

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

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

**Tuesday, 7 February 2006**

**(Extract from book 1)**

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<sup>1</sup> Ind from 17 September 2004  
ALP from 10 November 2005

<sup>2</sup> Ind from 7 April 2005

<sup>3</sup> Ind Lib from 30 November 2005



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**Tuesday, 7 February 2006**

The **PRESIDENT** (Hon. M. M. Gould) took the chair at 2.03 p.m. and read the prayer.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! On the first day of the sittings the Parliament today acknowledges the land of the tribes and nations of the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

### ROYAL ASSENT

Messages read advising royal assent to:

**29 November 2005**

**Child Wellbeing and Safety Act**  
**Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security Act**  
**Duties and Land Tax Acts (Amendment) Act**  
**Environment Effects (Amendment) Act**  
**Investigative, Enforcement and Police Powers Acts (Amendment) Act**  
**Land Tax Act**  
**Mineral Resources Development (Brown Coal Royalties) Act**  
**Mines (Aluminium Agreement) (Brown Coal Royalties) Act**  
**Motor Car Traders and Fair Trading Acts (Amendment) Act**  
**Racing and Gambling Acts (Amendment) Act**  
**Road Safety and Other Acts (Vehicle Impoundment and Other Amendments) Act**  
**Superannuation Legislation (Governance Reform) Act**  
**Transport Legislation (Further Miscellaneous Amendments) Act**

**7 December 2005**

**Children, Youth and Families Act**  
**Health Professions Registration Act**  
**Veterans Act**  
**Water (Resource Management) Act**  
**Workplace Rights Advocate Act.**

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Member for Ivanhoe: conduct

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Local Government. Members of Parliament and local councils are expected to act in ways that are open and accountable. The member for Ivanhoe in the other place is now being investigated by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly over the acceptance of thousands of dollars from a community organisation he runs, which has operated its activities from his office and is in part funded by the Banyule City Council. I ask: has the minister received any briefing or other correspondence from her department regarding the use of Banyule ratepayers money to make payments to an election campaign fund for the member for Ivanhoe?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Local Government) — The opposition is at it again, using state Parliament to raise allegations for which it has not provided any substance in relation to both a member of the lower house and a councillor. If the Speaker, as is being alleged, is dealing with these matters, then I have every confidence that the Speaker will deal with them appropriately. I have received no information from the Speaker about this matter. I will check on whether my department or office has received any information about this matter.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I thank the minister for her answer, and I ask: will the minister undertake an investigation of Banyule council's contribution to campaign funds for the member for Ivanhoe relating to the inappropriate charging of community groups for use of his parliamentary electorate office?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Local Government) — The member is making allegations again about matters he is alleging have occurred. If I receive proper information about these matters, I will do what I always do, regardless of where the information comes from, in terms of having the matters referred to my department for examination. But at this time I am not aware of having received anything from the Leader of the Opposition about this matter.

#### **Commonwealth Games: Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre**

**Ms ROMANES** (Melbourne) — My question is to the Minister for Commonwealth Games. In recent days

there has been much media attention on Australian swimmers and their preparations for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games. I ask the minister to update the house on the Victorian government's preparations at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre for the games next month.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Commonwealth Games) — It gives me great pleasure to speak about our preparations for our Commonwealth Games, and I thank Ms Romanes for asking the question. We are only 36 days away from the biggest event ever to hit Victoria. I can tell opposition members are excited — they always are — but I am particularly excited.

I know a number of opposition members as well as government members inspected the facilities yesterday, and I am sure they went away impressed. It is hard not to be impressed when you see the magnificence of the facilities being prepared for the Commonwealth Games. Our infrastructure is in tiptop shape. The cabling works for the opening ceremony are being completed as we speak, and the athletics track has been uncovered. It looks absolutely spectacular. The William Barak Bridge was opened before Christmas. As well as that we have seen in recent times the Melbourne Cricket Ground used for the Boxing Day test. The track was uncovered after that, which is a compliment to everybody involved in curating at the MCG.

We have also seen at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre the pool preparations for the games going absolutely swimmingly! It is worth appreciating that the MSAC will host more than 20 per cent of all Commonwealth Games competitions, with the swimming, diving, table tennis, squash and — I know the opposition in particular enjoys this one — synchronised swimming. On 19 December last year the Premier officially opened the pool, and members of Parliament will have seen the fantastic facilities down there.

Let me say that while I have continuously talked up the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre — I know it is one thing for a member of Parliament or a minister to tell the world how great our facilities are — what is very impressive is that those who actually use the facilities say what a great facility it is. The swimmers recently said it is one of the best pools they have ever swum in; they said it is actually one of the world's fastest pools. If the world's best swimmers are saying that this is the world's best pool, you have to believe them.

Seven world records were broken throughout the course of the Australian swimming titles which were also Commonwealth Games qualifiers. Three records were broken by elite athletes with a disability, and it is worth appreciating that elite athletes with a disability will be swimming in the Commonwealth Games. Those national titles have been a fantastic testing event, and it is worth appreciating what a spectacular event they were.

I compliment those who have been able to run or operate the facility throughout the course of the pool's construction. That has not been easy. I also compliment the residents in and around the precinct, because they have had to endure interruptions to their daily routine with the construction works going on. A series of information guides were presented throughout the course of the centre's construction, and we will send out more information throughout the course of the Commonwealth Games.

This is a fantastic testament to the state of Victoria and to those with the technical expertise to deliver these facilities. Whether their events last for 11 seconds, 11 minutes, or 2 hours and 11 minutes, hopefully the athletes involved will be awarded gold across the course of the 11 days.

**Member for Melbourne West Province:  
conduct**

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Housing. Given that the Honourable Sang Nguyen has admitted to abusing the Cain government's shared home ownership scheme, designed to help low-income earners to own their own homes, will the minister advise what action she has taken to recover those funds that were obtained by the member contrary to the rules of the scheme?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Housing) — Not content with the Leader of the Opposition's previous question, now he is at it again in seeking to cast allegations against a member of this house. He will be well aware that the matters that he is referring to predate my tenure as minister, they predate this government, and they go some way back into previous governments of both political persuasions. My advice is that these matters have been dealt with by the director of housing appropriately and there is no course of action that is called for by me as Minister for Housing in this government.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I thank the minister for the answer, but I seek to elucidate what it is that that response actually means. It would seem to me that either the funds have been recovered or they have not been recovered. Therefore I ask: will the minister advise the house either to that effect or of what action she intends to take to investigate this abuse and further abuses of the scheme?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Housing) — My response means exactly what I said.

**Commonwealth Games: athletes village**

**Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA** (Melbourne West) — My question is to the Minister for Commonwealth Games, the Honourable Justin Madden. With the start of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games just over a month away, I ask the minister to provide the house with an assurance that the athletes village in Parkville will be completed and ready to offer the world's best athletes accommodation which will help them perform at their very best.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** (Minister for Commonwealth Games) — I compliment the member on her question, because I know how excited she is about the Commonwealth Games, as we all are. The Commonwealth Games village in Parkville will house close to 6000 athletes, appreciating there will be some at Bendigo because of the full-bore shooting to be staged there. The village will accommodate the athletes across the two weeks of the games. Approximately 6000 athletes will be housed in 155 permanent structures, 68 apartments, 14 townhouses and 115 cabins during the games.

**Hon. D. K. Drum** interjected.

**Hon. J. M. MADDEN** — Yes, athletes and officials. Thank you very much, Mr Drum, I appreciate that correction. There will be 6000 athletes and officials at the village.

I would like to compliment members who visited the Commonwealth Games village yesterday for taking the time out, showing an interest and being able to visit all of those sites. I think that reflects strongly on the interest of members of Parliament in the Commonwealth Games. It also reflects well on members of Parliament because they made their time available to do so. I thank them for making their time available.

I was at the site this morning to give the media the last glimpse of the village before it is locked down for security purposes. It is looking absolutely spectacular. We basically unveiled the last overlay features of the village this morning, which include the likes of the gymnasium, the polyclinic, the dining hall and the international zone — and the international zone is particularly important as it is where the athletes will come together, socialise and mix. The facility looks absolutely spectacular.

Along the state's themes we have designated each of the areas — we have given each of them an identity — across the village. Each of those residential areas has been given a name representing a part of Victoria: the Great Ocean Road, the Murray River, the Yarra Valley, the Little Desert, the goldfields and the high country. This is to help have a theme through the village so that when athletes are making their way around they will know where to go and will be able to reflect on the broader experiences they might wish to come back to after the Commonwealth Games.

A neighbourhood guide has gone out to all the residents to assist them in the lead-up to the games. An enormous amount of work has been done with the residents, and I would like to compliment all the officers of the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination, particularly the liaison officers who have basically knocked on the doors of the households around the village to inform people of what they need to know in relation to the imposition of the village on their lives.

As well as that I thank the community liaison committee, chaired by my parliamentary colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Volunteers and Commonwealth Games in another place. Representatives from the local community have worked on it in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. I understand that that committee is meeting for the final time next week. I compliment everybody on it for the goodwill they have brought to the table. Such committees have helped feed invaluable information back to us so we could prepare and be confident that our preparations are not only on track but also that they have minimised any disruption to the residents in that community.

I also like to thank Ms Romanes because I know she has worked very closely with many of the residents that she represents. I also thank Mr Jennings because the village is also in his seat. He has worked very closely with the residents to make sure that any imposition across the course of the games and in the lead-up to the games has been minimised and that people are fully aware of what

is required of them throughout the course of the Commonwealth Games.

This is probably the best village ever delivered for any games. I said the pool was going to be fantastic — and it is fantastic. I said the Melbourne Cricket Ground was going to be fantastic — and it is fantastic. I suspect the athletes will highly endorse this village as well.

### **Hazardous waste: Nowingi**

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Major Projects, Mr Lenders. As the minister is aware, the panel hearings on the government's proposal to place a toxic waste dump in the Mallee are set to begin on 27 March and will go for eight weeks. Given that our horticultural industries are having a terrible time and this is right in the middle of their harvest, will the minister agree to reschedule the hearings to allow horticulturalists time to get their crops off so that our communities can properly represent themselves at the hearings?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Major Projects) — I welcome Mr Bishop's ongoing interest and his question. I also welcome the ongoing consistency he has shown in this matter, unlike his newly found Nationals colleague, Mr Crisp, who has used this for political purposes. But Mr Bishop cannot have it both ways. Week after week in this place Mr Bishop has said that we need more time in the environment effects statement (EES) process for the long-term containment facility. Day after day he has come in here and said there needed to be more time. More time was given and, as you and the house will recall, President, at the intervention of the Premier the EES process was extended for four weeks to give more time for people to put information in. Now Mr Bishop is saying that because more time has been given somehow or other the government has erred on that.

The government is committed to having an EES process which lets the people of Sunraysia put submissions in, and many have. The government is also committed to having those submissions heard in the process. But as much as Mr Bishop may believe this is in my purview, as he well knows, having been in this place a lot longer than I have, planning panels are appointed not by the Minister for Major Projects but by the Minister for Planning in consultation with or under the jurisdiction of Planning Panels Victoria and certainly not under my direction as a minister.

I must digress here. To give Mr Bishop his due, at least he put in a submission on this, unlike members of the

Liberal Party — not a single member of the Liberal Party even expressed interest or bothered to put in a submission. Neither Mr Philip Davis, the Leader of the Opposition, who is known affectionately on our side now as Mr Brown Davis to distinguish him from Mr David Davis, whom we know as Mr Green Davis, nor Ms Lovell, who has been in the north-west preaching about this and putting out media statements, nor Mr Green Davis actually put in a submission to the EES process. I apologise, President, I will use their correct names. I am pleased that Mr Atkinson is sitting between the two gentlemen because it makes it easier.

Obviously Mr Bishop has issues here which the independent panel needs to look at. There is also a long period of time for people in Sunraysia and other parts of the state to make their submissions to the independent panel, which I am confident will be sitting not just in Mildura but in other places. I am confident that in the absolute spirit of the EES process that panel will want to hear from many of the people in Sunraysia who have views to put before it.

I conclude by saying that this government, unlike its predecessor, of which Mr Bishop was a member, takes these matters seriously and opens up scope for people to talk about the issue. Unlike the approach of the Liberal-Nationals coalition while they still were friendly to each other and before they were McGauranised or Julianised, whatever the correct term is — I remind Mr Bishop of his conspicuous silence during the time when the Kennett government was going to put waste into open landfill — this government is committed to reducing waste, cleaning waste and then putting it into a world-class, safe facility. That is my response to Mr Bishop. I welcome his ongoing interest.

### *Supplementary question*

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — Given the minister's answer, which as usual attempted to absolve him of any responsibility and also clearly pointed up his absolute lack of understanding of the horticultural industry in the Sunraysia area, I will try another tack. I ask as a supplementary question: will he, as Minister for Major Projects, instruct major projects, as the proponents of the project, not to proceed until the crops are harvested?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Major Projects) — Again I guess I am flattered in a sense by Mr Bishop's view of my capacity to deal with this planning process. I remind Mr Bishop that these hearings, which are conducted under the auspices of the Minister for Planning in the other place, go over a long period of

time. I am sure if this government were to say now to Mr Bishop that it would postpone the hearings until the grape harvest is over, Mr Bishop would come back with another reason at the end of the grape harvest to say why it should be put off again and again. I am confident that every grape grower in Sunraysia will, during the period of time available, have an opportunity to deal with this. If they do not, Mr Bishop knows the process is to approach the panel at the directions hearings and put his case to the panel then.

### **Building industry: workplace safety**

**Mr PULLEN** (Higinbotham) — My question is to the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC, Mr Lenders. In the light of the successful build-up to the Commonwealth Games can the minister advise the house of the recent workplace safety performance of the construction industry in Victoria?

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for WorkCover and the TAC) — I thank Mr Pullen for his question, and I know he has an ongoing interest in matters of construction given that he is a proud, paid up member of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, as he stated in this house on a previous occasion.

The numbers of deaths and injuries are down and safety is up in Victoria. I repeat, deaths and injuries are coming down and safety is going up in this state. That is happening for a number of reasons. The government is committed to improving the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The WorkCover administration is committed to improving the insurance system. The WorkSafe organisation is committed to enforcing that, and the trade union movement is prepared to stick up and bat for its members. In that environment and working collaboratively with employer associations we are bringing down deaths and injuries in the state and we are seeing safety improve.

This is at a time when the Commonwealth Games construction activity, as my friend Mr Madden has raised on a number of occasions, is speeding along in this state. We have some incredibly large major projects coming to term now to be ready for the largest event in the history of this state. Despite the enormous growth in construction activity and month after month of \$1 billion-plus construction activity, we have not seen a fatality on a construction site in Victoria for the last year. I do not lightly talk about that because any fatality is a terrible thing and in a sense you do not like talking about it. But we need to make the point that for the first time in the history of the state a year has gone past without a construction fatality. That is happening because people are working together to make their

workplaces safe and to address the hazards in this area. We have been very fortunate that that work has seen an improvement on our work sites over the last year. WorkSafe inspectors are playing a key role to make sure employers and employees know our occupational health and safety laws and carry them out.

Mr Atkinson has some very large shoes to fill with Mr Forwood having taken a step backwards in the chamber here. We must not forget there is a cause and effect here with this behaviour on work sites and the legislative and enforcement regimes and community attitudes. These things do not just happen. We have had debate after debate in this place about workplace safety. We have been told by those opposite that we have a heavy hand, we are intervening, we are doing unnecessary things and adding costs to business. I say to those opposite and to all the Victorian community, there is nothing that is going to reduce costs to business more than lack of injuries in the workplace. There is nothing more that is going to boost the economy of the state than safe and vibrant workplaces without any injury, let alone what it does to our social fabric to have people go to a workplace and then go home safe at night.

In this year of the Commonwealth Games, for which we have had an enormous amount of extra construction activity, I am delighted to be able to say in this house that we are seeing injuries and fatalities down, and that is a good thing for Victoria. In this Commonwealth Games year I am incredibly proud of that. I hope the opposition pays heed to that and looks with an open mind at future legislation. I am delighted to say that our aspiration is to make Victoria a better place to live, to work and raise a family, and they are things that matter to us. I can think of nothing more strongly. There are few things we think about more strongly than about achieving the objectives of safe workplaces without fatalities.

### **Bushfires: government response**

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Local Government, Ms Broad. Local government is the body that will be expected to clean up the aftermath of Victoria's recent bushfires, which will no doubt cost millions of dollars rather than the \$55 000 the Bracks Labor government has offered so far. I ask the minister what action she is taking to ensure that those councils affected by the recent devastating bushfires in Victoria are adequately funded to meet this impost.

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Local Government) — I welcome the question from the opposition about the

response to the recent bushfires and actions by the Bracks government to assist in the recovery process. As recently as yesterday, as a member of the bushfire recovery task force appointed by the Premier and chaired by the Treasurer, I, together with Mr Eren and two other members of the task force, met with three councils — the Greater Geelong City Council, Golden Plains Shire Council and Moorabool Shire Council — to discuss the impact on their communities of the fires at Anakie and the Brisbane Ranges. Over the next month the bushfire task force will be meeting with, visiting and taking submissions from a range of organisations, individuals and communities in relation to what practical things the Bracks government can do to assist with the recovery now that the emergency has passed.

I was very pleased to hear in those submissions about the high level of cooperation, particularly between the Country Fire Authority and employees of a range of government agencies in Victoria, including Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and also employees of other governments, including those of Tasmania and New South Wales, as well as volunteers who came from interstate to assist in this process.

The Bracks government has already taken action to ensure that communities and councils are being assisted immediately. The member will probably be aware of the process for councils to be funded from the emergency fund, which is administered by the Department of Treasury and Finance, in relation to the replacement of municipal assets, a process which goes through the shire engineer. A whole range of actions have already been taken. Yesterday I was pleased, in my capacity as Minister for Local Government, to provide some immediate assistance to the community house at Anakie, which effectively acted as the focal point for the immediate response, to assist them with their expenses and actions they might take in the recovery in the future.

This government is acting and has already acted, and it expects, in line with the Premier's announcement, certainly within the next month to report on all the actions the government will be taking, once it has heard from the affected communities about their priorities and the things they need to have done.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) — I thank the minister for her answer, but local communities and councils are meeting-out. They are sick of meetings. Because the bushfires that caused the most devastation

ignited in national parks and state forests before spreading to private land, responsibility lies squarely with the Bracks government as landlord. When will the money start to flow to councils whose areas have been ravaged by bushfires to enable them to continue their clean-up processes? Can the minister give a time line for when the money will start to flow?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Local Government) — As I indicated in my previous response, the government has already provided immediate funds, and there will be further funds.

**Hon. J. A. Vogels** interjected.

**Ms BROAD** — I can assure Mr Vogels that is not what communities were saying to me and to other members of the task force at yesterday's meeting — at which he was not present. I would also like to point out to the house that the member's comments and criticisms of the men and women who put themselves in danger to fight fires stand in marked contrast to those made by the Liberal member for South-West Coast in another place, who has praised firefighters and staff of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria for their work. The fact is that the claims made by the member in relation to these fires are quite wrong on all counts, and I for one, on behalf of the government, want to place on record our thanks to all of the people who fought these fires.

**Commonwealth Games: seniors travel**

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Eumemmerring) — My question is to the Minister for Aged Care, Mr Jennings. Can the minister advise the house of arrangements to provide Seniors Card holders with free travel in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games?

**Mr GAVIN JENNINGS** (Minister for Aged Care) — I thank Mr Somyurek for his question and for his concern about the wellbeing of older members of our community, particularly in the context of the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games. During the games some 4500 athletes from 71 countries will arrive in Melbourne. However, their travel requirements will pale into insignificance when compared to the degree of transport across the metropolitan area and across regional Victoria. We anticipate that during this time 250 000 free trips will be taken by 856 000 senior Victorians.

I am pleased to say that during the lead-up to the games we will be providing free transport. The lead-up to the games coincides with when we normally hold the Seniors Festival. However, this year senior Victorians

will have free travel for two important weeks during the course of the year. The first week will be in March, in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games. It will enable senior Victorians to participate in festivals, exhibitions and community events that are attached to the Commonwealth Games, including Festival Melbourne which starts on 5 March.

Not only will there be free travel during the life of the games for senior Victorians who happen to purchase tickets to any of the games events, but also, later in the first week of October — and aligned with the International Day of Older Persons — there will be another round of free travel right throughout Victoria so seniors can fully participate in the Seniors Festival, which will take place at the beginning of October. By that time — surprise, surprise in terms of the baby boomers! — another 100 000 Victorians will be over the age of 60. It is quite extraordinary to reflect on the fact that between now and October another 100 000 Victorians will turn 60. Happy birthday to them all. We will provide them with an opportunity to celebrate later in the year with free transport. In March this year — —

**Hon. Bill Forwood** interjected.

**Mr GAVIN JENNINGS** — Is Mr Forwood on his feet for a reason? He is desperate for attention; he goes to the back bench and he is on his feet already.

**Hon. Bill Forwood** — I turn 60 in October!

**Mr GAVIN JENNINGS** — Then you will be travelling in style! Mr Forwood should put aside his gold pass and use his Seniors Card for free travel. In fact all community members will be happy for him to be a fellow traveller during that event. That would be fantastic. In fact I look forward to travelling with Mr Forwood on that day. I will pay his fare just to make sure that we are fellow travellers during that important week at the beginning of October. So happy birthday in advance, but those who are already 60 will be able to get out and travel free in the first week of March. Free public transport in regional Victoria starts on 4 March and will last for the course of the week. From 5 to 12 March people in metropolitan areas will be able to go to all the fantastic exhibitions and events taking place in the lead-up to the games. It will be a great build-up for the games and a great opportunity for senior Victorians, particularly those who turn 60 on 1 October, to enjoy this great year.

## Housing: homelessness

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — My question is to the Minister for Housing, whose government has presided over a 10 per cent cut in spending on assistance for homelessness, despite the fact that homelessness in Victoria has risen by a staggering 14 per cent. I ask the minister: how many Victorians are currently homeless in the Melbourne central business district?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Housing) — I commence by being charitable and congratulating the member on her appointment to the new shadow portfolio of housing, and I am particularly pleased to have an opposition spokesperson for housing in this house for the first time since I have held the portfolio. However, I would suggest that the member has some distance to travel in catching up with what is actually happening in relation to funding for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness in Victoria.

The facts are that under the recently completed supported accommodation assistance program's intergovernmental agreement between the federal government and Victoria, Victoria has put in an extra \$14 million to make up for cuts by the federal government to funding for homeless people in this state, affecting all the agencies that provide support every night of the week not only in the Melbourne central business district but through the length and breadth of Victoria. Without the Victorian government stepping in to make up for cuts by the federal government, agencies like the Salvation Army and all the others that do such a great job would have had their funding cut.

As well, since the Bracks government came to office we have consistently increased our funding of homeless services in Victoria. We have had none of that increased funding matched in any shape or form by the federal government. There has been no recognition of our actions by the federal government.

The member is quite wrong in suggesting that some cut has occurred to funding for homelessness assistance through any action by the Bracks government. Quite the contrary, this has been an area where we can demonstrate — I am happy to provide the member with the figures — consistent increases in funding for homeless services.

There is no doubt that this is a very significant community problem that requires action not only by governments but by the whole community. It is a fact that now the largest single group of people affected by

homelessness is young people, in contrast to the stereotype often seen and viewed through the eyes of the public. I welcome any interest in and support for action in this area from the state Liberal opposition, even though we have seen the cruel cuts by the federal Liberal government.

*Supplementary question*

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — The minister is shamelessly relocating these people for the duration of the Commonwealth Games. How many homeless people does the minister anticipate will still be in the central business district in April 2006 — that is, after the Commonwealth Games?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Housing) — As I have explained, I have been very pleased to work with Victoria Police and all the agencies supplying services to homeless people in the areas of Melbourne and country Victoria that may be impacted upon by the Commonwealth Games and the influx of visitors seeking not only high-end accommodation but low-cost accommodation for people on a budget.

Part of that work has involved prebooking accommodation to make sure that the agencies that obtain that accommodation for people who need emergency accommodation do not have to pay more for it than they do at any other time. It is a commonsense action and one which I have been very pleased that this government, working with the agencies, has taken.

**Commonwealth Games: local government participation**

**Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM** (Koonung) — Can the Minister for Local Government inform the house of how the Bracks government is involving local government in the coming Commonwealth Games?

**Ms BROAD** (Minister for Local Government) — I thank the member for her question. I welcome a question from a member who has such a distinguished record in local government. I am very pleased to advise the house that local councils in Victoria are well and truly embracing the spirit of the Commonwealth Games with the wholehearted support of the Bracks government. Our support is strongly in line with our commitment to govern for all Victorians. We have provided funding to all 79 councils under the Getting Involved program, bringing the total funding to local councils for the Commonwealth Games to \$4.5 million. I congratulate the Minister for Commonwealth Games on the action he has taken to ensure that city and shire

councils across Victoria are engaging in and being supported to engage in these terrific opportunities.

The program funding has been distributed under four main categories: celebrations, infrastructure, local sporting heroes and, of course, Warming Up for the Games. The Warming Up for the Games opportunity has allowed up to 500 000 Victorians to get into the spirit of the games by taking part in the sport and fun activities offered by Victoria's 79 councils. Some 200 events have been organised not only in Melbourne but also in country towns in a whole range of locations from the beach to city parks and all are designed to encourage people to get physical in the best possible way in the lead-up to the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

More than 500 games-related activities will take place across Victoria as every municipality in the state shares in this \$4.5 million to celebrate the Commonwealth Games in ways determined by local communities. In addition councils have adopted a second team. Councils are showing their support for their adopted teams by hosting welcoming ceremonies for athletes, establishing international penpal programs between schools and organising displays of dance, film and music.

I am very pleased that all Victorians, and particularly our city and shire councils, are embracing the opportunities the games provide to ensure that not only will this be a world-class event but that there will be enduring benefits for all Victorians.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Answers**

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 2128, 2364, 2854, 4053, 4094, 4127, 4128, 4665, 4759, 4850, 4937, 5003, 5313, 5396, 5444, 6167, 6295–6356, 6367–9, 6373, 6376, 6382, 6385–87, 6390, 6391, 6394, 6397–6409, 6436–8, 6443, 6444, 6453, 6456, 6459, 6460, 6462–64, 6466, 6468, 6470, 6485–95, 6522, 6555, 6558, 6611, 6623–29, 6631–33, 6635, 6639, 6640, 6643, 6645, 6647, 6648, 6656, 6658, 6659, 6666, 6672, 6695–6788, 6790, 6798–6807, 6838, 6839, 6844, 6845, 6858–63, 6866, 6868, 6870, 6871, 6881–85, 6924–48, 6969–7006, 7017–19, 7035–43, 7045–55, 7085–87, 7092, 7093, 7102, 7105–19, 7133–45, 7252, 7264–67, 7269–72, 7274, 7276, 7277, 7281, 7282, 7287, 7366, 7367–71, 7373, 7374, 7377



## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Mecwa: achievements

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — I would like to commend an excellent aged care organisation in my province called Mecwa. I can see the Minister for Aged Care nodding in agreement with me. That organisation has just produced its annual report entitled *Striving to Achieve*. The report speaks about some of the issues Mecwa is concerned with, what it has produced and what it has delivered to the community. Mecwa provides home-care services, community-based programs, residential aged care accommodation, community housing, a volunteer service and the Mecwa shops.

I put on the record my commendation of Robin Syme, chairman of the board, and the professional and talented chief executive officer, Judith Congalton. The chairman's report states:

Mecwa's strength is its history and reputation as an industry leader in the aged, community care and disability services sector. In its 46th year, the Mecwa brand continues to be well regarded for the provision of innovative support and care solutions.

I am honoured that the organisation is in Monash Province. As I said before, the Minister for Aged Care and I are in agreement in our praise for this excellent service.

### Students: Western Port Province awards

**Hon. J. G. HILTON** (Western Port) — Each year I present an achievement award to a student at each of 10 secondary schools in my electorate. The awards recognise and encourage students who have achieved a level of excellence in a sport or other activity which is not usually recognised within the school community. Proficiency in baseball should be as highly regarded as proficiency in cricket. It is all too easy for young people to become discouraged from striving to achieve excellence when the activity is not recognised. Australia's first chess Grandmaster was Ian Rogers. His achievement was every bit as meritorious as the achievements of an Olympic gold medallist.

The winners of my award in 2005 were: Elisabeth Murdoch College, Rhiannon Leontini; Dromana Secondary College, Mitchell Mackenzie; Newhaven College, Sarah Joyce; Western Port Secondary College, Jazzmin Birtles; Pakenham Secondary College, Emily Prescott; Flinders Christian Community College, Matthew Charlesworth; Wonthaggi Secondary College, Victoria Wyckelsma; Koo Wee Rup Secondary

College, Kellie Brian; Mornington Secondary College, Bianca Ambroso; and Rosebud Secondary College, Jimmy Macarios.

I wish them all every success in the future and encourage them to continue in their particular field of endeavour.

### Bushfires: government response

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) — With the summer only half over, once again we are experiencing devastating bushfires across the state of Victoria. The January fires have so far claimed three lives and destroyed 130 000 hectares, not to mention the loss of private property such as houses, sheds and fencing. Stock losses have been enormous, native wildlife has been burnt to death and our native vegetation ravaged.

I pay tribute to our emergency services personnel and volunteers who continually put their own lives at risk to save others. They include members of the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, police, the Red Cross and service clubs and ambulance officers. I pay tribute also to the hundreds of volunteers, including farmers, who make available private equipment to help fight bushfires, the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Department of Primary Industries and private vets who are coordinating the management of stock losses and distributing the donations of fodder to properties where stock has survived. Once again, local government, as the tier of government closest to the people, is the first in line when natural disasters occur, providing heavy equipment, staff, resources et cetera in support of local communities.

I call on the Bracks government to implement natural disaster arrangements to ensure that assistance reaches those communities ravaged by bushfires in a more effective and faster way than is now occurring.

### Member for Sandringham: newsletter

**Mr PULLEN** (Higinbotham) — Residents in the Sandringham electorate received the latest junk mail from the Liberal Party in the guise of the November newsletter from the member for Sandringham in the other place, Mr Murray Thompson. No doubt residents in other electorates received that so-called newsletter, as five of the articles that appeared in Mr Thompson's publication also appeared in the stuff from the Liberal member for Brighton.

Mr Thompson's publication is riddled with typical Liberal Party diatribe, which bears little resemblance to the true position in Sandringham. Mr Thompson is

pictured inspecting a wall at an unnamed local school, with the quote in part:

... staff and hard-working students are being let down by inadequate maintenance of our schools.

I ask Mr Thompson: what have you done about it, or do you intend to refer them to me, as you did with matters such as volunteers for the Commonwealth Games?

Even worse, Mr Thompson claims credit for saving the Royal Avenue beach, when I also attended the residents rally — Mr Thompson needed the support of his deputy leader, the member for Warrandyte in the other place — and I agreed to lead a residents' delegation to the Minister for Environment, Mr Thwaites. Following the ensuing meeting, Minister Thwaites agreed with the residents' views and implemented their suggested strategy for the treatment of the beach and cliffs. Again the Bracks government has listened and acted. I say to members of the Liberal Party: if you must put out junk mail, please ensure it is accurate.

**Members statements interrupted.**

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Before I call the next speaker I wish to acknowledge the Honourable Tony McGrady, MP, the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, who is visiting the chamber today accompanied by the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie. Welcome.

**Members statements resumed.**

#### Silcraft Pty Ltd

**Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA** (East Yarra) — In my new role as spokesperson for manufacturing and export, I put on the record that on 2 February I had the opportunity of visiting the Silcraft factory with the future member for Mount Waverley, Mr Michael Gidley. When we were looking at the boardroom it was interesting to see that there was a picture of the black rod. I asked what that was about and was told that the factory I was at had made the black rod or a facsimile of it to celebrate the centenary of Parliament from 1851 to 1951, although I will have to refer to Dr Ray Wright's book, where I will get further clarification, I am sure.

It is interesting to visit Silcraft because, as many would be aware, it has been forced to close its doors. While 500 staff had been operating out of this 50-year-old Mount Waverley company, over the next 18 months it will be closing its doors. We now know that an extra

100 staff have left since the announcement last year and now they are down to around 300 staff. The sad fact is that because of the Bracks Labor government's continued imposition of draconian taxes on businesses it is being forced to close and go offshore. This is just another example of a manufacturing company in Victoria which is heading for doom and gloom. It is about — —

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

#### Elsie Mutton

**Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM** (Koonung) — I am delighted to have the opportunity to congratulate the winners of the City of Whitehorse's citizen and young citizen of the year awards, presented on Australia Day. Elsie Mutton was selected as the Whitehorse citizen of the year. Elsie, whom I know and respect, has worked tirelessly for Nunawading University of the Third Age, or U3A, for the last decade. Commencing as a student of U3A, Elsie went on to become the organisation's president for four years and is currently vice-president and course administrator, which is a full-time commitment but in a voluntary capacity. During her time as president, Elsie saw Nunawading U3A grow from 200 to 800 members. It is a very successful and well-run organisation which delivers great courses and social opportunities for its members. I am very happy that such a deserving and tireless worker for the Whitehorse community has been honoured by receiving this award.

#### Kathryn Lea

**Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM** — The young citizen of the year award recipient is equally deserving. Kathryn Lea became a mother at 16 and received much valuable assistance from the Whitehorse Family Access Network as she struggled to cope with life as a young single mum. So much did the organisation help her that for several years Kathryn has volunteered with the network, helping other young mums to cope. With her daughter, Mia, commencing school this year, Kathryn has applied to study early childhood development at university, which is a fantastic outcome for her and her daughter. Kathryn's volunteer work with the Family Access Network has empowered her. She has been a great role model for other young women who find themselves in a similar situation to hers.

I congratulate all nominees for the Whitehorse Australia Day awards and the council for continuing to recognise the great contributions — —

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

### **Cr David Feldman**

**Hon. C. A. STRONG** (Higinbotham) — Members will recollect that the Minister for Local Government sacked the Glen Eira City Council just months before the November 2005 council elections. Members will probably also recollect that on many occasions my colleague Mr Pullen got up in this house and said all sorts of terrible things about an organisation called RAGE, the Ratepayers Association of Glen Eira, and its president, David Feldman. What is absolutely fascinating of course is that David Feldman was elected to the Glen Eira council — in fact, he got one of the highest votes on record — and he is now the mayor of the Glen Eira council. I notice that today Mr Pullen was again attacking somebody — that is, the member for Sandringham. I say to Mr Pullen: keep going — because being attacked by Mr Pullen is a way to be elected to a very good position.

I congratulate Cr David Feldman, who is a wonderful mayor of Glen Eira and did an enormous amount of work in ensuring that Glen Eira was kept accountable. He should be congratulated on being mayor of Glen Eira.

### **Muslims: community attitudes**

**Mr SCHEFFER** (Monash) — Yesterday's *Age* reported on research conducted by Dr Abe Ata of the Australian Catholic University into the attitudes of Australian schoolchildren towards Muslims. The study suggests that a high proportion of middle and senior secondary school students indicate that they have negative feelings about Muslims. Most students said that they had not learnt much about Islam at school and that they felt that Muslims were the most negatively stereotyped of all minorities. Those findings are deeply disturbing. That level of negativity inevitably makes life difficult for many Muslims.

Danish newspaper cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed have ignited an intense debate about the limits and responsibilities of free speech. Violence can never be condoned, and the repulsive, anti-Semitic banners carried through London that read, 'Be prepared for the real Holocaust' and, 'Europe, your 9/11 is on its way' must be unequivocally condemned. But it is also important for us to understand that Muslim members of our community live under considerable pressure and are affected by these overseas events. Our fellow Muslim citizens need our support.

Voices in the media have characterised the offence taken by many Muslims to attacks on Islam itself as an overreaction. Calls from the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils not to publish the cartoons in Australia are seen by some as undermining freedom of speech. Regrettably some cartoonists and journalists believe freedom of expression overrides minority sensitivities. Media workers have a social responsibility to fairly and fearlessly report on issues but they also have a responsibility to foster intercommunal trust and must recognise the dangers of self-indulgently trampling on what people hold most valuable.

### **Bushfires: Moondarra**

**Hon. P. R. HALL** (Gippsland) — Today I want to thank and congratulate those involved in responding to the recent Moondarra fire in Gippsland. This fire burnt some 15 000 hectares and raged in horrific conditions with days of temperatures above 40 degrees and very strong winds. Thankfully the fire was contained in large part to public land but many houses and some private property came under severe threat on a number of days during the course of the fire.

I want to congratulate property owners initially. The people I was able to visit since the fire demonstrated that they had made thorough preparations in determining their fire survival plans and had heeded the messages sent to them through the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and other organisations over a number of years. The fact that other than a couple of sheds, there was no real house damage in the fires is a tribute to the people who had put in place their own fire survival plans.

I would also like to thank the efforts of the professional firefighters through the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria. Again the people who I came into contact with demonstrated the professionalism with which they exercised their work. I would also like to thank the many volunteers, members of the CFA and other organisations, both locally and from other parts of the state. It is a pleasure to see a string of CFA tankers rushing down the highway to help with the local effort. But I also wish to thank the timber industry, municipal services and ABC radio for their excellent contribution in responding to these fires.

### **Bushfires: volunteers**

**Mr SMITH** (Chelsea) — In the spirit of bipartisanship I, too, would like to congratulate the 10 000 Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers who fought the bushfires in January, along with the 1600 employees made up of the 1379 Department of

Sustainability and Environment, and Parks Victoria staff, along with 297 interstate volunteer firefighters who were a welcome addition to Victoria's resources. Additional staff of the Country Fire Authority, Department of Primary Industries and Melbourne Fire Brigade allowed CFA firefighters to concentrate on fighting the country fires.

I think it is important to mention that as a result of the good work done by both the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Environment, the CFA and other volunteers had a great deal of appropriate equipment on hand to fight these fires. On 26 January they had 17 tankers, 89 slip-on units, 9 bulldozers and 53 tactical aircraft fighting the major fires. Credit ought to go to the government for providing these extra resources to the volunteers who needed as much assistance and equipment as possible to do the job of protecting citizens in Victoria and our assets. Unfortunately three people lost their lives during the course of these fires, and over 40 houses and 300 buildings were lost as well as livestock and land, but I congratulate all for their efforts.

### **Rabbits: control**

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — I rise today to make the point of how stubborn and impractical governments can be, particularly on rural issues. Firstly the policy on locusts ignored treating all land the same, which therefore let the locusts get away and decimate crops and pastures.

The government now has decided that oats are better than carrots in rabbit eradication campaigns. I hear that the officer in charge of the statewide baiting campaign has said, 'Oats are just as good. Rabbits will eat them just as readily and may find them even more palatable'. This is absolute nonsense. Any practising farmer would know, and I have seen from practical experience — and if you talk to any experienced Landcare facilitator, the story is the same — that carrots are the best.

Our Landcare groups are really switched on and they would be prepared to get the carrots and use their own machines to dice them if the government would supply an officer to treat the carrots. But the answer was, 'No, you must conform'.

The next question was, 'We, as farmers and Landcare people, have chemical management certificates. Can we train one of our members to apply the 1080?'. Again the answer was no.

I appeal to the government, the minister and the department to get a bit of commonsense and bring

carrots back into the rabbit eradication program so we can finish off the job calicivirus did so well.

### **Half Moon Caravan Park: community project**

**Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA** (Melbourne West) — I want to let the house know how delighted I was to attend and make a community strengthening funding announcement for a pilot project at the Half Moon Caravan Park in my electorate of Melbourne West. This is a partnership project between the state government, Hobsons Bay City Council and the Salvation Army.

The caravan park has a shopfront that has been quite derelict and run down. It has recently been renovated and work will be done with the local community and a group of highly disadvantaged residents to provide support for people who live at the caravan park. Professionals, specialists within the western region, will set themselves up at the shopfront to assist the residents who want to move from the caravan park to more appropriate and sustainable housing. They will also provide specialist programs for homework for the young people who live in the caravan park, some leadership training, as well as skills development and job search programs. I wish to congratulate the mayor of Hobsons Bay, Carl Marsich, and Cr MaryAnne Lindsay, who is the councillor for that — —

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

### **Bushfires: emergency services**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Jika Jika) — I, too, would like to pay tribute to the outstanding performance of Victoria's emergency services during the recent spate of bushfires. The men and women of Victoria's emergency services, many of them volunteers, including my caucus colleagues in the other place, the member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield, and the member for Yan Yean, Danielle Green, regularly put their lives on the line for the communities they serve. More than 4000 firefighters and many more supporting volunteers fought fires all over Victoria in extreme and volatile conditions.

I would like to express my condolences to the family and friends of Country Fire Authority volunteer Trevor Day, captain of Campbell's Creek CFA brigade, who lost his life protecting his community. I would also like to pass on my condolences to the family and friends of Malcolm and Zeke Wilson, who died in their car during the bushfires near Hall's Gap in the Grampians.

These deaths remind all Australians of the dangers our emergency services people face. Whilst I realise that the bushfire season has not yet passed, on behalf of my

electorate I wish to thank all of the volunteers for the service they provide to our community and to wish all of them continued safety during the continuation of the bushfire season. I would also like to congratulate the government on the establishment of a special ministerial task force, chaired by the Treasurer, which will make funds available to fire-affected communities.

Whilst I recognise that financial assistance cannot help to make up for lost homes and loved ones, I pray it will help to ease the burden somewhat.

## PETITIONS

### Youth: Ardeer residential facility

Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the state government withdraw from constructing a residential care facility for youth at 44 Rockbank Road, Ardeer, as the residents of Ardeer strongly object to its construction in their neighbourhood and ask that a more appropriate location be sought for this facility (285 signatures).

Laid on table.

### Disability services: language disorder program

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the state government immediately reinstate the severe language disorder funding program, thereby improving Victorian children with autism, Asperger's syndrome or other language disorders access to quality speech pathology (9 signatures).

Laid on table.

### Housing: supported accommodation

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the state government act immediately to resolve the shortage of shared supported accommodation facilities for disabled adults in the Goulburn Valley and north-east Victoria (240 signatures).

Laid on table.

### Hazardous waste: Nowingi

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the state government immediately withdraw its plan for transporting waste along the Calder

Highway and further withdraw its proposal to store toxic waste at Nowingi and explore an alternative, safer and more economically and environmentally feasible storage site within 100 kilometres of Melbourne (266 signatures).

Laid on table.

## SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

### *Alert Digest No. 1*

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) presented *Alert Digest No. 1* of 2006, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Budget estimates 2005–06

The Clerk, pursuant to the Parliamentary Committees Act, presented report, together with minutes of evidence.

## OMBUDSMAN

### Handling, storage and transfer of prisoner property in Victorian prisons

The Clerk, pursuant to the Ombudsman Act, presented report.

## BUDGET UPDATE

### Report 2005–06

The Clerk, pursuant to the Financial Management Act, presented report.

## AUDITOR-GENERAL

### Results of 30 June 2005 financial statement and other audits

The Clerk, pursuant to the Audit Act, presented report.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Labour hire

**The Clerk, pursuant to the Parliamentary  
Committees Act, presented government response.**

## ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

### Sustainable communities

**The Clerk, pursuant to the Parliamentary  
Committees Act, presented government response.**

## PAPERS

### Laid on table by Clerk:

Altona Memorial Park —

Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report for the period 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005.

Beechworth Health Service —

Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 2004–05.

Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee —  
Report, 2004–05.

Chiropractors Registration Board of Victoria —

Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Minister's report of receipt of 2004–05 report.

Commonwealth Games Arrangements Act 2001 —  
Commonwealth Games Designated access area, Venue and  
Project Orders, pursuant to section 18 of the act (23 papers).

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 —

Minister's order of 10 January 2006 giving approval for  
the granting of a lease at Mount Warrenheip Flora  
Reserve (three papers).

Minister's order of 20 December 2005 giving approval  
for the granting of a lease at Mentone and Mordialloc  
Beach Park Reserve (three papers).

EastLink Project Act 2004 — Statements of Variation,  
pursuant to section 21(3) of the Act (three papers).

Fawkner Crematorium and Memorial Park —

Minister's report of failure to submit report for the  
period 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005 within the  
prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report for the period 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005  
(two papers).

Food Safety Council — Report, 2004–05.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 —

Notice pursuant to section 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to  
Statutory Rule No. 151/2005.

Notice pursuant to section 32(4) in relation to the  
Building Code of Australia 2005.

Keilor Cemetery Trust —

Minister's report of failure to submit report for the  
period 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005 within the  
prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Minister's report of receipt of report for the period  
1 January 2004 to 30 June 2005.

Melbourne City Link Act 1995 —

City Link and Extension Projects Integration and  
Facilitation Agreement Thirteenth Amending Deed,  
21 December 2005, pursuant to section 15B(5) of the  
Act (nine papers).

Exhibition Street Extension Ninth Amending Deed,  
21 December 2005, pursuant to section 15D(6) of the  
Act (seven papers).

Melbourne City Link Twenty-first Amending Deed,  
21 December 2005, pursuant to section 15(2) of the Act  
(nineteen papers).

Orbost Regional Health —

Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report  
within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 2004–05 (two papers).

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

Alpine Planning Scheme — Amendment C17.

Bass Coast Planning Scheme — Amendments C6, C38  
and C54.

Bayside Planning Scheme — Amendment C37 Part 1.

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Amendment C42.

Brimbank Planning Scheme — Amendments C60 and  
C71.

Casey Planning Scheme — Amendments C67 and C78.

Darebin Planning Scheme — Amendments C10 Part 2,  
C45, C47, C53, C55 and C66.

East Gippsland Planning Scheme — Amendment C48.

French Island and Sandstone Island Planning Scheme — Amendment C1.

Gannawarra Planning Scheme — Amendment C15.

Glenelg Planning Scheme — Amendments C17 Part 1 and C28.

Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme — Amendments C61, C67 and C69.

Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme — Amendment C50.

Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Amendments C54, C55, C57 and C67.

Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — Amendments C36 and C38.

Hume Planning Scheme — Amendments C45 Part 1, C45 Part 2 and C61.

Indigo Planning Scheme — Amendments C20 and C25.

Kingston Planning Scheme — Amendments C25, C46 Part 1 and C56.

Latrobe Planning Scheme — Amendment C43.

Manningham Planning Scheme — Amendments C26 and C48.

Maroondah Planning Scheme — Amendment C44.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendments C60 Part 1A, C104, and C114.

Mitchell Planning Scheme — Amendment C27.

Moira Planning Scheme — Amendment C10.

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Amendments C49 and C63.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendments C38 and C48.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendments C55 and C83.

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme — Amendment C30.

Nillumbik Planning Scheme — Amendments C11 and C28.

Northern Grampians Planning Scheme — Amendment C03.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendments C29 and C43.

Queenscliffe Planning Scheme — Amendment C17.

Stonnington Planning Scheme — Amendments C32, C38, C48 and C50.

Strathbogie Planning Scheme — Amendment C22.

Surf Coast Planning Scheme — Amendment C15 Part 1.

Swan Hill Planning Scheme — Amendment C20.

Victoria Planning Provisions — Amendments VC35, VC36 and VC37.

Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Amendments C56, C58 and C68.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Amendments C53 Part 1 and C64.

Wodonga Planning Scheme — Amendments C27 and C35.

Wyndham Planning Scheme — Amendment C74.

Yarra Planning Scheme — Amendment C43 Part 1.

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendments C46 and C49.

Rail Corporations Act 1996 — Order in Council of 13 December 2005, pursuant to Section 38C of the Act.

Rural Northwest Health —

Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Report, 2004–05.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Adoption Act 1984 — No. 130/2005 (in lieu of that tabled on 15 November 2005).

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 — No. 160/2005.

Charities Act 1978 — No. 141/2005.

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — No. 172/2005.

County Court Act 1958 — Nos. 167 and 168/2005.

Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 — No. 151/2005.

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — Nos. 131 (in lieu of that tabled on 15 November 2005) and 158/2005.

Estate Agents Act 1980 — No. 169/2005.

Firearms Act 1996 — No. 173/2005.

Fisheries Act 1995 — No. 150/2005.

Food Act 1984 — No. 143/2005.

Land Tax Act 2005 — No. 178/2005.

Legal Profession Act 2004 — Nos. 149 and 152/2005.

Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 — Nos. 170 and 171/2005.

Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 — No. 159/2005.

- Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — Nos. 165 and 166/2005.
- Marine Act 1988 — No. 154 and 155/2005.
- National Parks Act 1975 — No. 142/2005.
- Planning and Environment Act 1987 — No. 2/2006.
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 — No. 3/2006.
- Police Regulation Act 1958 — No. 156/2005.
- Public Administration Act 2004 — No. 174/2005.
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 — No. 4/2006.
- Retirement Villages Act 1986 — No. 162/2005.
- Road Safety Act 1986 — Nos. 145, 176 and 177/2005 and 1/2006.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Nos. 146, 153, 157 and 161/2005.
- Supreme Court Act 1986 — No. 148/2005.
- Supreme Court Act 1986 — Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — No. 147/2005.
- Transport Act 1983 — Nos. 144, 164 and 175/2005.
- Transfer of Land Act 1958 — No. 163/2005.
- Water Act 1989 — No. 5/2006.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —
- Ministers' exception certificates under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 142, 146 to 148, 153, 157, 163 and 165 to 168/2005 and No. 2/2006.
- Ministers' exemption certificates under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 143 to 145, 149, 152, 155, 156, 160, 162, 169 to 172, 174, 176 and 177/2005 and Nos. 1 and 5/2006.
- Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 — Minister's request for the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to investigate the Goolengook Forest, pursuant to section 16(1)(a) of the Act.
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group —
- Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.
- Report, 2004–05 (two papers).
- West Wimmera Health Service —
- Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.
- Report, 2004–05.
- Yarram and District Health Service —
- Minister's report of failure to submit 2004–05 report within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.
- Report, 2004–05 (three papers).
- Proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following Acts:
- Firearms (Further Amendment) Act 2005 — Sections 3(1) (other than sections 3(1)(a), (1)(c) and (1)(d)), 6(4), (6) and (7), 12(2) (other than section 12(2)(a)) and 12(3), 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30(2), 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 55, 57, 58, 61(1) and (2), 62(1) and (2), 66 and Part 4 — 1 January 2006 (*Gazette No. G51, 22 December 2005*).
- Higher Education Acts (Amendment) Act 2005 — Sections 114(2) and (3), 122(2), 123 and 125 — 22 December 2005 (*Gazette No. G50, 15 December 2005*).
- House Contracts Guarantee (Amendment) Act 2005 — 1 February 2006 (*Gazette G4, 25 January 2006*).
- Legal Profession Act 2004 — Remaining provisions — 12 December 2005 (*Gazette No. G48, 1 December 2005*).
- Legal Profession (Consequential Amendments) Act 2005 — 12 December 2005 (*Gazette No. G48, 1 December 2005*).
- National Parks (Otways and Other Amendments) Act 2005 — Remaining provisions of Part 2 and Part 3 (except section 20) — 11 December 2005 (*Gazette No. G49, 8 December 2005*).
- Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005 — Part 1, Division 5 of Part 2, Part 3 (except section 30), Part 7 and Part 8 (except section 65) of that Act and Schedule 1 — 1 February 2006 (*Gazette No. G3, 19 January 2006*).
- Primary Industries Acts (Amendment) Act 2005 — Section 10 — 2 February 2006 (*Gazette No. G4, 25 January 2006*).
- Primary Industries Legislation (Further Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2004 — Sections 30, 35 and 36 — 2 February 2006 (*Gazette No. G4, 25 January 2006*).
- Property (Co-ownership) Act 2005 — 1 February 2006 (*Gazette No. G3, 19 January 2006*).
- Retirement Villages (Amendment) Act 2005 — Sections 12, 14 and 16 — 30 January 2006 (*Gazette No. G50, 15 December 2005*).
- Transport Legislation (Further Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2005 — Sections 9, 11 and 12 — 13 December 2005 (*Gazette No. S254, 13 December 2005*).
- Water (Resource Management) Act 2005 — Part 1 and sections 4, 11 and 34 — 15 December 2005 (*Gazette No. G50, 15 December 2005*).



**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Sessional orders**

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — By leave, I move:

That sessional orders 2, 3 and 5 be suspended to the extent necessary to enable general business to take precedence of all other business for 3 hours following statements on reports and papers during the sitting of the Council on Thursday, 9 February 2006.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE****Establishment**

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I seek your guidance, President. I seek to move, by leave, that the motion being circulated in my name be proceeded with without my reading it out.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Ms Hadden** — Leave refused, President.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I ask the minister to read the motion.

**Mr LENDERS** — By leave, I move:

That the sessional orders of the Council, adopted on 26 February 2003 and amended on 31 March 2004 and 22 March 2005, be further amended as follows:

1. After sessional order 41 insert:

**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE****Establishment**

42. The Council will appoint a Legislation Committee.

**Function**

43. The function of the committee is to consider in detail a bill or series of related bills referred to the committee by the Council and to report to the Council on the committee's consideration of the bill, which may include any recommendations for amendments to the bill(s).

**Membership**

44. (1) The committee will consist of six members, not being ministers, appointed by resolution of the Council. The membership of the committee must, so far as reasonably practicable, be proportional to party, minority group or independent membership in the Council.

- (2) A vacancy is to be filled —

- (a) by an appointment under subclause (1) — —

**Ms Hadden** — On a point of order, President, I refused leave for the motion to be debated in the chamber. You, President, asked if leave was granted, and I said leave was refused.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I asked whether leave was granted and leave was granted. The minister then asked for leave not to read the motion. That was when I thought Ms Hadden had denied leave, but Ms Hadden is saying that she denied leave for the motion to be debated now.

**Ms Hadden** — That is correct.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I have already ruled that leave was granted. The second request for leave, to forgo the reading of the motion, was denied. The minister is now reading the motion. I believe I have already ruled on that.

**Hon. W. R. Baxter** — On the point of order, President, I acknowledge there is perhaps a difficulty here, but let me just point out that from my perspective, and from that of those who are sitting at this end of the chamber, at the time this was all happening there was some discussion going on between the Leader of the Government and those at the table. When you, President, asked if leave was granted, you looked only, if I might say so, to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and not down to this end of the chamber. What was actually occurring was a little unclear to us down here. In those circumstances Ms Hadden has a point in saying that was her full intention. She may have missed the exact opportunity to refuse leave.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I thank the Honourable Bill Baxter for that clarification. That happens from time to time, if there is a bit of discussion going on at this end of the chamber. Under the standing orders if a member denies leave, then leave is automatically denied. Therefore the motion goes on notice for tomorrow and cannot be debated today.

**Leave refused.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Alpine National Park: bridle and walking tracks**

**Hon. E. G. STONEY** (Central Highlands) — My matter is for the Minister for Environment in the other place, the Honourable John Thwaites. Early in January I went for a week's ride across the high country with the mountain cattlemen. It was a protest; the cattlemen were protesting against the government taking the cattlemen's licences and taking their families connection with the land that goes back 170 years. On the way we met a lot of horseriders and bushwalkers. Apart from the protest, the topic of conversation was always the same — the terrible state of the bridle and walking tracks in the Alpine National Park.

Last year during two major storms many trees came down in the Alpine National Park. Since then I acknowledge that the government has cleaned up the roads and the four-wheel-drive tracks, but almost nothing has been done with the walking and bridle tracks to open them up after the storms. Many of them are covered with a lot of storm damage and it is very hard to get through. I will list a few of the tracks. There is the Howqua River bridle and walking track; the Bindaree–Mount Howitt Spur track, the Barry Saddle track, the Macalister Springs–Zeka Spur original bridle track, the Frys to Jamieson Hut via the Lick Hole track — the list goes on and on.

I know of at least one serious accident on the Mount Howitt Spur, which involved a friend of mine who was trying to negotiate a lot of fallen trees on that track, and I have heard of other horse groups that have had a lot of trouble trying to get through, especially on the Barry Saddle. They have been held up for hours, tangled up in fallen timber. The Barry Saddle was a road but now it is closed.

It is very important that these walking and bridle tracks are reopened to walkers and horseriders. I point out that the most efficient way to do this is to engage contractors with packhorses that can carry in chain saws and crowbars and get right into some of these very difficult and narrow tracks to get the fallen trees off the tracks and make them safe. I ask the minister to urgently instigate a program to have all walking tracks in the Alpine National Park checked, cleared and especially made safe for the public.

### **Fruit fly: control**

**Hon. W. R. BAXTER** (North Eastern) — I wish to raise a matter for reference to the Minister for Agriculture in another place. It goes to the issue of a fruit fly outbreak in home gardens in north-eastern

Victoria, especially in places like Wodonga, Rutherglen and Wahgunyah. I want to commend officers of his department for the baiting programs which they are conducting, particularly in Rutherglen and Wahgunyah, and I think also in Wangaratta, but I am concerned that there does not seem to be similar work being done in Wodonga where many home gardeners take a lot of pride in their gardens and their fruit trees, and they are finding a great deal of disappointment that there is some evidence of fruit fly in the locality this season.

A group there formed themselves into an organisation some years ago. They conduct their own baiting programs at their own expense with some success. It is being said around the town — and I cannot vouch for the veracity of this statement at all — that the reason Wodonga has not been baited by departmental officers is because fruit fly is at large in Albury and the New South Wales government does nothing about it, and therefore it seems pointless to do it in Wodonga. That does not seem to be a particularly valid argument to me.

I ask the minister if he could advise me why Wodonga is not being given more attention. If it is for the reason that I have outlined, will he take it up with his New South Wales colleagues with the view that we might have in Albury-Wodonga some cross-border cooperation to address this problem, as we do with so many other issues, health and otherwise?

We are well aware of the great value of the fruit industry to the state of Victoria and the nation as a whole in exports. Fruit fly is a very dangerous pest. It sends all sorts of messages to our customers overseas and they understandably get very nervous about it. It is a pest which can be eradicated with a bit of concentrated effort. It seems to me rather peculiar that the large urban area of Wodonga is not being included in the eradication efforts, and I would like some attention given to it.

### **Cardinia: mayor**

**Hon. J. A. VOGELS** (Western) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Local Government, Ms Broad. It concerns Cardinia Shire Council and the actions of Cr Ronald who is presently the mayor. Cr Ronald has substantial interests in a parcel of land undergoing extensive subdivision as part of the Heritage Springs Estate. As an executor of the estate of P. B. Ronald, Cr Ronald and the other executors receive payments from the developer in accordance with the contract of sale — some thousands of dollars per lot sold.

On 22 May 2004 council advertised tenders for construction of approximately 730 metres of road and

drainage in Henry Road, Pakenham. This road forms part of the southern boundary of the property being subdivided. On 11 June tenders closed. Eleven persons tendered. A draft report was distributed to councillors. One of the tenderers was Tarmac Civil Construction Pty Ltd. On 16 June 2004 Mark Cockburn, director of Tarmac, was contacted by Cr Ronald by telephone. Cr Ronald informed him that he was not the lowest tenderer for the construction of Henry Road but was very close, and that he would put the wheels in motion to influence other councillors to try to ensure that Tarmac's contract was successful.

Due to time constraints, I have documentation here that I will hand to the Minister for Local Government later on. However, Cr Ronald has breached the Local Government Act by not disclosing that he leaked confidential information and had pecuniary interests. Cr Ronald also has the rates for his private home — many thousands of dollars — paid by Krastoy Pty Ltd, a business entity of Parklea Developments, the principal developer of the Heritage Springs estate, which he also failed to declare.

The action I seek from the minister is to investigate this blatant disregard for the Local Government Act. It is my understanding that this councillor has been reported 13 times for investigation to the office of local government with no response. This brings the whole of local government into disrepute.

### **Agriculture: Sunraysia grants**

**Hon. B. W. BISHOP** (North Western) — My adjournment issue is directed to the Premier. The action I request is immediate financial assistance to horticulturalists in Sunraysia. I have never seen things so tough in the industry, particularly for dried fruit, wine grapes and citrus, which make up a huge part of the region's economy. Our wine grape growers have had their contracts cancelled, suspended or not renewed by some wineries. When that is added to reduced prices, which in some cases are below the costs of production, it shows the huge pressure that is on our growers. Another example is the dried fruit industry — a proud industry that started Sunraysia off and has been the backbone of the area for many years. The fruit is ready to come off but we find the packers only offering prices that are unsustainable and will drive the industry into the ground. Citrus is struggling with market access, and of course all sectors are battling cheap imports.

What do we do? There is no doubt these industries have a heap of ideas on how they can readjust, reset and put into place the structural changes that can and will see these industries survive and prosper. The main issue is

to maintain and sustain our people while this happens, so we must have some short-term assistance to get through. Following industry briefings — and I thank those industries for that — it is clear we need a swift assistance package that has a number of components.

One component is the provision of cash grants up to \$20 000 such as were provided to farms in drought conditions in 2002. This would be a practical way of allowing our farmers some cash to pay pickers, to pay water and municipal rates and to pay for chemicals and fuel to finish the harvest.

The next component is exceptional circumstances funding — and exceptional circumstances they are. Anyone who doubts that should have a look, sit down and talk to those in the industries and to the growers to get the picture. To that end I have written to the Minister for Agriculture in another place requesting that resources be made available to Sunrise 21, an organisation that by utilising world-class satellite digital imaging and conducting a grower survey could provide hard data to support the state in applying to the commonwealth for exceptional circumstances funding. I repeat that I have never seen it so tough. It is a crisis, and without assistance our horticultural industry and our communities will be decimated.

The other component is to get some more flexibility into the Farm Help program. Although that is a commonwealth program the state can and should advocate for changes.

During the briefings we found that New South Wales and Western Australia have farm debt mediation models that have statutory support and are invaluable for growers when negotiating with their banks. Again such direct assistance when growers sit across the table from their financiers would be invaluable.

The action I require from the Premier is to immediately put in place those short-term assistance packages so our industries can draw breath and proceed with the actions that will maintain their viability and sustainability into the future.

### **Planning: Beacon Cove development**

**Hon. ANDREA COOTE** (Monash) — My question is for the Minister for Planning in another place. It has to do with the Beacon Cove precinct, which is in my electorate. The precinct is vibrant, attractive and invigorating to be in, and it is just a few kilometres from the central business district. Beacon Cove, together with Princes Pier and St Kilda, is

frequently used in the glossy spin brochures that are published by the Bracks government on a regular basis.

During the upcoming Commonwealth Games the precinct will become a focus for our city. The residents of Beacon Cove are great advocates for the precinct, Melbourne, the Commonwealth Games and, indeed, Victoria. They will be great hosts to anyone who visits the precinct during the games. Some significant improvements are still required, notably to Princes Pier, which is an eyesore. It has become a focus of vandalism. Most recently a car was driven through the locked gates to the end of the pier, which collapsed into the water. This is just one of many instances of vandalism in this area. It is just not acceptable.

In 2004 the then Minister for Planning in the other place in the other place, Mary Delahunty, established a Beacon Cove Precinct Committee, which was asked to advise on the area. The committee was very enthusiastic and met more than 24 times. It came up with 14 recommendations which dealt with Princes Pier, Waterfront Place and Beach Street between Bay Street and Princes Street. I have received a letter from Michael Blyth, who is a member of this committee. The problem with the committee is that it has met and done all the things it was asked to do — it has come up with recommendations and put in a report — but nothing has happened. The reality is that here we have this government again putting in place all the procedures, having the meetings, doing the reports, with more submissions and recommendations going to it, but what has happened? A whole lot of nothing, absolutely nothing.

In the interim the people who are known within the community to be on this committee have been approached by several people. They have no idea of what is happening. The committee was supposed to have reported and action was supposed to have been taken. This government is going to be expecting an enormous amount from the people who live there, but it is not a two-way street. It is a one-way street. The Bracks government is happy to use them but is not happy to help them. I ask the minister when he will release this vital report and do something about the Beacon Cove precinct.

### **Bushfires: Grampians**

**Hon. DAVID KOCH** (Western) — My matter is for the Premier. It concerns the devastating fires that besieged the Grampians National Park and the surrounding farming community for over a week from 19 January 2006. In its attempt to appease the green vote the government has failed all those who live in or

near Crown reserves throughout Victoria. If the strategic planning policy does not accommodate regular fuel reduction schedules, this government will rightly be seen as an environmental vandal. Not only was the flora and fauna of the magnificent Grampians decimated by the destructive forces of the fire but the livelihoods of many nearby farmers were seriously affected by the loss of livestock, pasture and fodder, not to mention the loss of fencing, outbuildings and, in too many cases, family homes. In addition to these losses many tourist operators and other smaller rurally based industries have been disastrously affected. The short-term outlook of these operators is bleak to say the least. At least 20 people employed in tourism activities have already lost their jobs as a consequence of the fires.

Along with my parliamentary colleagues, I witnessed at first hand the destruction caused by the fires in the national park and surrounding regions. We were given extensive briefings by Ararat Rural City Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council, municipal emergency coordinators and personnel from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian Farmers Federation as well as fire controllers at the Halls Gap staging centre. Personnel from the Department of Sustainability and Environment showed us the extensive destruction to public and private property at Pomonal, Moyston, Mount William and Willaura. I extend my personal thanks to all agency personnel and local residents who shared their experience and losses. Repeatedly land-holders expressed their concern about the cost and inequity of fire insurance levies and stamp duty. It became evident early in our visit that the Bracks government was remiss in not declaring the Grampians fires a disaster area.

After joining community members at the Pomonal recovery meeting, which was similar to those I attended at Mirranatwa, Willaura, Dunkeld and Moyston, I was approached by concerned residents who raised with me problems associated with the lack of access and serviceability of fire tracks on Crown land and the need for the historic mosaic-management approach of lowering fuel loads to be reinstated. My request is that the Premier give Victorians, especially those living in regional fire-prone areas, an assurance that in undertaking management of Crown reserves the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria will give greater attention to annual fuel reductions and reopen and maintain former access tracks to allow greater fire prevention and control.

### Legislative Council: government business program

**Hon. PHILIP DAVIS** (Gippsland) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Major Projects, who is also the Minister for Finance, the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC and the minister for everything else no-one else in the government seems capable of dealing with.

The Leader of the Government in this place full well knows that at the end of the last sitting, in November, leading into the adjournment for the Christmas holiday period, the government endeavoured to facilitate in a couple of weeks what was a record legislative program. I am not sure whether that is literally true in terms of the number of bills but certainly in the term of this Parliament it was a record. I think we dealt with 12 bills in the second-last week and 15 in the last week of the last sitting. We did that in three days — 15 items as I recall.

I note that this week the government has the house sitting for three days. It is not apparent to me that there is any legislation for the house to consider, and while I am delighted to be here and to have the opportunity by way of members statements, questions without notice, adjournment debates and general business to put the government under appropriate scrutiny for its administrative performance, the government needs to be held to account just as well for its performance in managing the house. Quite frankly it would seem outrageous to me, and I dare say to the majority of the Victorian community, that the government should so mismanage its legislative agenda that it should abridge effective, proper public policy debate on issues of major import, and as a result curtail the opportunities of the public to have input to decision making so that in the week that the Parliament resumes in the new year, not only is there no business to consider — that is, which the government is bringing forward by way of legislation — but also the time could have been used to more fully explore legislation that was so hastily pushed through the Parliament at the end of last year. It is a disgrace.

I therefore ask that the minister advise the house appropriately as to what is the government's intention as to its legislative program for this year, to ensure that — —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Smith)** — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

### Responses

**Mr LENDERS** (Minister for Finance) — A number of issues were raised on the adjournment; firstly, by Mr Stoney for the Minister for Environment in the other place regarding bridle tracks in the Alpine National Park. I will pass his concerns on to the minister for his prompt response.

Mr Baxter raised an issue for the Minister for Agriculture in the other place regarding home gardening programs, particularly the absence of such in Wodonga, and I will pass that on to the Minister for Agriculture.

Mr Vogels raised an issue for the Minister for Local Government regarding the Cardinia Shire Council and I will refer that to the minister for her attention.

The Premier received two adjournment matters, one from Mr Bishop regarding financial assistance in Sunraysia and one from Mr Koch. I will pass those on to the Premier, although I will comment on the latter request from Mr Koch. One of the features of this Parliament has been a bipartisan approach to bushfires and also to acknowledging the work of firefighters. I must admit that Mr Koch, in making his request in such a partisan fashion, detracts from that. I am sure that he was not reflecting on the firefighters in what I thought was a fairly tactily phrased call for action.

Mrs Coote raised an issue for the Minister for Planning in the place regarding the Beaconsfield cove precinct committee.

**Hon. Andrea Coote** — Beacon Cove.

**Mr LENDERS** — Beacon Cove Precinct Committee! While observing that her colleague Mr Vogels has been critical earlier today about too many meetings, and Mrs Coote was waxing lyrical about 24, I take her point that she wishes to hear a report of that, and I will pass that on to the Minister for Planning in the other place for his consideration. But being a bit of a pedant, when she said it was not a one-way street, I advise her that Beaconsfield Parade in her electorate is a two-way street.

The final adjournment matter came from the Leader of the Opposition and was addressed to me as Leader of the Government. Acting President, I will take your guidance as to whether I should respond to this on the adjournment. Mr Davis alluded to a heavy legislative schedule — which is correct — in the last part of last year, and that we are light on legislation in the first week of this year. I will make a couple of comments on this.

Firstly, it was in the hands of this house to sit on several Fridays towards the end of last year, and clearly members at the time thought they could be succinct. Secondly, I would make the point that I do not want to make the judgment that this house is nothing more than a legislative sausage machine. I would say that the 90-second statements, debates on reports, abundant discussion of general business, question time, scrutiny of government in a context of life balance so that you finish when you finish your business rather than sitting late hours, is not a bad thing.

In concluding, I remind the Leader of the Opposition, in case he needs reminding, that this house has sat on average 49 days in each year of this 55th Parliament, which has given the opposition 49 chances for scrutiny during question time, 90-second statements and adjournment debates, unlike the previous government which guillotined debate in this place, made members sit all night and on very few days, and removed scrutiny. We are proud of our record of scrutiny, and we are always prepared to have ongoing dialogue with the opposition and other parties on how we can make this chamber more effective as a house of review within family-friendly hours.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Smith) —**  
Order! The house is adjourned.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 3.48 p.m.**