available for traffic. I have to ask why because while I know that Ms Romanes is keen on her bicycle I am yet to see anybody riding through Dandenong on a bicycle. Why on earth has VicRoads wasted —

Mr Somyurek — Didn't you see Panda and me in the *Dandenong Examiner* the other day?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — By way of interjection Mr Somyurek indicates that he and the Minister for Tourism, the member for Dandenong in the other place, have ridden bicycles in the bicycle lane. I submit that they are probably the only two people who have been on bicycles in that lane. I suspect based on the past form of the Minister for Tourism that he would not have been on the bicycle for very long. The point is VicRoads has wasted a lot of money on this 50-centimetre strip of bitumen on the Princes Highway through the centre of Dandenong which, to my knowledge, is not used and is not required. As you would be well aware, Acting President, those funds could have been used by VicRoads for many other projects in the south-east of Melbourne.

That brings me to the issue before the house today. While I agree very strongly with the need for the Scoresby freeway and the Dandenong southern bypass, as Mr Somyurek has articulated, where I disagree with my Eumemmerring Province colleague is in the way it should be provided. It is for that reason that the Liberal Party will be opposing this legislation today. We

oppose this bill because it enables the introduction of a tolling regime on the Scoresby freeway, something which the Liberal Party is vehemently opposed to.

The issue here is not whether the Scoresby freeway should or should not have been funded through tolls. We can argue until the cows come home about which model is the best way to provide infrastructure.

Members of the government have tried to raise an argument that the CityLink project is a tollway and it was developed by the previous government. That project was developed as a tollway by the previous government because that was the appropriate model for the circumstances at the time. If we go back to 1992 when the project was picked up by the incoming Kennett government, we had a situation where the state of Victoria was carrying more than \$30 billion in debt and was running a recurrent budget deficit exceeding \$2 billion. At that time the state budget was far smaller than it is now and it simply was not practical for that incoming government to build that necessary piece of infrastructure through the state's resources at the time.

Jumping forward to 2002, the circumstances in Victoria were very different because of the former Liberal government. The financial imperatives which were imposed on the Kennett government and necessitated CityLink being built as it was do not apply to the Bracks government. However, even that by itself is not the key argument here. The key argument is that before the election the Bracks government promised to do one thing and then after the election said it was doing something else. Prior to the 2002 election the Premier went out, hand on heart, and said the Bracks government would build the Scoresby freeway without tolls. As soon as the election was over, at the first available opportunity the Premier did a backflip. He said, 'No, sorry, we have had another look at it and changed our minds, the Scoresby will now be built with tolls'. That was a complete contradiction of the promise made in November 2002.

What makes it worse is that subsequent to that backflip by the Premier and that announcement in April 2003 — and it was a very cynical move by the Premier because he waited until the election was over and then at the first available opportunity so there would be the longest lead time until the next election got the bad news out of the way early on — documents have come to light indicating that the government was considering the option of tolls prior to the 2002 election, prior to the time when the Premier got up and said, hand on heart, there would not be tolls on the Scoresby freeway. That is why the Liberal Party and the people of Victoria are

so opposed to tolls being imposed on the Scoresby freeway.

The project is well deserving of support. I have been in this house since 1999 and in 2000 I saw government members in this chamber vote against the construction of the Scoresby freeway — every member of the government in this chamber in the 54th Parliament voted against a motion to support the construction of the Scoresby freeway. I am pleased to see that under pressure from the opposition and the community the government has finally come on side in supporting the Scoresby freeway, but we and the community do not support the manner in which it proposes to do it. It is our belief that the government ought to honour the commitment it made in November 2002.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Tell us about the \$7 billion.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Mr Theophanous asks about the \$7 billion, and I am pleased he has brought that figure up. The construction cost of the freeway is put at \$2.5 billion give or take, given that the definition of ‘the project’ changes from month to month. The question has to be asked: if the project is costing \$2.5 billion to build, why has this government committed us to a contract it says will cost \$7 billion to pay out? What sort of deal has this government done if this project will cost \$2.5 billion to build yet we have signed up for a \$7 billion contract?

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — A \$7 billion contract. According to the Minister for Energy Industries and Resources, paying out this contract will cost \$7 billion, so we are getting a \$2.5 billion asset for a commitment of \$7 billion. Either the \$7 billion figure — the figure the Treasurer has dreamed up — is wrong — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. R. H. Bowden) — Order! The Chair has been quite tolerant. There has been a fair amount of comment by several members on the government side. It would be helpful to the Chair if the honourable member who has the call could continue without assistance. The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips to continue without assistance from the government side.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — As I was saying, the Treasurer has put forward the figure of \$7 billion which in the fullness of time will be proved to be false, and if it is not proved false the question has to be asked,

‘Why has the government committed us to a \$7 billion contract for a \$2.5 billion project?’

The bill before the house contains three provisions. The first is the enabling aspects for the enforcement regime for tolling; the second is a land tax exemption for certain parcels of land involved in the project; and the third is the Dandenong southern bypass, which I fully support. The existing traffic problems through Dandenong are at great cost to industry and businesses in Dandenong, and obviously of great cost to the state of Victoria. It will benefit the whole state to see the bypass completed, and ultimately the Scoresby freeway completed, but it should be consistent with the government’s 2002 promise.

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — I am disappointed that government members, and Mr Somyurek in particular, do not seem to believe the government should honour the promise it made in 2002 and it is for that reason that the Liberal Party will oppose this legislation. The government made a promise and it should honour it. In opposing this legislation the Liberal Party is sending a clear message that it will not assist this government in introducing legislation which helps it to break an ironclad promise to the people of Victoria. In November 2006 the people of the eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne will have an opportunity to send a message. The impression I am getting from talking to businesses and residents in the Dandenong area and further north is that they are aggrieved by what they see as a cynical backflip by this government and by this Premier, and they are just waiting for the opportunity in November 2006 to send a very strong message to the Bracks government that this is not acceptable.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — Along with colleagues on this side of the chamber, I will be opposing this legislation emphatically. We are opposing the Mitcham-Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill solely on the basis that the government has lied to the electorate; it has lied to the constituents of Waverley Province. The government has lied and the chickens will come home to roost at the next election when the Liberal Party wins a swag of seats along the EastLink project route.

I must say at the outset that the Liberal Party does not oppose the construction of this project. We see it as being vital to completing the transport links of the south and south-eastern suburbs and joining the eastern side of the city with the western side. It is a very important infrastructure project. I want to record that the Liberal

Party is not against the project: it sees its economic benefits.

This legislation does several things which have been alluded to by previous speakers, but in brief it will facilitate the delivery of EastLink, which is the project's new name. Previous speakers have referred to the fact that this name has changed over time, but it really has not changed the tolling provisions. It is not a freeway, it is a tollway and the community will not forget that. The bill creates an enforcement regime for users of EastLink. Road users who do not have an agreement with ConnectEast will receive a tolling invoice and be given 14 days to pay. I must admit that that is certainly better than what currently exists with the CityLink regime. They will be charged a \$4 toll administration fee and a VicRoads look-up fee, which the South Eastern Integrated Transport Authority claims will be under \$1, and we certainly hope the cost is extremely low. After the 14 days has expired a motorist who has not paid the original invoice will receive a second invoice giving them another 14 days to pay, which will attract a further \$4 toll administration fee. If that invoice plus the fees remains unpaid then an infringement notice will be issued, and I think that is probably a relatively fair way to go. Look-up fees may be charged only once a week on the invoiced tolls, and I believe the tolls are yet to be decided.

The bill also gives ConnectEast an exemption from land tax on its leased and licensed land, and I am not going to repeat the arguments that were so eloquently put by the Honourable Ron Bowden in his opening speech on this bill.

Finally, clause 34 inserts a substitute section 4 into the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority Act 2003 and expands the description of the term 'project' to include the construction of the Dandenong southern bypass. It is instructive to tell the house that had it not been for the eagerness and the foresight of the City of Greater Dandenong this aspect of the bill may not have gone ahead. It is through the assiduous work of that council that the Dandenong southern bypass has been included, and I give it credit. While I am giving credit, I would also like to give credit to some of the other councils along the freeway, particularly the City of Monash that argued very strongly for ramps to be constructed at Wellington Road and the Monash Freeway because they were not part of the project in the initial plans. This project would have failed dismally had those links not been built.

The Dandenong southern bypass is extremely important to the City of Greater Dandenong. It is going to be 5 kilometres long and will cost an additional

\$85 million. It will have two lanes in each direction and will run from Perry Road to the South Gippsland Highway. The previous government speaker mentioned that it will pass over the Cranbourne rail line and will be fully interchanged with the Mitcham–Frankston project. It will also bypass 11 sets of traffic lights on the Princes Highway, and if members have ever driven from the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips' office through to the South Gippsland interchange with Princes Highway they will have encountered those 11 traffic lights: it takes an inordinate amount of time. The greatest benefit of this will be a saving in transport times and all of the on-costs that stop-start motoring makes to heavy vehicles and commercial vehicles. It is going to be an essential part of this project, and I welcome the inclusion of the Dandenong southern bypass.

In my brief research on this bill I have discovered that links at Burwood Highway and the Mountain Highway which were previously going to be underground have now been abandoned, and that is a sad and sorry thing to occur because the flow of traffic in those suburbs is going to be severely disrupted by that. I would like the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority to have another look at the decision.

In talking about the good side of the project one only has to look at the economic development that has occurred along the Tullamarine Freeway, CityLink and the western freeway extension. Previous wastelands along those roadsides have been converted into thriving industrial and commercial hubs. I am optimistic enough to believe that the same sort of development will occur in connection with this project and that that is where we will see major economic benefits to the state. It is forecast that many jobs will be created. Many figures have been bandied around, ranging from 3000 to 12 000 jobs — I am not sure what the figure is — but the opposition would certainly support every thousand jobs that are created by any major project.

A well-known mayor in the south-east area, Cr Neil Lucas, a former honourable member of this place, issued a press release on 22 March this year in which he alluded to the wide-ranging benefits to residents and businesses in his city. Neil Lucas said he was excited about the prospects offered by the project. He said:

With around 65 families moving into the City of Casey each week, we welcome the host of transport and employment benefits the Mitcham–Frankston tollway will provide to Casey residents.

He claims that the project is likely to generate 6500 jobs through construction, with a further 12 000 in downstream industries, as well as provide greater

access to Casey residents for existing jobs in the freeway corridor. Mr Lucas is a great fighter. He says that the council will continue to advocate ensuring that Casey residents gain the maximum possible benefit from the project, including funding to upgrade direct public transport links from Casey to and along the new tollway. That former Liberal member of this chamber, who is now the mayor of the City of Casey, is very supportive of the project.

I come back to the point of the government's lying to the community. Prior to the state election of 2002 the government went to the people saying that this would be a freeway — a real freeway with no tolls. In fact houses were letterboxed with a letter from the local Labor candidates signed by Premier Bracks. If you lived in the Scoresby electorate your letter said 'Vote Labor. Vote Pollyanne Williams for Scoresby'. It went on to say that the Scoresby freeway could be scrapped if the Liberals won the election. We know that is far from true, because we support the project. The letter continues:

There are no delays in completing the Scoresby.

The Bracks Labor government has negotiated and signed the fifty-fifty funding agreement with the commonwealth government.

The state government acknowledged there was a signed agreement — a signed memorandum of understanding. The federal government would contribute 50 per cent of this project no matter what the cost of the project on the proviso that there would be no tolls. That is the key point of the memorandum of understanding. The Bracks government tore up that memorandum of understanding.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDSON — I thank Mr Atkinson for the interjection. It was included at the behest of the Minister for Transport in the other place, Peter Batchelor. The letter on behalf of Pollyanne Williams continues:

A re-elected Bracks government has committed to calling for expressions of interest from construction contractors by the end of the year.

Key tasks leading up to the tender process have been made.

Under the signed state-commonwealth agreement, the freeway will be completed by 2008.

This is the important bit:

There will be no tolls on the freeway under a Bracks Labor government.

The rest is history. We know of the Bracksflip, and as I said earlier, the community will not forget that. In fact there has already been a referendum on the freeway. It came in the form of the last federal election, in which Chris Pearce, the member for Aston, was re-elected after campaigning almost solely on the basis that there would be tolls and that the Premier of Victoria lied to the electorate. He received a swing of more than 7 per cent, and the swings in the other federal seats along the freeway were substantial. In fact the *Age* editorial at the time basically said that the referendum on the Scoresby freeway at the federal election delivered seats to the Liberal coalition. It alluded to the fact that there ought to be some very worried members on the government benches because their seats could clearly be lost in the next state election, which is due by November next year.

I also put on the record that in October last year the opposition revealed that the Labor government had broken freedom of information (FOI) laws by not declaring documents which related to tolls on the Scoresby that had existed before April Fools' Day 2003. The Liberal Party revealed that the FOI request to the Department of Premier and Cabinet failed to identify the leaked cabinet document. The FOI request submitted in April last year requested all memoranda, briefing notes, et cetera for the Mitcham–Frankston freeway or Eastern Freeway since 1 January 2002. In response the Premier's department claimed there were 24 documents that fitted the description but that all of these documents were created after April Fools' Day 2003. Either the FOI response was deliberately falsified by the government or the Department of Premier and Cabinet is grossly incompetent.

I briefly touch on some market surveys by the Royal Automobile Club Victoria and the Maroondah City Council. The research commissioned by the RACV shows that there is broad-based support for the road to be built but without tolls. The Maroondah City Council survey showed that 87 per cent of people aged between 20 and 59 years and 83 per cent of those who were 80-plus believed it should be funded without tolls.

The ACTING PRESIDENT
(**Hon. R. H. Bowden**) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — In rising to speak on this bill I wish to say, as others before me have said, that this is an icon issue for the Labor Party. It exposes Labor members at two levels. It exposes them as out and out liars who are prepared to say anything to buy a vote and who deliberately go out and lie to the community. We have seen that in many areas

which people do not understand or about which they do not know, but this is an icon issue because it was so clear that Labor lied and people will remember that. This will go down as the freeway lie as happened with Goss in Queensland — and it will go down as Labor's Waterloo. We on this side of the house think this is lovely. I cannot wait to be in government, and I know after the next election we will be in government. This is an icon issue for Labor members at that level — that is, the extent to which they lie and have been exposed as liars.

It is also an icon issue because it exposes the extent to which Labor members, particularly the Minister for Transport, Mr Batchelor, in the other place, are lost in the past. It is clear that the Labor Party does not like roads or freeways, because if you look at what it did with the former South-Eastern Arterial you see there were traffic lights all along it and that it would not work at all.

Then there is this whole history of how clearly Labor did not want to build the Scoresby freeway. It got prices; it said it was too much; it withdrew them; it combined them again with the Frankston link; it put it out again, then said it would be for nothing and at the end of the day because it does not like cars —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — It's true! It is stuck in an old mindset of public transport. The Minister for Transport in the other place is one of these old-time socialists who believe in railways and railway unions. He absolutely loves them. One of the reasons I am sure why this issue is another icon is that it did not want — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — You did not want this and when you were forced to do it you punished the people; you tried to make sure it is not used by putting the tolls on. It is an icon issue, and you will regret this. You may be making smart comments over there, but after the next election the smiles will be wiped off your faces. That lie you made was being reinforced at many levels.

I might mention to the house a very interesting presentation I attended recently by Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority. The contractors were talking to a group of engineers — one of which I am proud to be — about the construction of this project and how they got this tender out at a certain time. They went to great lengths to say how in the early stages they were spending a lot of time thinking how they could, to use their word, 'incentivate' the private sector to

encourage it to get involved in this project. They spent months figuring out how they could incentivate the private sector.

Then they went on to say as soon as the government had announced that it would be tolling the project that they were able to put together the final tender document in about two weeks. I think everybody at that presentation said, 'We knew how they intended to incentivate the private sector because it did not take them long to get the documents out once they had done it'. As I say, this big lie will absolutely be the icon issue for this government.

I have been listening to the fairly diminutive debate from the other side. As has been said by other speakers, clearly you rabble opposite are not interested in talking about this because you have all gone. Nobody has made any presentation, and all Mr Theophanous can do is make his normal inane interjections. But those who were there talked about how this was necessary because the government was running out of money and had to put tolls on.

What a joke! Let us have a look at the last five annual reports put out by this government that record its financial progress from 1999–2000 to 2003–04. Almost every year it has overrun the expenditure budget. In their first year they overran it by \$1.5 billion, in the second year by half a billion dollars, in the next by \$2.13 billion, in the next by \$1.6 billion, and in the last report by \$1 billion. That is a total of \$6.86 billion by which you have overspent your revenue budget. On top of that — —

Mr Pullen interjected.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — You should listen to this because you will be held accountable — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Strong should address the Chair.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Tell him to stop interjecting!

As well, in the five-year summary, revenue was in excess of what was budgeted for at \$8.8 billion. If the government had stuck to its expenditure budget it would have been \$8.8 billion ahead. That is enough to build Scoresby three times and still have a bit over for some decent land tax reduction. That is a disgrace! It is an absolute joke for the government to say it could not afford it and is another icon issue of how it lies, cheats and seeks to distort figures so as to justify its stand that it simply does not want to help people drive cars. It is

clear that the government could have easily afforded this.

In the little time remaining to me I will turn to what this will cost Victoria; the cost will be significant. I remind honourable members that the contract is for \$2.5 billion. The ConnectEast initial public offering clearly puts out all the figures for this project. It reveals they have a \$2.5 billion fixed-price contract for its construction. I will take the house through these figures quietly and in a broad sense.

Let us remember that the commonwealth government was prepared to put in a very significant amount of money — something like \$600 million. For easy arithmetic I will start with a contract price of \$2.5 billion. Let us take off \$500 million for the feds, which leaves \$2 billion. If this were a freeway rather than a tollway there would be very significant savings. There would be no need for all the tollway infrastructure which would reduce the actual money that the government would have had to put in to something like \$1.75 billion to \$1.85 billion. Remember that figure \$1.75 billion to \$1.85 billion because if the government had kept to its budgets over the last five years it would have over \$8.85 billion extra at hand. If we are saying that is \$1.85 billion — —

Mr Smith — How much do you take for Medicare?

Hon. C. A. STRONG — The member should listen to these figures. They are very interesting figures because I do not think Mr Smith would have the wit to work them out.

Mr Smith — I am not going to listen to Mr Strong, who is boring. I am going to go to sleep!

Hon. C. A. STRONG — I wish Mr Smith would. That would be the member's normal and appropriate position. He might look like he is awake, but — —

Mr Smith — Ho-hum!

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Exactly. The mind is closed down anyway. So if you were to go out and borrow that amount of money, given that you could have quite easily funded it out of surpluses, in the worst case scenario it would cost something like \$120 million a year. Do members know what ConnectEast will be ripping out of the Victorian community, according to the figures in its initial public offering when the traffic has built up to its steady state? It will be taking out over \$350 million a year. That is what it will be taking out of the Scoresby freeway, out of Victoria. It will be taking \$350 million in what is a surrogate tax whereas if the government had borrowed the money in the worst case

scenario it could be costing Victoria about \$120 million a year. If the government had done it properly Victoria would have been over \$200 million better off. Is Mr Smith one of those people in the Scoresby corridor — —

Mr Smith interjected.

Hon. C. A. STRONG — Close down your mind again, Mr Smith, just leave it in neutral. It is better that way! The government knows it is paying something like \$300 million a year more than it has to. It is an absolute disgrace. The last con, the last lie I will turn to is in this bill. What is one of the main things this bill does? It sets up the arrangements for users who have not got an appropriate e-tag, or whatever ConnectEast will put on people's windscreen; how will people pay for the use of the tollway? We are talking about a management fee for sending an account out to them of \$4 plus another amount of probably about \$1 for the registration. The fees for sending out this account are going to be in the order of \$5. Let me tell you what the government has said about this. What has the mob over there said? What misleading statements has it made? The Minister for Transport in the other place, Mr Batchelor, on 13 May 2004 put out a press release saying:

... tolling arrangements would not penalise ... infrequent drivers.

Not penalise infrequent drivers!

... without making appropriate arrangements with the operator will receive an invoice in the mail ...

Listen to this part:

... the cost of the toll ...

will include:

... a small administrative fee ...

It will include the toll and a small administrative fee. What does the Premier in the other place say that the prices will be? The Premier in his press release of 14 October 2004 says the most frequently used section, which is the tunnel trip to the city, will cost \$2.06 and the cap will be \$4.43. There will be a small administrative charge on top of that. The small administrative charge is going to be about \$5, so for a \$2 charge you are going to get a small administrative charge on top of that of about \$5, which is about 250 per cent more. That will be the 'small administrative charge' promised by — another broken promise — Mr Batchelor. If you use the whole cap figure of \$4.43, that same administrative charge will be equal to that. A small administrative charge? Just

another lie, just another con, just another spin by this mob opposite. Just another thing that people will remember. It is another thing that people will punish the government for. Believe me, members opposite might laugh and jest now, but they will be punished. And will that not be fair and just and correct!

Mr SMITH (Chelsea) — After that diatribe, I want to say that Mr Atkinson commenced his contribution by saying that this government does not want under any circumstances to talk about this bill, that it is embarrassed to talk about anything to do with this new roadway. Quite the contrary. We are more than happy with the fact that this project is being built and is going to provide the freeing up of that whole area out there and provide a magnificent service to business and residents alike. The fact that these people over there did nothing for so long, knowing that this road was vital to the future economic growth of the country, is an indictment of them.

The fact is we are doing it. Opposition members do not like it, I understand that, but we are actually doing it. They are grasping at straws trying to pull us down and embarrass us in some way about the fact that we, under very difficult conditions, had to change our policy on tolling. I have to reiterate that the reason we changed from building a freeway to a tollway is due to their incompetence in the privatisation of national rail. Members opposite completely want to forget about that; they want to throw economic credibility at us. It is just a joke. They stuffed up the privatisation, Victorians have to pay the price, and we restricted that payment to that particular area on that tollway. Members opposite know, as we know, that in the fullness of time people will just love the fact that it is there, as occurred with CityLink, which has become more popular than anyone could have imagined. We accept that, and the same thing will happen out in the south-east. In the earlier words of Mr Atkinson, ‘Get over it’, because we have.

This bill facilitates what we have been doing in building the largest road project in the country — in fact, I would suggest in its history. It provides for changed arrangements that will improve the flexibility, cost structures and so on for the project. I might add that if the federal government was serious about divvying up the petrol levy and taxes, and so on and allocating Victoria its fair share — that is, the \$540 million it is withholding from Victorian motorists — we would be able to guarantee a lower toll. But no, it just wants to continue to play games.

Now you would expect that if it was withholding that money on the Mitcham–Frankston tollway it would allocate it elsewhere in Victoria — for example, the

Deer Park bypass or the Calder Freeway. But what is it doing? It is withholding it totally. There is a bit of hypocrisy involved here, and Dopey Doyle in the other place agrees with them. He has no desire whatsoever to pressure the federal government into allocating that money to the Deer Park or Calder Freeway projects.

This is just another example about Doyle — he does not get it. He is a guy who purports to be a leader but approves and supports first home owner grants to millionaires and opposes pay rises to working people, including nurses. He does not get it. This guy is unelectable — and he is their leader! I do not know what that says about that lot, but I can tell members that we are feeling pretty good about it on this side.

As I said, this bill facilitates changes to the current act and allows for a much more flexible arrangement with charging and fines. There will be a lot more time to make arrangements and to pay — 14 days, in fact — and there can be a 14-day extension on top of that. That is in stark contrast to what was negotiated for CityLink, where it was \$100 if you did not pay by midnight — and it is still \$100, although we have improved those arrangements since we have been in government.

The Dandenong bypass is now also incorporated into and has become part of the project, and that is good news. There is more good news: travel on it will be free. That is a huge boon for the people in Dandenong and surrounding areas. That is the direct result of the cooperative approach by the Dandenong council and this government. They worked hand in glove to get the best possible arrangements, and we were happy to facilitate the extras — in stark contrast to the Frankston City Council. I, along with other members of Parliament representing that area — including Mr Viney; the Honourable Jeff Hilton; Alistair Harkness, the member for Frankston in the other place; and Rosie Buchanan, the member for Hastings in the other place — have collectively met with the Frankston council about the bypass that we believe is fundamental and necessary for Frankston. We got the Minister for Transport in the other place to attend one of the meetings, when we talked about feasibility, needs and so on.

The end result was that the Frankston City Council was going to go off and talk with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council about presenting us with a proposal about the scope of and need for the bypass. What has happened? Nothing that I know of; we have not heard anything. No doubt it is the case that the Liberal Party members on the Frankston City Council — for instance, Rochelle McArthur, the current mayor who participated in the political stunt to attack the

government about no tolls being imposed for Frankston people — did enormous damage to the goodwill that was necessary to be had between the council and government to facilitate the bypass.

We will continue to work hard to get the bypass for the citizens of Frankston, but I would suggest that people like Rochelle McArthur and her cohorts take a very hard look at what they are doing in Frankston, because they are not benefiting the ratepayers or any other citizens of Frankston.

During the course of the debate we have been attacked by speaker after speaker from the other side about financial credibility and the like. I think everyone accepts the project will be worth about \$7.5 billion — but it is not because it will be a \$2.4 billion project. When we get to the issue of buyout, Dopey Doyle is suggesting, 'We'll find \$7 billion; that is not a problem'. He does not know how he will do it yet, although he might know but is just keeping it a secret — perhaps he is keeping it tucked away somewhere. I would bet a lot of members opposite are desperate to find out how he will actually do it.

What credibility does that lot think they have now? No-one, not only in this state but in this country, believes it is a feasible or realistic thing for them to do. They must be gagging every time they read something about, 'I'll buy it back'. Maybe they will; maybe they will forego or cut back on all the expenditure necessary for police, hospitals, schools and so on. They are pretty good at that. In fact, they have form when it comes to cutting back public service sectors and the service industries. I will not sit here and listen to accusations or criticisms from that lot opposite about financial credibility. Until they get rid of Doyle, or he changes that tactic or argument about buying back, then they have none themselves.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I have been listening to the honourable member make a contribution this afternoon referring in absolutely unparliamentary terms to the Leader of the Opposition in the other place. I would ask you to direct him, as you have done with other members in the house, to only refer to members of Parliament in this place or another by their correct titles. The honourable member is asserting unparliamentary expressions about the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SMITH — What was it?

Hon. Philip Davis — I do not intend to repeat the words used by the member, but I ask the President to

caution that he only refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his proper title.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I uphold the point of order. The honourable member and all members of this chamber have been reminded by me that when they refer to any member in this chamber or any member in the other place they will use the correct titles. I advise the member that I heard his comments; they were inappropriate, and I direct him to use the appropriate titles of members in this or the other place.

Mr SMITH — Thank you, President. I suppose referring to that mob over there is consistent with the very comments that their leader, the Honourable Robert Doyle, makes in the other place or out in the public arena, so that is okay. Nevertheless, I did not realise they were so sensitive about it, but I accept that it is appropriate to refer to people by their proper titles in here, and I will do so into the future — in fact, for the rest of my contribution.

In his contribution the Honourable Andrew Brideson referred to a survey conducted by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria that included the views of 80-plus year olds, which were that they should not have to pay a toll. What a surprise! Ask anyone, 'Do you want to pay for this?', or, 'Do you want it for nothing?', and have a guess what the answers will be! If that is the best they can do, they ought to just give up.

Hon. Andrea Coote interjected.

Mr SMITH — We love them. In fact, I have some relatives who are quite senior: my mum, my dad, my uncles — they are all senior, and I love them all.

That is a puerile argument to bring in here. Eighty-year-olds do not want to pay! The reality is that this is a good piece of legislation that will continue to facilitate the development of EastLink.

Before I conclude I want to mention one issue that almost guarantees it will be a highly successful project. That issue is the industrial agreement which is facilitated by the current federal secretary of the Australian Workers Union, Mr Bill Shorten. It is a visionary and far reaching agreement. It is setting the highest site allowance on major projects in the country's history. It has a demarcation agreement included that is guaranteed to ensure minimal industrial disruption.

Hon. Bill Forwood — They will work when it rains!

Mr SMITH — Scotch mist! Mr Forwood interjected and said, ‘They will work when it rains’. Is he suggesting they should not? My view and that of the union is that commonsense will prevail.

Hon. Bill Forwood — Obviously they are not CFMEU.

Mr SMITH — Mr Forwood interjected that it is obviously not the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. My friend should stick to what he knows. The fact is that the CFMEU has signed off on this agreement. The reason it signed off on it was that Bill Shorten signed did. He led and got it delivered. Everyone sat back and said, ‘Wow! It could not be done, but it has been done’.

Hon. Andrea Coote — Tell us what you think about Bill Shorten!

Mr SMITH — I like Bill Shorten. The fact is that the agreement is there between the relevant construction unions. It includes what is necessary to ensure the ongoing construction of flexible arrangements for rostered days off. There are no fixed rostered days off, it is half and half; there is the removal of the demarcation problem; and there are excellent pay and conditions.

Hon. Andrea Coote — What do you think about his father-in-law?

Mr SMITH — I do not know his father-in-law; I have never met him. I like his wife. She is a good Labor Party member.

The reality is that this industrial agreement guarantees that this project has every chance of being delivered on time and on budget. For that we should be grateful. Having said that, in my view the opposition side has no option but to support this bill. I commend it to the house.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I rise to make a contribution to the Mitcham-Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill. It is a bill about lies and taxes. It is a bill that puts into operation the Bracks government’s lies about tolls. It is a bill that puts in place the effective taxes to be levied by the Bracks government. We know that the Bracks government is a high taxing and greedy government. It is a government that likes to rip the resources, the money and the cash out of working people’s pockets. It is a government is determined to land hits and slugs on the people of the eastern suburbs.

We know that Labor and the Bracks government have never been at peace with the people of the eastern

suburbs. We know they have had always had a vindictive streak and have always wanted to punish the people in the east of Melbourne. Many of us in this chamber will remember that the Labor members in this chamber after the change of government in 1999 — including Mr Smith, who has just completed his contribution, and the Honourable Justin Madden — who voted against funding the tollway. It was clear even shortly after the government won the election that it had a plan to put its tolls on the freeway between Mitcham and Frankston, which was known — and it is still the most correct title — as the Scoresby freeway. The Labor Party had opportunities to come clean with the community but it chose not to do that. Labor made it clear from an early point that there was an equivocation about its support for that project. The earliest indication was that vote in this chamber.

Hon. J. M. Madden interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister has been here for 2 minutes and has not stopped chattering! I ask him to reduce his chatter.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — I appreciate your intervention, President. We did have a constant barrage from the other side of the chamber. The minister is obviously finding it a bit difficult late in the day to keep his attention on his ministerial duties.

Ministers like Minister Madden have not understood the impact of these tolls on the people of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Liberal Party has always sought to represent the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and the whole of the state, unlike other parties in this place which have driven their support to narrower, sectional groups within the Victorian community.

I note the comments that have been made about the Western Ring Road and its economic impact. Economic analyses were performed in the late 1990s. I pay tribute to the Mr Peter Nugent, who led the campaign in the eastern suburbs over a number of years to put the freeway on the map. Those early economic analyses going back to the mid and late 1990s made it clear that the Scoresby freeway was the no. 1 infrastructure project in this nation that needed to be completed.

For that reason Liberal members of Parliament, communities and councils began to advocate strongly for a road that had proper federal involvement in the funding, but also had the state government taking the lead. At the time the Kennett government lost government things were very advanced in the process of putting that freeway on the map and building that

very important road. Unfortunately Labor came to power with no commitment to the east and no commitment to funding that important project.

I was very disappointed on the day in the early weeks of the Labor government in 1999 when I saw the members of the Labor Party, at that point a minority in this chamber, vote against a motion to fund that freeway and to allocate money in the then forthcoming budget to facilitate it. It was clear to me and to others at that time that there was going to be a real problem in building this road. I was very concerned because I understood from the analyses I had seen of the Scoresby freeway that its economic impact was great, that its economic significance was, as I said earlier, significant and that it would be the greatest project in the country in terms of value for the community.

I was very concerned on the day of that vote to see Labor members who were prepared to vote down that project. It seemed to me that, without exception, those members did not understand the significance of the project — members like the Honourable Bob Smith. I remember his contribution on that day. Clearly he did not understand the significance of this project for people in his electorate. Now we have other representatives from the same area in the form of Mr Viney. He also did not understand the significance of that project for his community, and now people like the Honourable Helen Buckingham, a member for Koonung Province, have not been prepared to stand up and defend the freeway as being a freeway rather than a tollway. I was very concerned at that early point, and what I have seen with the election of further Labor members to this chamber in 2002 confirms my suspicion that Labor never had a true commitment to building a freeway in that area.

I think it was always the Treasurer's idea, and as time moves on it is being seen more and more that he is the one who has driven this project, and driven his perceived model of a toll road rather than a freeway. Why has he done this? I think he has some personal need to in some way prove himself to be more economically rational, sharper and — I do not know what the word is — vindictive in some way than others. I am not sure why he feels that need.

Hon. A. P. Olexander — Punishment politics.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — It may be punishment politics. Maybe he feels that Labor Party governments have such a poor record that he needs to appease financial markets in some way. I am not sure, but clearly he feels some overriding need to inflict pain on the community of the eastern suburbs for some

gratification he seeks out of that process. Obviously that is a difficult thing for most people in the community to understand, but it does appear to be the driving force in this government.

I make the point that in the lead-up to the last state election the Bracks government gave a commitment not to introduce tolls. All of us remember the lead-up to the federal by-election in the seat of Aston, and we remember the Liberal how-to-vote card that had the letter from the Premier to Neil Lucas, if I am not mistaken — but certainly a government letter to Neil Lucas, then a member for Eumemmerring Province — and that letter gave an unequivocal guarantee there would be no tolls.

You cannot get a clearer demonstration of the government's repudiation of its promises than the backflip that has occurred with tolls on the freeway.

Hon. A. P. Olexander interjected.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS — As I said, Mr Olexander, government members knew in 1999, shortly after they were elected, that they were never going to build this freeway. It was going to be a toll road even back then, otherwise they would not have voted as they did in this chamber.

I also commend the preparatory work done by a former member, the Honourable Geoff Craige, the Minister for Roads and Ports in the previous government. He did a lot of the background work on this freeway, and he would have built it. He talked about tunnels and about a whole series of major road infrastructure projects in this state, but unfortunately the sad fact is that people in the eastern suburbs will be left with a legacy that will penalise them individually and as a family.

The Honourable Andrew Brideson and I were looking at some of the figures earlier. It looks like somebody travelling the full length of the freeway in the initial period would be up for about \$9.68 daily and about \$47.40 a week to do the trip up and back each day between home and work. I figure that is about \$2275 a year. For a family, if several people — say, a husband and wife — are travelling on that freeway, then you might be talking \$4500, or perhaps a little more, in toll costs. That is a significant impost on a family budget.

There are many people in my electorate of East Yarra Province and in the council areas of Whitehorse, Boroondara and Monash who will be slugged heavily. For example, I can point to individuals who will be hit with this fee. If you think of people who live in Kew or Box Hill who wish to go to places further down in the eastern suburbs, it will be the most sensible route for

them, and there will be a significant daily cost. I must say I am still very concerned about the traffic-calming and traffic-restricting devices this government will use on some of the collateral roads. I have every reason to believe the government's promises not to block those roads will be broken. I have every reason to believe the government will restrict flows so that moving along some of those north-south roads will be like swimming through honey or swimming through concrete.

It will be very difficult. It is not going to be easy for cars to move down those roads. The fact is the government wants to restrict flow down those roads and to force people back onto this tollway to pay back the people who have tendered. It is going to be very difficult for families to get down any other road, and thereby they will be forced to incur the full hit of the tolls.

I am concerned. Unfortunately people particularly in the northern end of my electorate who may seek to travel south in the eastern suburbs will be left with little alternative but to use this tollway, and it will make a huge impact on their family budgets. Most of those families cannot afford it. As I said earlier, this is a greedy government. I note that one section of this bill — that is, clause 9 — inserts a substitute for section 10 in the Mitcham-Frankston Project Act, which names ConnectEast Pty Ltd as the freeway corporation, and provides a process whereby the Governor in Council may declare another person to be the freeway corporation in its stead.

It is interesting that the government would choose to put such a clause into the act at this time. One can only wonder whether there is some turnover in ownership or some change that is planned by the Bracks government. We cannot read the minds of government members, but in the same way as that signal in this chamber — that is, a vote against funding works in the lead-up to a Scoresby freeway — was a tragic one, this sort of bill is a signal that the government is planning to see some revolving door of ownership with this freeway, and that is something government members should come clean on.

In conclusion, I state again that this is the worst political lie that I know of. This is a political lie that will resonate for long time. The Premier did lie. He knew he was lying, as did all of the senior people in the government. There may be some hapless backbenchers who failed to represent areas properly and who did not fully understand what was going on, but the senior members of the government did know and should be held responsible — and the electorate should mete out a political price to these liars.

I conclude on the point that those slugs on families will resonate for a long time. This is a bill, as I said, about — —

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

Hon. DAVID KOCH (Western) — I certainly look forward to making a contribution on the Mitcham-Frankston Project (Amendment) Bill. In doing so for openers I congratulate the Honourable Ron Bowden, who led the debate today for the Liberal's, and also my other opposition colleagues who have made very worthy contributions to the debate on this legislation which quite obviously is an issue of major concern outside the house. We certainly oppose the bill in its current format. The main purposes of the bill are:

- (a) to amend the Mitcham-Frankston Project Act 2004 —
 - (i) to include the construction of the Dandenong Southern By-Pass in the project; and
 - (ii) to improve the operation of the tolling provisions; and
 - (iii) to improve generally the operation of the Act; and
- (b) to amend the Road Management Act 2004 in relation to the functions of the Mitcham-Frankston Freeway Corporation; and
- (c) to amend the Southern and Eastern Integrated Transport Authority Act 2003 to include the construction of the Dandenong Southern By-Pass in the Project.

The project, which is better known as the Scoresby freeway project, is one of the biggest road infrastructure projects ever undertaken in Victoria. It is a massive undertaking stretching some 39 kilometres with 19 exits, 88 bridges and 8 pedestrian overpasses. This freeway, which is overdue by more than five years, should be seen as key to opening up transport linkages from north to south through the heavily populated Scoresby corridor.

A *Melway* map gives an indication to the community of the course the freeway will take over its 39 kilometres. It starts at the end of the Eastern Freeway in the north, travelling from Ringwood through Wantirna, Rowville, Dandenong, Dandenong South, Carrum Downs to its final destination at Frankston.

The federal government was a great supporter of this massive project and agreed to put 50 per cent of the cost of the Scoresby section on the table. This was only stage 1 of the proposed three-stage project and the funding was conditional on the freeway remaining toll free.

Having gone to the 2002 state election assuring voters in writing that no tolls would be involved, the Bracks government was forging ahead on what was one of the biggest frauds, biggest swindles this state is ever likely to witness. 'Come into my parlour', the spider said to the fly — and those were the very thoughts running wild in the minds of Bracks, Brumby, Batchelor, Lenders and others. It did not take long. Come April 2003 the genie escaped from the bottle, and the lie unfolded. This shameless government then alerted all Victorians of something it had always intended — that is, to remove the freeway status and create a tollway. Imagine the surprise of the newly elected Labor members in the Scoresby corridor, let alone all the voters who took this government's word as gospel. Those elected members put their personal reputations on the line when they repeatedly assured voters in the corridor that the road would be toll free. I well remember, like many others, the look of disbelief as the blood ran from the face of these newly elected politicians when they realised they had all been duped and duded by their own disloyal and faithless colleagues. But worse was to come. All Victorians, including rural Victorians, were now of the clear belief that they had also been duped by the government, and whenever the Scoresby freeway is mentioned they usually come back with the same response referring to broken promises.

In trying to remove the memory of the Mitcham–Frankston freeway from people's memories the Premier recently tried to rename the tollway EastLink. He will never get away with it. As the Premier stood upon the excavator to turn the first sod his political colleagues in this now famous corridor cringed knowing full well that the Premier was digging their graves for the forthcoming 2006 election. As my colleague Ms Lovell from North East Province indicates, sadly some would look at this as a roadkill operation. I can assure members it was not a warm feeling; I have been assured by some of those members that that was the case.

Tolls and the way they are charged are giving us all plenty of concern. It has been stated that the average toll for using this tollway across all users will be approximately \$2.06. Where it will come undone is that when original invoices for non-regular users are not settled within 14 days they will incur another administration fee of \$4 plus a VicRoads surcharge of \$1. If another 14 days happens to elapse prior to settlement, a further infringement notice will be served to recover a total amount of \$12.06 for that single usage. So much for this government having reasonable toll fees on what users always anticipated would be a freeway.

I draw the attention of the house to two media releases. The first is a press release from the member for Polwarth in the other place dated Tuesday, 22 March, entitled 'Tollway fees to repeatedly hit occasional users'. It states:

If Steve Bracks and Labor are re-elected in November 2006 and the Mitcham–Frankston tollway does not become a freeway, Victorians will repeatedly face the risk of a raft of new fees in addition to the tolls.

Transport minister Peter Batchelor has introduced a bill to state Parliament that will result in drivers on the tollway who have not purchased an e-tag or pass being hit with a \$4 'administration fee' when they are sent an initial invoice.

There will also be a VicRoads 'look up' fee — which should be called the 'watch out' fee. The Bracks government is unable to say how much this will be, but it is meant to reimburse VicRoads for the cost of looking up its database of licence-holders.

Occasional users of the tollway, such as a rural Victorians and tradespeople from the other side of Melbourne, are among the groups most likely to be repeatedly slugged with Labor's fees on top of the tolls that Labor intends ConnectEast will charge all Victorian users of the tollway.

The initial invoice will not be run off until the 72 hours have expired after the driver has used the tollway. It will give the driver 14 days to pay. If no payment is received, a further invoice will then be issued, with another \$4 'administration fee' and VicRoads 'watch out' fee.

The Bracks government is unable to say how often VicRoads' 'watch out' fee will be levied, except that it 'may be charged on a weekly basis'. This will result in drivers who lack e-tags or passes being hit more than once if they drive more than once on the tollway with a gap of a few days.

Can Steve Bracks and Peter Batchelor guarantee the integrity of the VicRoads database listing motorists' names and addresses, given the mistakes that have occurred in the past?

How many more hidden fees do Steve Bracks and Peter Batchelor have up their sleeves for drivers on the Mitcham–Frankston tollway?

That is a major concern to all prospective users of this road, especially those people who are not registered and do not carry an e-tag in their vehicle, but wish to use the tollway on an intermittent basis. I would also like to bring to the attention of the house a media release issued by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Robert Doyle, on 23 March 2005. It is headed 'Labor's tollway of shame' and states:

Steve Bracks lied to Victorians about tolling the Scoresby and no number of photo opportunities, sod turnings or even the renaming of the project will change that.

Steve Bracks' announcement today —

that was 23 March —

that he will change the name of the tollway so it does not mention Scoresby, Mitcham or Frankston is a cynical attempt to distance himself from his lie. Steve Bracks thinks that if he changes the name, he can change the game.

He is wrong — Victorians will not forget his lie. Steve Bracks can't be trusted regardless of the tollway's official title.

Victorians were promised that this vital road would be toll free. They voted in the last election believing Scoresby would be toll free and that is what Victorians are entitled to.

Before the last state election, Steve Bracks sent letters to the 1 million Victorians living along the Scoresby corridor promising a toll-free Scoresby, proclaiming ... 'Labor will build the Scoresby freeway on time and on budget. These are not just election-time promises. They are my firm commitments to you and your family, and they will be honoured.'

Steve Bracks also emphatically denied he considered tolls on the Scoresby before April 2003. The day after his backflip was made he said, 'Two weeks ago, talking to you, I had not at that stage, at all, ever considered the fact that we might put on a toll.' ...

But leaked cabinet documents showed Labor was considering tolls nine months before the 2002 election.

The leaked expenditure review committee ... documents of 20 and 26 February 2002 state that Labor was considering four different options of funding the Scoresby freeway — three of which included tolls.

How can Victorians believe anything Steve Bracks says after this betrayal?

A Liberal government will give Victorians what Labor promised: a Scoresby freeway without tolls.

Victoria can afford this vital piece of infrastructure at a time when we are sitting on an operating budget surplus of \$1.23 billion and the federal government still has \$565 million for a toll-free Scoresby on the table.

I bring this to the attention of the house. We are certainly very concerned about the way in which the tolls are proposed to be charged, especially the administration costs that may flow on for non-regular users who have not registered or do not have access to an e-tag.

I and many of my colleagues, including the Honourables Bill Forwood and Graeme Stoney, last week made a trip to Narracan to attend the Farm World field days. As everyone is aware, Farm World is probably the second-biggest rural event staged in Australia annually. It is a four-day event and we, along with many other people in that area and from across Victoria, have a stand to showcase our individual opportunities. There were two significant happenings at Farm World this year. One was introduced by Mr Forwood earlier in the week — that is, when people approached our stand with WorkCover concerns and were seeking some direction to locate its stand at the

field days, they found that WorkCover was well parked under the federal tent. We were concerned with this position as it did not quite fit the position of the stands across the rest of the site. Many state government agencies had their own stands, but on this occasion WorkCover was sneaking around under the cover of a federal tent.

The other issue that came to our attention was that for anything related to Scoresby we redirected people to the local member, the member for Narracan in the other place, Mr Maxfield. He had a caravan which was unattended all day — —

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

**Debate adjourned on motion of
Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern).**

Debate adjourned until next day.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

SENTENCING (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

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

PARLIAMENTARY ADMINISTRATION BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

**Read first time for Mr LENDERS (Minister for
Finance) on motion of Hon. J. M. Madden.**

JUSTICE 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).**

LAND (REVOCAION OF RESERVATIONS) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 3 May.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Rail: Frankston–Stony Point line

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) — I seek the assistance of the Minister for Transport in the other place in relation to some representations I have received over a considerable period to do with the rail service between Frankston and Stony Point. I would like to open my contribution by saying that this service has been in place for a long time. It is very valuable; it is valued, and it is strongly supported by the community. I support the train service, and in no way, shape or form is there a suggestion that the train service is not needed. I make it clear that it is needed; it is appreciated and it is wanted.

Having said that, there are some aspects of this rail service that could do with a serious professional review by the transport people in the Department of Infrastructure and the minister's office. The staff who operate the train and give very good service to the commuters and users through the station network are excellent. They are very good people; they support the community and there are no complaints about the contribution that individuals make.

The difficulties and complaints are more along the lines of the age of the equipment itself and the standard and quality of the locomotive and carriages. It is estimated

that the diesel locomotive is 50 years old, and the railway carriages are also approximately 50 years old, and that is a very unsatisfactory circumstance. Not only is it uncomfortable, there are questions about the suitability of that equipment for continuous use and operation 7 days a week.

The major problem appears to be the timetable. There are problems because of the single line between Stony Point and Frankston, but passing loops could be put in, as were installed for the Cranbourne service. It is impossible for commuters to use this service efficiently and fairly for early morning assignments and work situations in the city, and it is very difficult to get to and return from town by using that service. It is a worthy service which needs a very detailed review. I ask the minister to urgently address the age of the equipment and the timetabling in order to improve this valuable service.

Koonung Province: training programs

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — The issue I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs in the other place, the Honourable Jacinta Allan. It concerns the availability of training programs for people who find it difficult to gain paid employment, training and qualifications. The specific issue I wish to raise with the minister is about information regarding the availability of formal and on-the-job training in my electorate of Koonung Province.

In Koonung Province there is a real need to train people to develop a wide range of skills in the areas of horticulture, landscaping, building and construction, information technology, business administration, aged care, hospitality, child care, transport and tourism. There are disadvantaged job seekers in Koonung Province, young people, the long-term unemployed and migrants. Recently a constituent dropped into my office who falls into this category — a person with enormously high qualifications who had come from overseas and was finding it particularly difficult to gain employment in Australia. That person would benefit from accessing a program of formal and on-the-job training.

I would like to know from the minister what programs she intends to put in place to meet this need in my electorate of Koonung Province.

Kyabram-Rochester Road: pedestrian refuge

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Transport in the

other place regarding a much-needed safety upgrade to the Kyabram–Rochester Road just east of the High Street intersection.

The Kyabram–Rochester Road is a busy main road that is the only road in Rochester that crosses the Campaspe River, and therefore carries all traffic east from the Rochester business district to the eastern section of Rochester, and also to other towns including Kyabram and Shepparton. The Kyabram–Rochester Road is a one-lane, each-way country road but it has an extremely wide gravel shoulder on both sides. On the southern side of the road there is a footpath. On its northern side, just east of the High Street intersection, is a school bus stop. Because the bus stop is on the northern side of the road, most students need to cross the road to get to the footpath on the southern side. Also on the northern side of the road is a petrol station and shop that attracts quite a few pedestrians who cross the road from the south.

The problem is that just west of the High Street intersection there is a sharp bend in the road that prevents pedestrians who are crossing near the shop or where the school bus stops from being able to see traffic coming towards them from Rochester. This is a very busy road at all times, but especially during the tomato harvesting season when up to 100 trucks transporting tomatoes utilise this road daily. Those trucks are in addition to the many milk tankers heading to the Murray Goulburn factory in Rochester that use the road all year round.

Parents in the area have approached me to raise their concerns about students crossing this road, and have suggested that some sort of safety treatment needs to be looked at to assist pedestrians to cross this road more safely. I have spoken with Mal Kersting, the northern regional manager for VicRoads, and he is also aware of the parents' concerns. He has agreed to meet with parents and inspect the area in the near future.

I ask the minister to protect students and other pedestrians who need to cross this particularly busy and dangerous section of the Kyabram–Rochester Road by installing a pedestrian refuge that would assist them to cross the road in safety.

Rail: Marshall station

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Transport in the other place concerning the Bracks government's second-term \$5 million election commitment to build a new railway station in my electorate at South Barwon. Last year the site for the new station was finalised; it is located in

Marshalltown Road, Marshall, and will be appropriately named Marshall station.

Construction of the new Marshall station has recently been completed. It comprises a 160-metre platform and station building, toilets, full disabled access, off-street bus interchange, parking for 100 cars and importantly, high-quality safety and security lighting. Marshall station will substantially add to the convenience of rail passengers in the southern suburbs of Geelong and will provide a real alternative for us to the South Geelong station. A couple of weeks ago I went out to the new Marshall station and had a look at the facility. I have to say that it is very impressive. On behalf of my constituents I now seek advice from the Minister for Transport as to when the train services will commence.

Brandon Park secondary college: site

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — I have a request to make of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place concerning the proposed visit of the community cabinet to the City of Monash on Monday, 9 May. I noticed an advertisement in one of my local papers advising my constituents that if they telephoned a particular number at Information Victoria they would be sent a participation kit. In that kit would be a submission form that was to be completed and returned by 4 April — which has obviously passed. The form says that once all submissions have been received they would call to let people know the outcome of their submissions. In other words, they are all vetted; so you can make a submission but that might be the end of it, you may not be able to have a meeting with the appropriate minister or whatever.

I have received advice from a couple of very active groups in my province — the Monash Ratepayers Association and the Brandon Park Residents Action Group. The Brandon Park group represents more than 1000 residents in the Brandon Park area. They definitely want a meeting with the education minister, as do the Monash Ratepayers Association. They want to discuss with the minister the future use of the Brandon Park secondary college site, which I have raised in this house on at least two occasions. I know the Brandon Park Residents Action Group has sought meetings with the minister previously, but no meetings have been arranged. I do not know whether the member for Mulgrave in the other place has been able to organise such a meeting but I do know that BPRAG in particular has approached him, although it seems that he has not been able to arrange such a meeting.

I certainly make a request of the minister to meet with those two groups to specifically discuss the future of

that site. If the minister is not going to meet with them, I request that I be given the reasons why she will not meet with those two appropriate groups.

WorkCover: youth safety program

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC. The matter I raise concerns workplace safety for young people, particularly the young people in my electorate of Melbourne West Province. I specifically want to know what action or programs the minister and his department are implementing to ensure that young people work in a safe and healthy environment. I also would like to know what actions or programs are being implemented by the minister to ensure that employers, who have the responsibility to work with young workers, are eliminating workplace risk. Melbourne West Province, which is a growth corridor, is one of the fastest growing areas and has more and more young people entering the work force.

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, President, the rules of the adjournment debate say that a member cannot develop her issue into a set speech. What is apparent is that the member has stood up and asked for particular action. She has detailed the action she wishes the minister to take and there is absolutely no reason for her to detail any further information about the number of people who work in her electorate, whether it is a growth corridor, the number of employers and so on. The member has risen to her feet, raised her issue, put her request and now she should sit down.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On the point of order, I direct the attention of members to a ruling I gave on 7 October 2003 where I indicated a four-stage process should be adopted. The member should indicate to whom the matter is being directed, give a brief résumé of the facts, set out the request, query or complaint, and suggest the action sought. The member has indicated to whom the matter is directed, given her request and is now giving a brief résumé of the facts surrounding the request. I do not uphold the point of order because the member is within the guidelines I have set out. I will continue to monitor and listen carefully to her contribution in the remaining time that she has.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA — We know from the information the minister has released that young people working in both the construction and community sector are at a greater risk of being injured at work than those who work in other sectors. The figures show that between 1997–98 and 2003–04 the number of

WorkCover claims made by young people in the construction sector rose by some 27 per cent from 397 to 417. We know in the community sector claims made by young workers increased by 22 per cent from 552 to 671. We also know that too many young workers in Victoria are injured or killed in what is often their first job. In the last four years 16 young people aged between 15 and 24 years died while at work. Last year 782 young workers were injured seriously enough at work to make a WorkCover injury claim. It is clear there is a need for employers to provide greater supervision, training and resources to their young, inexperienced employees. I want to know what action and measures the minister is taking to ensure this happens.

Hon. Bill Forwood — I move dissent from the President's ruling.

The PRESIDENT — Order! To do as Mr Forwood proposes, he is required to give notice on the next sitting day.

Ambulance services: Wilsons Promontory

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — The matter I raise on the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place and relates to issues in Gippsland, in particular in the Wilsons Promontory region and the bushfires there. Information has been put to me, some of it from the *South Gippsland Sentinel-Times* in a series of articles by Richard Schmeiszl, about ambulance officers who have come forward with issues arising from the provision of ambulance services in South Gippsland at the time of the fires.

To summarise this briefly, the facts appear to be — and I stand to be corrected on this, but I have spoken to the individuals concerned and it seems to me that the evidence is pretty clear — that there was a problem with ambulance provision at the time of those fires. Basically the evidence seems to be that there was a single ambulance officer at Foster and that that officer was not backed up by other units despite the fact that there was a raging bushfire lit by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in the Wilsons Promontory park. I note that a number of people were moved out of camping sites and other public areas onto the beach, and that there was considerable risk to the lives of not only campers and tourists but also workers in that area, fire officers and others.

What appears to be unusual about this is that there was no provision for the fact that a major event took place on Phillip Island which required the support of the

ambulance service and the proper provision of ambulances there on that day. A number of additional units from elsewhere in the state were properly stationed at Phillip Island to deal with the Superbike activities there on the day, but it seems to me that the government's disaster planning needs to take into account the fact that there can be two disasters or two incidents occurring at the same time. It does not seem satisfactory to me that a single ambulance and a single ambulance officer were all that were available to assist. It has also been indicated to me that that officer was ordered to stay at Foster and not to move, and they were therefore not in a position to help those on the Prom who were at risk. I ask the minister to conduct an inquiry, report back to this house and release publicly the information from that inquiry.

Education and training: student visas

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — I would like to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place relating to her media release of Tuesday, 15 March, entitled 'New strategy to promote Victoria internationally'. I note that the Bracks government is very keen to market Victoria internationally to attract more overseas businesses, tourists, migrants and students in the hope that this will generate millions of dollars for the state economy.

Members of Parliament and committee members like to sell Victoria when they are travelling overseas to attract more tourists and overseas students and encourage businesses to do business in Australia and Victoria. I have had the experience of visiting two countries, China and Vietnam, and a lot of people there want to send their children to Victoria to study. One of the problems they raise relates to visas, and I know the immigration department has an office in every country.

It is very hard for many people to get a visa to come here to study. Even if they make the application and they have the financial backup, some of the paperwork will ask them to prove things that are impossible to prove in many countries — for instance, where income comes from, to provide pay statements and many other relevant documents. In developing countries all that is very hard to prove. I want to ask the minister to talk to her counterpart to raise the issue of visas for international students.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — On a point of order, President, this is clearly a matter that concerns visas, which are clearly within the purview of the federal government. I understand there may be difficulties with this particular individual and the associated issues. I in

no way diminish those, but it is clearly within the federal jurisdiction. The adjournment debate is for raising issues of state government administration; this is not a matter of state government administration.

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN — On the point of order, President, I understand this is a visa issue but Victoria wants to get more students to come here. I have been contacted many times by people who want to come here but who cannot get a visa even though they get a lot of cooperation. I want the minister to talk to her counterpart in Canberra to make her aware of this issue.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — Further on the point of order, President, it is clear that it is a federal matter. The member may well have been contacted as many of us are in our electorate offices by people who have issues that are within federal administration. We are within our rights to refer those matters to the relevant federal minister or official. This matter is not for state administration and therefore is not within the purview of the adjournment.

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN — Further on the point of order, President, as I said before the state government wants to bring more overseas students to Victoria. We have difficulty in some cases —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member cannot debate the point of order. As I understand it, the member's request is for the minister to identify that there is an issue with the problem of visas and the member is asking the minister to take it up with her federal counterpart. Is that the request? It was a lot to do with visas. I was in a conversation but I did understand the member was raising matters about visas. I understand the matter was for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place because the member referred to bringing students to Australia but that they are having difficulty with getting applications.

The member wanted the minister to raise the concern with the immigration minister or whoever it may be on their behalf. It is a difficult question because you are asking the minister —

Hon. D. McL. Davis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind Mr David Davis that I will make the ruling.

I am concerned about this because visa applications do not in any shape or form fall under the purview of state administration. But the issue Mr Nguyen is talking about is students coming to Victoria, which does fall within the purview of the state of Victoria. I am

reluctant to do so but I am going to have to uphold the point of order by the Honourable David Davis because I do not think that calling on a minister to do something to a federal colleague on behalf of your constituents falls within the guidelines that I have set down for the adjournment debate.

Greensborough bypass: bicycle path

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I have an issue I wish to raise with the Minister for Transport in the other place. Honourable members may be aware that last year Mr Terry Makin wrote to me about a bike path network and opportunity that arose when a bypass was being widened over the Plenty River. I raised that matter during the adjournment debate. I wish to put on the record both his thanks and mine that his suggestion was picked up by the government and that the improvements he suggested have been picked up in the plan and construction. In his letter to me he said:

However it is my understanding that as yet there is no plan to connect the new path which will be incorporated on the overpass (this links to the Western Ring Road path) with the current path below the overpass which follows the Plenty River. This would probably need a switchback path from under the overpass beside the river to get to the overpass path which is about 30 metres above the river. As before this linkage would make a significant improvement to the connections of several paths in this area and it will be more effective and cheaper to do it when the current construction is carried out.

The Plenty River path will soon connect with the Yarra River trail which Banyule council will complete this year which makes it more important to make the above link at this stage.

He then asked me if I could raise this matter in the house and facilitate it.

We were very pleased with the prompt action of the government in completing the first part of his request last year, and I look forward to the minister also acceding to this request, which would significantly increase the flexibility and use of the bike paths. I know that the Minister for Sport and Recreation and others in this government — Ms Romanes et cetera — are keen for us to ride our bikes! This is another sound suggestion from Mr Makin, and I look forward to the government again accepting his suggestion.

Sport and recreation: Crown land

Mr PULLEN (Higinbotham) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is in the chamber at the moment. I refer to a determination by the Department for Victorian Communities that divides the football and cricket seasons and determines which sports can be carried out

on Crown lands at particular times. This determination was signed by the minister; Ken Gannon, the chief executive officer of Football Victoria; and Ken Jacobs, the chief executive officer of the Victorian Cricket Association, or Cricket Victoria.

I received a letter from Mr Jacobs which says in part:

For many years now, going back to the 1930s, there has been a determination set down to govern the division of seasons between cricket and football.

Whilst the determination itself relates specifically to the two sports played on Crown land, it is, in the majority of cases, also adopted by councils/shires throughout the state as a reasonable guide in determining the use of grounds throughout Victoria.

He goes on to say:

A copy of the determination is attached for your information, and you will note that the conditions laid down are binding on Cricket Victoria and Football Victoria and their affiliated associations ...

Please note that I will be writing to all municipalities/shires advising them of the renewal of the determination and encouraging them to accept the principles laid down for the division of seasons between both sports.

Clause 2.1.1 of the determination says:

The cricket season shall be confined to the period beginning on the 1st October and ending on the 31st March ...

I have five councils in my electorate. Members will be well aware of the three major ones — Glen Eira, Kingston and Bayside. Kingston and Glen Eira councils charge additional fees when finals start, whether that is February or March, which in my opinion is double dipping. Bayside, on the other hand, only charges if a non-Bayside club uses a ground for finals.

I therefore ask that the minister write to both the Kingston and Glen Eira councils requesting that they stop double dipping and allow clubs to use grounds at finals time without additional fees.

Hazardous waste: Nowingi

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — What a delight to be able to make a contribution to the adjournment debate. I would like to direct a matter to the Minister for Major Projects, if only he were here, but in his absence I will ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is at the table, to raise the matter of concern with him.

On 29 March, in the company of the Honourable Wendy Lovell, I visited Mildura and met with the Save the Food Bowl Alliance and discussed the issue of the

toxic waste dump with, among others, the Mildura council. In discussing that issue with the council and other people in the community it became evident to us that the Minister for Major Projects appears not to be well aware of the issues around the impact of that project. Just to recite some of the concerns, they are issues of the environment in regard to habitat for the nationally endangered Mallee fowl, the emu, blue wrens and other bird species; the clearing of 100 hectares of pristine Mallee; groundwater issues relating to the Murray River catchment; and risks to the Hattah lakes, the internationally renowned wetlands and Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. This area is a world-regarded, first-class food production area, and it is important to keep the reputation of the area intact. Foods which are grown include wine grapes, citrus fruit, table grapes, dried fruit, asparagus, almonds, honey, pistachio nuts, carrots, beans, peas, wheat, barley and prime Mallee lamb.

I make the point that the mayor of Mildura said, 'It does not matter what they decide, they will not build it because we will blockade the site' — and I think that is a reflection of the community view. Peter Byrne made it very clear, as did everybody else we spoke to, that the community does not want this project. One of the real concerns is that the Minister for Major Projects has not been to Mildura to meet with the stakeholders affected by this. I would like the minister to advise me, so that I can advise members of the Save the Food Bowl committee, that he will visit the Mildura district and, as I have done on previous occasions, meet with stakeholders at the Hattah-Nowingi toxic dump site to discuss all of the issues of concern to that community so that he can be properly informed.

Soccer: Geelong junior teams

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I wish to raise a very concerning matter which affects both the soccer fraternity within Geelong and indeed the wider soccer community in country and regional areas of Victoria.

Recently I have had a number of concerned soccer club officials approach me due to a decision that the Victorian Soccer Federation (VSF) had made in relation to its respective Geelong junior teams competing in the Melbourne competition. To put it into perspective, a number of soccer clubs in Geelong participate in Melbourne senior league competitions. They are Bell Park, Corio, Geelong, Geelong Rangers and North Geelong. These clubs, and rightly so, have for their own viability into the future invested an enormous amount of time, money and energy into their

junior clubs. The Melbourne league competition is of a high standard with a high skill level, and the respective junior clubs entered their junior teams so members of those teams could develop their skills and be prepared at a later date to play for their respective senior teams in the Melbourne league.

These junior clubs participated in the Melbourne league last year. In fact the Corio under-12 team finished on top of the ladder last season and was the champion in its league. Obviously these teams had prepared their respective junior teams to again play in the Melbourne league this year, but unfortunately at the last minute they were told by the VSF that it had carefully considered this matter and had decided that no Geelong junior team could participate in the Melbourne league and that they should stay in their own country region. Mind you, Geelong is no further away from Melbourne than some of the south-eastern suburbs. This is not acceptable, because this action by the Victorian Soccer Federation is a very Melbourne-centric decision. I would like to know whether it is the Victorian Soccer Federation or the Melbourne soccer federation. This decision is obviously very Melbourne-centric. The VSF is basically saying that country and regional areas should not be competitive and should not develop their skill level. I am informed in a letter from the North Geelong Soccer Club that the VSF is in breach of its own rules and regulations in taking this decision to exclude junior clubs from Geelong.

The action I am seeking is for the minister to take an interest in and monitor this very serious matter, as it has a severe impact on junior soccer in Geelong. The sad part about this is that there are numerous kids in Geelong who were looking forward to playing this year, and now there is uncertainty about whether they are going to play at all. This does not look good for the sport of soccer. I urge the VSF to carefully reconsider this matter and allow Geelong juniors to play soccer this year.

Bendigo: sport funding

Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation and has to do with major facilities funding under the funding grants scheme within the Sport and Recreation Victoria.

Last year was the first time since these grants were introduced that the City of Greater Bendigo missed out on a major facilities funding project grant. The state government decided not to support the Epsom soccer development, which would have been a well-timed boost for both junior and senior soccer in the region.

As the minister would be aware, junior soccer is bursting at the seams around Bendigo with a large number of both boys and girls being unable to get into teams due to a lack of sporting grounds and because of the general lack of sporting facilities. The withdrawal of these funds from the City of Greater Bendigo certainly hurt the entire soccer community. The shortage has further been exacerbated by the admission of Bendigo women's premier soccer team into the statewide premier soccer league. Funding for Bendigo's major sporting facilities has become a political football in recent years when promises have been made and granted for projects such as the Queen Elizabeth Oval redevelopment only to have the Labor member for Bendigo West interfere and start fighting with the local council, which he perceives to be a Liberal-based council, and the funds were withdrawn.

Sure enough, about a month ago when the new plans were submitted the allocation of that money was reannounced with a nice media opportunity for those concerned, but that money has since been returned. We see this happening quite a bit, and we would just like that sort of behaviour to stop.

We know that last year the regional municipalities had a reduction in the approval of projects of about 40 per cent and about \$2.5 million for regional municipalities came from the funding schemes. We also know that metropolitan councils suffered no such losses in either numbers of projects or in real dollar terms. Also, at the last election the state government promised \$400 000 to sporting developments at Strathfieldsaye and Maiden Gully.

I would like the minister, maybe not today but at another time, to let me know the progress of those moneys being passed on to the City of Greater Bendigo.

My main point of concern, however, is the reports that Bendigo is set to miss out again this year with its priority project, the Garden Gully hockey program. Its bid to build a second all-weather hockey pitch has been knocked back again. The Bendigo Hockey Association is prepared to put up \$300 000 of its own money, which is an enormous contribution from a sporting association, along with support from the government. We are really concerned that it seems that for the second time in a row Bendigo looks like missing out on a major facilities funding grant. We would just like the minister to be aware that the City of Greater Bendigo — —

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

Responses

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — There are quite a generous number of questions tonight. Mr Bowden raised the matter of the Frankston–Stony Point rail line. I will raise this with the Minister for Transport in the other place.

Ms Buckingham raised the matter of on-the-job training, and we will refer this to the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs in the other place.

Ms Lovell raised the matter of an upgrade on Kyabram–Rochester Road, and we will refer this to the Minister for Transport in the other place.

Ms Carbines raised the matter of the Marshall rail station in South Barwon — it sounds like a fantastic station — and I will refer this to the Minister for Transport in the other place.

Mr Brideson raised the matter of the community cabinet visiting the City of Monash and a former school site. I will refer this to the Minister for Education and Training in the other place.

Ms Darveniza raised a matter of protection of young workers in workplaces, and I will refer this to the Minister for WorkCover.

Mr David Davis raised a matter relating to Wilsons Promontory and an inquiry into relevant information. I will refer that to the Minister for Health in the other place.

Mr Nguyen raised the matter of overseas students and issues related to applications — —

Hon. D. McL. Davis — No!

The PRESIDENT — Order! The matter raised by Mr Nguyen was out of order and the minister will not refer it to any relevant minister.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — The Honourable Bill Forwood raised the matter of a bike path network near Plenty River, and I am very conscious of the complimentary remarks made by him in relation to this matter. I also thank the honourable member for his gratitude, particularly to the Minister for Transport. I know that Mr Forwood is one of the more physically active members of the chamber in relation to many pursuits. I am very enthusiastic about Mr Forwood getting on his bike and going, so I will refer this matter to the Minister for Transport in the other place — metaphorically and literally.

Mr Pullen raised the matter of the determination by me as Minister for Sport and Recreation in relation to the scheduling of football and cricket across the suburban facility network and the inconsistency of a number of councils in his locality. I am happy to make contact with the Glen Eira and Kingston councils about that matter to see if there can be some consistency in relation to the operation of the respective competitions.

Mr Philip Davis raised the matter of the long-term containment facility in Mildura and associated issues. I will refer this to the Minister for Major Projects.

Mr Eren raised the matter of the omission of the Geelong junior competition from the Victorian Soccer Federation (VSF) competition. This is a matter of particular concern because of the significant late notice given to those juniors. That must be disappointing not only for those who organised the competition but also for the juniors who are involved in that competition and were involved in it last year. I will monitor the matter closely and make contact with the VSF to see if there is some way of delivering an outcome which is far more palatable than the current arrangements.

Mr Drum raised a number of matters, and I am happy to answer at length in relation to many of them. Mr Drum would appreciate that there are a significant number of communities who apply for funding in any particular year. Recreational facilities in regional Victoria have done exceptionally well in recent years, and we continue to maintain investment in regional Victoria, particularly in sports infrastructure. There have been additional moneys for funding out of our election commitments, particularly for the Schweppes Centre in Bendigo, which received a significant amount of funds for long-term events as well as local grassroots sports participation, and the Queen Elizabeth Oval and some ancillary facilities around the QEO.

I am very appreciative of the growth of soccer in the regions, which has been raised by Mr Eren and Mr Drum. No doubt there are some significant matters about ensuring that the growth in soccer is catered for in regional areas. I am also conscious of the demands with hockey in the regions. We have seen a great deal of growth in hockey because of the successful administration of the game. There is a need to upgrade facilities, particularly synthetic surfaces, because that is the expectation, particularly in regional areas where the growth is very high. I would expect that in the not-too-distant future there will be some good news for the Bendigo Hockey Association at Garden Gully. I am working closely with local members for a very positive outcome in relation to that matter.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 5.23 p.m. until Tuesday, 3 May.

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, 19 April 2005

Agriculture: Victorian Meat Authority — capital works funding

2659. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Agriculture): In relation to the Victorian Meat Authority's allocation of funds to major capital works, including major maintenance, replacement, and upgrades, what were the priority major projects that were approved for the year 2002–03 and were each of those priority projects achieved.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Material relating to this issue is readily available on the public record — including the Annual Reports of this organisation tabled in Parliament.

I do not therefore propose to divert limited public resources and time for the purpose of conducting research work that is readily available.

However I am advised that this organisation carried out any major capital works in the period listed.

Agriculture: Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd — capital works funding

2663. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Agriculture): In relation to the Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd's allocation of funds to major capital works, including major maintenance, replacement, and upgrades, what were the priority major projects that were approved for the year 2002–03 and were each of those priority projects achieved.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Material relating to this issue is readily available on the public record — including the Annual Reports of this organisation tabled in Parliament.

I do not therefore propose to divert limited public resources and time for the purpose of conducting research work that is readily available.

However I am advised that this organisation carried out any major capital works in the period listed.

Education services: Merit Protection Board — office accommodation

3014. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Education Services): In relation to the Merit Protection Board's leases of office accommodation currently held, what is — (i) the location of each lease; (ii) the expiry date of the leases; (iii) the cost per metre of each lease; and (iv) the total cost of each lease over the term of the contract.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Treasury and Finance is responsible for Government office leasing arrangements.

Racing: Greyhound Racing Victoria — office accommodation

- 3080. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Racing): In relation to Greyhound Racing Victoria's leases of office accommodation currently held, what is — (i) the location of each lease; (ii) the expiry date of the leases; (iii) the cost per metre of each lease; and (iv) the total cost of each lease over the term of the contract.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Greyhound Racing Victoria owns the property it occupies.

Racing: Harness Racing Victoria — office accommodation

- 3081. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Racing): In relation to Harness Racing Victoria's leases of office accommodation currently held, what is — (i) the location of each lease; (ii) the expiry date of the leases; (iii) the cost per metre of each lease; and (iv) the total cost of each lease over the term of the contract.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Harness Racing Victoria owns the property it occupies.

Treasurer: State Trustees Limited — office accommodation

- 3233. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Treasurer): In relation to State Trustees Limited's leases of office accommodation currently held, what is — (i) the location of each lease; (ii) the expiry date of the leases; (iii) the cost per metre of each lease; and (iv) the total cost of each lease over the term of the contract.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This information is commercial in confidence.

Planning: Land Victoria — charges

- 3248. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS** — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the level/rate of charges in October 1999 charged by Land Victoria, Exchange, land registry, the Registrar of Titles and the Registrar General, respectively, for — (i) accessing property certificates; (ii) land title information; and (iii) other services offered to the public, and what is their current level/rate.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

A list of current fees charged by Land Registry and other business units of Land Victoria for services offered to the public is available on the Land Victoria website (www.land.vic.gov.au). The value of these fees in October 1999 is recorded in legislation as in force at the time, which can be viewed on the Victorian Government Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website (www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au).

Planning: Plumbing (Fees Amendment) Regulations 2003

3292. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of each of the fees covered by the Plumbing (Fees Amendment) Regulations 2003 — (i) in October 1999; (ii) immediately prior to these regulations; and (iii) following the introduction of these regulations.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The value of these fees in October 1999 and immediately before and after the Plumbing (Fees Amendment) Regulations 2003 were introduced is recorded in legislation as in force at the time, which can be viewed on the Victorian Government Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website (www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au).

Planning: Land Act (Fees) Regulations 2003

3295. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of each of the fees covered by the Land Act (Fees) Regulations 2003 — (i) in October 1999; (ii) immediately prior to these regulations; and (iii) following the introduction of these regulations.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The value of these fees in October 1999 and immediately before and after the Land Act (Fees) Regulations 2003 were introduced is recorded in legislation as in force at the time, which can be viewed on the Victorian Government Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website (www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au).

Employment and youth affairs: ministerial staff — mobile telephone services

3329. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs): What has been the cost of providing mobile telephone services to the Minister's staff since 1999-2000.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

I have responded to this Question in my capacity as Minister for Education Services.

Energy industries: ministerial staff — mobile telephone services

3354. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries: What has been the cost of providing mobile telephone services to the Minister's staff since 1999-2000.

ANSWER:

As at the date the Question was raised, the answer is:

The Department of Infrastructure was responsible for the payment of the Minister for Energy Industries' mobile phone expenses from 1 November 2002.

From 1 November 2002 to 16 June 2004, the cost of providing mobile phone services to Minister's staff has been \$35,036.

Resources: ministerial staff — mobile telephone services

3355. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Resources: What has been the cost of providing mobile telephone services to the Minister's staff since 1999-2000.

ANSWER:

The Department of Infrastructure handles these expenses for the office of the Minister for Energy Industries and Resources. Please refer to the answer to question number 3354.

Planning: Greater Shepparton — planning permit application fees

3640. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Shepparton local government area from planning permit application fees collected in 2003-04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from planning permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Greater Shepparton — building permit application fees

3641. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Shepparton local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003-04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Greater Bendigo — planning permit application fees

3648. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Bendigo local government area from planning permit application fees collected in 2003-04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from planning permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Greater Bendigo — building permit application fees

3649. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Bendigo local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Ballarat — planning permit application fees

3656. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Ballarat local government area from planning permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from planning permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Ballarat — building permit application fees

3657. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Ballarat local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Ballarat — building permit application fees

3659. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Ballarat local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Greater Geelong — planning permit application fees

3664. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Geelong local government area from planning permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from planning permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Greater Geelong — building permit application fees

3665. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Greater Geelong local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Latrobe — planning permit application fees

3672. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Latrobe City local government area from planning permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from planning permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

Planning: Latrobe — building permit application fees

3673. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Sport and Recreation (for the Minister for Planning): What was the value of revenue collected in the Latrobe City local government area from building permit application fees collected in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Matters relating to the value of revenue collected in local government areas from building permit application fees do not fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Planning. This information should more appropriately be sought from the relevant council.

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, 20 April 2005

Corrections: staff shortages

1819. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to staff shortages leading to regular lockdowns at the HM Prison Ararat, HM Prison Barwon, HM Prison Beechworth, HM Prison Bendigo, HM Prison Dhurringile, HM Prison Langi Kal Kal, HM Prison Loddon, HM Prison Melbourne Assessment Prison, HM Prison Tarrengower, HM Prison Won Wron, Fulham Correctional Centre, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Port Phillip Prison, between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002:

- (a) How often did prison lockdowns occur.
- (b) How often does prison overcrowding affect staff shortages.
- (c) How many prisons have been locked down due to staff shortages.
- (d) What happened to the prisoner's educational class or rehabilitation program when there was a prison lockdown.

ANSWER:

I am advised as follows:

- (a) Accurate data is unavailable in the form required for the period in question.
- (b) Prison overcrowding does not affect staff shortages, as contingencies are generally in place to deal with both planned and unplanned increases in prisoner numbers. Staff shortages were more commonly associated with attrition of staff and the lag in the time that it takes to recruit and train replacement staff.
- (c) Accurate data is unavailable in the form required for the period in question.
- (d) Most lockdowns are not related to staff shortages but to other issues such as to facilitate an emergency response, to preserve a crime scene, to conduct post-emergency searches and to facilitate staff training or major staff meetings. Some of those lockdowns necessarily impact on prisoners' access to education and rehabilitation programs but many lockdowns affect only part of a prison (eg single units) and participation in programs can proceed unaffected. All prisons in Victoria (except the Melbourne Assessment Prison) are averaging more than 12 hours out-of-cell on a daily basis. The Melbourne Assessment Prison, which is required to provide prisoners with 8 hours out-of-cell, is exceeding that benchmark.

Corrections: staff shortages

1820. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to staff shortages leading to regular lockdowns at the HM Prison Ararat, HM Prison Barwon, HM Prison Beechworth, HM Prison Bendigo, HM Prison Dhurringile, HM Prison Langi Kal Kal, HM Prison Loddon, HM Prison Melbourne Assessment Prison, HM Prison Tarrengower, HM Prison Won Wron, Fulham Correctional Centre, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Port Phillip Prison, between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003:

- (a) How often did prison lockdowns occur.
- (b) How often does prison overcrowding affect staff shortages.
- (c) How many prisons have been locked down due to staff shortages.
- (d) What happened to the prisoner’s educational class or rehabilitation program when there was a prison lockdown.

ANSWER:

I am advised as follows:

- (a) Accurate data is unavailable in the form required for the period in question.
- (b) Prison overcrowding does not affect staff shortages, as contingencies are in place to deal with both planned and unplanned increases in prisoner numbers. Staff shortages were more commonly associated with attrition of staff and the lag in time that it takes to recruit and train replacement staff.
- (c) Accurate data is unavailable in the form required for the period in question.
- (d) Most lockdowns are not related to staff shortages but to other issues such as to facilitate an emergency response, to preserve a crime scene, to conduct post-emergency searches and to facilitate staff training or major staff meetings. Some of those lockdowns necessarily impact on prisoners’ access to education and rehabilitation programs but many lockdowns affect only part of a prison (eg single units) and participation in programs can proceed unaffected. All prisons in Victoria (except the Melbourne Assessment Prison) are averaging more than 12 hours out-of-cell on a daily basis. The Melbourne Assessment Prison, which is required to provide prisoners with 8 hours out-of-cell, is exceeding that benchmark.

Corrections: staff shortages

2067. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to staff shortages leading to regular lockdowns at the HM Prison Ararat, HM Prison Barwon, HM Prison Beechworth, HM Prison Bendigo, HM Prison Dhurringile, HM Prison Langi Kal Kal, HM Prison Loddon, HM Prison Melbourne Assessment Prison, HM Prison Tarrengower, HM Prison Won Wron, Fulham Correctional Centre, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Port Phillip Prison between 1 July 2003 to 1 June 2004:

- (a) How often did prison lockdowns occur.
- (b) How often does prison overcrowding affect staff shortages.
- (c) How many prisons have been locked down due to staff shortages.
- (d) What happened to the prisoner’s educational class or rehabilitation program when there was a prison lockdown.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

- (a) There were 965 separate prison lockdowns recorded across public and private prisons for the period of 1 July 2003 to 1 June 2004.

Facility	Number of Lockdowns
HM Prison Ararat	129
HM Prison Barwon	156

Facility	Number of Lockdowns
HM Prison Beechworth	48
HM Prison Bendigo	26
Dame Phyllis Frost Centre	90
HM Prison Dhurringile	4
Fulham Correctional Centre	49
HM Prison Langi Kal Kal	5
HM Prison Loddon	33
Melbourne Assessment Prison	78
HM Tarrengower	5
Port Phillip Prison	337
HM Prison Won Wron	5
Total Number of Lockdowns	965

- (b) Prison overcrowding does not affect staff shortages, however, contingencies are in place to deal with both planned and unplanned increases in prisoner numbers. Staff shortages were more commonly associated with attrition of staff and the lag in the time that it takes to recruit and train replacement staff.
- (c) Data was not kept for this period.
- (d) Most lockdowns are not related to staff shortages but to other issues such as to facilitate an emergency response, to preserve a crime scene, to conduct post-emergency searches and to facilitate staff training or major staff meetings. Some of those lockdowns necessarily impact on prisoners' access to education and rehabilitation programs but many lockdowns affect only part of a prison (eg single units) and participation in programs can proceed unaffected. All prisons in Victoria (except the Melbourne Assessment Prison) are averaging more than 12 hours out-of-cell on a daily basis. The Melbourne Assessment Prison, which is required to provide prisoners with 8 hours out-of-cell, is exceeding that benchmark.

Police and emergency services: police — numbers

3691. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What has been the number of police officers employed in Victoria for each calendar year since 1999.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Total numbers of police are published in the Annual Reports of Victoria Police and tabled in Parliament. These numbers are categorised by Head Count and Full Time Equivalent, and reported in financial year formats. Data on Victoria Police numbers since 1999 has been taken from the relevant *Victoria Police Annual Report* and is set out in Table One below.

Table One: Full Time Equivalent Police

	30/06/99	30/06/00	30/06/01	30/06/02	30/06/03	30/06/04
Police and Recruits (Headcount)	9599	9789	10119	10495	10529	10702
Police and Recruits (FTE)	*N/A	9675.5	9991.75	10342.1	10367.7	10514.5

Source: Victoria Police Annual Reports

* Data on FTE - first published in 1999/00 Victoria Police Annual Report

Police and emergency services: police — numbers

3692. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What has been the number of police officers employed in Victoria for each calendar year between 1992 and 1999.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Total numbers of police are published in the Annual Reports of Victoria Police and tabled in Parliament. These numbers are now categorised by Head Count and Full Time Equivalent, and reported in financial year formats. Data on Victoria Police numbers between 1992 and 1999 has been taken from the relevant *Victoria Police Annual Report* and is set out in Table One below.

Table One: Full Time Equivalent Police

Police and Recruits Headcount	30/06/92	30/06/93	30/06/94	30/06/95	30/06/96	30/06/97	30/06/98	30/06/99
	9958	9954	10120	10278	10457	10225	9858	*9599

Source: Victoria Police Annual Reports

* Data on FTE—first published in 1999/00 Victoria Police Annual Report

Police and emergency services: police — numbers

3693. THE HON. PHILIP DAVIS — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services): What has been the number of police officers employed in Victoria for each calendar year between 1988 and 1992.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Total numbers of police are published in the Annual Reports of Victoria Police and tabled in Parliament. These numbers are now categorised by Head Count and Full Time Equivalent, and reported in financial year formats. Data on FTE equivalent was first published in the 1999/00 Victoria Police Annual Report

Data on Victoria Police numbers between 1988 and 1992 has been taken from the relevant Victoria Police Annual Report and is set out in Table One below.

Table One: Full Time Equivalent Police

Police and Recruits (Headcount)	30/06/88	30/06/89	30/06/90	30/06/91	30/06/92
	9229	*9678	*9948	9957	9958

Source: Victoria Police Annual Reports

* Includes Police Reserve - 1988/89–60 & 1989/90–66.

WorkCover: Victorian WorkCover Authority — freedom of information requests

3885. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Minister for WorkCover): In relation to the Freedom of Information requests received by the Victorian WorkCover Authority between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004:

- (1) How many requests were received.
- (2) How many were —

- (a) denied in full;
- (b) released in part; and
- (c) released in full.

(3) How many of these requests were given to the Minister before being given to the applicant.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) 1119.
- (2) (a) 41;
- (b) 114; and
- (c) 594.

In addition to the formal decisions listed, an additional 366 requests were either withdrawn or no documents existed relevant to the request.

In accordance with the Victorian Government's Improved Accountability Guidelines, the Minister for WorkCover was **briefed** on 41 Freedom of Information decisions.

Corrections: CORE — The Public Correctional Enterprise — freedom of information requests

4030. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to the Freedom of Information requests received by CORE–The Public Correctional Enterprise between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004:

- (1) How many requests were received.
- (2) How many were —
 - (a) denied in full;
 - (b) released in part; and
 - (c) released in full.
- (3) How many were given to the Minister before being given to the applicant.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

(1) & (2)

The Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner integrated with CORE — the Public Correctional Enterprise in July 2003 and Corrections Victoria was established. Corrections Victoria is part of the Department of Justice and not a separate prescribed authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982. Their statistics are incorporated into the Department of Justice figures. I refer you to the 2003/04 Freedom of Information Annual Report.

(3) Statistics regarding freedom of information requests which are given to the Minister before being given to the applicant are not collected by the Department of Justice.

Financial services industry: alcohol purchases

4070. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Small Business (for the Minister for Financial Services Industry): In relation to alcohol purchased by the Minister’s Office since 1 January 2002, what was the —

- (a) date of each purchase;
- (b) value of each purchase; and
- (c) items purchased.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development’s finance records indicate there were no alcohol related purchases by my Ministerial Office since January 2002.

Manufacturing and export: alcohol purchases

4072. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Small Business (for the Minister for Manufacturing and Export): In relation to alcohol purchased by the Minister’s Office since 1 January 2002, what was the —

- (a) date of each purchase;
- (b) value of each purchase; and
- (c) items purchased.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development’s finance records indicate there were no alcohol related purchases by my Ministerial Office since January 2002.

Transport: Victorian Bicycle Advisory Committee — entertainment expenses

4197. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): In relation to the Victorian Bicycle Advisory Committee’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2003–04, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —

- (a) date incurred;
- (b) cost;
- (c) number of guests;
- (d) purpose; and
- (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

As at the date the question was raised, the answer is :

The Victorian Bicycle Advisory Council did not incur any entertainment expenses during 2003–04.

Transport: Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council — entertainment expenses

- 4199. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Transport): In relation to the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2003–04, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —
- (a) date incurred;
 - (b) cost;
 - (c) number of guests;
 - (d) purpose; and
 - (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

As at the date the question was raised, the answer is :

The Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council did not incur any entertainment expenses during 2003–04.

Victorian communities: Victorian Grants Commission — entertainment expenses

- 4347. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Victorian Communities): In relation to the Victorian Grants Commission’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2003–04, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —
- (a) date incurred;
 - (b) cost;
 - (c) number of guests;
 - (d) purpose; and
 - (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Minister for Victorian Communities does not have portfolio responsibility for this matter.

Victorian communities: Victorian communities — stress-related leave

- 4647. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Victorian Communities):
- (1) How many days have been taken as stress related leave by executive level staff and base line staff of the Department of Victorian Communities in 2003–04.
 - (2) What was the estimated cost.
 - (3) What was the total number of staff involved.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) During the 2003–04 financial year, base line staff have taken 18 days as stress related leave, while there have not been any days taken by the Executive staff.
- (2) The estimated cost of the stress leave to the Department for Victorian Communities has been \$4,566.00
- (3) Two staff were involved in stress related leave.

Police and emergency services: Justice — stress-related leave

4652. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services):

- (1) How many days have been taken as stress related leave by executive level staff and base line staff of the Department of Justice in 2003–04.
- (2) What was the estimated cost.
- (3) What was the total number of staff involved.

ANSWER:

I am informed that as a result of WorkCover stress claims in 2003–04, 2422 days were taken by Department of Justice staff. The total of costs paid during that period in relation to those claims was \$493,182. This total includes costs for days taken and medical and like expenses.

The total number of staff involved was 49.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

Thursday, 21 April 2005

Corrections: Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner — staff

- 1407. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner:
- (a) What was the number of effective full time employees as at 1 January 2003 and 4 December 2003.
 - (b) What was the actual cost of employee remuneration and entitlements as at 1 January 2003 and 4 December 2003.
 - (c) What was the organisation structure of the Office, what were their classifications and what duties were performed by each area/unit according to the organisational structure as at 4 December 2003.
 - (d) How many employees were classified as Senior Executives as at 1 January 2003 and 4 December 2003, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am advised that in relation to the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner (OCSC):

- (a) The number of effective full time employees as at 1 January 2003 was 110.7 people. The number for 4 December 2003 is not available as the OCSC amalgamated with The Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.
- (b) The remuneration of staff as at 1 January 2003, including on costs (Long Service Leave, Payroll Tax, Workcover and Superannuation), totalled \$8.8m per annum. The actual cost for 4 December 2003 is not available as the OCSC amalgamated with The Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.
- (c) The organisation structure of the Office, the classifications and the duties performed by each area/unit according to the organisational structure as at 4 December 2003 is not available as the OCSC amalgamated with The Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.
- (d) The organisation included seven Executive Officers as at 1 January 2003. The number for 4 December 2003 is not available as the OCSC amalgamated with The Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.

Corrections: CORE — The Public Correctional Enterprises — staff

- 1408. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Energy Industries (for the Minister for Corrections): In relation to employees at Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE):
- (a) What was the total number of effective full time employees as at 30 June 2003 and 4 December 2003.

- (b) What was the actual cost of employee remuneration and entitlements as at 30 June 2003 and 4 December 2003.

ANSWER:

I am advised that in relation to employees at Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE):

- (a) The number of full time employees as at 30 June 2003 was 1739.5 people. The number for 4 December 2003 is not available as the Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) amalgamated with the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner (OCSC) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.
- (b) The remuneration of staff as at 30 June 2003, including on costs (Long Service Leave, Payroll Tax, Workcover and Superannuation), totalled \$103.7m per annum. The number for 4 December 2003 is not available as the Public Correctional Enterprise (CORE) amalgamated with the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner (OCSC) on 1 July 2003 to become Corrections Victoria.

Premier: Office of Public Employment — entertainment expenses

4524. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier): In relation to the Office of Public Employment’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2002–03, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —

- (a) date incurred;
- (b) cost;
- (c) number of guests;
- (d) purpose; and
- (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

During the period 2002–03 fiscal year there were no Office of Public Employment entertainment expenses in excess of \$500.00.

Premier: Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel — entertainment expenses

4525. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier): In relation to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2002–03, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —

- (a) date incurred;
- (b) cost;
- (c) number of guests;
- (d) purpose; and
- (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

During the period 2002–03 fiscal year there were three entertainment expenses in excess of \$500. They are as follows:

1.
 - (a) 18/12/2002
 - (b) \$2480.00
 - (c) 80
 - (d) Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Client Function
 - (e) Food Makers of Fine Food
2.
 - (a) 12/06/2003
 - (b) \$544.10
 - (c) 48
 - (d) Conference / course–04/02/2003
 - (e) Treasury Café
3.
 - (a) 12/06/2003
 - (b) \$544.10
 - (c) 48
 - (d) Conference / course–07/02/2003
 - (e) Treasury Café

Premier: Australia Day Committee (Victoria) — entertainment expenses

- 4526. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier): In relation to the Australia Day Committee’s (Victoria) entertainment expenses incurred in 2002–03, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —
- (a) date incurred;
 - (b) cost;
 - (c) number of guests;
 - (d) purpose; and
 - (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

During the period 2002–03 fiscal year there were two entertainment expenses in excess of \$500. They are as follows:

1.
 - (a) 13/08/2002
 - (b) \$650.00
 - (c) 60
 - (d) Australian of the Year
 - (e) Parliament of Victoria Catering Department
2.
 - (a) 07/02/2003
 - (b) \$1800.00
 - (c) 80
 - (d) Australia Day Fun Run Presentation
 - (e) Fillings Catering

Premier: Public Service Medal Committee (Victoria) — entertainment expenses

4527. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier): In relation to the Public Service Medal Committee’s (Victoria) entertainment expenses incurred in 2002–03, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —

- (a) date incurred;
- (b) cost;
- (c) number of guests;
- (d) purpose; and
- (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

During the period 2002–03 fiscal year there were no Public Service Medal Committee (Victoria) entertainment expenses in excess of \$500.00

Premier: Victoria/New South Wales Border Anomalies Committee — entertainment expenses

4528. THE HON. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA — To ask the Minister for Finance (for the Premier): In relation to the Victoria/New South Wales Border Anomalies Committee’s entertainment expenses incurred in 2002–03, what are the details, in relation to expenses in excess of \$500, including the —

- (a) date incurred;

- (b) cost;
- (c) number of guests;
- (d) purpose; and
- (e) name of service provider.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

During the period 2002–03 fiscal year there were no Victoria/New South Wales Border Anomalies Committee meetings and therefore no entertainment expenses in excess of \$500.00.

Environment: Access to Parks program — cost

4589. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Environment):

- (1) Will the Minister provide a full list of the completed projects and costs funded by VicRoads Access to Parks Program for 2003–04.
- (2) Will the Minister provide the full list of the proposed projects and costs funded by this Program for 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The funds spent on the parks road network in 2003–04 by Parks Victoria was \$1.66 million.

Environment: Access to Parks program — cost

4593. THE HON. GRAEME STONEY — To ask the Minister for Local Government (for the Minister for Environment): Will the Minister provide the full list of the proposed projects and estimated cost of these projects funded by VicRoads Access to Parks Program for 2004–05.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The funds to be spent on the parks road network in 2004–05 by Parks Victoria are proposed to be \$2.53 million.

Community services: Gippsland — disability accommodation

4655. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities in the Gippsland region as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the total funding allocated to Shared Supported Accommodation.
- (2) How much of the funding was for Department managed accommodation.
- (3) How many beds were provided in Department managed accommodation.
- (4) How much of the funding was for non-government managed accommodation.

- (5) How many beds were provided in non-government managed accommodation.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) The total Output funding directly allocated to the Gippsland region for Shared Supported Accommodation as at 30 June 2004 was \$15m.
- (2) Funding directly allocated for internally delivered services and program support was \$9.4m.
- (3) The number of people provided with Shared Supported Accommodation in Department managed accommodation was 115.
- (4) Funding directly allocated for externally delivered services was \$5.6m.
- (5) The number of people provided with Shared Supported Accommodation in non-government managed accommodation was 98.

Community services: Gippsland — disability accommodation

4656. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services):

- (1) How many individuals on the Disability Service Needs Register, as at December 2004, were people in the Gippsland region waiting for —
 - (a) shared supported accommodation;
 - (b) in-home accommodation support; and
 - (c) day programs.
- (2) For each category, how many were classified as —
 - (a) urgent priority;
 - (b) high priority; and
 - (c) low priority.
- (3) For each category, how many were aged —
 - (a) under 18 years;
 - (b) 18 to 24 years;
 - (c) 25 to 29 years; and
 - (d) 30 or more years.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

As at 21 December 2004 (the date final SNR numbers for 2004 were extracted):

- (1) The number of individuals on the Disability Service Needs Register in the Gippsland region waiting for:
 - (a) shared supported accommodation was 177;

- (b) home first was 98 (noting that in-home accommodation support and home first were merged into the activity home first in 2002-2003); and
- (c) day programs was 25

(2) For each category, the number of individuals classified as:

(a) urgent priority were;

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
Urgent	56	71	21

(b) high priority;

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
High	42	17	2

(c) low priority

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
Low	79	10	2

(3) For each category the number of individuals aged:

Age	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day Programs
under 18 years	18	12	1
18 to 24 years	54	20	10
25 to 29 years	23	12	3
30 or more years	82	54	11

It should be noted that most individuals on the service needs register classified as urgent, and other individuals receive interim and other supports whilst waiting for the nominated and/or assessed support service.

Community services: Gippsland — carers

4657. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the Service Needs Register in the Gippsland region:

- (1) How many people have a carer.
- (2) How many people do not have a carer.
- (3) How many people have their carer's age recorded.
- (4) How many people do not have their carer's age recorded.
- (5) How many of the carers with their age recorded are —
 - (a) under 55;

- (b) 55 to 64;
- (c) 65 to 69; and
- (d) 70 or more years.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people on the Service Needs Register:

- (1) The number of people recorded as having a carer was 105.
- (2) The number of people who did not have a carer or who did not have a carer recorded was 195.
- (3) The number of people that had their carer's age recorded was 98.
- (4) The number of people that did not have their carer's age recorded was 7.
- (5) The ages of carers with their age recorded are:
 - (a) under 55–64
 - (b) 55 to 64–17
 - (c) 65 to 69–8
 - (d) 70 or more years–9

It should be noted that most individuals on the service needs register classified as urgent, and other individuals, receive interim and other supports whilst waiting for the nominated and/or assessed support service.

The nature of these supports will often have a component of carer support such as respite and other services.

It should also be noted that, as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has reported, the number of ageing carers is expected to grow in the future as a result of population ageing. The government is putting in place programs specifically designed to assist carers.

Community services: Gippsland — accommodation services

4658. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): For the Gippsland region:

- (1) How many people with disabilities waiting for shared supported accommodation obtained a place in a community residential unit for the year ended 30 June 2004.
- (2) For how many days (on average) had those people been waiting for a place.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

For the year ended 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of persons with disabilities that waited for a shared supported accommodation place and obtained a place in a community residential unit was 10.
- (2) On average the people that waited for a shared supported accommodation place and obtained a place in a community residential unit had waited for 81 weeks, however these people have been receiving a range of supports and services.

Community services: Gippsland — Kew Residential Services

4659. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services, how many of the Kew residents will move to the Gippsland region.

ANSWER:

I am informed that 6 Kew Residential Services residents will be moving to Gippsland, following an extensive consultation process with the individuals concerned along with their guardians and families.

Community services: Gippsland — disability accommodation

4660. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): As at 30 June 2004, how many people with disabilities in the Gippsland region were in receipt of—

- (a) accommodation outreach support;
- (b) family options support;
- (c) flexible support packages;
- (d) home first;
- (e) individualised support packages;
- (f) shared supported accommodation; and
- (g) transitional accommodation support.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

As at 30 June 2004 the number of people with disabilities in the Gippsland region in receipt of the following were:

- a. accommodation outreach support — 282
- b. family options support — 0
- c. flexible support packages — 127
- d. home first — 92
- e. individualised support packages — 51
- f. shared supported accommodation — 210
- g. transitional accommodation support — 3

Community services: Gippsland — disability services

4661. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services):

- (1) How many people in the Gippsland region were assessed as eligible to receive services under the Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 as at 30 June 2004.

- (2) How many of these were aged under 18 years and 18 or more years, respectively.
- (3) How many people were assessed as eligible to receive services under the Disability Services Act 1991.
- (4) How many of these were aged under 18 years and 18 or more years, respectively.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) The number of people in the Gippsland region that were assessed as eligible to receive services under the Intellectually Disable Persons' Services Act 1986 as at 30 June 2004 was 1,441.
- (2) The number of these people aged under 18 years was 323 and 18 or more years was 1,118.
- (3) This information is not available.
- (4) This information is not available.

Community services: Gippsland — respite beds

4662. THE HON. PETER HALL — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to government and non-government respite beds for people with disabilities in the Gippsland region as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) How many beds were there.
- (2) How many beds were not open between 9.00 am to 3.00 pm, unless it was an emergency.
- (3) How many beds were available less than seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Information for respite service usage and capacity is reported through respite episode data.

Community services: Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement

4674. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services):

- (1) What funds did Victoria receive from the Commonwealth in 2003–04 under the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement.
- (2) What funds did Victoria contribute to meet its responsibilities under the Agreement in 2003–04.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) Funding responsibilities of the parties to the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement are set out in Schedule A of the agreement. The Commonwealth made \$124.074 million available to Victoria for 2003–04.

- (2) Victoria contributed \$773.977 million in 2003–04 to meet its responsibilities under the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA)—over six times greater than the Commonwealth made available to Victoria under the CSTDA in 2003–04.

Community services: disability services — accommodation

4675. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): As at 31 December 2004:

- (1) How many individuals had lodged applications on the Disability Service Needs Register.
- (2) How many individuals on the Disability Service Need Register were waiting for —
 - (a) shared supported accommodation;
 - (b) in-home accommodation support; and
 - (c) day programs.
- (3) For each category, how many were classified as —
 - (a) urgent priority;
 - (b) high priority; and
 - (c) low priority.
- (4) How many individuals for each category have intellectual disabilities.
- (5) For what length of time have clients been waiting for a shared supported accommodation place

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

As at 21 December 2004 (the date final SNR numbers for 2004 were extracted):

- (1) The number of individuals that had lodged applications on the Disability Service Needs Register was 5,081.
- (2) The number of individuals on the Disability Service Needs Register waiting for—
 - (a) shared supported accommodation was 3,018;
 - (b) home first 1,528 (noting that in-home accommodation support and home first were merged into the activity home first in 2002-2003); and
 - (c) day programs 535.
- (3) For each category, the number of individuals classified as—
 - a. urgent priority were;

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
Urgent	1,160	1,162	383

b. high priority;

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
High	688	252	116

c. low priority

Priority	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
Low	1,170	114	36

(4) The number of individuals for each category that had an intellectual disability were;

	Shared Supported Accommodation	Home First	Day programs
No. of individuals with intellectual disability	2,507	825	481

(5) The length of time individuals have been on the service needs register for shared supported accommodation varies enormously. As at December 2004 it ranged between 3 weeks and 698 weeks. It should be noted that the register does not operate as a ‘wait turn’ list. The circumstances of each individual on the service needs register vary and their needs are categorised and prioritised accordingly. Most individuals on the service needs register receive interim and other supports whilst waiting for the nominated and/or assessed support service.

Community services: disability services — accommodation

4676. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): For the 12 months ending 31 December 2004:

- (1) How many persons with disabilities waiting for shared supported accommodation obtained a place in a community residential unit.
- (2) On average, for how many days had those people been waiting for a place.
- (3) How many of those persons were relocated from congregate care to community based care.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

For the 12 months ending 31 December 2004:

- (1) The number of persons with disabilities that waited for a shared supported accommodation place and obtained a place in a community residential unit was 196.
- (2) On average the people that waited for a shared supported accommodation place and obtained a place in a community residential unit had waited for 162 weeks, however these people have been receiving a range of supports and services.
- (3) None of these people that were allocated a place came from a congregate care facility.

Community services: disability services — carers

4677. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people on the Disability Service Needs Register:

- (1) How many have a carer.
- (2) How many do not have a carer.
- (3) How many have their carer's age recorded.
- (4) How many do not have their carer's age recorded.
- (5) How many of the carers with their age recorded are —
 - (a) under 55;
 - (b) 55 to 64;
 - (c) 65 to 69; and
 - (d) 70 or more years.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people on the Service Needs Register:

- (1) The number of people recorded as having a carer was 1,488.
- (2) The number of people not recorded as having a carer was 3,593.
- (3) The number of people that had their carer's age recorded was 1,417.
- (4) The number of people that did not have their carer's age recorded was 71.
- (5) The ages of carers with their age recorded are:
 - a. under 55—737
 - b. 55 to 64—311
 - c. 65 to 69—100
 - d. 70 or more years—269

It should be noted that most individuals on the service needs register classified as urgent, and other individuals, receive interim and other supports whilst waiting for the nominated and/or assessed support service.

The nature of these supports will often have a component of carer support such as respite and other services.

It should also be noted that, as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has reported, the number of ageing carers is expected to grow in the future as a result of population ageing. The government is putting in place programs specifically designed to assist carers.

Community services: disability services — shared supported accommodation

4678. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): Further to the answer to Question No 4164 given in this House on 14 December

2004 in relation to disability services shared supported accommodation, what amount of the \$220 million allocated to Department managed accommodation is —

- (1) the Capital Asset Charge on secretary owned accommodation;
- (2) revenue offsets applied to support the accommodation of residents; and
- (3) a proportion of state-wide corporate infrastructure costs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The amount of funding identified in Question 4164, as being allocated to Department managed accommodation was \$222m.

- (1) The amount of Capital Asset Charge attributed to Secretary owned accommodation was \$7m.
- (2) The revenue collected from residents in Departmentally managed accommodation in 2003–04 was approximately \$3m. This amount is not offset against the reported expenditure for the government sector as it is reported separately as government income.
- (3) The proportion of statewide corporate infrastructure costs attributed to Secretary owned accommodation program was \$26.1m.

Community services:disability services — respite beds

4679. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): As at June 2004, how many of the respite beds for people with disabilities in each region are —

- (1) part-time government beds; and
- (2) part-time non-government beds.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Information for respite service usage and capacity is reported through respite episode data.

Community services: disability services — Kew Residential Services

4680. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services (KRS), for the 12 months ended 31 December 2004:

- (1) How many properties have been purchased off-site for the relocation of KRS residents.
- (2) What is the purchase price of each property.
- (3) What is the expected renovation/building cost (if any) for each property.
- (4) How many residents can each property accommodate.
- (5) What is the expected total cost for the purchase of each property, including contingencies, project management and consultant’s fees.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) 34 properties were purchased off-site for the relocation of KRS residents.
- (2) The cost associated with purchasing the 34 properties for the twelve months ending 31 December 2004 is detailed in Column C of the table attached.
- (3) The expected renovation/building cost for each property is detailed in Column D of the table attached.
- (4) The resident capacity of each property is detailed in Column B of the table attached.
- (5) The total anticipated cost for the purchase of each property, including contingencies, project management and consultant fees is detailed in Column E of the table attached.

ATTACHMENT

A Property	B No of Residents	C Purchase Price	D Estimated Construction Cost	E Total Estimated Cost of Property
1	5	345,000	<i>\$540,705</i>	<i>\$960,182</i>
2	5	314,750	<i>\$503,869</i>	<i>\$847,927</i>
3	4	307,500	<i>\$457,250</i>	<i>\$791,628</i>
4	6	232,500	<i>\$531,135</i>	<i>\$813,826</i>
5	5	362,000	<i>\$593,822</i>	<i>\$1,002,511</i>
6	5	342,500	<i>\$529,818</i>	<i>\$922,893</i>
7	5	330,000	<i>\$527,254</i>	<i>\$899,525</i>
8	4	250,000	<i>\$462,023</i>	<i>\$759,507</i>
9	5	352,000	<i>\$457,250</i>	<i>\$837,463</i>
10	5	345,000	<i>\$486,229</i>	<i>\$871,525</i>
11	4	332,500	<i>\$547,645</i>	<i>\$921,700</i>
12	4	270,000	<i>\$573,575</i>	<i>\$868,948</i>
13	5	350,000	<i>\$593,822</i>	<i>\$968,431</i>
14	4	235,000	<i>\$462,023</i>	<i>\$744,057</i>
15	5	309,000	<i>\$435,640</i>	<i>\$793,715</i>
16	4	309,000	<i>\$486,229</i>	<i>\$834,445</i>
17	6	292,000	<i>\$499,235</i>	<i>\$837,665</i>
18	5	292,000	<i>\$499,234</i>	<i>\$837,663</i>
19	5	360,000	<i>\$573,575</i>	<i>\$982,317</i>
20	6	297,000	<i>\$498,644</i>	<i>\$934,530</i>
21	4	345,000	<i>\$510,618</i>	<i>\$918,885</i>
22	4	290,000	<i>\$435,640</i>	<i>\$774,145</i>
23	6	170,000	<i>\$540,921</i>	<i>\$760,426</i>
24	6	335,000	<i>\$527,254</i>	<i>\$904,675</i>
25	4	335,000	<i>\$573,576</i>	<i>\$950,205</i>
26	5	230,500	<i>\$588,506</i>	<i>\$883,631</i>
27	5	300,000	<i>\$540,455</i>	<i>\$876,848</i>
28	5	297,000	<i>\$486,229</i>	<i>\$822,085</i>
29	5	344,500	<i>\$480,059</i>	<i>\$867,521</i>
30	5	335,000	<i>\$510,618</i>	<i>\$908,585</i>
31	4	315,000	<i>\$486,229</i>	<i>\$840,625</i>
32	4	290,000	<i>\$547,645</i>	<i>\$868,771</i>
33	6	350,000	<i>\$544,709</i>	<i>\$937,708</i>
34	4	231,000	<i>\$431,573</i>	<i>\$718,455</i>

N.B. Estimates are in italics in Columns D and E in Table above.

Community services: disability services — developmental delay criteria

4681. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): How many children under the age of six have been assessed as eligible to receive services under the developmental delay criteria in the *Intellectually Disabled Persons Services Act 1986* as at 31 December 2004.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The number of children under the age of six that have been assessed as eligible to receive services under the developmental delay criteria in the *Intellectually Disabled Persons Services Act 1986* as at 31 December 2004 was 2.

Community services: disability services — Colanda

4682. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Colanda as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Colanda as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 140.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$15.5M.
- (3) The number of people that received on-site programs was 68.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$0.5M.

Community services: disability services — Sandhurst

4683. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Sandhurst as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Sandhurst as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 48.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$5.3M.
- (3) All day programs are provided off-site.
- (4) There are no on-site day programs.

Community services: disability services — Kew Residential Services

4684. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Kew Residential Services as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to Kew Residential Services, which is under redevelopment, as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 326.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$42.5M.
- (3) The number of people that received on-site programs was 141.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$3.1M.

Community services: disability services — Plenty Residential Services

4685. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Plenty Residential Services as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Plenty Residential Services as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 98.

- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$ 9.7M.
- (3) The number of people that received on-site programs was 4.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$71,000.

Community services: disability services — Redlands

4686. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Redlands as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Redlands as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 11.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$0.9M.
- (3) There was no day program on the Redlands site in June 2004.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$0.

Community services: disability services — Woodbine

4687. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Woodbine as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Woodbine as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 9.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$0.8M.
- (3) The number of people that received on-site programs was 9.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$187,000.

Community services: disability services — Kindilan

4688. THE HON. BILL FORWOOD — To ask the Minister for Aged Care (for the Minister for Community Services): In relation to people with disabilities at Kindilan as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) What was the number of people in residence.
- (2) What was the total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department.
- (3) How many people received on-site day programs.
- (4) What was the total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In relation to people with disabilities at Kindilan as at 30 June 2004:

- (1) The number of people in residence was 36.
- (2) The total recurrent expenditure provided by the Department was \$2.5M.
- (3) The number of people that received on-site programs was 32.
- (4) The total expenditure in 2003–04 for on-site day programs was \$641,000.

