

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 16 April 2008

(Extract from book 5)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

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Minister for Housing, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr A. G. Lupton, MP

Legislative Council committees

Legislation Committee — Mr Atkinson, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, Mr Drum, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Pulford.

Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Mr Jennings, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Select Committee on Gaming Licensing — Mr Barber, Mr Drum, Mr Guy, Mr Kavanagh, Mr Pakula, Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Viney.

Select Committee on Public Land Development — Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Kavanagh, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Pennicuik, Mr Tee and Mr Thornley.

Standing Orders Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr P. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Jennings, Mr Lenders and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Mr Batchelor, Mr Cameron, Mr Clark, Mr Holding, Mr McIntosh, Mr Robinson and Mr Walsh.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leane and Ms Mikakos. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Mr Haermeyer, Mr McIntosh, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Morris.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Council*) Mr Atkinson, Mr D. M. Davis, Mr Tee and Mr Thornley. (*Assembly*) Ms Campbell, Mr Crisp and Ms Thomson (Footscray)

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Mr Hall. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Dr Harkness, Mr Herbert, Mr Howard and Mr Kotsiras.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Ms Broad, Mr Hall and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr O'Brien, Mr Scott and Mr Thompson.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney. (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Ingram, Ms Lobato, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mr Scheffer and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Perera, Mrs Powell and Ms Wooldridge.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Atkinson, Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Mr Eideh and Ms Hartland. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mr Howard, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Scott and Mr K. Smith.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Donnellan and Mrs Maddigan.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr, Mr Guy and Ms Hartland. (*Assembly*): Ms Green, Mr Hodgett, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz and Mr K. Smith.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Mr Barber, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Pakula and Mr Rich-Phillips. (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Ms Munt, Mr Scott, Mr Stensholt, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Leane. (*Assembly*): Mr Eren, Mr Langdon, Mr Mulder, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*) Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Ms Lovell, Ms Tierney and Mr Vogels. (*Assembly*) Ms Marshall and Mr Northe.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr Eideh, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Peulich and Ms Pulford. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Carli, Mr Jasper, Mr Languiller and Mr R. Smith.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. R. F. SMITH

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Mr PETER HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr DAMIAN DRUM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
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Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Eideh, Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Smith, Hon. Robert Frederick	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hall, Mr Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Theophanous, Hon. Theo Charles	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Kavanagh, Mr Peter Damian	Western Victoria	DLP	Thornley, Mr Evan William	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Western Victoria	LP

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Wednesday, 16 April 2008

The PRESIDENT (Hon. R. F. Smith) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General — Report on Delivering HealthSMART — Victoria's whole-of-health ICT strategy, April 2008.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 — No. 20.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — No. 21.

Firearms Act 1996 — No. 22.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Minister's exception certificate under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rule No. 21.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Twelve Apostles: tourist facilities

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — In the late 1990s the then Kennett government flagged a proposal to develop toilets and sell a cup of coffee and a bottle of water at the Twelve Apostles. With around one million visitors a year and no amenities at the site for visitors, following trips to the site lasting hours, the surrounding environment was suffering.

The then Labor opposition and its shadow environment minister, Sherryl Garbutt, vehemently opposed the siting of the amenity and any commercial activities there. As we all know, Labor won the election, picked a new site for the toilet block and banned commercial activity, even though it granted a licence to operate a helicopter, and it is now actively canvassing for a centre to do very similar things — that is, selling water, coffee et cetera.

The issue that Labor never addressed, even though it promised to do so at the time, was the issue of distance from the bus parking area toilet block to the viewing platform at the Twelve Apostles. Our frail, elderly or handicapped tourists and visitors are unable to share in the wonderful views of this world-famous landmark because of the kilometre or so they have to walk to the viewing area. Labor promised that a people mover would be part of the deal, which saw the closure of the car park adjacent to the Twelve Apostles. The walking track and the tunnel under the Great Ocean Road were all built to ensure this could happen. It saddens me to

see hundreds of tourists arrive at this world-famous site who are unable to see the views because of the tyranny of distance. I ask the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Jennings, and Parks Victoria to deliver what was initially promised when this infrastructure was built — a people mover.

Dying with dignity: rally

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — On the Parliament House steps today there will be a rally in support of the need for dying with dignity legislation. It has been named for Steve Guest, a man who ran a very public campaign to be allowed to end his life with dignity. I would urge members to attend the rally, and the briefing tonight with Marshall Perron at the Imperial Hotel, with an open mind so that we can begin the discussion and debate on this very important matter.

Princes Highway: duplication

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — The Princes Highway east — that is, the section of the Princes Highway between Melbourne and Sale — is recognised as a national highway and qualifies under the AusLink program for some joint state and federal government funding for improvements. Members who have travelled that highway in recent times will know that it is duplicated between Melbourne and Traralgon, and the area under the AusLink program that is not duplicated is that area between Traralgon and Sale. Prior to the last federal election the then Liberal-National coalition government committed \$250 million towards completing that duplication. The federal Labor opposition committed only \$140 million towards that project.

This morning I joined with The Nationals candidate for the Gippsland by-election, Mr Darren Chester, in calling on the now federal Labor government to match the previous coalition government's funding of \$250 million for this project. I commend Darren Chester for standing up and making that call. He is a local person who understands the needs of Gippsland: he understands the importance of getting this road duplicated all the way through to Sale to ensure that it is a safe road and reduces the possibility of accidents along that section of it. Both Darren Chester and I today call on the federal Labor government to increase its commitment to this project to the tune of \$250 million as promised by the previous Liberal-National federal government.

Schools: State Library of Victoria website

Mr THORNLEY (Southern Metropolitan) — I had the pleasure on Tuesday of helping contribute to the launch of the State Library of Victoria's new website for senior school students, called Ergo. It has been a terrific project and I think it exemplifies the way that modern libraries are moving from traditional bricks-and-mortar and bookshelf provision to utilising their specialisation in the organisation and retrieval of knowledge in the online world. The new Ergo website has a number of outstanding features. It has generic study skills advice and materials for students on things like essay writing, research, how to handle the pressures of study and how to keep yourself well organised. It also has a range of exercises that help students develop those skills using the unique collection of Victorian content that is housed in the State Library of Victoria, helping them build those study skills whilst also helping them learn more about the state in which they live — its history, its environment, its people and a whole range of other material. It also packages up lesson plans and other excellent materials for teachers and educators.

I congratulate the State Library of Victoria on this initiative. I think it demonstrates that it is a forward-looking institution that understands the evolving role of libraries in the digital world, and it was a great pleasure to be part of that launch.

Wyndham: citizenship ceremony

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — I was pleased to join councillors and guests at the Wyndham City Council citizenship ceremony held last Thursday evening. Ninety-one new Australians pledged their commitment to Australia and were presented with certificates by the mayor, Cr Kim McAliney. The sense of excitement generated in the room was a timely reminder of the many privileges and opportunities we enjoy in this great country. It was wonderful to see family and friends join in the celebrations on this special evening.

The guest speaker, Werribee Lions Club president Lou Scholten, who arrived in Australia 41 years ago, spoke of what it means to become an Australian citizen and to live in Wyndham among people from a wide range of backgrounds. The national anthem was beautifully sung by 15-year-old Jessica Samargas, who also delighted everyone with a moving rendition of *I Still Call Australia Home*.

The City of Wyndham welcomes over 1000 new Australian citizens each year, and with a population of over 128 000 it is the fastest growing municipality in

Victoria and the third fastest in Australia. Wyndham is experiencing a growth rate of 6 per cent or 6500 people per annum. This equates to about five new families moving into Wyndham every day, and with people coming from all corners of the earth to live there it really demonstrates the diversity of this municipality. I congratulate the mayor on her warm welcome to Wyndham's newest citizens.

Peter Randles

Mr KAVANAGH (Western Victoria) — I rise to pay tribute to a former MLA, the late Peter Randles, who passed away last Saturday at the age of 84. He was a hero in more ways than one.

During World War II, from the age of 18, Peter Randles served with Australian forces in New Guinea — the time and place of Australia's most desperate need. In my opinion all those who served Australia in that theatre of war are true heroes of Australian history.

From a union family, he was elected Labor member for Brunswick at the age of 26. As an MLA he fulfilled the promise made in his maiden speech to represent Brunswick 'with zeal and enthusiasm'. He opposed extremist attempts to take over the Labor movement. Along with a majority of ALP members in Victoria who resigned or were expelled, Peter Randles joined the Anti-Communist Labor Party, later called the DLP (Democratic Labor Party), even though it was unlikely to be personally advantageous.

In 1955 Mr Randles's seat of Brunswick was abolished and he stood as an Anti-Communist Labor Party candidate for the new seat of Brunswick West. He lost by only 82 votes and would surely have won except for the redistribution. In the circumstances the narrowness of his loss was a personal tribute. Of course his judgement and sacrifice have been vindicated by history.

Peter Randles then studied law at Melbourne University and had a long and successful legal career. More importantly, Peter Randles and his wife, Pauline, successfully raised a family of seven children. I offer my sincere condolences and those of the DLP to Pauline and to their children, particularly their son, Paul, who I am proud to call a friend.

Schools: teacher training

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — We all value education very highly, and we also value quality educators highly. These are just two of the many reasons why the Brumby Labor Government is recognising schools that excel in the training of

teachers. These schools have exceptional induction and mentoring programs to ensure that what teachers learn in their university training is added to and strengthened once they enter employment as teachers. This government is dedicated to providing the very best education it can for all Victorians. That automatically includes ensuring that teachers equally receive the best training and preparation. That is why we are recognising leading schools and why the Minister for Education in the other place, the Honourable Bronwyn Pike, recognised 269 schools only last week.

Not every school is so recognised. First a school must firmly assess its own processes, then it must detail how it is developing the appropriate support environment. So I am proud to acknowledge Altona Green Primary School, Ardeer South Primary School, Craigieburn South Primary School, Werribee Primary School and Rockbank Primary School within my electorate. My sincere congratulations go out to their school communities and to the great staff who are making these leading educational centres.

Rail: Somerville level crossing

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — We see time and again with the increased population in Victoria — which is a good thing — that infrastructure spending does not match that growth. One of the worst examples relates to level crossings. We have seen a number of tragedies, with many people losing their lives at level crossings in Victoria in recent years.

The announcement by the Minister for Public Transport in relation to 80-kilometre-per-hour speed limits at select level crossings is really an admission of a failure to address the underlying core problem with these level crossings, and that is a lack of safety and a lack of boom barriers at level crossings to protect train commuters and road users.

Perhaps one of the worst examples of this negligence is on the Stony Point line at the Bungower Road intersection. Bungower Road is currently being upgraded courtesy of funding secured by the federal member for Flinders, Greg Hunt, which will see increased traffic loads on that road, but sadly the state government is refusing to commit to installing appropriate safety measures at Bungower Road, despite the fact that visibility at the intersection with the railway line is poor and traffic loads will increase significantly as the road is upgraded and the population on the peninsula increases. I condemn the government for its failure to address these severe infrastructure problems.

Ukrainian holocaust: commemoration

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — In light of yesterday's very successful Holodomor remembrance torch ceremony on the steps of Parliament House I rise to again pay my respects to those who perished in the Ukrainian famine of 1932–33 and to recognise the courage and strength of those who survived this heinous act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. The Ukrainian community in Australia is a pivotal part of the 75th year Holodomor remembrance events around the world and is doing its best to ensure that the famine is known amongst the broader community. I recently had the honour of speaking at a very large gathering at Newborough celebrating the history of Ukrainian settlement in Gippsland — along with the member for Narracan in the other place, Gary Blackwood, and the federal member for McMillan, Russell Broadbent — where the Holodomor was again the focus of much of the community. Last weekend I attended a Holodomor torch ceremony at Ukrainian Hall in Noble Park, where survivors told of their experiences of hunger, oppression and the ways in which they tried to help family members survive the oppression of the Ukrainian nation by Stalin's communist dictatorship.

Yesterday a number of members of Parliament, including Peter Hall, Inga Peulich, Bernie Finn, Peter Kavanagh and my friend Jan Kronberg from this chamber, met on the steps with community members and the Ukrainian ambassador, Mr Valentyn Adomaytis, to be a part of the Ukrainian community's Holodomor torch ceremony. The torch's flame symbolises the spirits of the near 10 million people who died during the famine and also the strength and courage of those who survived. It is a fitting way to honour the memory of those who experienced the Holodomor. The Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations and the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria deserve full praise for their efforts in ensuring the Holodomor is never forgotten, as do the many members of the Ukrainian community who are doing their best to ensure that Stalin's criminal actions will never be forgotten or repeated.

Canterbury–Middleborough roads, Blackburn South: safety

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to raise concerns about the intersection of Canterbury and Middleborough roads in Blackburn South, which has become dangerous and congested. It is clear to anyone using this intersection that it can no longer handle the volume of traffic passing through it. The intersection is in constant gridlock during peak hour

and is not much better throughout the rest of the day. As a result motorists are experiencing severe frustration, and it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs. There is additional concern about rat runs that have been established in Aberdeen Road, Amery Avenue and Pakenham, Banksia, Hirst and Duckham streets, to name just a few.

The appalling state of this intersection is typical of a road network in crisis across Victoria. Over the last eight years Labor has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to planning for Victoria's growth, and now the people of the eastern suburbs are suffering because of it. Even the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its 2008–09 budget submission criticised the Victorian Labor government, stating that congestion is rife and is impacting on workplace productivity. It is about time the government got real with its long-term planning strategies. The intersection of Canterbury and Middleborough roads is but one example that has become a major problem for people in the eastern suburbs.

Police: G20 protesters

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The maintenance of law and order is very much dependent upon respect for those who are charged with the responsibility of upholding the law — those protecting each and every one of us wherever we may be.

Law and order in this state suffered a major setback this week when ratbag, left-wing anarchists, participants in the infamous G20 riot in Collins Street in November 2006, were allowed to walk free from court. If assaulting police and at least in one case seriously injuring police officers in the course of their duty does not demand the full force of the law, our justice system has become a joke, and a very sad one at that. If setting out to bash police does not demand jail time, then Victoria's judicial system under the careful craftsmanship of the Attorney-General has gone to hell in a handcart.

I reassert my continuing support for Victoria's finest and trust that every police officer in this state appreciates the community's revulsion at the lack of support for them from the judiciary.

VICTORIAN WATER SUBSTITUTION TARGET BILL

Statement of compatibility

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (the charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Victorian Water Substitution Target Bill 2007.

In my opinion the Victorian Water Substitution Target Bill 2007, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The Victorian water substitution target (VWST) scheme operates to promote activities that will contribute to a reduction in potable water use by substituting potable water with alternative water supplies including recycled water, treated stormwater and rainwater. The scheme also encourages investment, employment and technology development in industries that supply goods and services which reduce the use of potable water.

The VWST scheme operates so that individual consumers who undertake activities to reduce consumption of potable water by substituting alternative water supplies are entitled to create, or assign the right to create, water substitution certificates. At specific target dates water retailers and large water consumers — that is, those purchasing more than 10 megalitres of potable water each year — are required to surrender a certain number of certificates to the Essential Services Commission (commission). Water consumers who do not have a direct obligation to surrender certificates can sell any certificates they become entitled to or assign the right to certificates to a water retailer, to a large water consumer or to an intermediary.

1. *Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill*

The VWST scheme will operate so that businesses, body corporates or sole traders may be accredited persons to whom entitlements to create energy efficiency certificates and obligations under the bill apply. Insofar as a natural person may, however, become an accredited person under the VWST scheme, a number of human rights issues arise.

Provision of information to the Essential Services Commission

The requirement that accredited persons provide personal information, such as their name and address, to the commission raises the right to privacy. Clauses 8 and 55 require that information be given to the commission. However, this information is relevant to the operation of the bill and the provision of such information under a regulated scheme such as this one, which has clear public purposes, is not arbitrary and is clearly lawful. Therefore, the right to privacy is not limited by the requirement that such information be provided to the commission. In addition, the

water substitution certificate created under clause 19, the certificate surrender order issued under clause 35 and the register of accredited persons and the water substitution certificate register under clauses 52, 53 and 54 may contain such personal information but, for similar reasons, it would not interfere with a person's right to privacy.

The bill also contains safeguards concerning the use of information obtained while exercising powers or performing functions in connection with the bill. For example, clause 60 makes it an offence to disclose confidential information except in limited circumstances. To the extent that the confidential information is also personal information, this safeguard will assist in ensuring that privacy rights are not unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

Surrender of certificates

The bill requires that water substitution certificates be surrendered in certain circumstances (see clause 35). Insofar as a natural person may be required to surrender a certificate which is registered and holds value under the VWST scheme, property rights under section 20 of the charter are raised. However, the deprivation of property (i.e. the surrender of the certificate) is in accordance with law. It is also not arbitrary as the bill sets out the precise and reasonable circumstances in which the surrender should occur — that is, if the person is found guilty of an offence against sections 18(1), 18(3), 18(4) or 18(5). Therefore, property rights are not limited by the operation of clause 35 of the bill.

Powers of authorised officers

The requirement under clause 37 of the bill that an authorised officer must carry an identity card that contains their photograph and signature is a reasonable requirement given the powers of an authorised officer and is not an unlawful or arbitrary interference with their right to privacy under section 13 of the charter.

Part 7 of the bill sets out the process for authorised officers to be appointed to monitor and inspect premises for the purpose of determining whether the bill has been complied with. That process enables the authorised officers to do the following:

enter any premises with the consent of the occupier or under a monitoring warrant (refer to clauses 39 to 43);

conduct a search of the premises for any thing that may relate to the creation or transfer of certificates or scheme acquisitions (refer to clause 43); as part of a search of premises, the authorised officer can examine property on the premises, take photographs, take extracts of documents or make copies, secure any thing on the premises that may be evidence of an offence against the bill, until a warrant can be obtained to seize the thing, and can operate any equipment on the premises or remove devices which contain files/information; and

where the authorised officer has authorisation to enter premises by a monitoring warrant, require that a person in or on the premises answer any questions relating to the creation or transfer of certificates, scheme acquisitions or the provision of information under this bill and produce any document that is so related (refer to clause 45).

The power of the authorised officer to enter and search premises under clauses 39 to 43 engages the right to privacy

and home under section 13 of the charter. The right is raised because the authorised officer may be entering private premises when conducting their duties under these clauses. It is relevant to note that the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations states, in its general comment on the right to privacy, that the term 'home' is to be understood to indicate the place where a person resides or carries out his or her usual occupation.

The powers of authorised officers under clauses 39 to 43 of the bill are lawful and not arbitrary for the following reasons.

Consent must be obtained from the occupier, or the authorised officer must have a monitoring warrant that is given by court order.

The bill provides numerous additional constraints around the exercise of the powers of authorised officers. Powers of search and seizure must be exercised reasonably and only in relation to the creation or transfer of certificates, scheme acquisitions or information provided under the bill. The bill also requires that, in exercising powers, the authorised officer must only enter at a 'reasonable' time of the day, must cause as little inconvenience as possible and must not remain on the premises any longer than is reasonably necessary. Where consent is obtained from the occupier, the authorised officer is also required to leave the premises if asked to do so (see clauses 38 and 39).

The VWST scheme must be monitored to ensure that it operates properly. Persons who participate in the VWST scheme are subject to the regulatory requirements of the regime and have obligations and responsibilities that must be discharged. It is therefore reasonable that they be subjected to the necessary audit processes.

Therefore, the right to privacy under section 13 of the charter is not limited by clauses 39 to 43 of the bill.

Clause 45 of the bill requires that any person in or on the premises answer any questions or produce any documents to the authorised officer. This raises the right to privacy under section 13 of the charter. However, for the reasons previously mentioned the right to privacy is not limited.

Clauses 44 and 45 also raise property rights under section 20 of the charter. The removal of, or the requirement to, produce documents (such as certificates of value under the VWST scheme or devices containing relevant information) may amount to a deprivation of property. However, any such deprivation would be in accordance with the law and would not be arbitrary as the production or removal of documents is only permitted where it relates to the creation or transfer of certificates, scheme acquisitions or the provision of information under the bill or for determining whether the bill has been complied with. As such section 20 of the charter would not be limited. For similar reasons, the production of documents to the commission under clause 55 of the bill would not limit property rights under the charter.

The right to freedom of expression under section 15(2) of the charter is also raised by clause 45 of the bill, as that provision requires individuals to answer questions put by an authorised officer. The right to freedom of expression includes the right not to express. However, the right also contains an internal exception under section 15(3) of the charter. Section 15(3) of the charter provides that the right to freedom of expression

may be subject to lawful restrictions including for public order. Public order can be defined as the sum of rules that ensure the peaceful and effective functioning of society. It is considered that the requirement that persons provide certain information to an authorised officer for the purposes of administering the VWST scheme is for a public purpose and is reasonably necessary for the protection of public order. Therefore, any restriction on the right to freedom of expression by virtue of clause 45 is lawful under section 15(3) of the charter and the right is not limited.

Collection of information by the Essential Services Commission

The right to freedom of expression under section 15(2) of the charter is also raised by clause 55 of the bill, as that provision requires individuals to provide certain information or produce a document either orally or in writing to the commission. For the reasons set out above it is considered that the limitation on freedom of expression is lawful as reasonably necessary for the protection of public order under section 15(3) of the charter.

Clause 55(2)(c) also enables the commission to require that a person appear before it at a time and place specified. This clause limits a person's freedom of movement under section 12 of the charter. However, such limitation is reasonable for the reasons set out below.

Clauses 58 and 59 also raise property rights under section 20 of the charter as copying of and retaining of documents may amount to a deprivation of property. However, any copying or retaining of documents would be in accordance with the law and would not be arbitrary. As such section 20 of the charter would not be limited.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

The right to freedom of movement under section 12 of the charter is limited by the operation of clause 55(2)(c) of the bill.

(a) What is the nature of the right being limited?

The right to move freely within Victoria encompasses a right not to be forced to move to, or from, a particular location and includes freedom from physical barriers and procedural impediments.

(b) What is the importance of the purpose of the limitation?

The limitation is important because it enables the commission to interview or examine a person it reasonably believes has information or documentation that is relevant to the operation of the bill.

(c) What is the nature and extent of the limitation?

The individual is required to physically appear before the commission to give information either orally or in writing. The limitation only extends to that individual who is required to attend before the commission at the specified time and date and the limitation only operates for the period of time that the person appears before the commission.

(d) What is the relationship between the limitation and its purpose?

The limitation is rational as it is integral to the operation of the bill that the commission has the ability to make inquiries when investigating matters under the bill. The limit is proportionate because the limitation only applies to a person that the commission has reason to believe holds information or documentation that is relevant to the operation of the bill.

(e) Are there any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve its purpose?

A request for written information could be made before requiring attendance before the commission; however, attendance may be considered necessary in certain circumstances.

(f) Conclusion

The limitation is reasonable and necessary to achieve a legitimate aim, namely the effective operation of the VWST scheme which aims to encourage the reduction of potable water use within the community.

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the charter because, even though it does limit a human right, that limitation is reasonable and proportionate.

PETER HALL, MLC
Member, Eastern Victoria Region

Second reading

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The provision of adequate water supplies to all Victorians is a core responsibility of the Victorian government.

The last major infrastructure investment to provide additional water to Melbourne was the construction of the Thomson Dam, completed in 1983. A series of dry years has highlighted the need for urgent action to increase water supplies.

Prior to the 2006 election the government released the *Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy*. This document outlines an approach to meeting Melbourne's future water needs based on a combination of modest increases in supplies and greater emphasis on water use efficiency and recycling. The approach adopted by the strategy is effectively summarised by the following statement:

The government considers that Melbourne must tap the significant potential for conservation, efficiency and reuse and recycling gains within the central region rather than connecting with northern Victoria (*Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy* page 64).

The subsequent announcements in 2007 of a proposal to construct a 150-gigalitre desalination plant at Wonthaggi and to take water from the Goulburn Valley via a pipeline to the Sugarloaf Reservoir represent a substantial change in direction from that announced in the *Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy* and a complete contradiction of previous government policy.

The north–south pipeline and the desalination plant represent a combined investment of almost \$5 billion. To fund their share of the cost, Melbourne water consumers face the prospect of their water prices at least doubling by 2012. These projects will also have adverse environmental consequences for the state. Amongst these the proposed desalination plant will inevitably add to the state’s greenhouse gas emissions. The Sugarloaf pipeline will take water from the Murray–Darling Basin, reducing the water available for northern Victorian communities and for environmental flows in the basin’s rivers.

A large proportion of Melbourne’s precious potable water supplies is used for non-potable purposes, such as flushing toilets, industrial cooling and irrigating parks and gardens. The coalition is of the view that greater emphasis needs to be placed on meeting Melbourne’s future water needs by using alternative water supplies, such as recycled water, treated stormwater and rainwater in these non-potable uses.

This bill gives effect to this objective, establishing the Victorian water substitution target (VWST) scheme, which sets targets for using alternative water sources to substitute for Melbourne’s limited and valuable potable water supplies in non-potable uses. The overall target is by 2020 to substitute 129 billion litres of potable water used for non-potable purposes with water sourced from alternative sources. This represents approximately 30 per cent of Melbourne’s current water consumption. The bill also establishes interim targets of 43 billion litres by 2010 and 86 billion litres by 2015.

The bill is modelled on the Victorian energy efficiency target (VEET) scheme and applies to the water industry a similar approach to that used by the VEET scheme to promote energy efficiency. Like the VEET scheme, the VWST scheme takes a market-based approach. The bill provides for the creation of water substitution certificates through activities that result in the substitution of potable water in non-potable uses with alternative supplies. At nominated target dates relevant entities will be required to surrender certificates corresponding to their share of the overall water substitution target. Relevant entities are Melbourne water retailers and large water customers purchasing

more than 10 megalitres of water per year from the retailers.

The scheme would work in the following way. When an individual, a business, a government department or indeed any consumer of potable water supplied by a Melbourne water retailer undertakes an activity that results in reduction in the use of potable water by substituting alternative supplies in a non-potable use, they potentially generate a water substitution certificate (WSC). One WSC would be created for each kilolitre or 1000 litres of annual water savings generated.

For example, a consumer installing a rainwater tank connected to a toilet or laundry would be eligible to earn a prescribed number of WSCs. The consumer could sell these certificates to a relevant entity, such as a Melbourne water retailer or a large water consumer. The sale could be negotiated directly between the consumer and a relevant entity or through an intermediary.

At the specified target dates — 2010, 2015 and 2020 — each relevant entity would be required to surrender water substitution certificates corresponding to their share of the overall water substitution target. Relevant entities could accumulate the WSCs they are required to surrender in a number of ways. They could either directly undertake activities that substitute alternative supplies for potable water in non-potable uses or they could purchase certificates from others who had undertaken such activity.

If a relevant entity does not surrender sufficient WSCs to meet its share of the target, a shortfall penalty will be imposed. The penalty for water substitution certificates shortfalls is to be prescribed, but the intention is that it equate to the alternative cost of augmenting Melbourne’s water supply, which under current government policy is seawater desalination.

A feature of the scheme that may not be immediately apparent is that it provides a degree of flexibility to water retailers and large water consumers as to how they respond to the need to augment Melbourne’s water supply. Currently these groups do not have a choice. All will pay for the desalination plant and Sugarloaf pipeline in proportion to the water they use. Action they have taken to reduce water consumption by using alternative supplies, such as recycled water, is irrelevant.

The bill requires funds generated from water substitution shortfall penalties to be paid to the Consolidated Fund and appropriated for infrastructure projects which will supplement Melbourne’s water

supply. This effectively gives water retailers and large water consumers a choice as to how they respond to the need to augment Melbourne's water supply. They can either take action to reduce their demand for water by substituting alternative supplies or contribute directly to augmentation through water substitution shortfall penalties. Those that have economic opportunities to utilise alternative supplies, such as recycled water, stormwater or rainwater in non-potable uses, will do so. Those who are unable to reduce their demand by substituting alternative supplies will in effect directly contribute to the cost of augmentation through the payment of shortfall penalties.

The bill provides that the Essential Services Commission will administer the VWST scheme. The bill also provides that the ESC, in making price determinations, must ensure that Melbourne water retailers' tariff structures appropriately reflect the different ways large and smaller water consumers meet the cost of complying with the VWST scheme.

The objects of the bill are as follows:

- (a) to reduce potable water use;
- (b) to encourage the substitution of potable water with alternative water supplies including recycled water, treated stormwater and rainwater;
- (c) to encourage investment, employment and technology development in industries that supply goods and services which reduce the use of potable water.

Part 1 of the bill provides that the VWST scheme come into place on or before 1 January 2010. The intention would be that the scheme commence as soon as possible following the making of regulations under the legislation.

Part 2 of the bill provides that the ESC will administer the VWST scheme and that the commission, in undertaking its role as the water price regulator, ensures water tariff structures appropriately reflect the different ways large and smaller water consumers meet the cost of complying with the VWST scheme.

Part 3 of the bill provides for the accreditation of persons that may create a certificate in relation to the prescribed regulations. It also outlines the process for creation of water substitution certificates. The process parallels the mechanism for creation of energy efficiency certificates under the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007

The activities that may be prescribed by the regulations are those that will result in the substitution of potable water supplied by a Melbourne water retailer with water from an alternative source. Examples of activities that may be prescribed are the installation of rainwater tanks connected to toilets or laundries or the use of recycled water for cooling or for irrigating parks and gardens.

Only an accredited person under the VWST scheme may create a WSC. An accredited person that may create a certificate may either be the water consumer or the holder of an assignment of the right to create a certificate from the consumer. A certificate can only be created if the activity the certificate relates to was undertaken after commencement of the VWST scheme.

Each certificate created with respect to an activity represents 1 kilolitre (or 1000 litres) of water saved per annum. The regulations will determine the calculation of potable water substituted by prescribed activities.

Certificates will be electronic and will be traceable to the point of origin by the unique identification code allocated to each certificate. Once created, certificates may be registered by the commission. Certificates that have been registered may be transferred.

A certificate may be surrendered, at which time the certificate ceases to be valid. The commission must update its register to show the transfer and surrender of certificates.

Part 4 of the bill defines the obligations imposed by the bill on relevant parties. The water substitution target for individual Melbourne water retailers — City West Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water — is calculated from their water sales during the previous year excluding sales to large customers, being those consuming more than 10 megalitres (or 10 million litres) of water per year.

The obligation for large water consumers is calculated from their water purchases in the previous year.

The bill provides that a relevant entity must surrender sufficient certificates to cover its share of the water substitution target at each of the target dates — 2010, 2015 and 2020. A relevant entity unable to surrender sufficient certificates to meet its share of the water substitution targets at a relevant date is liable to pay a shortfall penalty.

The penalty rate will be prescribed by the regulations and will be set to reflect the relative cost of securing additional potable water supplies for Melbourne. At the current time this is the cost of desalinated seawater. The

practical effect is that the costs imposed by this scheme on water consumers will be equal to or less than the cost of meeting Melbourne's projected water shortfall through desalination of seawater.

Part 5 of the bill establishes requirements to record and report obligations incurred under the bill and the surrender of certificates to meet those obligations. For example, the bill provides that a relevant entity must lodge a statement with the commission in respect of each target year.

Part 6 deals with the enforcement regime and part 7 with the appointment and powers of authorised officers.

Part 8 establishes an internal merits review process, creates a requirement for the commission to establish and maintain registers necessary for the operation of the scheme and provides the information gathering powers which ensure its integrity.

Part 8 also provides for an independent review of the operation of VWST scheme by the end of 2012.

Part 9 of the bill provides for consequential amendments to the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 to empower the commission to administer the scheme.

In summary the major advantages of the scheme include:

it is likely to provide a cheaper option for Melbourne Water consumers than building an expensive north-south pipeline or a desalination plant;

it avoids the necessity for Melbourne to take water from other communities which are themselves desperately short;

the market mechanism proposed will identify least-cost opportunities to substitute potable water with recycled water, treated stormwater or rainwater. This is in marked contrast with the government's approach to encouraging water recycling, which involves ad hoc grants which favour large projects over small-scale projects, largely ignores the private sector, is subject to political influence and has resulted in government subsidies for high-profile but often inefficient water substitution projects. An example would be the retrofitting of a water recycling system to Southern Cross station; and

the VWST scheme is far more environmentally sustainable, avoiding the need to take water from northern Victoria that could otherwise be used to

enhance river health. The scheme will also reduce or at least minimise the requirement for an expensive water desalination project which will have a very high demand for electricity and create environmental problems with the disposal of highly saline water and sludge.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned for Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) on motion of Hon. T. C. Theophanous.

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 30 April.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Having examined this bill and having listened to Mr Hall's second-reading speech I have some doubts about the capacity for the bill to be initiated in the Legislative Council because of the appropriation requirements of section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975. I will further consider this matter before the debate resumes on this bill with a view to making a ruling as to whether this bill can proceed any further.

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE: POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Electoral Matters Committee to inquire, consider and report no later than 30 April 2009 on —

- (1) whether the Electoral Act 2002 should be amended to create a system of political donations disclosure and/or restrictions on political donations; and
- (2) the outcome resulting from similar legislative reforms introduced in Canada, the United Kingdom and other relevant jurisdictions.

If members believe that the current system as it operates under Victorian law is perfect, then I guess they will not support this motion. However, I know that across this Parliament on all sides of politics there are individuals with particular concerns about this issue. This is not a left-right thing. It is a democracy thing, and there are many people who, regardless of their political positions on a range of issues, believe that donations to political parties and the associated involvement of money in elections is an important consideration in creating a level playing field for democracy to operate. The Greens have a view on what model we should implement here in Victoria and in the Australian jurisdiction, but I am not here to push our particular model. Basically our model would be the Canadian system of restrictions on donations and the UK system of continuous disclosure, which I may come back to in a little while.

Supporting this reference to this committee at this time creates an opportunity for members of a joint committee to have those sorts of round-table discussions that are a hallmark of committee work, and it also allows members of the public who have concerns to bring them forward. This issue is of course changing fast, and it is my awareness, I suppose, of the number of different political forces that are now speaking out and calling for some reform in this area that has caused me to bring forward this motion.

I referred earlier to the Canadian model. The first item that the Conservative Party of Canada put forward in its federal election platform of 2006 was to reform the financing of federal political parties. Its reforms, which have now been implemented, were to:

Limit individual donations to parties or candidates to a maximum of \$1000 —

that is Canadian dollars —

Prohibit all corporate, union, and organisation donations to political parties, ridings, and candidates.

Ban cash donations ...

Extend to 10 years the period for which Elections Act violations can be investigated and prosecuted.

That is the Conservative Party of Canada, and the Greens party of Australia now agrees with it.

In the UK, again in response to a range of scandals, the existing government brought in some strong new reforms, including quarterly donation disclosure expanding to weekly disclosure during the campaign period itself.

We have had some changes to local government disclosure requirements here in Victoria. We have also had around Australia some very high-profile concerns about the role of money in local government campaigns: I am referring to the Gold Coast council issue in Queensland; the Tweed council issue in New South Wales; Smiths Beach in Western Australia; recently Wollongong; and at some levels the Geelong council, which was examined by the Ombudsman in Victoria.

At the same time we have seen some strong and rapid action from the Rudd government on this issue in the short time it has been in office. A media release from Senator John Faulkner, Special Minister of State, on 28 March 2008 announced some immediate reforms: that the threshold for disclosure of donations would be brought down from \$10 000 to \$1000; that donations from overseas or from non-Australian companies would be banned; that election funding would be tied to

reported and verified electoral expenditure, so that no candidate could make a profit out of running for Parliament; that the loophole would be removed whereby separate divisions of parties are treated as separate entities, so that you could not make small donations to each state division and the federal division and sort of smurf your way through the system with a number of small donations; and that public scrutiny would be increased by reducing the disclosure time frames from 12 months to 6 months. Those reforms by the Rudd government, to my mind, are very welcome. It is not stopping there, though. There will be a green paper process that will look at the broader issues and will commence, I have been informed, in October this year.

In terms of the work of the Electoral Matters Committee, this committee has the opportunity to operate in advance of and in parallel with the process that the federal government now has under way. It may be the consideration of the committee that it wants to get some part of its work out of the way before October, make an interim report that could then also form advice to the federal government green paper, and then finish up its work in parallel with the federal government process so that the two processes can work in sync in that way. However, I am putting this forward as a stand-alone motion. Even if the federal government were not taking action, there would be ample reason why we here in the state jurisdiction could examine this issue.

The electoral commissioner, although he is non-partisan and strictly neutral on these things, has made the point to the Electoral Matters Committee — the committee to which we are proposing this reference — that this is a fast-moving area and it should be something that the committee takes into account. In response to a question during his recent testimony to the Electoral Matters Committee, he said that the Democratic Audit of Australia research process had focused his mind on this issue. He said:

I know — from people I know in Canada — that electoral funding and disclosure is probably the biggest issue for the electoral commission; it is, 'Where is the money coming from for political parties and candidates?'. In Canada they appear to be concerned about the gun lobby running big cargoes of money through Canada to get support. They are very anxious about that.

And he concluded by saying:

It is an emerging issue and I think I would be remiss in my role — it has nothing to do with me, but I would be remiss in my role if I did not bring it to your attention and say something like I am saying now; it is an issue worldwide. There is the Democratic Audit of Australia, who is clearly

concerned about it. You have received papers on it. It is up to you to consider.

That was the electoral commissioner's advice to the Electoral Matters Committee.

I think there are some obvious loopholes in the Victorian law that the committee may wish to consider addressing. The first is that if you are not a federally registered political party or candidate and you are running for a state election, you do not have any disclosure requirements with regard to where your money is coming from. In the 2006 state election there were 707 candidates, 63 of whom were independents, 44 of whom were candidates for People Power, which is only a state-registered party, and a number of whom were candidates for the Country Alliance, which is also not registered at the federal level. So something like 15 per cent of candidates in that election did not have to make a return to the federal government for their spending because they were not federally registered parties. There is no state requirement for them to disclose this, so we will therefore never know who funded them. Those people fall completely outside the net.

As it is, because of the timing of these things, we did not find out for one and a half financial years who funded candidates in the run-up to the November 2006 election. That is a far cry from the situation in the United Kingdom, where disclosure is continuous, and in fact weekly during the election periods. I am sure these are matters that the state government is keen to address. In March 2002 the government brought forward a bill to amend the Electoral Act in some of the ways I have just mentioned. The bill — or at least all its provisions — was not ultimately passed. Since I was not there at the time, I cannot make any statement as to why the bill as presented did not pass. The bill included a system of disclosures that would have at least mirrored the federal requirement. In the event that those provisions did not pass, the only requirement would be that federally registered parties send a copy of their commonwealth electoral return under section 314 of the commonwealth act to the Victorian Electoral Commission.

In terms of restrictions as to who may donate, Victorian law has a precedent in this area. The only types of entities that are restricted in any way from donating in Victorian law are holders of particular types of gaming licences — that is, the casino, Tattersall's and Tabcorp. They are restricted from donating any more than \$50 000 to a political party in a given year. So the current Victorian law already recognises that there is at least some case for certain classes of donors to be

restricted in their donations — that is, entities whose entire business depends upon the provision of a licence from the government. That is a worthy and worthwhile provision to have in the bill. However, it opens the door to a wider debate as to whether there should be bans on particular types of entities donating, whether there should be restrictions on a broader group of entities and whether there are concerns about the current situation. For example, we have just had an announcement that there will be a change to the structure of ownership of poker machines in Victoria. With that change the question must be raised: will the existing provisions now apply to anyone who owns a poker machine, which is a much larger group of entities, or will the system lapse? That is a worthy matter for the committee to consider.

There are a number of failings in the local government system in this regard. I could very well have looked at a review of the Local Government Act in this reference. However, in some regards the provisions governing local government elections are stronger than those governing state elections. We as state parliamentarians would not want to have a stronger system brought to bear on local government than we have been willing to impose on ourselves, so for the moment we will just be reviewing the provisions of the Electoral Act 2002. However, if this reference is successful we may receive submissions on matters relating to local government.

I have received some feedback from members about my motion, which I will quickly address. The feedback was that the timing may not match well with the federal process that is now under way. I have only just received details of the federal green paper process, but I think it is possible within the flexibility of these committees for the committee to do its work using the remainder of this year and still be timely with regard to the federal process, possibly still having some time to respond to findings that come out of the federal process. Even if the action needs to be through the federal election law, there would still be one or two holes in the net created by the state system, and if those were not addressed they would create problems for some of the worthy efforts that the federal government is now undertaking.

The second part of my motion refers to the outcome resulting from similar legislative reforms introduced in Canada, the United Kingdom and other relevant jurisdictions. That should be read to mean 'all other relevant jurisdictions'. It is totally open to the committee to examine any jurisdiction, including New Zealand, the United States, our federal jurisdiction or those of other states. It is open to the committee to go wherever it needs to go to find relevant information. I

have written the motion in short form but in sufficiently broad terms to give the committee the powers it needs.

In summary, this is an issue that has a high level of currency across Australia, and in fact across the world, as we have heard. There is no doubt that members of all political parties on all sides of the Parliament are pushing for reform in this area. The federal government is now leading the way, and it is to be commended for that. So I believe this reference to the Electoral Matters Committee is timely, and I hope that we achieve some unanimity here today with all members ultimately supporting this reference.

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — I welcome Mr Barber's reference to the current federal Labor government leading the way in relation to reforming and modernising electoral financing matters. I refer back some decades to an earlier federal Labor government which similarly led the way in relation to disclosure of electoral donations and the funding of elections in order to create a more level playing field. There was a third leg to the earlier reforms by an earlier federal Labor government, which involved restrictions on advertising. The great bulk of any funds that are raised for elections end up in payments for advertising. As members who have followed events in this area would know very well, that third leg of the earlier reforms was struck out by the High Court following a challenge, and the two other legs remained.

This is certainly an area which requires constant vigilance and updating. I want to congratulate the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and welcome his initiative in terms of the commitments and statements that have been made so early in the life of the new federal Labor government. Given the huge range of competing priorities for action by the new government, the fact that such an early statement and set of specific actions have been listed for early attention is very welcome indeed.

I will go over those matters which have already been committed to by the Rudd Labor government. In the short term the government has committed to moving to set the campaign donation disclosure threshold at \$1000. That, importantly, reverses an action by the former Howard Liberal-National government, which increased the threshold, taking the disclosure limit from \$1500 to over \$10 000, an action which was opposed by Labor as a retrograde step in the transparency and disclosure of campaign donations. That will be reversed and a new threshold will be set at \$1000. The actions moved also include banning donations from overseas or from non-Australian companies, ensuring that donations come from a jurisdiction where Australian

laws apply and can be enforced; and tying election funding to reported and verified electoral expenditure directly incurred by a candidate or party for an election, which prevents any candidate making a financial gain from the electoral funding system. Further actions are removing the loophole where separate divisions of a party are treated as separate entities, so preventing large donations from being hidden by paying portions across state and territory branches of the same party; and last, but not least, increasing public scrutiny of donations by reducing disclosure time frames from 12 months to 6 months.

That is a very significant package of reforms and actions which the Rudd Labor government has committed to very early on, with Senator John Faulkner having responsibility for the carriage of implementing those reforms. One of the reasons the Rudd Labor government has acted early on these actions is to ensure that they will be in place and take effect within a time frame commencing July this year, so that they will take effect for the next financial year. That is another very important and welcome step the Rudd Labor government has taken.

Beyond those early actions, the Rudd Labor government has also committed to releasing discussion papers in the form of an electoral reform green paper, which it has committed to releasing in two parts — the first, looking at disclosure of funding and expenditure issues, which is to be released for discussion in July; and the second, examining a broader range of options aimed at strengthening other areas of our electoral laws, which is to be released for discussion in October of this year. That is a pretty extensive work program which has been set, with a process of engagement through the course of this year. As well as that, the Prime Minister has committed to writing to the premiers and chief ministers seeking their cooperation in progressing these electoral reforms and asking them to nominate ministers to work with the commonwealth on the green paper process. The federal government is also asking the equivalent of the Victorian Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee in the commonwealth jurisdiction — the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters — to consider the green paper, and has committed to working closely with that all-party committee as the electoral reform process moves ahead. The federal government has made it very clear that these measures are aimed at restoring more transparency and openness in our electoral system, as well as improving electoral mechanisms to ensure that voters can effectively enrol and vote.

Given that those actions are being taken and those processes are being worked through, I indicate that as a member of the Victorian Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee I am very keen to have the opportunity to contribute to those processes. That would mean that the timing proposed in the motion before the house — and I know Mr Barber is aware of this issue, because it has been raised with him in discussions — is somewhat problematic if the Victorian committee is to have the opportunity to have some input into these processes at a stage where it might have the capacity to influence the views, decisions and subsequent actions which are taken in the federal sphere. As well as that, given that the federal government, the Prime Minister and the responsible minister, Senator John Faulkner, have indicated that they wish to engage with jurisdictions and responsible ministers to seek their input, it would be a very unfortunate missed set of opportunities if we had on the one hand, through the executive in Victoria, the responsible minister making representations to the federal government in advance of the work of the Victorian Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee, and on the other the committee not completing its work until, in effect, views had been formed, decisions had been taken and even actions had been put in train. I am very keen that in considering this motion before us today we consider the question of time lines. I would wish to support, and I will come to shortly, a proposed amendment addressing the issue.

In considering the matters which have been put on the agenda by the Rudd Labor government federally, which is certainly going to set the scene for what happens at a state and territory level, I think everyone would agree it is highly desirable that we have as far as possible a uniform set of requirements. We have certainly seen instances in the past where the lack of harmonisation between jurisdictions has, to be generous, been exploited and worse in terms of transparency, accountability and disclosure.

The scope of the matters that have been set out by the Rudd Labor government federally are somewhat broader — no pun intended — than are canvassed by the motion which has been put before us today by Mr Barber. In saying that, I do not wish to indicate at all that I believe Mr Barber is seeking to restrict the scope of the Electoral Matters Committee in its investigations. However, I believe that could be an unintended consequence of the way the motion is currently worded. I know that Mr Barber is aware of these matters, because they have been raised with him in discussion.

I come now to the matter of moving and circulating to the house a proposed amendment. The second matter

which is intended to be addressed by this amendment is the question of the scope of the reference to the Electoral Matters Committee in addition to the matter of timing. I move:

That all the words after 'That this house' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place 'notes the green paper process established by the federal government and requires the Electoral Matters Committee to inquire, consider and report no later than 30 September 2008 on —

- (1) how the Electoral Act 2002 could be amended to fix loopholes in donation disclosure and modernise the Victorian electoral processes; and
- (2) the outcome resulting from similar legislative reforms introduced in other similar jurisdictions.'

I hope that in my contribution I have explained the purpose of that amendment, which is to ensure that the work of the Electoral Matters Committee of the Victorian Parliament has the maximum impact and value in terms of addressing not only Victoria's electoral laws but also the federal considerations which are going to occur this year, as well as ensuring that the scope of this investigation is as broad as it needs to be to encompass all the matters that it may wish to be addressed.

There have been preliminary discussions across the members of the Electoral Matters Committee from both houses and across the parties represented on that committee. Members of the committee, including the chair, have expressed a keen interest in investigating these matters and doing so as a matter of urgency. I might say that those discussions pre-dated the motion which is before the house today, but that does not change the fact that the motion is very welcome.

I urge members to consider the amendment that I have put forward in the spirit in which it is intended — to ensure that, in the work of the Electoral Matters Committee, which I will certainly be contributing to vigorously along with other Labor members of the committee and I hope Liberal and Nationals members as well, we do indeed put forward advice that will assist the Brumby Labor government in ensuring that our Victorian electoral laws are transparent and open and that we provide for the appropriate levels of disclosure through those laws.

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am keen to make a contribution today to debate on this motion that has been brought to the chamber by Mr Barber and essentially asks the Electoral Matters Committee to inquire, consider and report by April next year on whether the Electoral Act 2002 should be

amended to create a system of political donations, disclosures and/or restrictions on political donations.

The second part of the motion refers to legislative reforms that are being carried out in a range of jurisdictions. It is true that there is significant movement on these sorts of issues around the world. Mr Barber has very carefully outlined a number of them for the chamber. He has pointed to various things in the United Kingdom, to issues in New Zealand, with a forthcoming election there, and also in Canada. He has pointed interestingly to the particular reforms of the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr Harper, and some of the controls and restrictions on donations and increases in transparency that he has put in place.

I think that there are issues with electoral donations. Certainly a committee of this house, the Select Committee on Public Land Development, has heard all manner of evidence around the state that would lead you to the conclusion that there are issues of concern, perhaps most spectacularly in relation to the Kew Cottages site, which saw the intervention of former Labor Senator Graham Richardson as a person who was able to crunch through and achieve movement on decisions by the then Bracks government and get favourable decisions for the Sydney-based Walker Corporation. There is no doubt that the Victorian ALP has been a significant beneficiary of finances from Walker Corporation, and in my view some of the decisions at Kew Cottages have not been decisions made in the public interest.

There have also been recent discussions around the countryside. Most notably — I did not see it myself, but I have had numerous reports about it — there was the *Four Corners* television show this week on the issues surrounding the Wollongong City Council. The decision of the Iemma government to sack that council and deal with the issues in that way in part is a reflection of how sordid it had become in and around the Wollongong council, with certain developer contributions and certain involvements that appear quite extraordinary. I also put on record the concern that I think many have about the situation in Western Australia with Mr Grill and Brian Burke and their unsavoury activities that we know reach into Victoria. Those individuals have met, I am aware, with senior Labor Party officials in Victoria, including in recent times. There are significant matters where shadowy figures in the background have undue influence, and we need to get to the bottom of some of that.

I also want to put on record today a particular concern that the Liberal Party has, and that is the growing power and influence on the political process of the trade union

movement. Whilst it is true to say that the trade union movement has always had influence on the Labor Party, through the 60 per cent requirement for its state council — later adjusted to 50 per cent — a massive influence of manpower, womanpower, donations and voting power at Labor Party conferences. I have to say that at the end of the day, with the continuing fall in trade union membership that we have heard about this week, the trade union movement is not representative of the Australian community, and to that extent it reflects a sectional interest that has, in my view, undue influence on the Labor Party and has now begun to have undue influence very directly on the political process.

At the last federal election an enormous amount of money was spent by the union movement, and the size of that contribution is still not fully clear, but it was certainly upwards of \$30 million. It was a massive contribution to television advertising, newspaper advertising, direct mail and manpower. I am sure the resourcing of campaigns in 22 targeted marginal seats by the Australian Council of Trade Unions and its various affiliates had a significant impact on the election campaign. Of course people have the right to be politically active, to put their views, to go doorknocking, to make their points. At the same time the process should not be so distorted that other political parties are not able to get their message out. This is akin to the interests, as we have heard, of extremely big business in some other countries, where very large corporations are able to have a disproportionate impact on the process.

I think one matter that the Electoral Matters Committee could look at is the impact of trade union donations and the impact on the Labor Party of those donations and the direct impact on the political process. I see that as a critical issue, and Mr Barber's motion is broad enough to encompass such things. It seems to me that his motion is broad enough to give the committee a great deal of compass, a great deal of opportunity, to deal with all manner of things that it finds appropriate. That seems to me one of the most significant impacts.

The other point that I think is important to make here is that this government — the Bracks government initially and now the Brumby government — has sought massive donations from business through its Progressive Business arm. There is nothing wrong with having close links with business and understanding business and the business community, but I am directly aware of a number of cases where Progressive Business and senior ALP officials have been prepared to — let us be blunt about it — beat up senior business people if they do not donate to the Labor Party.

Mrs Peulich — It's called bullyboy tactics.

Mr D. DAVIS — Bullyboy tactics! And I put on record the concern — —

Mr Barber — Give us some names.

Mr D. DAVIS — No, I am not going to go into that, but what I will say is that I am aware of a number of cases where businesspeople have been told that if they did not donate to the Labor Party they would not get business in this state. Worse than that, the donations of people to other political parties have been disclosed. Senior Labor Party officials have gone down that list and blatantly targeted them. They have said, 'You have donated to them; you had better give us the same, otherwise ...'. This is a practice that has got to be dealt with in a very strong and clear way. There is a strong argument for disclosure and openness, but there also need to be balancing protections so that those who make and disclose political donations for purposes that are legitimate in assisting the democratic process are protected from intimidation, threats and actual retaliation.

Mr Viney — I thought you wanted this to be bipartisan.

Mr D. DAVIS — I am just making the point.

Mrs Peulich — How about a ban on all donations? That will protect it.

Mr D. DAVIS — Ms Broad has put on the record, as has Mr Barber, a number of points that it would be worth the committee considering. There do need to be proper protections.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr D. DAVIS — I have got to say that I think it is important to put some of these points on the record. We want a system in Victoria where people are able to go forward in the clearest possible way and undertake political activities.

Changes are occurring where small donations delivered via the internet are able to have a massive impact on the political process. I welcome that development, because the broader the base of political contributions, the better it is for the democratic process. We have seen this most spectacularly in the United States where a number of American presidential candidates, probably beginning with Howard Dean, have been most successful in dragging in enormous political donations made up of small amounts via electronic means. I see that as something that should be legitimately and fairly

facilitated. In no way does that process diminish the importance of disclosure, and I think it is something for the future.

I am concerned that the Labor Party is attempting to move this amendment. As we have indicated in the past, the opposition is very concerned about the developing practice of amending motions willy-nilly in this chamber. Deleting all words after 'That' and inserting something quite different is not the way this chamber should operate. The government has the opportunity through its own mechanisms to put on the notice paper a motion using its own phraseology and its own words. Seeking to amend motions such as this is not an ideal practice for this chamber. The longstanding practice — occasionally I indicate honoured in the breach — of not amending such motions is the better one. The debate can proceed on a motion with clear wording; people can make their points and vote accordingly. That is appropriate. The Labor Party seeking to amend Mr Barber's motion in such a substantial way is disingenuous and unhelpful.

Ms Broad raised matters of timing. Mr Barber's motion talks about April 2009. Ms Broad wants the reporting date to be September 2008. She argues in a sense for reducing the role of the committee to acting as a sort of input to the federal process. I do not see that as being the committee's entire role. I would have no difficulty if the committee were to choose to prepare an interim report and provide that to the Parliament on the date proposed. The committee's report could perhaps provide bipartisan suggestions to the government and to the community in the lead-up to the federal process to which Ms Broad has referred. That would not stop the committee from undertaking a process that is responsive to the federal process.

Later, as we begin to understand precisely the direction of the federal process, the committee may be able to respond in a way that is informed and timely. It would be able to come back to the chamber with suggestions to the Parliament, the government and the community on where, hopefully in some bipartisan mode, it thinks the issue of political donations, disclosure and so forth should go. It may in that period have a greater opportunity to look at some of the other models around the world. The New Zealand election could well be such a source. I am just checking the date of that. Either way there is enough material around the world and sufficient innovation has occurred in some American states, Canada, the United Kingdom and other relevant jurisdictions, as Mr Barber phrased it, to enable the committee to form some sensible views on the issue.

I also want to put on record the need to protect those who want to participate in the political process in every way, and that includes making donations. I strongly indicate to the chamber that this is an important matter that could be looked at within these terms of reference. I do not propose to say more, and I look forward to further contributions from other members of the chamber.

Mr KAVANAGH (Western Victoria) — I would like first to congratulate the Greens on initiating this motion, which strikes me as being both important and timely. It is important because of suspicions that political donations have the potential to corrupt our political system. It is timely, particularly this week with the *Four Corners* story on the influence of political donations in New South Wales. If the suspicions about the potential of political donations to corrupt are misplaced, the reference to the committee will still be useful, because, as we know in law, justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. Perhaps in government we could say that political processes must not only be clean but must be seen to be clean, if we are to have a healthy democracy.

Mr Barber expressed concerns about the lack of a requirement for small parties, such as Country Alliance and People Power, to report donations to the Australian Electoral Commission. I would be fairly confident in guessing that those parties, like the Democratic Labor Party but unlike the ALP and the Liberal Party, do not receive corporate donations, particularly not from developers in search of rezoning. Relatively recent legislation has made things very difficult for small parties in Australia — and, I have to think, intentionally so. The DLP objects to requirements that it provide lists of 500 members to be checked by the electoral commission in order to remain registered. In practice, to have 500 people write to the electoral commission requires you to have probably 1000 names to send to the commission, because so many people will be away, will move house, will forget to send in their form on time or will not do so for other reasons.

This has relevance to the present motion about political donations, because a requirement for small parties to regularly disclose donations is likely to place an unfair administrative burden on those parties. It seems to me that, without discriminating between different parties, it would be possible to address this potential problem by limiting reporting requirements to fairly substantial donations — for example, if a party received less than, say, \$20 000 a year in donations, it would not be unreasonable to not require it to report in the same way as large political parties, which receive millions of dollars in donations a year, are required to report. As a

matter of fairness to small parties and to serve the interests of political diversity I think allowances should be made by the committee in its recommendations for small political parties.

House divided on amendment:

Ayes, 18

Broad, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Scheffer, Mr
Eideh, Mr	Smith, Mr
Elasmar, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr	Theophanous, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Lenders, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Thornley, Mr
Madden, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Viney, Mr

Noes, 20

Atkinson, Mr	Hartland, Ms
Barber, Mr	Kavanagh, Mr
Coote, Mrs (<i>Teller</i>)	Kronberg, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Davis, Mr D.	O'Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Pennicuik, Ms
Drum, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Petrovich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr	Vogels, Mr

Pair

Pulford, Ms	Koch, Mr
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Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

TEACHERS: SALARIES

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That this house recognises the importance of education to Victoria's future and sustaining its economic prosperity, and calls on the Brumby government to immediately increase Victorian government school teacher salaries from the lowest paid to the highest paid in the nation.

The most valuable asset that any business can have is its workforce, and there is no difference with education. We in the coalition say that the most valuable asset in the whole education system is its workforce — that is, its teachers. You can have the best facilities, you can have the best equipment and you can have the best administrative structures in education, but unless you have got the best teachers, that system will not perform at an optimal level. Buildings are important and equipment is important also, but far and above these the quality of the teaching workforce is the most critical factor in delivering first-rate education programs.

This motion before the chamber today is about teachers, and in particular it is about attracting people both young and old who are best equipped to become teachers. It is also about retaining quality teachers, and that is what I will be concentrating my remarks upon today.

In moving the motion one anticipates what the likely response from the government benches will be. We are likely to be accused of being hypocrites in moving this motion today; we will be accused of having a new-found interest in the welfare of teachers in this state. I dare say government members will talk about school closures and past history — we had a bit of that from the Treasurer yesterday — and about sacking teachers, and we have heard that for the last eight or nine years while Labor has been in government.

Today I issue a challenge to government members who will participate in this debate: concentrate on the present and the future rather than the past. The people of Victoria are interested in what is happening today in schools and what will happen tomorrow rather than what happened nine years ago. For my part today I am going to be positive — even optimistic — about the future of schools and teaching in Victoria. I want to talk about how the government, regardless of which party is in power, should be working with its teaching force to ensure that we have the best qualified and best accredited teaching force in the whole of the nation.

I make a plea to government members, and I hope they observe it, to talk about current and future needs rather than go back to the past and rehash all of those things from years gone by. If that is the game, if the government wishes to do that, I am sure that such a debate will be entertained by my colleagues on this side of the chamber. We are optimistic about the current and future levels of education in the state, and that is what I will concentrate on in my contribution.

In keeping with that commitment to be positive in this debate, I start by saying I reckon we have a pretty good education system in Victoria. Whether we go back 10 or 15 years or just the last 5 years, the system is fairly good. At a school-based level we have a good blend of public and private schools that offers a balanced choice for parents. Our preschool system is good in comparison to a lot of the preschool systems in other states of Australia, and it has benefited by the recent integration with education. I applaud the government for this position, which we in The Nationals have advocated for at least the last two elections, for at least the last six years.

We can be proud of our vocational training system in Victoria although, and I will come to this, some

pressure points within the system need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. In terms of higher education, we have been blessed with many fine Victorian-based universities in this state that provide opportunity for our young people to get a higher education.

I am sure the government would not disagree with some of the comments I have made, and I am sure it will not disagree with me when I say that there is more to be done. We can make it better. We can make improvements to our current level of education system. One of those ways in which we can make improvements is the topic of this discussion today — that is, our teaching workforce and ensuring that we have the best and the brightest delivering the education in the system that we have in the state. There is room for improvement, and we all need to acknowledge that, and I do not think I could have any arguments with the government in respect of that comment either.

We need to keep ahead of the pack. There are pressure points in the system. If we do not address those pressure points, then we will soon fall behind in the race of delivering the best quality education in Australia.

One of the pressure points is the attraction and retention of people best suited to teach. Again I say that there is a common view amongst all parties and most education commentators that we need to address that issue. I notice the Australian Education Union made comment to the government in its pre-budget submission in respect of that issue. I quote from page 5 of the *AEU State Budget Submission 2008–09*, under the heading ‘We need to attract and retain the best teachers’:

The basic ingredient of a quality public education system is quality teachers. One of the major issues confronting education in Victoria is a short supply of teachers across all sectors — early childhood, schools and TAFE. The supply situation is becoming acute in certain subjects, industries and geographical areas. As at June 2007, 19.6 per cent of schoolteachers were employed on short-term contracts; contract and casual employment is even higher in TAFE. In fact, the level of contract employment in schools is higher than it was for most of the Kennett years. This is very discouraging for new entrants who start in the profession with poor conditions and no job security. This is cited by new teachers as a major reason for leaving the profession.

There are some comments that the Australian Education Union makes in respect of the need to retain and attract the best teachers for our system. I note the government’s views are not significantly different to the AEU in that respect, and I will come to the government blueprint for education in just a minute. Before leaving the AEU submission I also want to comment on the teacher shortage and the impending crisis situation. The AEU submission also states:

Recent reports confirm applications for teaching places have plunged by 30 per cent over two years in Queensland, and Western Australia is unlikely to fill places for the coming year. In Victoria applications for entry in 2007 and 2008 were down 12 per cent after increasing by 2.5 per cent the previous year.

As a result, entry scores are decreasing. This situation is unacceptable if we are to ensure a quality teacher workforce into the future. Teaching is clearly becoming an even less attractive career.

This comes on top of the teacher supply and demand report that indicates a secondary teacher shortfall of 500 per year for the next three years. In addition, many teachers are teaching outside their area of qualification.

We need to do more to attract quality schoolteachers; we need them to be properly qualified in the subjects they teach; we need to keep them in the profession. To achieve this —

and the union recommends a number of initiatives for the government to pick up. I think the government would agree with most of those initiatives.

Firstly, the Australian Education Union suggests there is a need to significantly reduce the percentage of schoolteachers on short-term contracts. Secondly, it suggests providing the best salaries and conditions for teaching staff in Australia, and that is what this motion is about. There are other suggested improvements about teacher qualifications et cetera, and there are other worthwhile comments from the union that the government needs to take on board. As I said before, the government does not seem to completely disagree with what the AEU is saying. I had a look at the blueprint for education recently released by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, which sets out a five-year plan for education in this state.

I refer to a discussion paper on this subject — that is, the *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform — School Reform Discussion Paper* and in particular to the second chapter, which is headed ‘Workforce reform — the best people doing the right things’. This is what the government says in the blueprint, and I totally agree with it:

Good teaching is critical to improving student outcomes. Research indicates that, after student-related factors such as socioeconomic and cultural background, teaching quality has the greatest impact on how much students learn, accounting for 20 to 30 per cent of the variation in student scores.

On the subject of schools, the government’s blueprint states:

The best systems

get the right people to become teachers

develop these people into effective instructors

put in place systems to ensure every child succeeds.

I would add a fourth point by way of contribution to this discussion paper, which would read, ‘retain those teachers we have in the system now’. All those points are relevant with respect to the role teachers play and the needs we have to address within the workforce.

In this blueprint the government also talks about workforce development. It states:

A global skills shortage, together with the lowest unemployment rate in Australia for over three decades, means many careers and professions are facing critical shortages, and education is no different.

Nearly 40 per cent of the Victorian teaching workforce is aged 50 years and over and there are shortages of secondary teachers in key subject areas including maths, science and technology and languages other than English. Location is also an issue, with some rural areas having difficulty attracting casual relief teachers.

All of us — we all represent schools in our electorates — would be aware of some of the issues cited by the government. The median age of the profession is increasing, and it is common for teachers to retire just prior to their reaching the age of 55 years. Given the fact that 40 per cent of the teaching workforce is currently aged over 50 years, there is an impending shortage of teachers in the very near future.

The government also makes one other interesting comment to which I wish to refer in this discussion about workforce. Page 13 states:

... by making teachers more accountable for their students’ outcomes, we can more easily encourage good teachers to remain in the profession and assist disengaged teachers to leave.

I am not sure — it is not very clear in the discussion paper — what that actually means. Making teachers more accountable for the students’ outcomes is a good thing, and I support that. We all should be accountable for the product of our various types of work, and teachers are no different. We can more easily encourage good teachers, but how does making them more accountable encourage good teachers? I am not too sure what that means. I am also unsure what ‘assist disengaged teachers to leave’ means. There is no clarification of that in the discussion paper or how that might be achieved.

Page 14 of the discussion paper outlines what we could do to ‘attract and reward the best people’. The blueprint says we could work with universities to ensure teacher training programs are appropriate. It also says we could

develop a scheme to encourage high-performing graduates from other fields, and cites programs in the United Kingdom and the United States of America upon which we could model a Victorian scheme. The document talks about finding ‘the best ways to motivate and reward high-performing teachers and school leaders’ and about providing incentives, including higher salaries, for the best teachers and school leaders to work in those schools where they are needed most. That is all well and good. It then goes on to talk about supporting ‘teachers who have become disengaged to leave the profession’. I made the point earlier that I am not exactly sure how that is achieved and what is meant by that. The focus questions relating to that particular part of this discussion paper are:

Do you agree with our reform proposals to attract and reward the best people? Are there other reform proposals we should consider?

I ask that the government perhaps take my contribution to the debate today as a response to those questions in this discussion paper.

I agree that we certainly need to reform aspects of the teaching workforce — there is no doubt about that. I would also point out in responding to the question about considering other reform processes that the most basic of the proposals we should be considering is increasing the salaries paid to teachers to reflect what they are actually worth in the classroom. Teachers salaries should reflect the value that they add to our education system in Victoria. Throughout the whole discussion paper there is no mention of paying teachers what they deserve. The only hint about payment is about providing incentives including higher salaries for the best teachers and school leaders to work in the schools where they are needed most.

In response to that I say that every school in the state of Victoria needs good teachers, not just the ones that are not performing well, not just the ones that are in disadvantaged areas, not just the ones that are in hard-to-staff areas, but every one of the 1500 or 1600 schools we have in this state. They all need good teachers, and what I say to the government in response to this discussion paper is that one of the ways in which it will attract and retain good-quality teachers is to pay them what they deserve.

If you look at the two documents to which I have referred — the AEU submission to the government on the 2008–09 budget and the government’s own blueprint for education over the next five years — you find that in terms of identifying the issue and recognising the need, there is not a lot of difference in view about that basic principle. What is different is that

the AEU has argued very strongly that we should reward teachers, but the government appears to be silent on that matter.

‘What would you do about it?’, is probably the question the government will ask those of us on this side of the chamber who are making a contribution to this debate. What we would do about it was clearly outlined by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Ted Baillieu, in his address to the Liberal state council on Sunday.

Mr Thornley — It didn’t do him any good.

Mr HALL — That is yet to be seen, because this has been warmly accepted as a great initiative by the people of Victoria, Mr Thornley, and I think it will do us on this side of the chamber a lot of good. Moreover, this is not a political statement, because education should be above politics. We should all be working to make sure that education in Victoria is the no. 1 priority. You say it and the government says it, but you do not match it with action. We are saying it should be, and we are committed to making it the no. 1 priority in the state of Victoria. It should be above politics.

Mr Pakula — What we were talking about was the EBA negotiations.

Mr HALL — I have been talking about education for at least the last 30 or 40 years, having been a teacher myself and having retained an interest in public education — indeed all forms of education — over the long period that I have stood as a member in this chamber and prior to that. I have always been a strong advocate for the education system we have in Victoria. Indeed I said in my opening remarks that we have a good system, but we need to improve it — because there is room for improvement — and we need to build upon it to be ahead of the pack. I do not condemn the government for what it has done in education, but I am more interested in working with the government to make it a better system and to improve the system for the benefit of the people of Victoria — not for the benefit of the Liberal Party or The Nationals, but for the benefit of the young people in the education system in Victoria and their families. That is what we were interested in, not the politics of the matter.

On Sunday Ted Baillieu outlined what the coalition is prepared to do about teachers salaries and identified this as a critical issue for attracting the best-equipped people to enter the teaching workforce and for people to stay within the workforce. You need to reward people. Yes, there are intrinsic rewards in teaching — none of us would deny that — but you also have to consider the

salary levels paid to those teachers. It is true — and I do not think the government will refute this — that Victoria's are the lowest paid teachers in the whole country, and the interstate comparisons verify that. I will not tabulate those comparisons in my contribution to the debate, because I do not think I will get any argument.

The government has put on the table a 3.25 per cent wage increase. That will still leave Victorian teachers well below their interstate counterparts. The coalition has costed that beyond the existing 3.25 per cent offer on the table, and says another \$396 million will be required over three years to bring Victorian teachers salaries to a level so that they become the highest paid in Australia. That is the commitment from the coalition. That commitment applies not only to teachers in the primary and secondary system but also to preschool teachers, because if there was ever an area that really needs some addressing, it is the preschool system.

This is an issue which I stressed strongly prior to the last state election. We need to do something to improve the conditions, salary levels and workloads in preschools around Victoria. I am pleased that the government has now moved preschools under the umbrella of education and early childhood development. I said that was a great first step, but the most important step is to provide pay parity for preschool teachers.

We have an absolute dearth of preschool teachers, particularly in country areas where preschools often have to cancel sessions because there are no emergency teachers to come into the system and take over when a director is sick or is on leave for a day. We need to bring about that pay parity between preschool teachers and primary and secondary teachers to ensure that we maintain supplies of qualified preschool teachers in the system.

I am delighted that the \$396 million, which is on top of the on-the-table offer of 3.25 per cent, is being made available and has been promised by the coalition to the teaching force in Victoria. It has given Victorian teachers a clear idea of where we stand on the issue now. The coalition has often been accused by the government of not having policy on an issue. Today we have policy on the issue, and that was clearly enunciated by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place on Sunday at the Liberal Party state conference. It is a clear and concise policy position. Today we challenge the government to match that offer.

I want to say a couple of things about other pressure points in the system. There are probably a lot of areas I

could talk about. If I went too far into those fields, if I started to list what I believe are further pressure points, people would accuse me of being negative. I am not going to do that, because I promised at the start of my contribution I would not be negative.

There are other areas of the education system in Victoria that need a bit of help as well. It is not just the primary, secondary and preschool areas. The non-government school sector is also facing some pressure points in respect of teacher salary levels. The commitment from the coalition is to work with those organisations to try and see if those issues can be addressed. We know that funding for non-government schools is not a prime responsibility of state governments at any level, but I think, given the fact that one-third of Victoria's schoolchildren are educated in the non-government sector, it beholds a government at a state level to at least work with the sector, to sit down and talk to that sector and see if there are mutual benefits in terms of assisting with the way in which they deliver their fine education to one-third of Victorian schoolchildren. We need to work with the non-government school sector on pressure points, particularly with respect to teacher salaries in that area as well.

I also mentioned pressures within the TAFE sector. This is of particular relevance to the state government, as it funds TAFE colleges. I note again the 2008–09 budget submission of the AEU and the comments in respect of the TAFE system in Australia. It states:

On every benchmark figure Victoria leads the country — which is great; I said before we have a good system —

but not in funding. We remain between 12 per cent to 15 per cent behind the national average with no indication of a change in direction.

It goes on to say:

Victoria must address the issues surrounding the skills shortages by attracting teachers into the system and retaining them into the future. The starting salaries are \$19 000 behind that of NSW and for regional institutes close to the border this is having a major recruitment and retention impact.

With respect to TAFE, the AEU also talks about the issue of casualisation. I know casual employment has advantages for the employer but not always the employees. They do not have any certainty of ongoing future at the position that they might hold at any one time. With regard to casualisation the AEU says:

Official figures indicate that out of a workforce of 14 000 TAFE teachers, 8000 are employed casually.

When casual employees represent in excess of half the total workforce, there are some serious issues with respect to the ongoing supply and the quality of those people. Most of us enjoy having permanent status with our work. I understand the necessity to have a level of casualisation, but to have more than 50 per cent in the TAFE sector is an issue which the government should look at. What the AEU has suggested is that the Victorian government needs to lift Victorian funding to TAFE up to the national average within three years to provide more places, more teachers and better facilities.

I am not in a position to make any commitment in the TAFE sector except for this: we from the coalition are well aware of those pressure points within the TAFE system. Certainly in my role as shadow Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation I intend to work with that sector to see if there are areas in which we can assist in having them addressed by the government of the day and certainly take forward their concerns if and when there is a change of government in 2010. There is more to be done. I do not think the government would deny that. There is certainly more work to improve the system of education at all levels that we have in Victoria.

I just want to make some concluding general comments about teaching. I bring these from my almost 15 years experience as a teacher and my close contact with teachers and schools since then. Teaching is a very difficult task. It is not a simple matter of turning up at a school between 9.00 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. each day of the week for about 40 weeks of the year. I would challenge anyone to stand in front of a class of 25 or so teenagers for 5 or 6 hours each day, to keep their attention, to channel their energies in a constructive way, to coordinate their individual learning programs, to monitor their needs, to address their shortfalls and to record their progress. It is a pretty demanding job.

Some of us find it intimidating to stand up here and speak for a length of time. As a schoolteacher, you stand in front of 25 pretty highly spirited young teenagers for 5 or 6 hours a day. They come in shifts, too; they are not all the same ones. You do not wear them down over a period of time. At the secondary level you will get a group of 25 for one hour and then you will have another 25 for the next hour, and they come at you each time. It is not an easy task, and you need to be a particularly well-skilled person to deal with that.

I can remember a former minister, Mr David White, in this chamber asking me about schoolteachers. He said, 'Do you have to be a social worker as well?', and I said, 'Yes, you certainly do'. You have to be an educator,

you have to be a social worker, you have to be a psychologist, you have to be an administrator, and you have to be a respected friend of the students, too, if you are going to get the best out of them. It is a highly complex job, and the only way we are going to convince people of the highest capacity to become teachers is to pay them a decent wage. If we wish to have the best education system in Australia, if we want young people to be taught by the most able of teachers and if we want our kids to have the best opportunity to fulfil their potential, we must attract the people most able to deliver that education, and we must retain them in the system.

The starting point for all of that is to offer our teachers a decent salary. I said that before. There are intrinsic values, but that alone is not going to be sufficient today to attract the best and brightest to the teaching profession. The 3.25 per cent that is currently on the table by the government is not good enough. We need better than that, and we need to be prepared to pay at a rate better than any other state, and that is the proposal put forward by the Liberal-National coalition, as I said previously, at Sunday's state council.

The challenge issued to members of the government by members of the coalition today is to talk about the issue today — to talk about teachers, to talk about salary rates for teachers and to see if we cannot confine ourselves to that particular topic, because that is the most important and critical issue as identified by the government itself in its blueprint. This is what affects the outcome of every child's education — that is, the quality of the teaching force.

To do that there is a whole range of things we have to do, but first and foremost is to pay them at a decent level and then look towards some other issues about improving quality. First and foremost we must pay them a decent wage. That is the challenge which is issued to members of the government today. The response I think will be of great interest to the 40 000 or so teachers in public education in Victoria and will be of particular interest to the parents of the in excess of half a million students who attend Victorian schools. They will wait with much anticipation to see whether this government is going to support teachers in this state by paying them at a rate better than any other state in Australia. That is what our teachers deserve and that is what this government needs to do, and I commend to members of this chamber the motion we have before us.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I always welcome the opportunity to participate in a debate in this chamber on issues such as education — and last week

on health — because it gives us an opportunity to talk about the initiatives of the government in this area. I am reflecting on a couple of comments from Mr Hall. I suspect there are some similarities between speaking in this place and being a teacher. Sometimes in the audience you are trying to talk to, some of them are asleep, some of them are uninterested and others want to have a go back, so I suspect there are lots of similarities. I cannot think of too many other professions where your audience often yells back at you, but I suspect that occurs for both teachers and us.

Mr Hall attempted to define what he thought I should restrict my comments to. In this debate I do not intend to keep myself to the issues Mr Hall suggested I should keep myself to, in part because he did not keep himself to those issues alone. To steal a line from the Acting President, I am about to become a history teacher, because what we need to remember in this debate is what we inherited. Mr Hall talked about the need for the government to do more, and we absolutely accept that there is plenty more to do in education, but there is plenty more to do in education because for seven years under the Kennett government it was run down. There were 8000 teachers sacked and 300 schools closed. We inherited a failure to invest in our schools, a failure to invest in education and a failure to invest in the maintenance of schools. The government inherited a system that was not only run down physically, but the morale of the teaching force was run down. Class sizes over those years had increased from an average of around 21 and 22 to up to 23 and 24 across both secondary and primary schools. I remember there were secondary schools with class sizes approaching 30. We had a very stressed profession.

This government has invested back into education. It has invested back into the workforce. It has employed 8000 additional staff into our schools. The government has invested heavily into the education system. It has re-invested \$7.3 billion since 1999 into education and training. The government's record in these areas has not only been because it places such a high priority on education, but because there was so much catch-up to invest back into the system and to invest in not only the physical infrastructure of the system but also the morale of our teachers.

We have funded projects. We have commenced or completed more than 400 major school building projects. In the last budget we funded major projects at a further 131 schools. We have increased the number of schools receiving primary welfare officers from 450 to 573 in 2008. We have initiated things such as the School Start bonus and increased the education maintenance allowance.

The investment of the government in our education system from 1999 to this year has been absolutely substantial. But we do agree with Mr Hall that there is more to do. That is why we have the blueprint with a plan to invest \$1.9 billion in the Victorian schools plan where we are planning to renovate or extend 500 schools over the next four years. That investment includes the construction of 20 new schools in the growth areas and major regeneration projects to rebuild school facilities across localities. We have construction of three new or replacement special schools and major renovations to at least six others. We have provided permanent buildings for more than 40 small rural schools. We have arranged for the construction of 400 new relocatable classrooms. There is \$30 million to assist needy non-government schools to replace or upgrade their facilities. There is a \$60.5 million fund to establish the ultranet. We have refurbished or replaced 200 science classrooms. We are building 30 new technical wings and we are going to re-equip the technical and science classrooms at all secondary schools, and there is \$48 million for TAFE capital works.

This investment into our education system is because we recognise that education is a vital priority. Investing in our schools and investing in the whole education system is what is necessary. What is necessary is focusing on the outcomes of the education system and then making sure we fund both the physical infrastructure and the staff resources to achieve those outcomes. As I have said, this is a contrast to the sacking of teachers and the closure of over 300 schools. Not only did the previous government close those schools, but it handed the contract to sell the sites off to a company associated with the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Mr Baillieu.

Let us have a look at the issue that Mr Hall raised of Mr Baillieu's commitment on the weekend to teachers salaries.

Ms Lovell interjected.

Mr VINEY — It is always good to offer people a pay rise — absolutely! — but what we have to look at is the cost of that to the system and how it will be paid for. Mr Baillieu said in his commitment that this would cost \$400 million.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr VINEY — Mr Koch says it is putting money in front of people. Where was he during the Kennett years when the education system was cut, when the health system was cut and when train lines were closed? I

remember being at the Bairnsdale railway station on the day that the last train went into Bairnsdale, and when the government hijacked that train there were not just people there complaining about the train line's closure; I remember kids being there complaining about Mr Kennett's closure of their school and their kindergarten.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Acting President, I note that the member is straying wildly from the motion at hand, and I ask you to bring him back to the debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! There is no point of order. I note that Mr Viney strayed just a little from the subject at hand, but I think he has returned to the point of this debate.

Mr VINEY — It is difficult to stick to a debate when you have provocation like you get from the other side. The Liberal Party saying that this government is putting money in front of people is a complete joke, because this is the government that has invested back into Victorians; this is the government that has invested back into our education and health systems; and this is the government that was re-elected in 2002 and 2006 with substantial majorities, because the electorate recognised that the Labor government cares about people, places a priority on services for people and places a priority on the issues that matter to people by investing in services that people in this state need and use. This is the government that, for those very reasons, has invested and continues to invest in our education system.

Mr Baillieu said that the cost of paying teachers at the highest level was \$400 million a year, but he also indicated that he was going to commit to the 3.25 per cent annual wage increase, and he did not factor that in. The actual cost of Mr Baillieu's commitment is \$1.2 billion a year. If you are going to pay teachers at the highest level of any state in the country, then what is going to happen? There will, naturally, be a claim for nurses to be paid at the highest level of any state in the country as well as for people working in the disability field, for the police, for other emergency services workers and for other public servants.

Mr Guy — You abused him for ranting and raving. Listen to your own speech! You abused him for ranting, and now you come in here and do this!

Mr VINEY — I have never abused anyone for ranting.

Mr Guy — Yes, you did.

Mr VINEY — I listen with interest to Mr Guy's contributions when he comes in here and to some of the accusations he likes to throw about the chamber. I am actually debating the issue. Mr Baillieu has made this commitment, and there will naturally be a flow-on to other government employees. It will not take much for that cost to blow out to \$3 billion or \$4 billion per year in the recurrent budget. If we just confine the cost to teachers at \$1.2 billion a year, you have to think about how that is going to be paid for.

How is it going to be paid for? It is possible that we could go down the New South Wales path of not only paying the highest salaries but charging the highest taxes. Is that what the Liberal Party is proposing — to increase taxation in this state? To use Mr Guy's words, the Liberal Party normally does not rant about increasing taxes; that is not normally its proposal. Is Mr Guy's proposal to fund the increase in teachers salaries through increased taxation? No; probably not. How else would you do it? You could offset this increase in the cost of education; that is the other path that the Liberals could go down, just as it did before. How could the Liberal Party offset increasing salaries? I suppose it could sack another 8000 teachers, or it could increase class sizes, as it did before. Alternatively, a possibility is that it could sell schools, as it did before, to fund increasing salaries.

Mr Dalla-Riva — Do you support the motion? It is a simple motion.

Mr VINEY — It is true that it is a simple motion from simple heads that have not thought through the implications of what they are proposing. No-one on this side of the house is saying teachers are not valuable, that they are not respected or that they are not deserving of a decent wage. Everyone is in agreement that teachers are entitled to a decent wage and that teachers need to be recognised. But there are a whole range of things that can give recognition to teachers, including respecting the fact that they are entitled to teach in a classroom that is maintained, has air conditioning, has decent facilities and has a class size that will enable the students to hear what the teacher is saying. Respecting teachers is about respecting not only the salary they are paid but also the classrooms they teach in, the number of students they have and the facilities and equipment they have to use in the classrooms. That is what a genuine respect of the education system and of teachers is about.

I am dead certain that if the Liberal Party got back into government and delivered on this promise of paying teachers the highest wages in the country, it would offset that in a number of ways: by increasing class

sizes, by sacking teachers, and by closing and selling off schools.

Mr Pakula interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I have asked Mr Pakula to refrain from cross-chamber discussions. I request his cooperation.

Mr VINEY — Not only can we be sure that the Liberal Party would increase class sizes, sack teachers and sell off schools, we can be reasonably confident it would find an estate agency consisting of its mates to flog off the schools.

Mr Guy — Tell us about Auspoll!

Mr VINEY — Now Mr Guy is ranting. I have not owned Auspoll for over eight years. Let me re-emphasise what this government's commitment in education is all about: it is about getting the best public education system that the state can possibly have and getting the best outcomes for our young people. It is about investing in our young people.

That is a complete process; it is not just about teachers salaries. Teachers salaries are an important part of that, but so is the investment in our schools generally. You cannot invest to the tune of \$1.9 billion to renovate and extend over 500 schools in this state if you are going to add another \$1.2 billion in recurrent expenditure to education in the state budget because of the rash commitment of Mr Baillieu in his attempt to reverse what has been a downward spiral in his stock not only in the public mind but also in the Liberal Party itself.

This government is committed to continuing its program of investing in education and placing the highest priority on improving Victoria's public education system. We are committed to investing in facilities and teacher training, providing the opportunity for teachers to teach with decent facilities and equipment and in quality classrooms. We are committed to investing in things like the provision of tech wings across all our secondary schools and the upgrade of schools across the entire state.

What we will not do is go down the path of making rash promises that will jeopardise the capacity of the government to deliver on those facilities and services and on our commitment to young people in the state. We will continue down the path of rebuilding every school in the state over the term of the government from 1999 through to this term and, if re-elected, including the next term of government as well. That is because we have that commitment to education and to

the young people of the state, and also because of our commitment to the teaching profession.

We on this side of the house absolutely respect teachers. I respect Mr Hall's contribution to the debate and as the mover of this motion, with his knowledge as a former teacher. However, I wish that The Nationals' record was a little more credible. I wish that at the time of the Kennett government the then National Party had stood up for country schools and had not allowed the level of country school closures that we saw. I wish it had stood up for rural education and ensured that there was a decent investment in rural schools during the course of the Kennett government. It did not do that.

What is quite extraordinary is how quickly in coalition The Nationals have become the parrots of the Liberal Party again.

Mr Lenders — Orange-bellied parrots.

Mr VINEY — They could be orange-bellied parrots. The Nationals tend to find them when they need them. This government, unlike The Nationals, is committed to investing in our rural schools. It is committed to investing in education not only in metropolitan Melbourne but across the whole of Victoria. The government will not be supporting Mr Hall's motion.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Schools: Bendigo

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I direct my question without notice to the Treasurer. Labor Party policy for the 2006 election committed to the building of four new junior secondary colleges to replace five existing schools in Bendigo. Currently there is a \$52 million black hole in the project and the forward estimates of the budget show nothing. I ask: when will the Brumby government allocate the remaining \$52 million capital required to build the four new colleges in Bendigo?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Ms Lovell for her question. I guess it was addressed to me as minister representing the Minister for Education in the other house. As I have informed the house before, while education minister, the state Labor government has announced a much-needed regeneration or rejuvenation of schools in Bendigo, particularly after the shameful neglect of seven years under the Kennett government, which closed more than 300 schools and would not

invest in education infrastructure or the education workforce.

I have reported on that specific thing to the house before in my former capacity as education minister. Ms Lovell asked a specific question about whether the government will fund two more of these schools — and I think it was the question that Mr Drum asked me last year in this Parliament — —

Ms Lovell interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Ms Lovell interjects about black holes in the budget. As Treasurer I am meant to report on the state's finances and on policies and alternative policies due to those finances. I am required to make an assessment so that the state can keep its AAA credit rating.

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Mr LENDERS — David Davis talks a bit like the orange-bellied parrot we were talking about just before. I confirm that it is a role of the Treasurer to present budgets to the Parliament and in doing so to make informed decisions as to the outcomes of initiatives. If a member of Parliament calls for \$10 billion of extra expenditure across the state — which was the commitment of the opposition at the last election, let alone since — to add to a \$37 billion budget, then I as Treasurer need to respond to that in the formation of the budget.

They are views that come to government, and they do from all stakeholder groups, over what should and should not be spent. In the context of people promising all things to all people, to the tune of \$10 billion more than what there is capacity for, I would say to Ms Lovell that this government will consider those matters, as it has assured, in framing the budget. We do not go into the business of closing 300 schools, like the previous government did; we go into the business of building schools.

The Bendigo project is a classic example of how a government that cares about education goes about this. Bendigo Senior Secondary College is a wonderful model which is state of the art and has one of the highest reputations of a government school in this country — a model which other schools aspire to. As part of that, in consultation with the community, feeder schools, junior secondaries, are feeding into that.

It is a model that is put up there on a pedestal by most in the community and the education sector. As part of that the government last year announced the funding of some of the schools and announced that the funding

would come in a future budget for the remainder of the schools. This government went to the election committed to rebuilding, modernising or renovating 500 schools during this term. In the last budget we announced 131 of those 500 schools — that leaves 369 to go over the next three budgets, and they will be delivered.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mrs Peulich should get her abacus out; she would find that that is actually more than 25 per cent in the first year — \$555 million in capital was announced last year out of a pledge of \$1.8 billion, which is more than 25 per cent.

An honourable member — What about Bendigo?

Mr LENDERS — The opposition says, 'What about Bendigo?'. In every single school in the state its members go around and promise all things to all people, like they did last time they got in, when they had said, 'Not one more dollar in tax', yet their first act was to put a \$100 poll tax on every single Victorian and when they said 'No cuts', but they cut. The Victorian community is entitled to ask, and I will respond to Ms Lovell's question.

We will deliver. We promised and we have delivered. We will continue to deliver, but I will not be the first Treasurer in the history of the Westminster system to start, three weeks before a budget, answering specific budget queries such as, 'Are they in or are they out?'. I will not do that, and Ms Lovell well knows it. She may have a press release out saying, 'Treasurer will not rule it in', but I would say to anybody who reads her press release, 'Judge her and her policies by where they stand; judge the government on what it has done'.

This government has delivered. It is a government of action — it has delivered and it will continue to deliver. The runs are on the board: 131 schools out of the 500 were delivered in the last budget. There will be a number of schools for us to equal that target this year. Bendigo has put forward its case. Bendigo has had a strong investment from this government, and we will invest in the whole Bendigo project as we committed to, and we are doing it because we believe in our education system, we believe in putting value into it and we believe in assisting everywhere we can.

That is what makes us have outstanding records of year 12 retention — the top in this country — and gives us among the lowest student-teacher ratios and among the lowest contact hours of teachers of any state in this country. That is what we have delivered: better educational outcomes. And we will continue to deliver

to make Victoria, including Bendigo, an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

Supplementary question

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I thank the Treasurer. In his time as education minister he displayed a complete disinterest in this project and demonstrated to this house that he was not well informed on the details of the Bendigo education plan. Under his watch the plan also stalled, when he failed to secure — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member knows full well that question time is not to encourage debate. If she wants to make a statement, this is not the time for it. If she has a supplementary question, she should ask her question.

Ms LOVELL — I ask: as Treasurer will he give me an assurance that the Brumby government will allocate capital to deliver the four new junior secondary colleges in Bendigo in the current term of this government?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — President, I am delighted that David Davis thinks I am floundering; I am absolutely flattered by his description. What I will say is that I am happy to flounder in this house on any day on budget or education matters. I wish the opposition would ask me every question today and every other question time. I welcome question time, and particularly when talking of the Bendigo secondary college.

For Ms Lovell's edification, I first came across Bendigo Senior Secondary College in 1997, when the principal, Mr Ron Lake, outlined to me the great vision of that school and where it was standing. I have followed it very closely. It is a model of a regeneration of schooling and of schools. This government has a commitment to Bendigo far stronger than anybody else in this house.

This government has had that commitment. We have delivered by the very fact that we have gone out as a government and discussed and negotiated with the Bendigo community as a whole, particularly its educational community, about what the best outcomes for students in Bendigo are, a long process about how schools are situated and what the best feeder system is, and we have committed to the project and we delivered on capital for the project in last year's budget. We will continue to deliver to Bendigo; we will continue to deliver to education. We are not the people who sacked 9000 teachers and closed 300 schools and have now

come forward crying crocodile tears about something they do not believe in.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, I would hate the Treasurer to inadvertently mislead the house by claiming that the former Liberal government sacked teachers. He knows very well that voluntary departure packages were in place.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mrs Peulich knows full well that that is not a point of order.

Climate change: impact

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Can the minister inform the house of how the Brumby Labor government is preparing Victoria to adapt to the impacts of climate change?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — Thank you, President, for the opportunity to respond to Mr Leane's question and his concern about Victoria's ability to adapt to some of the pressures that will be within the Victorian community as a result of climate change.

Members of this chamber know that the Victorian government is determined to mitigate many of the adverse impacts of climate change. It is mobilising with determination to try to make sure that the Victorian economy adapts, transforms and attempts to change its ecological footprint to play a role in the global marketplace in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the consequences of global warming.

As part of that story and as part of the story that was discussed at the summit, which was hosted by the Premier and attended by me and a number of ministerial colleagues and some members of this chamber, it was important for us to identify the threats to the Victorian economy in terms of agricultural production and our productive capacity in terms of the impacts that might have on the wellbeing of Victorian communities in a time of climate change.

How do we foresee what those challenges may be? How do we mark out a research program, a community engagement program, to try to make sure that parts of the Victorian community are not adversely affected? We are mindful of equity considerations, and we are mindful of what economic potential there might be in adapting to new processes, new products and new responses to climate change.

Consistent with that framework, today I am announcing that the Victorian government is establishing a

ministerial reference council, which will report to me, to guide the scoping of that work. It will not necessarily be a closed conversation; it will provide me and the community with a pivot point in terms of putting together some of those ideas and what they might mean in terms of a scientific program and a community engagement program, and it will provide guidance to the government about how we should do this.

I am pleased to say that the reference council will be headed by Kate Auty, who is well known to many members of this chamber and many members of the community. She has played a very important role in the work she has undertaken as a magistrate — applying her skills as a lawyer to the establishment of the Koori courts in Shepparton was one of the important projects she has been associated with — and is well versed in rural communities and in trying to bring people together. She also has environmental science qualifications, so in fact is well versed in terms of the science that underpins this work.

The Victorian government recognises that it is very important to bring together members of farming and agricultural communities who may have to be adapting their practices. We have a representative sample of fantastic attributes in terms of the agricultural community who will be on the council — Alex Arbuthnot, Christine Forster, Helen Martin, Pam Robinson, Mark Wootton — who are well versed in adaptation in terms of agricultural production, catchment management and land management techniques, and who are well connected through the stream of the Victorian Farmers Federation and right through to the creation and establishment of the Climate Institute. They are a very representative group of outstanding Victorians who will be able to consider land management issues and who are well versed in Landcare and other forms of programs designed to shore up the productive capacity of Victorian land.

It is very important that we engage with equity questions and be engaged with the non-government sector, so we have Larissa Brown and Janet Stanley, who will be engaging with questions that straddle both sustainability and equity considerations in terms of adaptation.

It is very important that we are well versed in terms of the science of climate change and the technologies that will be addressing climate change adaptation, and we will be supporting this with the work of Peter Christoff, David Griggs, Ary Hoffman and Chris Mitchell, who will bring together expertise from across a number of universities and the CSIRO and will make sure that we are well versed in the science as it emerges.

We recognise that it is important to engage policy expertise that straddles a range of industrial realities, commercial realities, financial and legal realities and occupational health and safety, so we have a variety of expertise that straddles those policy considerations. That expertise includes Deborah Hollingworth, Sean Lucy, Tim Piper, Sean Silvey and Malcolm Sim — well-recognised and well-regarded individuals in relation to the disciplines they bring to the council.

I look forward to the council convening within the next week and to having an opportunity to meet with its members to discuss the way in which we will scope out important scientific, technical and community engagement aspects of the work in dealing with adaptation so that Victoria will indeed be resilient in confronting climate change into the future.

Planning: residential zones

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. Noting that *New Residential Zones for Victoria*, a discussion paper which contains a written endorsement from the minister, flags the removal of third-party objection rights — a proposal that the Labor member for Essendon in the other place has publicly declared that she does not support — can the minister inform the house what justification the government offers for proposing the removal of a community's right to object to a development?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Guy's question in relation to this matter. I welcome it because it is very clear from the proposition Mr Guy puts that he does not want to see progress in relation to the planning system. What is important in the criticism Mr Guy makes in relation to any of these matters about the potential for having new zones is that he should bear in mind that one aspect of the discussion paper is about making local policy stronger. It is also worth Mr Guy appreciating that this has been an initiative that has come through via the Victorian Local Governance Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria. They are seeking greater clarity, greater support and greater ability to implement their own local planning policies. We are happy to enter into that discussion with the community about these issues, and hence there is a discussion paper.

As opposed to members of the opposition, who would not be keen on consulting broadly around planning policy but would be unilaterally making decisions, as has been the tradition and history of the Liberal Party, we are eager to enter into discussion and consultation with the community. I am also happy to have our

members of Parliament, and Liberal members of Parliament, make comments around these matters to enhance the discussion, to broaden the consultation, and I look forward, whatever the result may or may not be, to its having the broad support of not only local governments but of the community, so we can accommodate housing needs right across Melbourne.

While Mr Guy might be very concerned about this matter, he should also be concerned about matters around housing affordability and sustainability. This discussion around these ideas and this consultation with the community provide an opportunity for the community to have input into these matters, which Mr Guy pretends are important to him, but in actual fact when it comes to ideas around these things he does not have any — a bit like his colleagues. If you do not have the ideas, if you are not providing content to the discussion and the debate, it is disappointing to members of the broader community who want to be involved in this conversation to make Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I note that the removal of appeal and objection rights features explicitly in the new residential zones document, and I ask the minister to inform the house of how a community will be able to express its concern at a planned development if third-party rights are removed.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — What communities seek, what local government seeks and what housing developers seek in wanting to provide more housing opportunities right across Melbourne is clarity. This discussion paper, initiated through the Victorian Local Governance Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria, is an opportunity to provide clarity to new zones within the planning system. If Mr Guy does not want clarity, I am happy for that to feed into the consultation process and to have that as part of the debate — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Guy!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — We are committed to improving our relationship with local government to make sure that we can bring forward housing opportunity right across Melbourne. If members of the opposition are contradicting that, they should make it clear and make a statement. It seems to me that there is a contradiction in the opposition's proposition. They are not seeking clarity around the planning scheme. We are seeking clarity; we are seeking community support on

that, and there is no doubt that the discussion paper is around the opportunity for members of the community to make comment.

Hence, I inform Mr Guy, we have a discussion paper, not a ruling by a Maclellanesque style of planning minister of the type we know he would fall into. The default position of the Liberal Party is the Maclellanesque style of planning system.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind the house, and ministers in particular, that it is very difficult for me to curtail interjections from the other side when members are being either lectured or commented on or questions are being debated. It is very hard. I have allowed a little leeway with that particular question, but I will not continue to do that. I ask ministers for their assistance in sticking to the guidelines in the way they answer questions.

Wind energy: renewable targets

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. The Victorian government has committed to meeting the Victorian renewable energy target, which states that 10 per cent of all electricity consumed by 2016 will come from renewable energy sources. Can the minister update the house on wind energy facilities recently approved by the Brumby Labor government that will contribute to achieving this target?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Ms Darveniza's interest in this matter and her interest in a topic which is very important, bearing in mind the issues that the Minister for Environment and Climate Change has already mentioned today. In confronting great challenges and having the policies, the programs and the initiatives to confront those challenges I am pleased to report that the Brumby Labor government is committed to meeting the Victorian renewable energy target. I am also pleased to report that we are well on track.

I would like to give the house a few statistics. Five wind farms are already operating, generating power to more than 76 300 households. Another 14 have been approved, and once they are operational we will see the provision of power to an additional 761 160 households — that is pretty impressive. We are heading towards the 1 million households mark in terms of the provision of wind-farm-generated renewable energy. That is a very impressive indicator

of where we are heading. We have a very clear policy on these matters.

I am also pleased to announce today the approval of a planning permit for the Woolsthorpe wind energy facility, which will see 23 000 homes benefit from a renewable power source. In granting this permit I have accepted the recommendations of an independent panel tasked with assessing the application. I am informed that the Woolsthorpe site features up to 20 wind turbines and is located 3 kilometres west of Hawkesdale in the Moyne shire.

As part of this development the state government is committed to supporting renewable energy facilities across the state — but in the right location — hence we have a comprehensive, consultative, transparent decision-making framework that gives consistency and confidence to a balanced decision-making process on wind energy development. Victoria's economy is delivering long-term, cost-effective greenhouse gas abatement solutions. I know that rolls off the tongue, particularly when the Minister for Environment and Climate Change is saying it. As well as that, wind energy is driving regional investment and employment opportunities.

Let us not forget, as was raised at the climate change summit recently, that the opportunities around a low carbon emission economy are about the prospect of more jobs in the future. These energy targets, these announcements, these policies and our commitment are leading to a more sustainable future for Victoria, which will make Victoria not just a great place but the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Environment: container deposit legislation

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I refer to the minister's attendance this week at the environment ministers conference in Melbourne, and I ask whether the minister will confirm to the house that the Brumby government will finally drop its longstanding and bitter opposition to container deposit legislation (CDL) and effectively adopt opposition policy to support a nationally consistent system of CDL.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and for the opportunity to talk about this issue. I also thank members of the opposition for their graciousness in recognising that I will be required to attend the ministerial council meeting in Melbourne tomorrow and on Friday. That

will probably have an impact on the house tomorrow, but perhaps not on Friday. My apologies in advance to the house if I am not accountable and at the beck and call of the chamber tomorrow to answer questions on policy considerations. I will do my best on subsequent occasions to make sure that the house is well furnished with information about what happens at the ministerial council meeting.

The work in progress relating to waste management, product stewardship generally, resource efficiency and the drive to try to reduce our ecological footprint and reduce the waste stream is something to which I am dedicating a great deal of my life. Within the last fortnight, with the cooperation of waste management groups across Melbourne, the Victorian government has released a plan for infrastructure development to deal with that waste stream in the years to come.

Within that plan we identified that, whilst we as a community recycle about 300 per cent more than we did a decade ago and have had significant successes in terms of our kerbside collections and great participation by our citizens in streaming their waste, there still continue to be shortfalls in our ability to recycle material to its ultimate benefit and to segregate the waste stream in terms of the final product lines that come from the waste stream generally. That is particularly so for green and organic waste. That is the great unresolved aspect of the municipal waste stream that we currently have to grapple with. In some aspects of our product lines — for example, glass containers or plastic bottles — we as a jurisdiction — —

Mr D. Davis — We do well.

Mr JENNINGS — We do quite well, exactly.

Mr D. Davis — Longstandingly.

Mr JENNINGS — That is absolutely the case, and I am glad Mr Davis recognises that, because people who support container deposit legislation (CDL) are driving it on the basis of the assumption that the system is not working, and they want to take these elements out of the waste stream by taking a perhaps old-fashioned approach, which is something the Treasurer was attracted to. In his younger days he used to take some of his bottles down to the bottle-oh and was the beneficiary of deposits on those bottles being returned. There is a lot of community receptivity to the notion of making a contribution both in terms of collecting and in taking bottles to depots to facilitate their recycling. It is driven by altruism, and it is driven by perhaps a marginal — —

Mr D. Davis — And environmental factors.

Mr JENNINGS — Altruism in terms of environmental focus, yes; that is the driver of that altruism, and there is a small financial incentive to individuals who undertake this. Ultimately we have to consider that policy direction and that prescription in light of what is the step-change required to take waste treatment further so that we become more resource efficient. I think the jury is well and truly out in that context on whether CDL will play a positive role in taking the next step-change in terms of the capacity of recycling.

Within the waste management plan that I talked about a few minutes ago is the desire of the Victorian government to try to facilitate advanced waste technologies. These are large industrial complexes which can be maintained on the highest principles of environmental safety and security and which are good neighbours because they can be constructed in a way that reduces any odour or transmission of material into the environment. They are exclusively driven to try to reduce the amount of landfill and to efficiently work through all the product lines that come through the facilities to maximise recycled products. We want to drive that form of investment.

I am not convinced as the minister responsible at this point in time that CDL assists in creating viable businesses in terms of waste technologies and the processes that underpin them to ultimately drive our performance even further. If I receive evidence that suggests it may assist rather than hinder the viability of those waste technologies, I will be open to it. At this point in time the Victorian government is not, and I certainly am not, supportive of the introduction of CDL before we make the business case for the viability of advanced waste technologies in Victoria.

Supplementary question

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer and the full spread of detail that he gave — —

Mr Lenders — A very good answer.

Mr D. DAVIS — I am prepared to concede that it was a long, detailed response, although it did not precisely address the full aspect that I asked about initially. Further to my question on container deposit legislation, is the minister aware of the Boomerang Alliance report that indicates significant greenhouse gas reductions would be achieved in Western Australia by the introduction of a CDL scheme; has the minister therefore analysed the greenhouse gas advantages of a

CDL scheme in Victoria; and if so, will he release that analysis?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — Obviously Mr Davis got up this morning and read his *Herald Sun*. From memory it was on page 17 that this particular item was referred to. When I read page 17 of the *Herald Sun* this morning and saw this I thought to myself, ‘What is the research — —

Mr D. Davis — I just told you where it comes from.

Mr JENNINGS — No, no. What is the research methodology that underpins such a piece of work, and how confident can we be as public policy-makers about what that research method has delivered? I issued a missive to the people who work for me as recently as this morning to say, ‘Let’s have a look at the integrity of this piece of research and how valid its assertions may be’.

Mr D. Davis — Is there Victorian data?

Mr JENNINGS — As I indicated to Mr Davis, my request for analysis of this piece of work has not been provided to me because I asked for it only a couple of hours ago. We do not have one ready to take off the shelf. I am a bit worried that this piece of research might have a whole range of methodological elements to it that may be predetermined off the shelf as distinct from what the science that underpins it may validate. I am very careful about jumping to conclusions, and I am very happy for us to do our own piece of analysis and at a subsequent point in time share that analysis with the member or members of the community.

Major projects: Sumner Theatre

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Major Projects. Can the minister inform the house of how the Brumby Labor government is taking action to further deliver for the arts in Victoria through new infrastructure development?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Major Projects) — I thank the member for his question. One of my jobs as major projects minister is to deliver on about \$3.5 billion of infrastructure projects that I am responsible for. Within that portfolio there is the \$127.76 million development of the Melbourne Recital Centre and the new home for the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), so I was very pleased recently to be at an event at the Melbourne Theatre Company’s new theatre and to announce the naming of that theatre. It has now been named the Sumner Theatre. For those

who do not know, John Sumner is a giant in the arts, as a member of the Melbourne Theatre Company for 30 years. I am sure there have been many Melburnians, many Victorians and many people from overseas, for that matter, who have enjoyed some of the productions that he has been responsible for. It was a great pleasure for me to be there for that particular event. I might add that Ray Lawler was also honoured at the event in the naming of a smaller theatre that is part of the facility.

It is important for us to understand that the construction of major projects of this type are a significant part of building our cultural and artistic future and providing infrastructure which our children will be able to use and which enhances the kind of place that we want to live in in Melbourne. I wish we could get a bit more reporting in the newspapers of the positive features of these events.

Mr D. Davis — But you don't like the reporting they do on you!

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I am happy when the newspapers report on the fact that there are 2000 jobs being created in Geelong or report on an important new facility. I noted in today's *Age* that Lawrence Money and Susan Carbone reported on the MTC theatre, but of course rather than commenting on what is a fantastic new theatre or commenting on the rich history of the Melbourne Theatre Company or commenting on the dedication of the facility to John Sumner and Ray Lawler, these two journalists did their usual grubby, irrelevant, snide little report at the back of the *Age*. I have got news for the *Age*: that reporting only belittles the *Age*; it does not actually do anything for anyone else. I think Andrew Jaspan ought to wake up to himself in relation to those things.

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, this is well beyond the brief of the question, and the minister also knows he is not allowed to play to the audience in the chamber.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — On the point of order, President, the report in the *Age* is directly related and makes a number of claims in relation to this facility, and I am answering directly on the question. In fact I want to put right some of the claims that have been made in the *Age*, which are actually wrong in relation to this facility.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think the minister is within his rights to comment on the issue in the way that he is, given all of the content of that particular report. The issue of addressing the audience is relevant. It is not something that I encourage — in fact I think we

have had discussions about this before. I have to say that I did not actually see the minister doing that — I was distracted — but I accept what Mr Davis is saying, and I am sure that the minister is aware of the appropriateness of addressing his response through the Chair.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — President, thank you for your ruling, and I want to draw to your attention that, far from reporting what are the obvious benefits to the people of Victoria of this particular building, the *Age* and these two journalists did their boring guilt-by-association thing with reference to my brother, then went on and commented on my diction because they could not find anything of relevance. But they did make a couple of comments about the theatre, and I want to put them straight.

They claimed in this little piece in the *Age* that the Melbourne Theatre Company had to launch an appeal to cover a \$5 million shortfall. In fact I am aware that the journalists themselves were told that this project is on time and on budget. There is no shortfall in the project — it is on time and on budget. It is true that the Melbourne Theatre Company is trying to raise additional funds for a new headquarters in Sturt Street and for some new theatre equipment which was not included in the scope of work that Major Projects Victoria is responsible for building. You would expect that the Melbourne Theatre Company would want additional equipment and would launch an appeal to get additional equipment to use in the new facility, and you would also expect that the Melbourne Theatre Company might want a headquarters in the nearby facility, but — guess what? — they were not part of the responsibility of Major Projects Victoria.

The journalists knew that they were not part of the scope of works, but that did not stop them. It is the type of reporting where you never let the truth get in the way of grubby, vindictive journalism.

HealthSMART: project funding

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer. Given the presence of Department of Treasury and Finance officials on the steering committee for the HealthSMART project, when did the Treasurer first become aware that it would not meet program targets?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Rich-Phillips for his question and for his interest in HealthSMART, which is a great initiative by this government for a better interaction in the health system between patients, their carers and their clinicians. It is a

project the government has invested in, and we obviously received an Auditor-General's report on this particular issue this morning.

I, as a minister, always welcome Auditor-General's reports because the Auditor-General is a figure who this government particularly values. We value his input to these areas, and we also know that this project was one of the most far-reaching and comprehensive health IT system changes anywhere in the country. I have not had a chance to read the whole of the Auditor-General's report.

Mr D. Davis — That was not what the question was.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Rich-Phillips has asked me a question. This house, in its wisdom, has removed time limits on how long it takes me to reply to a question, and I believe in answering the question without the assistance necessarily of David Davis, who found it difficult to actually say 'good' to Mr Jennings before. He is probably not the connoisseur of questions.

Mr Rich-Phillips asked me a particular question, and having seen the response to the Auditor-General's report this morning I looked at various items. Obviously it was an iteration between the Auditor-General's office and the Department of Human Services and the Department of Treasury and Finance. I made a point of reading from the report the responses of both secretaries of those departments to the Auditor-General. I also know that the Auditor-General, as the Auditor-General does, made some reference suggesting that the scope of the project may have been overambitious. He made those comments. He also made comments about very strong virtues in the project.

This government, as always, welcomes reports of the Auditor-General. His reports will make comment to government on things that have gone well, and there are aspects in his reports that will also draw government's attention to things that could be done better.

I contrast the measured response of the Auditor-General, as an independent observer and someone who tries to improve the processes of government, to that of the opposition, which whines and carps all the time. The Auditor-General actually says, 'This could have been done better; this is how I think it could have been done better'. I acknowledge Mr Rich-Phillips's question. The Department of Treasury and Finance has made comment through the secretary on this particular proposal, so the department has been aware of and responded to it, but most

significantly the Auditor-General, in an open, transparent and accountable manner, has reported to government — —

Mr D. Davis — When did you know?

Mr LENDERS — David Davis makes comments about the Auditor-General. The government he was part of made the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission look transparent.

We will back the Auditor-General as the independent umpire at every stage, and I welcome Mr Rich-Phillips's supplementary question, which I am sure will be one commending the Auditor-General on being such a good independent umpire and congratulating the government on giving power to the Auditor-General to enable him to review government so we do not have a situation like that of the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the Treasurer for his broad, general and non-specific response. Given that 57 per cent of the allocated budget for HealthSMART has been spent to roll out just 24 per cent of the project, will the Treasurer now assure the house that the project will be delivered within the \$323 million budget?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I say to Mr Rich-Phillips that this government will be correctly judged on how it delivers its budget and how it delivers services to the state. The government will be judged by that. You will find there are some projects that run over budget and some projects that run under budget. I have had a cursory look — —

Mr Drum — Most of them.

Mr LENDERS — I will take up the interjection. Mr Drum said 'most'. One of the features that this government cops a beating for from the opposition at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings is when we have what are called cost underspends. We get criticism from the opposition if we underspend.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — I have got a question on budget, and I have got interjections on this. When this government underspends on a budget — and I draw Mr Drum's attention, for example, to the Hallam bypass, which came in at \$10 million under budget — the opposition then comes to us — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — Mr O'Donohue is yabbering away about the Hallam bypass — he drives down it; he knows about it — but when we come in under budget on an item like the Hallam bypass, we come under criticism because we have overestimated the cost. The opposition cannot have it both ways. Governments are about being open, transparent and accountable; when a budget item overruns, we are accountable for it — it is transparent; and when they come under cost, we are also accountable for it and it is transparent, so we say, 'Judge us as a government on that'.

The government can be judged on its AAA credit rating. Its budget surpluses for every year are invested in the next year in schools, roads, hospitals and police stations — all those great capital works projects that the opposition slashed. In addition, we have targeted service delivery. We report our finances to the Victorian community five times a year in such a way that the *Australian Financial Review* of 15 January 2003 said we were too transparent. Mr Guy talks about supervision — —

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, the question to the Treasurer was very specific, about a specific program and future spending on it. The Treasurer has gone on a general ramble, talking about bridges and broader things that have nothing whatsoever to do with the question. I ask you to bring him back to the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question was reasonably specific and has allowed the minister to give a reasonably broad-ranging answer to it, which he is doing. I am sure the minister is aware of the need to be relevant in his answer. I judge it to be relevant to date. Some of the digressions he may be taking are the direct result of some of the interjections he is getting. Opposition members may like to think about that.

Mr LENDERS — The government makes no apology for modernising and overhauling an outdated, centralised data system. We also make no apologies for empowering the Auditor-General to make exactly these comments on government projects that the community can see.

Mr Rich-Phillips is asking questions regarding the time lines of a particular project. Whilst Mr Rich-Phillips is asking about time lines, the Auditor-General has actually analysed the project, analysed the findings and made a report to the community, which is open, transparent and accountable. I would back the Auditor-General any day for giving advice to the

Victorian community in a far more effective manner than Mr Rich-Phillips would ever dream of. This is what makes this a great state, a more open and transparent state. We do not fear an Auditor-General's findings; we welcome his comments. If they are adverse, we will respond to them.

Commonwealth-state relations: cooperative federalism

Mr THORNLEY (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer. The Brumby Labor government has a commitment to reducing the regulatory burden in Victoria. I ask: how is the Brumby Labor government working with the Rudd Labor government in the spirit of cooperative federalism to continue to reduce the regulatory burden and make Victoria the best place to live, work, do business and raise a family.

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Thornley for his question. It is music to my ears to hear expressed in this chamber the words 'cooperative federalism' and 'Rudd Labor government'. Mr Thornley asks a very serious question about what the two governments are doing together to reduce the regulatory burden. This is what modern cooperative federalism is all about. The contrast is extraordinary between what we see now with cooperative federalism and what we saw a year ago under the aspirational federalism of the then federal government.

Firstly, the very fact that nine governments are sitting together, signing up to a program of harmonising business regulation, is extraordinary. Mr Guy talks about being non-competitive. There could be nothing less competitive than the previous government going down its adventurous paths on issues like Comcare. Let us use that as an example of cooperative federalism versus its opposite. This group of governments is working together on trying to come up with a plan that harmonises occupational health and safety (OHS), as an example. Together Victoria and New South Wales have already taken some extraordinary steps here that do not affect a person's rights or entitlements but remove red tape. If there are issues such as the WorkCover warning tape in one state being regulated to be a fraction larger or smaller than it is in another, you can harmonise that without affecting a single outcome and you can cut business costs.

On OHS, for example, with the previous model the commonwealth was determined to set up a separate Comcare system where there was duplication. To use an example, if you had a Victorian OHS scheme which applied in a Victorian Coles Myer shop, the

commonwealth's new Comcare strategy meant that suddenly Linfox, as a company, would have a separate OHS on its trucks. Therefore you had one state regime and one federal regime, let alone the grey area and more red tape when the forklift went from the Linfox truck to the Coles Myer dispatch bay.

That is an example where the commonwealth wanted to go down a path of its own without any thought of what it would do to competitiveness, business red tape or cost. Without determining the merits and demerits or which system was best, it went down the path with its eyes closed, because it was looking for a political fix for the six o'clock news — it was standing up to state systems. What it meant for two large companies like Linfox and Coles Myer was a lack of compliance, different regulatory regimes and the costs that go with this.

What we are seeing now is a working group of COAG (Council of Australian Governments) which is actually dealing with reducing costs to businesses. What that means for ordinary Victorians is jobs, jobs and more jobs. If we reduced the regulatory burden by 5 per cent a year in the state of Victoria alone, it would boost GSP by 0.4 per cent. Opposition members should figure that in job terms. If the commonwealth replicates that, it will boost our GSP by an equivalent of a further 0.6 per cent.

That alone will mean more jobs in Victoria, less time wasted by business filling in unnecessary paperwork and red tape and less time for community groups dealing with unnecessary red tape. The COAG working group Mr Thornley is talking about is focusing the country on dealing with this unnecessary duplication. New South Wales and Victoria have harmonised payroll tax already. It reduces business costs, so that money can actually be spent on other areas.

We will continue to work with other jurisdictions and we will continue to work with the commonwealth, because cooperative federalism is the way forward. These Labor governments working together are making Australia a better place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

Gunnamatta: sewage outfall

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and it relates to the March 2008 report by the Clean Ocean Foundation that compared this state's performance on ocean outfalls with the new National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines. I would like to ask the minister to respond to two

particular concerns raised in the report. One is that with the current treatment method used at Gunnamatta, which kills the indicator pathogens but not all of the important and dangerous pathogens, we are getting an unnecessarily low measure of the risk there; and the second is that the mixing zone has lower standards than would be required by the usual guidelines — and at Gunnamatta this mixing zone extends over 4 kilometres, encompassing a beach that has 350 000 users a year and includes the Gunnamatta Surf Life Saving Club. Are the concerns raised in this report valid and has the minister asked his department whether there is any immediate action he should be taking?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank Mr Barber for providing me with a very rare circumstance, because in fact I am not well advised on this particular matter at this point in time.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — I volunteer that because there are obviously some environmental issues that are impacted upon by what the analysis actually says, so I am acutely interested in knowing what the analysis says. In terms of the wastewater treatment that is the driver of this piece of research and this analysis, Mr Barber would be aware that that is the ministerial responsibility of my colleague in the other place, the Minister for Water. So whilst I am not abrogating my responsibility for being aware of the environmental issues involved, in terms of dealing within government I am sure if Mr Barber had the opportunity to ask that question of the Minister for Water directly, that minister would be better informed immediately to respond to that issue. I am happy to take advice on that matter, to consult with my colleague and to provide the chamber with a response that relates to these matters.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — In light of that answer, I will ask the minister about two recommendations for action. I understand that upgrading the Gunnamatta outfall is a long-term commitment of the government. In fact it was a policy in 2002 and is now to be delivered in 2012. But in relation to the short-term actions recommended by this report — one being that the state environment protection policy be updated to meet the national standards and the other being that a short-term alert system be put in place, not the one currently run by the Environment Protection Authority, but one that can obtain information and give alerts within one day — when will they be implemented at that site?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I am happy to explore those and happy to respond to them when I deal with the substantive question. I am happy for that question and other questions to be furnished to me that may be relevant to my responsibilities in responding to this issue in the future.

Infrastructure: government initiatives

The PRESIDENT — Order! To help celebrate his 55th birthday, I call Mr Nazih Elasmr.

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer. How is the Brumby Labor government continuing to be a world leader in infrastructure delivery?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Elasmr for his question. I thought his birthday present actually was when Ms Pennicuik had clearly joined the government benches earlier and Ms Hartland had moved one step closer, but alas it was not to be!

The answer to Mr Elasmr's question about how Victoria is leading the world or what are the standards and principles that make us such a good place for infrastructure investment and for companies to do infrastructure work here is a long journey. Part of it is government transparency as to how processes work. Part of it is a clear pipeline. Whether it be in education, with 500 schools being announced in a four-year term and that giving some certainty to construction companies that there is work going on; whether it be our \$9 billion water plan, which sends a clear message through to industry that it is a good place to invest and work in Victoria; whether it be our Meeting Our Transport Challenges plan, which is a \$10.5 billion plan over 10 years in public transport; whether it be our ongoing work in hospitals; whether it be ongoing construction in many areas where there are a lot of infrastructure works, they are all clear signals to the business community that Victoria is a good place to invest and a good place to invest for a long-term future. There is a \$4 billion commitment on infrastructure — four times what it was when we came into government — which sends a message that it is a good place to invest because we are building this critical infrastructure.

Adding to that, though, there is an obligation on government to do what it can to remove some of the impediments. Just as my colleague the Minister for Planning, Mr Madden, is removing so many of the impediments in planning that reduce the capacity of people to work — he is assisting it by reform — my

other ministerial colleagues are doing exactly the same. In the public-private partnership (PPP) forum this government is leading the way with an action plan on streamlining the principles of public-private partnerships. We do that so we get greater efficiencies, and greater efficiencies mean shorter procurement times, which obviously save costs and ultimately lower the cost for government.

We are also very conscious that we need to further harmonise this across jurisdictions so that people who want to carry out projects in different parts of the country will know where they stand in Victoria and that they can do business here. Any savings in this process give us more money for more schools, for more hospitals and for more of these important capital works programs.

So I can say to Mr Elasmr that what this government has done — it may not be the birthday present he was looking for — is to streamline the PPP process. We are leaders on this across the country, so the principles are being improved. I had the privilege of announcing those last week. They will assist in making it easier to do business and we will get better value from the projects. They add to the transparency that we have by being on our website. They will first be applied on the PPPs for the 11 new schools. Again this is but another example of the government investing in education — 11 new schools announced quite recently. What we will see then is that this will assist us in moving forward, because this construction and these projects are such important parts of making Victoria an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I seek from the Treasurer, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Minister for Industry and Trade and the Minister for Planning an explanation with respect to certain questions on notice: with respect to the Treasurer, questions 1024 and 1025 for response by the Minister for Education in the other place, questions 1036 and 1037 on behalf of the Premier, and question 1044 on behalf of the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission in the other place; with respect to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, questions 35, 514, 543 to 549, 1040 and 1041 for the minister's direct response, questions 1026 and 1027 on behalf of the Minister for Health in the other place, and questions 1208 and 1210

on behalf of the Minister for Water in the other place; with respect to the Minister for Industry and Trade, questions 1030 and 1031 for the minister's direct response, questions 1012, 1028 and 1029 on behalf of the Minister for Public Transport in the other place, and question 1038 and 1039 on behalf of the Minister for Energy and Resources in the other place; and with respect to the Minister for Planning, questions 1034, 1035 and 1211 for the minister's direct response, and questions 1032 and 1033 on behalf of the Attorney-General in the other place. All those questions have been on notice for more than 30 days and the ministers have been written to regarding late responses.

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I think I can speak on behalf of other ministers, but for myself I will certainly follow through with those Assembly ministers that Mr Rich-Phillips listed. For the information of the house, any correspondence from Mr Rich-Phillips certainly has not come to my office, but he has raised it in the house today so I will accept that as the request for information as is appropriate under the standing orders.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I will follow up on the request from the member.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I am happy to follow up on those matters. I have not sighted the letter from Gordon Rich-Phillips, but if it is in the system, I am happy to seek it out.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I would like to give a response not in identical terms but in very similar terms to those of my ministerial colleagues.

TEACHERS: SALARIES

Debate resumed.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I want to quickly conclude my contribution on the general business motion of Mr Hall. As I indicated, the government is not able to support the motion in its current form, because whilst it would support the first part of the motion, which states in part, 'That this house recognises the importance of education to Victoria's future and sustaining its economic prosperity', it would be argued that the second part of the motion, rather than being in the form it is currently in, should be talking about recognising the need for the Brumby government to continue its investment in education along the lines I outlined in my earlier contribution.

The government is not in a position to be able to support this motion in its current form, but it does support the first sentiment expressed in the motion.

Sitting suspended 1.06 p.m. until 2.13 p.m.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to support Mr Hall's motion:

That this house recognises the importance of education to Victoria's future and sustaining its economic prosperity, and calls on the Brumby government to immediately increase Victorian government school teacher salaries from the lowest paid to the highest paid in the nation.

Before speaking to that, I take the opportunity to set straight some of the claims that were made by the previous speaker, Mr Viney. I believe he argued — and I will need to look at tomorrow's *Hansard* very closely — that the substance of the motion, which is the proposal announced by the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, would cost \$1.2 billion per year. This is in stark contrast even to the comments made by the minister, who said it would cost \$1.2 billion over three years. Both are incorrect, because both the minister and Mr Viney have not taken into account the funding already set aside for the pay increase that the government is prepared to fund. The figure given for the proposals announced by Mr Baillieu was for the difference. That is one matter where Mr Viney has certainly got it wrong.

I will very briefly rebut some of Mr Viney's other points. He said that the former Liberal government had sacked 7000 or 8000 teachers — I cannot remember the figure he used. He knows full well that not a single teacher was sacked; we had voluntary departure packages in place. The Labor government continues to perpetuate this lie as a way of diverting attention from the truth: that in 1992 it left the education system in an absolute shambles, with a \$700 million backlog and a series of systemic failures. It left a system that was geared towards the 1950s and 1960s rather than towards the end of the 20th century.

Mr Viney also claimed that the Liberal government sold off 300 schools. I briefly make the point that our policy was that any schools that were surplus to government needs would first of all be offered to other government departments — as I believe is current policy, although I am not sure if it is being followed — and, if they were surplus to state government needs, they would be offered to the local government sector at half the commercial value. That is why many of these wonderful facilities are now enhanced community facilities — it is the result of difficult action that had to be taken because there was an absolute need for the

consolidation of educational facilities because the Labor government had been so derelict in its duties over the preceding period.

The government will clearly vote against this motion, using the argument that it would contribute to budget problems and perhaps be an inflationary measure, when there are many other areas where the government could exercise its responsibility to offset the inflationary effects of government spending — for example, removing the annual indexation of taxes and charges. The Bracks and Brumby Labor governments have been in power for nine years, which is a longer period of government than the period for which we presided, during which we reshaped and modernised the system and introduced elements that are still in place under this government — for example, the use of school charters and school global budgets.

There are also other areas that have been done away with, I think to the detriment of the system, such as the physical resources index, which at least under the opposition when in government was able to categorise different levels of maintenance. Schools then could openly, fairly and transparently have an indication of what maintenance funding they could expect rather than relying on a system that is being used to pork-barrel, as is the practice of this government.

This government has been running the system for nine years now; it has no-one else to blame. For a large part of that it had two education ministers, one being former member Mary Delahunty and the other being the present Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, both in the other place. Dare I say without being unkind to either woman, who no doubt have other positive attributes, that they added very little to the strengthening of our education system. In fact I would say that for the past eight years very little progress has been made, despite the government trumpeting its achievements.

I am flicking through the government's policy that it took to the 2006 election. I invite members to compare this Victorian schools plan, which presumably would apply between 2006 and 2010 with the new blueprint that has been circulated; let me say that there is not a lot in common. I flicked through the plan wanting to see what it said about teachers — and there were only two meagre references to teachers in this 18-page document, which I think tells an interesting story.

The language of the latest document *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform*, particularly the discussion paper that is out for consultation, makes interesting reading. It engages all

the right language; it says most of the right things. But one thing we have learned over the nearly nine years of this government is that this government is very good with words, very good with rhetoric and very good with the spin — but although it is very good at conceiving them, it is very poor at executing plans. We can have a quick look at what has been achieved over this time to rebut the government's claims about how it prizes education and how it still remains its no. 1 priority, and set up an argument where the motion before the house should be supported, and should be supported by all government members.

I refer to the funding of schools. If we look at it from an historical perspective and at when the budget of this state was half the size of what it is today, we can give some curry to the government's argument. But when we look at the increase in the population and the increase in the budget, this area is a problem for the government. In terms of capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure on schools and school buildings, it does not look good. According to the government's own figures, more than \$200 million of maintenance is already outstanding in our schools. I think the opposition, when in government, virtually wiped it out, but it is steadily creeping back up.

Many schools in the government's heartland seats have been very badly neglected. It seems that now it is embarking on school closures, school amalgamations and school mergers in the Labor heartland, where it knows that if communities express their dissatisfaction, it will not really do a lot of political harm. But it can bring about untold damage to the very communities that it supposedly now seeks to strengthen by improving school facilities — something that should have already been achieved through the nearly nine years of this government.

Some of those schools are schools that I have had an association with. I am proudly a graduate of Albert Park High School — a school that has been closed by the government. That site is not in my region; nonetheless, the land must be a really attractive parcel and the government must be biting at the bit to try to sell that off. In my region, in Dandenong, a cluster of schools are being merged into fewer sites. One of the closures is likely to be Cleeland Secondary College, which is a school that I taught at and which, I dare say, despite its very multicultural population achieved some very good outcomes. Similarly, in Springvale a number of schools will be merged into fewer sites.

However, a site the government is very keen on selling off is the best location for a secondary school. It is adjacent to a railway line and so transport for

commuting would make life for students, many of whom are from fairly impoverished backgrounds, a lot easier. No, I imagine this government plans to flog that off to the highest bidder for residential purposes, for the high-density housing, for the no-go zone that the Minister for Planning is trying to put through his current consultation paper.

What happens to those schools? They end up having spouting that is falling off, floors that are damaged, carpets that are worn and torn and windows that are rotted — such as at, for example, the Dingley Primary School. It is a very good little school with some great teachers, and they deserve better than what they have. What happens when parents look at these schools? Unfortunately a lot of them decide that they will continue looking, so more people leave the state system and go to the private sector or the cheaper independent schools than ought to be the case.

I did all my teaching in the state government sector and I am a product of a state government education. I believe, given the amount of money that we set aside for state education, every child should be getting the best possible quality of education we can deliver. Every dollar wasted is a child cheated of that dream and that right.

The capital expenditure has not been set aside. The government boasts about how it will rebuild 500 schools — that is a very small proportion of the total number of schools — but, as I said, the need for maintenance is increasing. The government continues the practice of imposing voluntary levies, which was a difficult issue when the opposition was in government, and now concedes that perhaps the imposition of levies is a little too vigorous in some schools; it is going to undertake an audit of 100 schools.

Let us look at the funding per student. The 2008 Productivity Commission figures released recently show that the real comparison between what this government says and what it does is vastly different. The figures relate to the 2005–06 expenditure, but they are the latest figures available. In table 4A.8, headed ‘Real Australian state and territory government recurrent expenditure per student, government schools’, you can see from the average totals spent on students across all states and territories and also the national figure that Victoria spends the least per student. It spends on average \$10 352 per student, which is at the bottom of the range. When you look at the other states you see that New South Wales spends on average \$11 279, Queensland spends \$11 043, Tasmania spends \$11 361, the Northern Territory spends \$16 647, and the Australian average is \$11 243. Victoria is the lowest

funder of education when you look across all of the other states and territories, and this government cannot hide from that fact.

When the figures are broken down into primary and secondary figures it does not look good for the government either. Primary education is crucial but, whilst the government provides a bit more funding there, once again Victoria is at the bottom of the pile behind Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales. It is behind all the states and territories at \$8767. The Australian average is \$9699; Victoria is well below that average. Statistically it is also reflected in the secondary school funding. Once again, Victoria is at the bottom with \$11 329. The Australian average is \$12 148, and it is below all the other states and territories. The government’s claim that education is its no. 1 priority is then blown out of the water.

Student achievement is always a vexed and difficult issue. There is always debate about whether the focus should be on skills or content; the reality is that it is usually both. While the government embarks on some testing at particular year levels, it is not comprehensive and comparative, because those tests are generally not administered at the same time of the year. But international evidence from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 2006 literacy report, which is released every three years — it was released last year — provides a real comparison because exactly the same testing is carried out in each state and territory of Australia and 23 other countries around the world.

This is a powerful indicator. Sadly, Victorian schools are at the bottom of the pile when compared with other states, according to the OECD results, and of course it is the worst of the mainland states. In the PISA results, which are a measure of students using scientific evidence in explaining scientific phenomena, Victorian students were the worst performing of all the mainland states. The conditions under which the test is given is a sound methodology, and the minister who says that we compare favourably needs to hang her head in shame.

In regard to school enrolments, the Australian Bureau of Statistics preliminary report on schools in Australia says that 752 fewer students are in Victorian schools now than they were two years ago, while the number of students in the non-government sector has risen by 8658. How can we make some inroads into fixing some of these performance indicators in a system that ought to be committed to improving and providing the best quality of education to our children so that they realise their potential and our economy in actual fact has the

opportunity to prosper? I believe the Ted Baillieu plan is an excellent way of spearheading that reform. Why? Most parents who have schoolchildren, and most of us would know, that the value of a good teacher is gold. The most important factor, of course, in education is good-quality learning and teaching.

Mr Hall interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — Absolutely.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — That is sort of sticking your head in the sand, because we know, for example, that the recruitment of teachers is a problem, that teachers are not sticking with teaching for long enough and that experienced teachers leave the system. What are we doing? Clearly we are not providing a pay structure that addresses all of those issues. Teachers are 10 per cent to 15 per cent more poorly remunerated than other states. What we have seen as a manifestation of that is teacher strikes, causing disruption to parents and disruption to learning. Every day lost due to a strike negatively affects a child's learning. The minister has done nothing since 21 November last year to resolve this issue. The minister needs to do so, and I believe the government should be offering more than what is being done.

In closing, I was very proud to see Ted Baillieu make the commitment that he did at last weekend's state council conference, and I should like to read a couple of quotations from his speech. He said:

If our children are to be the best minds of the nation, they must be taught by the best educators in the nation.

I certainly share that view.

And the best educators are in very, very high demand.

I don't believe we should accept the disparities in education. There should not be one salary for those in New South Wales, WA, Tassie, South Australia, ACT, Queensland and a lower salary for those in Victoria. We have already started to lose teachers from the profession and to other states and overseas.

In closing, he said:

In the event that John Brumby fails teachers now, we —

that is the Liberal Party —

undertake today —

that was a couple of days ago —

that under a coalition government, if the budget position is maintained, we will move to ensure every Victorian

government teacher will be elevated to the highest paid for their level in Australia.

There is much to be done in order to strengthen our public education system. Maybe the discussion paper released by the government offers some hope, but I am sceptical because the government is so good at words and so poor at delivery. However, I believe if we encourage good-quality teachers to stay in the system, to be recruited in the system, to experience a degree of satisfaction, to be able to operate more effectively as teachers and supported with appropriate funding and appropriate facilities and equipment, that we can turn this around.

As a member of Parliament, previously in the lower house and now in the upper house, I look forward to one day having the opportunity of shaping a better government education policy to make sure that all of our children, including those from the most disadvantaged parts of our community, have the very best chances to fulfil their potential, because so many have come here to Australia, many immigrants like I did when I was 10 years of age, in search of better opportunities. They deserve every opportunity that we can give them, and currently we are failing to do so. With those few words, I support the motion.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to speak today on Mr Hall's motion:

That this house recognises the importance of education to Victoria's future and sustaining its economic prosperity, and calls on the Brumby government to immediately increase Victorian government schoolteacher salaries from the lowest paid to the highest paid in the nation.

I recall that Mr Viney in his contribution said that the government supports the first part of the motion that education is important to Victoria's future and sustaining our economic prosperity. I would say that it is not only important to our economic prosperity but also to our cultural and social wellbeing and to the general education of all citizens. It is not only an economic issue.

The second part of the motion relates to whether Victoria's teacher salaries should rise from being the lowest paid in the nation. We know that they are the lowest in the nation and that the government spends less on education than any other state; one only has to look at the figures in the Productivity Commission report to know that that is the case. There may be some argument as to what that actually means. I know the Australian Education Union has been running a campaign asking for 10 per cent per year over three years, a 30 per cent pay rise, and is talking now about parity with New South Wales, which in fact is the state

with the highest paid teachers. This motion is in parallel and equal to what the Australian Education Union campaign is about. I congratulate the union for its campaign and perseverance over some 16 months now dealing with the government in trying to get wage justice for teachers.

It is hard to disagree with this motion as a principle. Victorian teachers deserve to be amongst the highest paid in the nation or equal to the highest paid in the nation, who are New South Wales teachers. It can also be said that raising them from the lowest level to the highest level would enable them to catch up from the period during which they have endured being the lowest paid teachers in the nation. It is not good enough for the Victorian government to allow our teachers to languish at the bottom of the national pay scale, particularly when so much more is being asked of them in terms of the initiatives that the government is putting forward in its blueprint. That is blueprint mark 2 — I think there was another blueprint five years ago.

Whether teachers around the country should be paid on the basis of parity with each other and whether the current enterprise bargaining agreement system of wage negotiations every three or four years is necessarily the best way of achieving this is, I would say, an argument for another day. There is competition amongst the states about who is paid the most and who is paid the least, when essentially teachers around the nation are doing the same job. As Mr Hall so eloquently said, it is a complex job being a mentor — and being a crowd controller sometimes. My experience as a physical education teacher is that you definitely need to be very organised and very firm in your expectations if you do not want to have chaos in your class. There are also the skills in the subject areas, the social welfare roles, the in-absentia parent roles, the counselling roles — all these roles that teachers fulfil and the large number of hours that in my experience most teachers put into the job over and above the actual classroom, face-to-face hours. A lot of work, thought and effort goes into being a teacher over and above those face-to-face hours. That is why teachers should always be remunerated well, and should enjoy good working conditions. Unfortunately we are in a situation in Victoria where that is not the case. It needs to be remedied.

An honourable member — It sounds a lot tougher than our job.

Ms PENNICUIK — It is a lot tougher than our job. As Mr Hall said, facing a fresh, new bunch of year 9s or year 10s every hour or so — some of whose mission in life is to make your day unhappy — is always a challenge, so when you are teaching there are several

challenges a day, but my experience was that teaching is also a very enjoyable and rewarding occupation. However, it also needs to be well remunerated, and teachers should have good conditions.

I was a bit surprised that this motion came forward from the Liberal-National coalition, but I am pleased to speak to it and to have the issue raised in this house, because it is an important public policy issue.

An honourable member — We should have more.

Ms PENNICUIK — That is right. The Greens have consistently supported the Australian Education Union in its campaign for increased salaries and improved conditions, especially in the reduction of the use of contracts in state schools and in technical and further education — an unhappy initiative that was brought in by the former government. I do not want to dwell too much on the history of things, but not a lot has been done by the present government in its almost 10 years in office to reduce that number. The number of teachers on contract is about the same as it was, and that is not a good thing for teachers' career structures and for their morale. I have made many public statements in support of the Australian Education Union campaign throughout 2007–08, and I addressed the teachers' rally on the steps of Parliament late last year.

The importance of education to the Greens is encapsulated in the policy statement with which we went to the last election. In our policy we state the obvious: that the Greens believe education is a human right and a public good; that a quality education system promotes equality, social justice and economic wellbeing; and it is the responsibility of this state to provide a fully funded and resourced public education system including free school education. Our policy states that we value and promote the work of educators and are committed to providing innovative, student-focused learning environments. In our statement we recognise the constraints and difficulties of doing so, given that funding levels for Victorian preschools, government schools and technical and further education (TAFE) are the lowest of all the Australian states. Our basic principles on education are that a free, public, secular and democratic education system is fundamental to a just and democratic society. That is first and foremost the educational responsibility of government: to fund and support a public education system available to all people at a level to sustain excellence.

We say that educational funding models should address inequities between schools and not disadvantage government school students. In terms of educators, we

say there should be pay parity and conditions for all educational workers and across all educational sectors, in particular schools and TAFE. Also in terms of conditions, as I mentioned before, there should be the phasing out of the use of contracts except where they are genuinely needed, which is in very few circumstances.

We say, and this is part of the complaint of the AEU, that teachers are being asked to do more and more with less resources and are not being supported in new initiatives. They are being asked to bring them in, but they are not being supported in them, so our policy talks about increasing resources and increasing the time allocation for teachers to train and prepare for curriculum changes and to attend to increased administrative requirements. I know the AEU has been raising that issue as well — the amount of time teachers have to spend on administrative tasks rather than on teaching, which is what they are trained to do.

I would like to talk a little about equity. In the *Age* over the last couple of days there have been stories about education, discussing the government's new initiative. An *Age* article today by Farrah Tomazin says that when the Minister for Education in the other house goes to the education ministers meeting tomorrow, her discussion paper will concede:

...that Australia's education system 'lacks equity' with the nation's underperformance concentrated in areas of high disadvantage.

'Evidence suggests there has not been a significant improvement in the levels of equity in Australia's education system over time' ...

'Literacy and numeracy data from surveys of Australian students indicates that differences in social background had as much impact on differences in educational achievement in 1998 as they did in 1975.

So we have not actually moved ahead.

It also says that we need a national integrated effort. I agree, and part of that should be pay equity amongst teachers.

The policy of the Howard government, I must take the opportunity to say, of radically increasing the amount of public funds to non-government schools has served to increase those inequities between schools, and it is a policy that needs to be seriously looked at. Although it is not the topic of today's motion, it needs to be noted.

Teachers are critically important to education, which is to state the obvious; there is evidence going back decades to that effect. Mr Hall mentioned in his contribution that the effect of teachers on students is

very significant. The education system, the education environment, in terms of the school, the socioeconomic environment of the students and the role of teachers all contribute to the mix, but the role of teachers is crucial to the outcomes that are achieved by students.

In the *Age* of 11 April, continuing this theme in the media, at a summit in Melbourne hosted by Ministers Pike and Morand to launch the education blueprint, which is 'The five-year strategy designed to lift student achievement, boost child-care services, and make schools more accountable for their results', Sir Michael Barber, who was a leading adviser to Tony Blair and now works for McKinsey's Global Education Practice, made the point that:

The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.

It said the government should be focusing its efforts on teachers. I think these points that are being made underscore — —

Mrs Peulich — Mentioned twice in their policy document.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, and I will move to the blueprint document, thank you, Mrs Peulich. I noticed that Mr Hall was quoting from that document this morning. That is *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform*, which is available on the department's website, and, as Mr Hall said, invites comment from the community. While you would not disagree with any of the words in this document — as Mrs Peulich, I think, said, 'All the right words are there' — when you read through it, it contains a lot of motherhood statements, it has a lot of what are known as 'weasel words'. Mr Hall picked out one phrase, which I too had put an asterisk next to:

Making teachers more accountable for students' outcomes, we can more easily encourage good teachers to remain in the profession and assist disengaged teachers to leave.

I did puzzle over how making teachers more accountable was going to encourage good teachers to remain in the profession. Those might be two good aims but the link between them is elusive. In fact some of the statements in the document border on being Orwellian.

The aim of the government's blueprint for workforce reform is 'to attract the best people to teaching' and to 'encourage them to improve once they are teaching'. To do that they propose to focus on teacher training programs — this is further down on page 5:

...and to support teachers who have become disengaged to leave the profession.

I note that the AEU (Australian Education Union) in its response to this blueprint said it is basically missing the point. Even if teachers are disengaged, you would think the role of the state education department would be to find out why they are disengaged and whether it is something that is being done in the system, and to assist them to stay in teaching, because we know — and certainly Mr Hall and Mrs Peulich have talked about it — there is an impending teacher shortage, with 4 out of 10 teachers now over 50, and many of them will be looking to retire — —

Mrs Peulich — A youthful age.

Ms PENNICUIK — Very youthful. But they are very experienced as teachers and possibly need to be retained in the system. So the government's idea to encourage teachers to remain is to have teacher training programs. Remuneration and conditions for teachers are not mentioned anywhere in this document; it does not mention much about supporting teachers. It talks a lot about supporting schools, supporting the system, but not about supporting teachers per se.

It mentions that 40 per cent of teachers are over 50, and many will be looking to retire within the next 5 years and certainly the next 10 years. The AEU's survey of principals found that 33 per cent of them are struggling to fill teaching vacancies in their schools, so we have an impending crisis. This blueprint talks about, as Mr Hall said, getting the right people to become teachers, developing those people into effective instructors and retaining them in the system. The problem is the public message being given by the government with its 16-month hardline campaign against teachers for what I and the majority of the community believe is a reasonable request for teachers to have pay parity with their New South Wales colleagues — who, incidentally, work fewer face-to-face hours than Victorian teachers. As I have already said, I do not think that should be a measure, because teachers put in so many hours outside face-to-face hours in preparation, correction and other extra-curricular activities that it is really a red herring.

Mrs Peulich — PE teachers always had less.

Ms PENNICUIK — PE teachers always had more, Mrs Peulich, with so many sporting teams to look after before and after school and at lunchtime.

Getting back to my point, the public message that is being sent to existing and prospective teachers by the government is that it is sticking to its attitude that all

public servants will get a 3.25 per cent increase, and if they want more they have to show productivity improvements. When you are talking about productivity improvements in a manufacturing context that might mean you are going to produce more widgets per hour, but when you are talking about productivity in terms of the complex job I have outlined and Mr Hall has outlined, measuring it is not so easy to do. It usually means having to do yet more with less, adding to the already high workload and the much more complicated and complex job teachers do now than they have had to do in the past. With each new government initiative and technological advance the requirements for teachers to do more and more grows.

The message the government is sending with its intransigence in this matter is that teachers are not valued and they are not going to be adequately rewarded by this government. That is the public message. That is the message current and prospective teachers have been hearing for almost a year and a half.

I earlier congratulated the AEU on its campaign, and it has been persistent. The reason it has been able to be so persistent is that its campaign for increased remuneration is well supported by teachers. Teachers have been participating in the rolling industrial action. The rallies outside Parliament and other rallies throughout the state have had strong teacher support and participation, and there has been increased membership of the union. If teachers did not feel strongly about this issue, that would not be the case, but it is the case. In the context of the government's being so intransigent, the aims put forward in the government's blueprint to attract more teachers are being undermined by its public behaviour in not supporting the reasonable requests of the AEU on behalf of Victorian teachers.

Last month the AEU released the results of a poll it conducted. I have just mentioned that teachers strongly support the AEU campaign. The reason it has been such an ongoing campaign and been able to — as I am just about to say — gain so much public support is that there is so much teacher support, and the public values teachers. The results of the AEU's Essential Research poll show that only 6 per cent of the public believes the government is doing enough to resolve the dispute, and 80 per cent believes the government should be doing more. An article on the AEU's website states:

The results ... clearly indicate that the Victorian public overwhelmingly supports teachers in their campaign for better pay and conditions, with 85 per cent of the belief that our teachers should be paid the same as those in NSW.

The article goes on to say:

Other poll results include:

82 per cent of the public believe that Premier John Brumby and the education minister Bronwyn Pike should meet the union to try to resolve the dispute.

We all know that the education minister has refused to meet the union at any time. The article continues:

96 per cent of the public are aware that the Victorian public school teachers are currently in dispute with the state government about their wages and conditions and have been taking industrial action ...

That is a very high level of awareness of the campaign by the general public and a very high level of support.

I again make the point that the behaviour of the government is at odds with the words in its blueprint. The words in its blueprint about attracting teachers et cetera are being undermined by its public display of not valuing teachers, which is clear from its intransigence on the teachers' campaign.

We have a situation where we have a looming — not even a looming but an existing — teacher shortage because we know that 33 per cent of principals are reporting that they cannot fill vacancies, and teachers themselves are reporting that they are being required to teach outside their areas of expertise. That is not good for the teachers, and it is not good for the students. We have an existing teacher shortage and a looming exacerbation of that shortage. At the same time the government's public behaviour towards prospective teachers and teachers who are already in the profession and might be thinking of leaving and going to a less demanding job that pays better — and who would blame them; even though as I said, teaching is a wonderful profession, you can get to a stage where enough is enough — is completely at odds with what it says in the blueprint. It is undermining its own document.

I want to refer to the costs, but before I do that, in terms of requirements for the supply of teachers the AEU has provided me with some figures that indicate that the supply of teacher graduates must be supplemented by the recruitment of an additional 500 secondary teachers a year between now and 2010 to meet the shortfall. I do not know the maths, but that is a lot of teachers. We also know that one in five teachers is on a short-term contract. That is also a message to prospective teachers that they will not have a career structure and they are going to be on a year-by-year contract. The fax sent to me by the union also states:

Our inability to attract and retain teachers is underlined by figures from the Victorian Institute of Teaching suggesting that —

one-third of beginning teachers do not teach beyond three years and that in the next five years at least 15 000 teachers will leave the profession. As I said, we have a looming crisis.

I have been informed that the Australian Education Union has sent to members copies of correspondence between it and the minister regarding its log of claims. In a letter from the Minister for Education to the union the minister claims that the AEU's log of claims, if acceded to in full, would cost in excess of \$8 billion to implement over the next four financial years. On round figures the total education budget is about \$7 billion, and the total budget for employees is about \$3.8 billion. I note that Mr Viney in his contribution said it would cost \$1.2 billion. I did a bit of calculating and found that if we used the 10 per cent per year that the AEU has been looking for, it would be around \$400 million per year and over four years would be \$1.6 billion, just on a rough estimate. So it is very unclear how the minister could talk about a figure of \$8 billion. It is not believable that that could be the figure, which is more than the total education budget.

I discussed this with the AEU, which said it is very hard to get precise figures because the annual teacher supply and demand report for this year has not been released, and the last one available is for 2006. I am informed that it is usually released every February after being finalised in December. Perhaps the government could release that report so we could all be a little clearer as to what the actual figures are.

Mrs Peulich — They're sitting on it, are they?

Ms PENNICUIK — They are sitting on it, Mrs Peulich. I am sure the Australian Education Union has sent its briefing paper to other members, as it has to me. One figure in the briefing paper jumped out at me. We know that a beginning teacher in Victoria is paid some \$4000 less than in New South Wales and that a four-year trained teacher in Victoria — that is, after five salary increments — is the lowest paid in Australia. The Australian Education Union in its briefing paper makes the comment that:

As well as the salary disparity, it takes Victorian teachers longer to progress to the top of the scale. Over the first 12 years of their career —

which is where you come to the ceiling in pay scales —

a Victorian teacher earns \$114 520 less than their New South Wales counterpart.

That jumped out at me, because it is not the figure over just one year, it is the figure over that 12 years, when they have been consistently at the lowest end of the scale. If you add that up, it ends up at \$114 000 over that time. I do not think that is good enough. Victorian teachers deserve better than that.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Was any of that over the Kennett period?

Ms PENNICUIK — As I said, Mr Theophanous, I was not going to go into a history lesson here. With those comments, the Greens will be supporting the motion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to start by saying that people on this side of the house believe teachers should have a fair outcome on their agreement and a fair pay rise. One thing we do not support is hypocritical opposition party stunts, and that is what is happening here. A fact that we should all be able to agree on is that we would not be debating this motion if teachers were not currently in enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations. I have to say I have been involved in a lot of long negotiations, sometimes fortunately and sometimes unfortunately, over enterprise bargaining agreements. Although all parties sometimes go very hard during negotiations, they eventually get settled, and the teachers EBA will get settled. The union representing the teachers is a very good and capable union, and it will not settle on an outcome unless it is happy with it. The Australian Education Union will not take it to its members and its members will not endorse it unless they are happy with it.

One of the components of the outcome of the agreement will be wages. Teachers deserve a fair pay rise because they do a great job, and no-one on this side of the house would question that. The Australian Education Union is running a good EBA campaign on behalf of its members, which is its job. Two of my sisters have been long-term members of the education union. Unfortunately one of them is no longer with us, but I have had a number of conversations with my other sister at family gatherings in recent times regarding the EBA campaign which her union is conducting on her behalf. She has told me that the union is working hard and doing a great job in rallying the members and getting them active, which is exactly what a good union should do.

I believe strong unions are very important, and I challenge opposition members in their contributions to echo those sentiments, because I think they might instantaneously combust. I repeat that I think the

education union has run a good EBA campaign on behalf of its members, just as the Australian Nursing Federation ran a good EBA campaign on behalf of its members. The nurses union at that time had the spectre of the WorkChoices legislation, the extreme industrial relations laws, put over its head by exactly the same coalition that moved this motion. Those laws could have seen people put in jail for their actions in striving to get a good enterprise agreement outcome. That is a law that this coalition passed — to put people in jail for taking action to improve their conditions. I am not talking about the state secretary and I am not talking about the organisers. I am talking about the nurses — individuals. This is a law that was put in place by the coalition that has moved this motion today.

If coalition members think that just because the coalition's state leader announces a policy on teachers wages — it sounds as if his funding is a bit short, but that is neither here nor there — and the coalition moves this motion, these two stunts, which they do not believe in, will win over public service workers such as teachers, nurses and firefighters, they must think those workers have very short memories. If Ted Baillieu can get up and make these statements and think he will be looked on by teachers as some sort of white knight, he has to remember that not long ago he was not a white knight; he was Baillieu Knight!

Ms Pulford — They had something to do with schools, didn't they?

Mr LEANE — Through his real estate business he sold schools where teachers worked — I mean, you have got to have somewhere to work! — which resulted in 9000 fewer teachers over that period of time. Workers are not stupid; they have long memories, and it is very insulting.

Mr Barber — They are smart.

Mr LEANE — They are smart, Mr Barber.

Mr Barber — That is why most of them vote Green these days.

Mr LEANE — Yes, most of them are smart. Some of them lose their way, Mr Barber, but they are smart. Maybe Mr Baillieu should take advice from the website that you would suspect has been put up by some disgruntled members of the Victorian Liberal Party called Ted Baillieu Must Go.

Here is a recent quote from it:

Ted, there is naught to be gained by pursuing alliances with those who will never vote for you, be they unions, opponents

of bay dredging, refugee collectives, Greenpeace or the (laughably small) Malcolm Fraser Appreciation Society.

The Liberal Party has never won an election by outflanking the ALP on the left. Every attempt to do so has resulted in electoral humiliation. If the politically talented and genuinely charismatic John Brogden couldn't do it, what on earth makes you think you can?

Whoever wrote that has made a very good point, which confirms what I think. Even if coalition members had not launched their anti-union and anti-worker attack, which is what WorkChoices was, they will never woo workers collectives, because the coalition is a group of people who have formed a collective, the main ethos of which is to be anticollective. They will never be able to woo collectives, because it is not their ethos. They are dreaming.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Leane, through the Chair, please.

Mr LEANE — Sorry, President. I have heard coalition members in this chamber confirm a number of times that they are about the individual not dragging down the collective and individuals being able to take advantage of as many people as they can.

Turning to the motion, from speaking to my sister and to other teachers in the electorate I know that funding is important to teachers in relation to the quality of education they can deliver, so the funding of 8000 additional teaching positions over the term of this government is important and has been since the previous government ripped the guts out of the education system.

I am sure that there are a lot of issues on the teachers' log of claims other than a fair pay rise, and that is where I think this motion may be a bit flawed. In his motion Mr Hall calls for an immediate pay rise, which might not suit the union strategy in settling with the education department issues that are very important to teachers' hearts but may not be monetary. Industrial relations campaigns are all about pressure, and maybe the pressure point has not been reached. Opposition members might find it hard to understand the concept that people might be striving for outcomes that are important to them, but it does exist. The coalition should improve its understanding of industrial relations a bit more before coming to the house and moving motions such as this.

In the short time I have been in this house it has struck me that a number of motions that have been moved by the opposition in this house indicate that people in the coalition act like a group of people who are resigned to never forming a government again. Perhaps in the

future members of the government and members of the coalition will change sides in this house — tragic things happen! If that happened, we would follow the agreement and put the whole log of claims on the motion and get it right. We would believe in what we were doing and not make a political grab for relevance which has slipped away.

I am not going to go too much into the past and highlight the previous government's undeniable history of sacking teachers and closing schools and flogging them off and the current Leader of the Opposition's personal involvement in that process. I want to talk about the part of the motion which makes a bit of sense as far as the future is concerned. The motion states, in part:

That this house recognises the importance of education to Victoria's future and sustaining its economic prosperity ...

From what I have seen in the short time I have been in this place — over the last year and a half — I think this is a given as far as the government is concerned. I have been fortunate enough to visit a lot of government primary and secondary schools in the electorate I represent. What has impressed me is the quality and passion of the teaching and the high quality of the students in those schools. I am sure opposition members will talk about the education system falling off and about schools in their electorates. It will be similar to the health debate. They might mention announcements in the budget for capital works so they can send out media releases — which everyone will ignore — claiming that they achieved by gobbing off in here during this debate.

Mrs Peulich — Who wrote this for you?

Mr LEANE — Mrs Peulich knows that no-one writes my speeches; that is why they are unique.

I am sure opposition members will follow their leader's announcement that we need to attract the best and the brightest, which I reckon is a slur on the current teachers. The current teachers I have met and the young people they are educating are great. They are bright, and I would like to see someone do better, because teachers are doing a fantastic job. The young people I have spoken to in the public system are more socially aware than previous generations. They have been taught about the cultures of other countries and the importance of understanding and appreciating difference in diverse cultures. They are more computer literate than previous generations, due to modern IT equipment and the willingness of their teachers to train them in the use of that equipment.

These kids have a stronger belief in the importance of sustainability and looking after the environment than any generation before them, so someone is doing something right. I think it can be put down to the fact that their teachers are teaching them well. I do not think we have to attract the best and brightest, because we already have the best and brightest. No-one will argue that teachers do not deserve a pay rise. They should get a pay rise and a decent EBA. I congratulate teachers on their campaign, and I am sure there will be an outcome that they will be happy with eventually if they keep going down the track they are on.

I have speeches from opposition members on all sorts of topics, but I think it is the generation of children who are being taught now who will save our planet. Opposition members have made comments beginning with the exclamation 'Kids today!', but these sorts of comments have been made for centuries. This is something that was said by Socrates 2407 years ago. If you watch *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* you will hear them call him So-crates. He said:

Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers.

The only thing that suggests this is outdated is that I do not think many people say 'tyrannise' now. This is what people have been saying for years. I believe the opposite to that. I believe children today are going to save this planet. All power to the teachers. I am sure they will get a decent pay rise. We support their getting a decent pay rise, but we do not support opposition stunts.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I congratulate Peter Hall on moving this motion on behalf of the opposition today. I think it is a very important motion for us to debate in this house. Education is very important to all of us. All of us have a great deal of admiration for the people who taught us when we were at school. Ms Pennicuik and I actually went to the same primary school, and I am sure Ms Pennicuik remembers Mr Horsburgh, Mr Byrne, Ms Speakman and Mrs Davidson with a great deal of affection and admiration, as I do.

I would not be standing in this place if it were not for my year 10 business studies teacher. He was one who would have sat on the opposite side of the chamber to me; he was a member of the Labor Party. He was a very good schoolteacher who had a great deal of influence on me. The debates that occurred between the teacher of that year 10 business studies class and me were influential in forming my political thoughts at the time and were the catalyst that engaged me with the Liberal Party. I joined the Liberal Party in year 10,

aged 16, because of the challenges he threw out to me. I thought he would fail me at the end of the year, but he gave me a really glowing report. When I was elected to this place, I thanked him in my maiden speech. I gave him a copy of that speech. He told me he was really proud of me, he just thought I represented the wrong party. Unfortunately he has been lost to the education system as a teacher — he was a very good teacher — because he went on to pursue a career in the law. Many of the teachers who taught me have moved on to pursue careers in the private sector as lawyers or as accountants or in other fields where they can be remunerated a little bit better.

On his first day as Premier, Mr Brumby said that education, including early childhood development, was his no. 1 priority, but so far the government has not demonstrated that. It has taken the government nine months to put together — —

Mr Lenders — Who created a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development then?

Ms LOVELL — Creating a department does not improve outcomes. Just making an announcement that you are going to create a new department, move a few chairs around and spend a bit more money on decorating offices does not create outcomes for the children in our schools.

Coming up with the blueprint has taken the department nine months. We have had an announcement of a new department, we have had announcements that kindergartens are moving into the department of education, but nothing has been communicated to the kindergartens of Victoria as to how this will affect the way they run or how it will affect the way their teachers are employed or what impact it will have on the children in those kindergartens. Nothing has been communicated to them.

It has taken the ministers and the department nine months to come up with a blueprint. They have come up with two very sketchy and thin discussion papers. That is all they can come up with in nine months. Women in this state have had babies in the time that these discussion papers have been put together. I am sure those women are concerned about the future of the children they have had in those nine months and how they will be educated in this state.

Let me just touch on these blueprints. For a start the discussion paper on early childhood development is 21 pages long, but of those 21 pages the first 5 are taken up by a title page, a publisher's page, a contents page, a blank page and a ministerial foreword. We then have

2 pages of executive summary and then there are 13 pages that form this blueprint for the future of early childhood development in this state. Of course the last page is again a nice picture.

The discussion paper for school reform is even worse. It is only 17 pages long. Again at the beginning we have a title page, a contents page, a ministerial foreword, an executive summary that takes up two pages — so five pages are taken up by that — and then an introduction page. That is six pages. Two pages are taken up by key achievements in school education, so we are down to nine pages of what the future is actually — —

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, Mr Hall's motion talks about the salaries of teachers. What we are getting is a dissertation on a number of blueprint documents that have nothing to do with salaries. I ask you to call Ms Lovell back to the motion.

Mr Hall — On the point of order, President, the blueprint documents clearly refer to the issue of salaries in respect of incentives for teachers to teach in hard-to-staff school areas, so there is certainly some reference to the whole issue of teachers salaries in the blueprint. I think in this debate people have been critical of the fact that there is not enough emphasis on that in the blueprint document, but there are certainly references to payment for teachers in those documents.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On the point of order, I have listened quite closely to just about all of the contributions to date on this motion. I would have to say there has been a fair bit of digressing from the main theme by all contributors to date. I do not think anything serious has resulted from allowing that, and whilst where Ms Lovell is at the moment is technically a digression, I do not think it is any different from what everyone else has done. I will allow it, but I ask Ms Lovell to be conscious of the need to be relevant and to stick as closely as is reasonably possible to the terms of the motion.

Ms LOVELL — I had just about finished with those anyway, because there really is nothing further in those nine pages about what this government plans for our schools.

The last thing I would like to touch on about the blueprint is my disappointment in the consultation process. There was one summit for invited attendees, and then a series of four consultations is being held in Traralgon, Geelong, Dingley and Moonee Valley, but there is nothing in the north-west of the state. The closest consultation forum for people living in Mildura

is at Moonee Valley. There will be nothing available in the north-west, in the north-east, in central Victoria or further west than Geelong. That is a little disappointing, and I think the government could have done better.

Currently in Victoria our teachers are receiving the lowest pay of any state or territory in Australia, which is a very poor record for this state. Victorian government schools are receiving the least funding per student of any state or territory, and Victoria has the lowest literacy and numeracy levels of any mainland state. That is a poor record by this government. The school maintenance backlog has doubled from \$130 million to almost \$280 million since Labor came to office, and many schools will not receive any funding to remedy that until 2016. Parents are losing confidence in Victorian government schools, and the number of enrolments has declined over the last two years. The situation in Victoria is a sad one.

Many people have touched on the commitment made by the coalition at last Sunday's state council, and I commend the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Ted Baillieu, for making that commitment to Victoria's teachers. I particularly welcome the announcement that kindergarten teachers are to be included in that. We know our kindergarten teachers have for a long time been paid well below even the amount received by a primary school teacher, and this announcement would bring kindergarten teachers not only to the same rate as schoolteachers but would also make them the best paid kindergarten teachers in Australia. In order to do this, the coalition would increase funding for kindergarten committees that employ those kindergarten teachers, to ensure they are able to meet that policy commitment.

The fact that Victorian teachers are the lowest paid of any state or territory has a particular impact on my electorate because just across the river in New South Wales, we have the highest paid teachers in Australia. Mr Phillip Rogers, who is the principal of the Rutherglen High School, is starring in commercials on TV at the moment telling us how hard it is for him to keep teachers in Rutherglen when they can go across the river to Corowa and be paid \$10 000 more. That is the same for all the border towns — whether it be Echuca-Moama, Albury-Wodonga or Cobram-Barooga — because anywhere along the river in my electorate teachers can drive for 5 minutes, cross the river and be paid \$10 000 more. You cannot blame the teachers for taking up that option.

If we want to attract the best and the brightest teachers for our schools and if we want to have the highest standards of education for our children, we need to

adequately reward those teachers so that we can attract them to our schools, keep them in the Victorian education system and provide better education for our children.

There is a series of rolling strikes happening around the state at the moment. Only this morning in Shepparton close to 200 teachers gathered outside the office of Kaye Darveniza to express their frustrations at trying to negotiate with this state government over their pay. They are disgusted that the Premier will not meet them, to sit down and talk about their new salary packages.

A delegation from the protest this morning entered Ms Darveniza's office. Of course Ms Darveniza was not there because she was here, which is a fair enough position. Her secretary told the delegation she was not there, that she was in Parliament, but was not permitted to give them an appointment as no-one knows when Ms Darveniza will be in Shepparton.

The delegation returned to the protest and said, 'Ms Darveniza is not here', and the laughs and the cries from the crowd were, 'Well, she is never here. What else would we expect?'. But the secretary did tell the delegation, for what it is worth, that Kaye's secretary was on their side, but that she could not speak for Kaye. So it will be interesting to see which way Ms Darveniza votes — whether she votes to support teachers in their quest for higher pay in this state and to support keeping the best teachers in the state of Victoria, especially in her electorate, which is the same electorate as mine, Northern Victoria, where we border with New South Wales, which pays teachers the highest rates in Australia. I invite Ms Darveniza to cross the floor and vote with the coalition on this motion.

Mr PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I suppose my question in this debate is: what does a party do when it has lost its identity and forgotten what it stands for? The answer is it resorts to stunts, and this is just another one. The latest stunt in the Liberal Party, which is fashioned in the image of its leader, is to try to attack the Labor Party from its left flank. They tried to do it during the dredging debates, and look where that got them. Dredging has been going on for two months now, the bay is as clear as crystal, and if corporate Australia is not laughing in the Liberal Party's face, it is certainly laughing at it behind its back.

They tried it with their ill-conceived reference on gaming licensing — that is, the conspiracy that was not there. Then the member for Malvern in the other place was banging on in the media every day about how the government was giving Tattersall's a rails run.

Whoops-a-daisy! What a rails run — the conspiracy that was not there!

Now they are reincarnating themselves, this time as the friends of the workers. Mr Hall, in his opening statement, said that we in Victoria should attract the best and the brightest to the teaching profession, and I agree with him; I agree that they should be paid appropriately. But it is not a simple matter of a headline wage rate, and it is not a matter that will be resolved by a speech to the Liberal Party state council, even though — and this has been little remarked upon — its leader, Mr Baillieu, did not promise to ensure that Victorian teachers would always be paid above the national average.

That is in the AEU's (Australian Education Union) own media release. It will not be resolved by an opportunistic motion that is moved in the middle of an EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) negotiation. It is in fact a very difficult EBA negotiation because there are very complex issues at play and because the AEU is an extremely formidable union, and I pay credit to it for that. My mother was a member of the AEU. I watched the AEU in action for my 14 years as an official of another union, and it was always an example. It and the nurses union were always an example to the rest of the trade union movement about how to organise yourselves, how to have density, how to negotiate strongly and properly. It is a very good union.

This is a difficult negotiation process that will be resolved. It will be resolved by collective bargaining, because this party believes in collective bargaining. Unlike the Liberal Party, we believe in the concept of collective bargaining. We are committed to it, and we will resolve these issues in that way. Like every other attempt that the Liberal Party has made to pretend that it is something it is not, it will come a cropper on this. It will come a cropper on this because one of the good things about politics is that, by and large, you are not judged by what you say, you are judged by what you do. The Liberal Party's form and the coalition's form is that every time they get into government and every time they get a chance to do working people in, they take it. Teachers should understand — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I advise Mrs Peulich that teachers should understand that they are not exempt from the Liberal Party's view of working people or unions. I would like to ask members in this chamber and I would like to ask the teachers union which particular Liberal Party article of faith it is that should lead teachers to believe with any confidence that when the Liberal Party

finally takes government it will not simply revert to type. What particular article of faith of the Liberal Party would give teachers any confidence that it will not just revert to type when it is in government?

I know Mr Hall's challenge is to put aside history, but I think, as I said at the start, you have to judge people by their actions and not by what they say. History is very instructive. One of the first things the Kennett government did when it came to office in 1992 — before it sacked the teachers, before it sold off the schools and before it did any of those things — was to repeal the Industrial Relations Act and to dismantle the state industrial relations commission (IRC). That was one of its first acts, if not its first act, when it came to power. In doing that it took away shift loadings, it took away overtime payments, it took away casual rates, it took away public holiday substitution and it axed two public holidays outright. It replaced the act with the Employee Relations Act and replaced the IRC with the Employee Relations Commission of Victoria, which was stacked with employer organisation representatives. Hundreds of thousands of Victorian workers were forced to flee the state jurisdiction to get themselves onto federal awards. I remember because I am one of the people who helped them do it. I am one of the people who helped thousands of Victorian workers get out of the rotten state system that the Kennett government put into place and then did away with entirely.

The Kennett government replaced 100 years of common-rule awards. Do members remember that? We had an award system in this state that applied to every single worker in Victoria, with guaranteed minimum conditions that applied to every single worker in Victoria. It was not like the federal award system where your employer had to be a party to the award. These were common-rule awards that gave security of wages and conditions to every single worker in this state, and the Kennett government did away with it at the stroke of a pen and replaced that security with four minimum conditions. The Kennett government's Employee Relations Act of 1992 was the template for WorkChoices. Jeff Kennett's Victoria was the crucible for WorkChoices. This is where the Howard —

Mr Hall — The Treasurer will take a point of order on relevance in a moment.

Mr PAKULA — I am going to take up Mr Hall's interjection, because if he would argue that it is not relevant to talk about the Liberal Party's record in terms of how it treated workers and public servants in particular when the Liberal Party is saying, 'We will

pay teachers more than the Labor Party', he is kidding himself.

Let us remember another group of public sector unions — the public transport unions. When they had the temerity to go on strike, the Liberal Party used it as a pretext to privatise the public transport system. It privatised the public transport system on the pretext that working people had the temerity to go on strike. Today's Liberal Party would say, 'But we've changed'. We have seen how much it changed, because in 1996 the Liberal-National party coalition took government federally, and we got the first wave of industrial relations reform, then we got the second wave of industrial relations reform, and we had the lie that was put to the community that no worker would be worse off. We had a government that opposed every single national wage case adjustment that was taken to the federal IRC. Then we had the waterfront dispute 10 years ago this month. Mr O'Donohue asked in his address to the house in the channel deepening debate where I was during the waterfront dispute. I will tell Mr O'Donohue where I was.

Mrs Peulich — You probably had a balaclava on!

Mr PAKULA — It was Mrs Peulich's side of politics with the balaclavas on.

Mr Hall — On a point of order, Acting President, I put to you that Mr Pakula has strayed long and far from the content of this particular motion that we have before us. He has spoken about transport, he has spoken about the industrial relations system in Victoria and now he is speaking about channel deepening. This is far from the content of this particular motion, and I suggest it is completely irrelevant. I ask you to bring him back to the content of the motion.

Mr PAKULA — On the point of order, Acting President, there have been a number of contributions to this debate, many of which have talked about industrial relations and wage setting more generally. Ms Lovell spoke about the blueprint, which is also not directly germane to the debate.

Mr Hall interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I advise Mr Hall that there are two elements to this debate. I would put it to you, Acting President, that this is about a Liberal Party proposal to pay teachers higher wages than the government will pay, and I think it is relevant for me to talk about its record in that regard.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! Mr Pakula has been straying from the motion. I ask him to get back to the motion.

Mr PAKULA — I will do that, Acting President, but I want to talk for a couple more minutes about this, because Mr O'Donohue asked me where I was, and I have said —

Mrs Peulich — You have just flouted the ruling!

Mr PAKULA — No, Mrs Peulich. I was down there at the waterfront, and I think the fact that the question was asked of me underlines how little the Liberal Party has changed.

Mr Atkinson — On a point of order, Acting President, you have just given a very clear ruling which I think every member in the house understood — except, it seems, Mr Pakula, who has continued and has indicated his intention to continue with a matter that you have deemed is not relevant to the debate, despite a ruling in which you asked him to return to the substance of the debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! Mr Pakula has been straying a fair way from the substance of the debate. I ask him to get back to the debate.

Mr PAKULA — I will do that. The substance of the debate is whether or not the Liberal Party will be a party that will pay teachers more than what they are currently paid and whether the Liberal Party, in accordance with the speech given by Mr Baillieu, can be relied upon to make teachers the highest paid teachers in the country.

Mrs Peulich — And you are going to be judged on every single Labor government that went ahead of you; is that what you want?

Mr PAKULA — I advise Mrs Peulich that the Liberal Party will be judged on its record and whether or not it can be relied upon to make teachers the highest paid in the country.

Ms Pulford interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I take up Ms Pulford's interjection. This is not history; this is not about 10 years ago. WorkChoices was a Liberal Party article of faith four months ago. As recently as four months ago the Liberal Party was committed root and branch to WorkChoices. I will bring my contribution to a close because of your ruling, Acting President. but I ask again: which particular piece of Liberal Party history,

whether it be its approach to workplace rights or its values, should give teachers a scintilla of confidence that they will do better under the Liberal Party than they do under the current government?

The Liberal Party can come in here with all the stunts it likes and treat the Legislative Council as some pit stop on the road to redemption, but in order to be given absolution it has to have actually changed. It has to say it and it has to mean it, and it does not. Instead the Liberal Party comes into this chamber — like Barry Hall on the weekend — and goes whack! Then it asks, 'What? What did we do?', trying to get everyone to forget its past, forget its history and forget its approach to workplace rights in the past. We know it; I suspect the teachers know it; and I think the community more generally knows it. Platitudes aside, when the opposition gets the chance it will sink the slipper into workers in the same way it has for the last 15 years. If anyone thinks it will do anything different, they have rocks in their head.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — This is an important debate. It goes somewhat further than was expressed in the motion, but it is not relevant to stray into many of the areas that Mr Pakula, in particular, went into. I think it is more important to consider the impact of remuneration and the current wages claim by the Australian Education Union in respect of the future of education in this state and the importance of rewarding our teachers appropriately for the work they do in delivering the education standards we all expect.

A number of government speakers who I listened to, in particular Mr Pakula and, earlier, Mr Viney, talked about the history of coalition governments. Mr Pakula in particular referred to this as one of a series of stunts by the coalition. He said that the coalition has adopted particular positions on a number of issues, such as dredging, gambling and so forth, and the world as we know it has not ended, we have gone on, and everything is fantastic. I warn Mr Pakula and his colleagues in the government that when it comes to issues the circus wagons may well move on, but they should not believe they have left behind an audience that is convinced, supportive or even pacified on some of these issues. The reality is that there is a lot of anger in the community on a number of the issues Mr Pakula referred to on which the opposition had made its position public. People were very supportive of the position the opposition took on some of those issues, and they remain angry at the government's arrogance and refusal to engage in full and fair debate. Members of the government should not be convinced that those issues have been put to bed; the reality is that the electorate has a long memory.

It is interesting that the government continually harks back to the previous term of a coalition government in Victoria. As members know, I am particularly antagonistic to that debating tactic, because it ignores the context in which previous governments have operated and the policy settings of those governments. It is interesting to note that the Labor Party has been a very strong opponent of the GST — and it is on record to this day as such, because it has not resiled from this position.

Mr Pakula interjected.

Mr ATKINSON — Unfortunately, Mr Pakula, because you were rabbiting on, you would not have heard my remarks, so I will have to repeat them. I was saying that the Labor Party has been a strong opponent of the GST, and it has not resiled from this position — it is still, as far as we know, an opponent of the GST. It has not sent any cheques back; it has been living off GST income both at a federal and now at a state level. It is quite happy to accept the money, but to my knowledge it has not changed its position on the GST.

Mr Pakula — On a point of order, Acting President, in accordance with the ruling about my contribution I put it to you that Mr Atkinson is straying from the point by talking about the GST. I ask that he be brought back to the motion at hand.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mr ATKINSON — I will abide by your ruling, Acting President. Isn't it funny how when an irritating issue gets under the skin there is an immediate reaction? It is a very significant correlation with the very arguments that you have tried to prosecute —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! Through the Chair.

Mr ATKINSON — It is through the Chair, Acting President. All your colleagues, Mr Pakula, have tried to prosecute this argument during this debate.

Mr Pakula interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! Mr Atkinson and Mr Pakula! Mr Atkinson will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr ATKINSON — It is interesting that when this matter is raised it becomes an irritant, even though it has a direct correlation with some of the historic issues that were prosecuted by government members in their participation in the debate.

I do not intend to go back over any of that ground. Enough has been said. What concerns me more is the future. What concerns me more is the structure of the teaching service in Victoria and our ability to achieve the education outcomes we want. This motion goes part way to achieving a better result, and the government ought to pay heed to it. I am disappointed to hear that the government is not prepared to support the motion.

I find it interesting that 42 per cent of primary school teachers and 50 per cent of secondary school teachers in the teaching service today do not expect to be in the service in five years. It is true, given the age profile of our teaching service — I think the average age is about 45 across the board — that that picks up a number of teachers who are looking towards retirement. However, there is an alarming number — and I will come to the statistic — of teaching graduates and new teachers in the service who are part of that 50 per cent in secondary school teaching and 42 per cent in primary school teaching who are saying, 'We do not think we will be here in five years time'. My source for that is the *Staff in Australia's Schools 2007* report that was released in January 2008 and other work that has been done by the Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union, which has produced very similar results.

There is a range of issues as to why the teachers are concerned about their future. Some of it has to do with workloads; in some cases it is a lack of satisfaction in the teaching profession because teachers are being required to do things that they do not regard as part of their work. It is interesting, when you look at this study in further detail, to see the relatively low number of teaching staff who aspire to leadership positions in schools.

Essentially what most teachers want to do is face-to-face teaching with their students. They want to do the thing that they enjoy and are good at, but they also want to be remunerated appropriately for it. The reality is that so many of our teachers really are at their wits' ends and are thinking, 'Is it worthwhile going ahead?'.

It is fascinating that the government will not release the figures. The Australian Education Union does not have these figures because the government will not tell it what they are. It finds it impossible to compile the figures because the government will not release them publicly. The current turnover statistics for teachers in our school system are not released publicly, and 19 per cent of teachers in the teaching service today are contract teachers. This is particularly true of newer teachers to the system who are, say, one to three years out into the teaching service.

Many of those young people, as we have remarked on previously — I know Mr Hall has referred to this previously, as I have — find it very difficult to get loans for housing or other substantial asset purchases simply because they cannot guarantee they will have continuity of employment. Is it any wonder that they are therefore questioning whether their vocation going forward ought to be in teaching? When they look at the remuneration scales, particularly here in Victoria — the lowest in the nation — they are asking, ‘Is it worth my while?’.

The reality is that these young people ought to be able to expect that they are recognised for their talents, their skills and their contribution to educating our future Australian leaders and those people who in future will populate all the industries and services in this country. We expect them to do a very important job, but we are clearly not prepared to reward them for that.

It is interesting that, according to the *Staff in Australia's Schools 2007* report, 10 per cent of teachers intend to leave teaching permanently prior to retirement while around half do not, but one-third of teachers across the total teaching service are unsure of whether they will continue working in schools. This suggests, as the report indicates, that career intentions are somewhat fluid and difficult to predict with any certainty.

That is an alarming set of statistics for any education minister. An education minister is looking at trying to create an education service that goes forward — that is not just about delivering classes this year but is very much about structuring a teaching service and education system for the future. The ageing teaching profile that was referred to particularly by Ms Pennicuik in this debate is an alarming statistic, because there are not enough teachers coming through, and those who are being trained and entering the system are then leaving the system. Some of them are going overseas; some of them are going interstate to better paid jobs; and some of them are just giving away teaching completely.

Those alarming numbers — as I have just indicated by the statistics I referred to — are flashing yellow lights which are saying clearly to all of us that if we do not get the public policy settings right, if we do not ensure that teachers have satisfaction in their work in schools, if we do not ensure that the resources are there to enable them to teach effectively and if we do not ensure that they are remunerated appropriately for the skills they bring to their profession, they will give it away and go somewhere else. We simply have to do better. Graduate retention in particular ought to be a major issue for this

government, and a large part of that graduate retention issue is the remuneration levels available to teachers.

There are some other things the government needs to look at. One is the 54/11 superannuation policy, which sees a lot of experienced, very capable teachers leave the system. Given the number from the graduate ranks who are leaving the system early, it will be imperative for the government going forward to look at trying to retain some of those experienced teachers.

As to retaining teachers in the profession, according to the federal government report that I have to hand — and it is also consistent with the Australian Education Union material — the majority of teachers in schools surveyed believe that their schools have difficulty in retaining teachers in the profession. In fact, 66 per cent of primary teachers and 73 per cent of secondary teachers believe it is becoming increasingly difficult to retain teachers in the service, and around 70 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that higher pay based on competence or extra qualifications would be a measure to retain more teachers in the service. The report also notes that around 25 per cent of primary and 30 per cent of secondary teachers agreed or strongly agreed that ‘higher pay for teachers whose students achieved higher goals’ would retain teachers.

I do not intend to go on, as this has been a fairly full debate and most of the statistical evidence and basic principles have been covered amongst the rhetoric. But one interesting thing I want to bring to the debate is something the government ought to be very cognisant of as it approaches the current negotiations. It ought to think carefully about the proposition that has been put by the opposition in this motion, which follows from what Ted Baillieu, the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, announced as a policy position of a coalition government. Some 47 per cent, or nearly half, of principals reported moderate or major difficulty in suitably filling vacancies in the past 12 months — this report came out in January 2008 — and about 34 per cent, or one-third, indicated moderate or major difficulty in retaining suitable staff. In my view, they are very significant statistics in terms of where the teaching profession is going and why there are some real warning signs about our need to address remuneration for teachers and be very quick about addressing it.

Earlier I mentioned teachers being interested in leadership positions in schools. The survey is fascinating, in the sense that only 10 per cent of teachers in the school system had any intention of applying for either a deputy principal or a principal position in the next three years, and males were much

more likely than females to apply. When it came to people who were already acting in deputy principal positions in schools, only around 20 per cent intended to go on and apply for principal positions in the foreseeable future. That indicates that there is a real concern about taking up the extra workload and responsibilities in the absence of remuneration that reflects and compensates for the additional workload that takes them away from what they are really keen to pursue — more face-to-face teaching.

It is interesting to note that surveys have shown that primary school teachers spend on average around 48 hours a week working in their schools. My wife happens to be a primary school teacher. She is never at home. She never leaves school before 6.00 or 6.30 at night, and I know that many of her colleagues in schools are also there long after hours, when the school gates have formally closed. The myth about teachers bolting off at 3.30 p.m. is long gone, although I must say that a number of people I know in the teaching profession have observed that a number of graduates are far more inclined to leave school on the basis of working to rule because they do not find that they are being adequately rewarded for the skills they bring to the profession and the extra responsibilities that are expected of them.

I point out that in secondary schools the workload is an additional hour on an average of 49 hours a week for a secondary school teacher. We all know the extensive workloads they have and the range of things they deal with, such as the responsibilities of reporting to parents and dealing with children with special needs who are not adequately catered for in classrooms. Many members would go to schools and find in general classrooms students with special needs who might have 3 or 4 hours a week in support staff but who represent a very significant workload to teachers who also have a broader responsibility to the rest of the class. They are consistently being confronted by government with new responsibilities and accountabilities.

Interestingly enough, some business organisations used to send their head office staff out to the regional offices. Budget Rent A Car used to do that, and Myer did it once. It sent all the buyers out to the shop floor for them to see the impact of their decisions in head office. They never went out again, but at least they moderated some of their behaviour because they started to realise the impact of central decisions on the actual coalface where they have to be implemented. Teachers are inundated with accountabilities and processes from government that are not always fully thought through and are constantly changing. In many cases it makes their work a lot more onerous and a lot less satisfying in terms of

what they see as their primary role: teaching and educating young people.

We need to ensure that they are better resourced, that they are able to get on with the job of educating people, and in the context of this motion we need to make sure that they are properly remunerated for the work they do.

Mr THORNLEY (Southern Metropolitan) — I do not doubt the sincerity of Mr Hall as a long-serving teacher and someone who has often demonstrated that continuing interest. I do not doubt his sincerity in moving this motion and I do not doubt his sincerity in seeking to improve the position of the teaching profession. What I doubt is that that is the consistent motivational position of the side of politics of which he is part.

I do not doubt Mr Atkinson's sincerity either, because he inadvertently argued our position. He referred in glowing terms to research about teachers talking about pay rises, but talking about pay rises on the basis of higher qualifications or performance. I think Mr Atkinson, being a performance-oriented guy, would understand that that is a good way to think about how people should be remunerated. That, however, is not what this motion says.

This motion mentions no such thing. This motion is about a one-size-fits-all wages policy. Regardless of who you are, where you are working, how well you are doing, what your qualifications are or anything else, everybody, all at once, should get the same pay rise, and that pay rise should be determined not by reference to any objective criteria other than what the pay rises in other states are. It is an interesting approach.

It seems at first instance to me, and I suspect to others in this chamber, a little out of character for the Liberal Party to be not just outflanking the Labor Party on the left but outflanking the AEU (Australian Education Union) on the left. It is outflanking the union itself, because the union actually thinks there is a wide range of factors that need to be considered in the remuneration discussions and in the broader enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations. It has been representing teachers for a while, and I guess members opposite are a little new to sticking up for workers, so they have a slightly simplistic one-size-fits-all approach.

If coalition members are serious about trying to rebrand their efforts as being pro teachers, and it seems pro teacher unions all of a sudden, then to be taken seriously they probably would need to start with an

apology for past misdeeds. It is a little hard to be taken seriously when not many months ago their national leadership was continuing a years-long process of denigrating public education, denigrating teachers, denigrating the values in public schools and denigrating anything else to do with public schools. They just could not talk them down quickly enough.

They are entitled to do that, but that is part of your brand, and they had better get used to it. If they want to change that, then they might have to convince people that they did not mean any of that stuff that John Howard and Julie Bishop were saying.

Mrs Peulich — It was your brand.

Mr THORNLEY — Our brand is not sacking 8000 teachers. I am sorry, but that is yours. Mrs Peulich tried to explain it away by saying it was not really sacking exactly, it was more a kind of semi-voluntary redundancy with a bit of a shove, but I think the rest of the community was on to it and knew what it was — it was sacking 8000 teachers.

Mr Hall — That's exactly what your blueprint is — get rid of teachers.

Mr THORNLEY — No, we talk about performance; that was not about performance, Mr Hall. Your motion is not about performance. You have nothing in the motion about performance. You have a one-size-fits-all motion for everybody regardless of performance. That is your position. It is an interesting position. It is a fair way further to the left than the position of this government and of the union itself, but if you want to be a third party in that negotiation, you are entitled to take that position.

Those opposite are the people who did that to teachers in the past but now they want to rebrand, which I understand, but if they want to rebrand and be taken seriously they have to fess up. Mr Pakula talked about seeking absolution on this. A little confession is required with their saying, 'Maybe we got that a little wrong. Maybe the 8000 teachers being sacked was a little wrong, and really what we believe in is looking after teachers. In fact, so much so that we are arguing for a one-size-fits-all wages policy'.

If members of the coalition want to be taken seriously in rebranding, as Mr Pakula suggested, then they have a bit of work to do to get over the hurdle of their position on WorkChoices and Australian workplace agreements, because this is arguing not only for collective bargaining, which is something our party has always supported, but it is arguing for one-size-fits-all

collective bargaining, where everybody gets the same deal.

That is a little inconsistent with the WorkChoices philosophy, which last time I heard it being talked about by members opposite was all about individual bargaining and about there being no pattern bargaining. They said, 'Heaven forbid. We cannot have pattern bargaining. What happens to one person should not impact on what happens to another person. What happens in one workplace should not impact on what happens in another workplace'. It is certainly possible that this is not just a rebranding exercise, it is a genuine, road-to-Damascus conversion, because there are people like Mr Hall who are very sincere in their support of the teaching profession.

It may be that the rest of the coalition has come to this view and that its members are rebranding and will in the fullness of time step away from all those things that might have inadvertently led the community to think that they were not quite so supportive — all the things they said about public education, talking it down; all the things they did to close schools; all the things they did in workplace relations that are antithetical to everything that is in this motion — but I am not sure that that will be entirely successful, because it did seem to me a pretty big stretch, when I first read this motion, to think that they had completely flipped their position, done a big 180, and that this was not just a simple stunt or rebranding exercise but reflected a genuine conviction. Then I read on the *Sydney Morning Herald* site on 13 April the fine print of Mr Baillieu's proposal. And what was that? The article says:

He would not promise to ensure Victorian teachers were always paid above the national average.

And I quote the statement from Mr Baillieu:

We'd certainly like to be in that situation, but we can't be irresponsible about this; we will assess the budget position prior to 2010.

So what he is really saying is, 'We really reckon that the Labor government should immediately up the wages, but we make no commitment of our own because we have got to see where the budget is actually at'. One of the things that will be in the budget if Mr Baillieu is leading his party is compensation to the two gaming giants, which is worth about \$1.3 billion. Since Mr Baillieu got his figures wrong and this is not a \$400 million promise but over the life of an EBA a \$1.2 billion promise, I guess the budget might be looking a bit shaky. I guess the spare \$1.2 billion the opposition might have wanted to have in the budget when it was thinking about whether it would actually

deliver the promise it is asking us to deliver might be a little shaky, because it has already promised it to Tabcorp and Tattersall's. I think people have a reason to be suspicious of this. This is a do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do motion.

Let us look at what the motion actually says and whether the community can see any seriousness in this in terms of a coalition genuinely committed to educational reform, genuinely committed to trying to find the right answers that will improve outcomes for students and deliver a teaching profession that we can all be proud of as the best in the country — or perhaps the best in the world. Let us look at the opposition's policy versus ours. It is interesting, I realise, now that the new-found friendship between the coalition and the AEU — at least from the coalition's point of view, though I suspect not from the AEU's — is developing, I can see the coalition trying to take a leaf out of the National Tertiary Education Union's book as well. The NTEU had this great little lurk going — and I say all power to it; it is there to represent its members — where it got the University of New South Wales to commit to paying the highest levels in the country. Then it scooted across the border and got the University of Melbourne to agree to pay the highest wages in the country. And hey presto, you can guarantee that those two would keep knocking each other up, and by definition one or other would always be in violation of that policy.

Now that is a good stunt if you can pull it off, and I say good luck to the NTEU, but it is hardly a responsible way for a political party that aspires to the government benches to be setting wages policy. Let us just assume that this was our wages policy, and no doubt someone in another state would argue that it was also their wages policy, then you would have an auction going on forever, cycling out of control, with no reference to any objective factor except that there is somebody else who has outbid you. That is a pretty sophisticated wages policy, a pretty sophisticated way of approaching things — let us make sure that there is a never-ending auction between any two jurisdictions that want to outbid each other! It is not exactly the sort of responsible position you would expect from a government.

Compare that with what we are talking about and the way we approach these EBA negotiations and the complex issues around the EBA and the relationship between the teachers and their employer, in this case the state government. We think performance issues matter, and we want to create a system that will enable incentives — for example, to encourage strong teachers to work in disadvantaged schools. We need to address

the fact that, whilst the vast majority of teachers do a fabulous job, a small minority of them do not. We want to attract the best and brightest into the teaching profession, which is why we are looking at some programs overseas that have done that, like Teachers First, Teach for America and others. We want to create career structures that enable individual teachers to reach their own personal goals and have flexibility in doing so. Those are the sorts of things that any sensible person would include in a wage negotiation or an EBA negotiation if they wanted to have a proper structure to the teaching profession and to its remuneration.

Unsurprisingly those are issues which the union on the other side will also be happy to discuss in such a negotiation, because they are the sorts of policy levers that people who care about workers — in this case care about teachers — and care about the outcomes for the system need to work through and negotiate. But what do we get in this motion? None of that; just a simple, one-size-fits-all, everybody should immediately get a pay rise, regardless of performance, with no incentives, with no capacity to make any changes, with no program to attract new teachers apart from this one lever, with no impact on career structure or anything else, and with no consideration of what that might mean in the next EBA with the next set of public sector workers.

Let us just ignore that; that is a bit of a complication — that you might have to think about what you promised the nurses, what you promised the police and what you promised the emergency services workers — so do not think through a holistic exercise that tries to share the total resources fairly among all the different groups and tries to make sure everyone gets fair pay. Let us take one group out, deliver a one-size-fits-all result, with no performance and no incentives and no career structures and none of the other important mechanisms that both sides of this negotiation want. Let us just deliver one out of the blue, and let us just caveat that with, of course, 'When we are in office, all bets are off. We are not sure that we are actually committed to this. We would have to check the budget' — and once the coalition had looted the budget for the \$1.3 billion for the gaming companies, this may not look that attractive.

I am not sure that that is a particularly compelling proposition. If coalition members are seeking to rebrand themselves in the community, whose members overwhelmingly believe Labor is the party that delivers in education, then I think they will have to do a little bit more work than that sort of one-size-fits-all proposition. I think they might look at more issues than just compensation in isolation — all the issues around supporting teachers, around the calibre and scale of support staff, for example, who enable teachers to

spend more time teaching and require them to spend less time being concerned with other activities. They may want to focus on the other things that cause stress in teachers' lives and look at reducing them, as we have done, as the WorkCover figures show. They might want to look at class sizes, they might want to look at technology, they might want to look at the quality of facilities that people are asked to teach in, how they impact on the learning environment and what they will do to actually rebuild schools.

They might like to look at teacher training and how the university system works. They might want to look at principals and leadership and how they impact on retention in the system. In every other industry I am aware of, one of the single biggest factors in retention is the relationship between an employee and their immediate supervisor. If that is a poor experience, that is one of the major motivations for people leaving. If a government cares about retention, which coalition members say they do, presumably they would have a policy about principals and leadership. Presumably they would care about some transparency and performance driving in the system, as we are doing, and as has come through in the Council of Australian Governments program under which we will now be releasing extensive performance information on schools so that teachers and principals can see how they are performing versus others, and so can the rest of the community.

Those are the sorts of things that a real education policy would include. They are not the things that are in this motion. This motion is not even a real wages policy. This motion is a stunt, and it is not even a stunt that the coalition is willing to hold itself to. It is one it wants to hold us to, but when it gets into office it will depend on the budget situation and how much money it has given to the gaming companies. This is a rebranding exercise for the coalition, and it is a consummate failure.

Mr KAVANAGH (Western Victoria) — As a person with 15 years of experience as a teacher, including recent experience, I feel obliged to contribute to the debate.

There are two limbs to the motion that we have been discussing. The first says that education is important to our economic future. I do not think anyone is going to disagree with that. It is the second limb calling for Victorian teachers to be paid at a higher rate than teachers in any other state that is controversial. It is based on a perception — and I will admit there is a perception — that teachers are underpaid. In fact, as a teacher quite recently I was surprised at teachers expressing sympathy with me because of the low pay

they thought I was getting. I said, 'I am paid okay'. I did not want to point out that I was certain to be getting two or three times more than their parents were making, but it was the truth.

I think this perception is largely based on American television shows, where you keep hearing about how terribly underpaid teachers are, which I think they traditionally were in the United States. However, that is not particularly relevant to the situation in Australia. This perception has also been fed by a media campaign by the teacher unions. I recall not very long ago that they showed advertisements which claimed that lawyers on average get — it was either \$150 000-plus a year or \$200 000-plus a year. That does not accord at all with the experience that I have had as a lawyer or the experience of lawyer friends I have had who have worked very hard to make considerably less money than most teachers make.

In Victoria, teachers do not make as much as, say, orthodontists or even plumbers, but lots of people make a lot less than teachers. Consider, for example, the people who work for us: our electorate officers. They are well paid, skilled, generally intelligent people, and they make much less than teachers do — probably not much more than half of what teachers are paid. A teacher's starting salary is \$46 000 a year in Victoria. That is one of the highest starting salaries for any job. There are not many jobs that start on more than \$46 000 a year.

In my opinion, there are problems with teachers' pay, but they are not general problems with the level of pay or their starting salary. The problems, as I see them, with teachers' pay are, firstly, that although a teacher's salary increases for quite a while, it later stops increasing, and then teachers are left facing the rest of their career never getting another pay rise. That can be rather disheartening and may explain why many people are interested in leaving teaching. Secondly, extra duties are really not paid for adequately under our present system. Extra duties pay perhaps, \$2000, \$3000 or at the most \$4000 a year, from what I recall. This may explain why, as Mr Atkinson said, few teachers are seeking positions of leadership in schools. The very poor rate of incentive may partly explain that.

Another problem with salaries for teachers is that it is really not possible to tell who is a good teacher and who is a bad teacher, let alone vary pays according to that. Who knows who is good teacher? I used to teach with lots of people but I would not know whether they were good teachers or not because quite some time ago inspectors were done away with in Victoria's school system. The way that people applied for extra jobs was

to produce huge amounts of paperwork. It was the people who were skilled at the gobbledegook of modern bureaucracy who were assessed on that basis as being worthy of perhaps a promotion or extra pay. It had very little to do with their abilities as a teacher.

Mr Hall said earlier that he believed education in Victoria is in good shape. I respectfully disagree with Mr Hall about that. We are now at the point where the University of Melbourne offers remedial English and remedial maths for new students. The crème de la crème of Victoria's high school student graduates cannot read or write well enough and cannot do mathematics well enough to study at university level. That is a shocking condemnation of our education system. It is quite consistent with what you will find if you speak to a lot of young people. If you ask them, for example, to tell you the sum of nine and seven, they will go and find a calculator.

There are several causes of the difficulties in our education system, and some of them are beyond the purview of any government. The first is the general culture, and in particular the introduction over recent decades of new technologies which detract from literacy and numeracy. One of them is the calculator, and another one would be, for example, computer games. When I was a primary school student it was a great thrill to get a book as a gift or perhaps even to go to the library and get a beautiful book. That does not apply for many young people any more, because there are alternatives which are more exciting — for example, computer games. The result is that ultimately those students who do not read for pleasure do not get to the point where they are able to read for pleasure, and their standard of literacy remains relatively low for the rest of their lives.

In my opinion our schools have also suffered greatly from the leftist ideology that permeates — in fact I would say saturates — our schools and their curriculums. A recent example that caused a bit of a stir was students being asked to analyse *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of Marxist theory. That is only one example, although a rather shocking one, of this pervasive leftist influence. Another one which I find quite destructive is the constant negative portrayal of Australia and our heritage in our schools. We are paying a price for that and will pay a bigger one in the future.

In addition a constituent recently expressed to me deep concern about *Humanities Alive 2*, a textbook used in Victoria's high schools in year 8. It contains a section on the Middle Ages which is a vicious and false attack on Christianity. It is factually wrong and contains misinformation. The textbook has been criticised by

Melbourne University historian Dr Barry Collett, a specialist in medieval history and a visiting scholar at Oxford University, as being historically inaccurate and grossly misleading in its depiction of the Middle Ages. The content I am talking about is not only factually wrong but is also religiously motivated, and I would say that if it were done by anybody else it would be clearly determined to be inciting religious hatred. In common with much of the left, clearly in schools there is sensitivity to every religion except Christianity. The point is: what sort of education system are we going to have if the information that is permeated is premised on falsehoods?

There has been quite a lot of talk about Jeff Kennett today and his influence on education. Indeed Mr Kennett did not fund education very generously, but in his defence he would probably argue that he could not in the circumstances he was in. My heart sinks a little bit each time I hear the opposition say that Mr Kennett sacked teachers. Mr Kennett did not sack any teachers, and I believe the opposition knows it.

Mr Pakula — The government.

Mr KAVANAGH — The government knows it. I speak about that as someone who was quite intimately involved in that and knows what actually happened. Teachers were not sacked. In talking about former premiers, however, we might mention Mrs Kirner and the enduring damage she has done to Victorian education.

Mrs Peulich — Getting rid of tech schools was one.

Mr KAVANAGH — Yes. It was certainly enduring and severe damage — hopefully not permanent. In terms of salaries, we need to retain good teachers in our schools, and of course they deserve reasonable salaries, but what is the point of expressing their salaries vis-a-vis other states? Why do Victorian teachers need to be the highest paid in Australia? If we had to choose teachers in one state to be paid more than the others, what criteria would we use? I think we would ask what state has the highest cost of living. Having been to Western Australia recently, I believe the cost of living there is far higher than in Victoria. Why pay people at a higher level in Victoria to do the same job as in another state where the cost of living is higher?

In any event our intention should be to develop the best education system we can. We should not take any solace whatsoever in another state's having a system that is even worse than ours, which is the implication of the motion. It seems to me that this motion is premised, unusually for the conservative side of politics, on a kind

of cargo-cult view of the economy, an opinion that says there is a huge cornucopia of goods, services and wealth that is just sitting out there somewhere and all that governments and those silly politicians have to do is step out of the way and let the people get at it. We all know that that is not what an economy is like at all. If it were not for the fact that this motion was proposed by Mr Hall, I might suspect political opportunism behind it. With all the nasty, rotten things that have been said about the Democratic Labor Party, I do not think I have ever heard it accused of political opportunism.

Useful and desirable though it is to thoroughly debate education policy with a view to improving our schools and outcomes, unfortunately I do not believe this motion promotes that opportunity.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — It gives me pleasure to rise to make a few brief comments in this debate. Obviously everyone in the chamber is greatly committed to excellence in education and providing the best possible environment for young Victorians to learn. Teachers are an essential part of the education system in that they are the ones delivering all that knowledge and wisdom to our young people. As I have said in this place before, as a parent of quite young children, a parent's perspective on the state education system is one that is very new to me, but I have been astonished to see how much a young child in the right environment can learn in a short period of time, and I take off my hat to all educators.

This motion is clearly about EBA (enterprise bargaining agreement) negotiations that are currently going on. There has been debate and points of order have been taken about what it is about and what it is not about, but the announcement made by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place at the Liberal Party state council on the weekend was nothing short of the opposition moving into the EBA discussions in a most public way. All bargaining negotiations have a lot of colour and movement. It is part of the essential character of workplace negotiation that parties will have different positions and at some point, at the conclusion of the negotiations, everyone will have moved a bit and there will have been discussions around the differences. These are often passionately held positions and different perspectives, and this negotiation is no different. The government has, as all members know, a responsibility to balance the wages of public sector workers with the other areas of expenditure by government.

This is not something that we do in a light-hearted way; it is something that we take very seriously. Everyone in the chamber is well aware of the government's wages

policy, as are all the unions that represent public sector workers. The government's wages policy is for an annual increase of 3.25 per cent per annum, with additional increases being offset by productivity increases. That policy is an important part of how the government balances competing priorities.

The Liberal Party is suffering a crisis of identity at the moment, which is all good and well and to be expected in the circumstances, but this foray into the other side of the industrial relations equation is spectacular. My two favourite highlights in this place are when opposition members talk about industrial relations and infrastructure spending.

Only five months ago the Liberal Party was still flogging the dead horse of WorkChoices. Opposition members in this place were arguing in favour of the former Howard government's awful attack on the rights and, in a practical sense, the wages and conditions of working people. We all know who was being picked on the most. Unremarkably it was a bullying, master-and-servant style industrial relations system that the Liberal Party supported and introduced when it was last in government federally, and that legislation had a nasty impact on the most vulnerable workers in Victoria and in the nation. Statistics started to show that real wages were declining, and the people who were the most hard done by were young women working in hospitality and retail. What sort of economic policy is it that rips off people who work behind checkouts in supermarkets?

Mr Hall — On a point of order, President, I think we all know the government is trying to assemble numbers and is filling in at the moment, but you still have to be relevant to the — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr Hall — You still have to be relevant to the motion before the house. This motion is about education, and I put to you that Ms Pulford's comments have nothing to do with the motion before the chair.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Earlier, in response to another point of order on exactly the same matter, I made it clear that almost every speaker had digressed in some way, shape or form from the motion, and latitude was given. I do not propose to change it this time. Technically Mr Hall is correct, but given that Ms Pulford is the last speaker — and that she has, I understand, almost finished, which may be contrary to Mr Hall's previous statement — I will allow her to continue.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, President. The motion is about wages and increasing the salaries of Victorian government school teachers from the lowest to the highest in the nation. That has to be taken in the context of what opposition members do in the area of wages when they are government.

So 20Ted and the Libs had a rush of blood to the head at the state council on the weekend, and now they are buying into these negotiations. We know that their approach to industrial relations — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I was not quite clear how Ms Pulford named or referred to the Leader of the Opposition in the other place. Perhaps she can refresh my memory.

Ms PULFORD — To clarify, media reports indicate that the Liberal Party is adopting a Kevin07-style branding for Mr Baillieu. I was referring to Mr Baillieu. I know that the appropriate way in this chamber is to refer to the Leader of the Opposition in the other place as Mr Baillieu. The name 20Ted is the Liberal Party's new branding for Mr Baillieu and is based on the Kevin07-style original.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not comfortable with that. That may well be appropriate for the press — they can do what they like — but in here, particularly in terms of the Leader of the Government or the Leader of the Opposition, I would appreciate the member's referring to them properly. Clearly she has not done so, and she did not preface that name as coming from a comment in the media — she just used it.

Mr Thornley — It's the Liberal Party.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind Mr Thornley that I am on my feet. I ask Ms Pulford to withdraw that and refer to the Leader of the Opposition properly.

Ms PULFORD — Certainly; I withdraw. President, I thank you for your assistance on this matter. I conclude by saying that I am advised that, in his latest media release, the Leader of the Opposition in the other place has indicated that he cannot guarantee that, if he is able to make Victorian schoolteachers the highest paid in the country, he will be able to keep them there, and this is in addition to the qualifications about other budgetary constraints. Having made those few remarks, I will conclude.

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I begin my reply by thanking those who have contributed to this debate: Mr Viney, Mrs Peulich, Ms Pennicuik, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell, Mr Pakula, Mr Atkinson, Mr Thornley, Mr Kavanagh and Ms Pulford. I have sat here through

3½ hours of what at times has been very spirited debate and listened to the contributions made by everybody.

Having listened to the debate on this motion, it seems to me that opposition to this motion centres around five key points: firstly, government members claim that this is simply a stunt; secondly, that you cannot believe the Liberal-National coalition; thirdly, that we are being populist; fourthly, that it would be too expensive to pay teachers at a comparative rate to their colleagues interstate; and, lastly, that the government stands accused of offering a simplistic solution.

In respect of all of those, let me say first of all that this is not a stunt; it is a serious issue. There is a teacher shortage crisis right now, and the predictions are that it will worsen in the years ahead. Action needs to be taken right now to address that serious problem, so bringing on this debate this afternoon and putting it on the table is in no way a stunt. This is a serious issue. The government admits in its blueprint paper that we need to take some action to address the problem.

On the point that suggests this motion is about a popular opinion and we are being populist by putting this solution forward, if most people in the community believe that paying teachers is a necessary requirement to meet future demand, then we stand accused and guilty of being populist, but that is what we were supposed to be. We are here to represent the people of Victoria, and I say to members of this chamber that the common view is that we need to attract new teachers and reward teachers who are teaching well within our system, and therefore they should be paid at a rate that is at least comparable to their interstate counterparts.

The issue about the government finding it too expensive to pay our teachers at those comparative rates is an interesting argument put forward by the lead speaker of the government, Mr Viney. He has suggested that this proposal was going to cost \$1.2 billion. Notwithstanding the very salient points made by Mr Atkinson — that is, that the government failed to disclose some of the true statistics about teacher pay levels and the like — it is very difficult for anyone to estimate exactly how much some of these initiatives are going to cost.

However, if we do a conservative estimate and say that an average teacher's salary is \$60 000 a year and there are 40 000 teachers in the public system, my calculations are that a 3.25 per cent wage increase for those teachers would represent somewhere in the order of \$80 million. If you extend that over any period of time, you do not get anywhere near the \$1.2 billion that Mr Viney proposes. Even if you add the \$80 million to

the \$360 million that we have identified, you get nowhere near the \$1.2 billion that Mr Viney has suggested would be the real cost of paying teachers in Victoria at a comparative rate to the best paid teachers interstate. I think there has been no foundation whatsoever for Mr Viney's claim that this is too expensive and the Victorian budget cannot afford to pay our teachers. We can, and we need to.

The last point which was raised, particularly by Mr Thornley, was that this is purely a simplistic system. He said we should incorporate matters like performance levels, for example, as an indication of the pay which teachers should receive. Mr Kavanagh, to his credit, suggested it was pretty hard to judge who is a good teacher and who is not a good teacher. I do not know if that is quite true. There are systems on which performance pays are based. If the government is going to move down that track, if it is going to implement a performance pay structure in Victoria, then it is beholden upon it to outline exactly what sort of structure it is proposing. If it is that the government is going to make it easier for disengaged teachers to leave the system, to quote the blueprint — that is, sack teachers, one could only suggest — then it is again beholden upon it to explain these fundamentals. If Mr Thornley wants to argue this is simplistic, then let him spell out in detail exactly how he would propose to reward teachers in the Victorian system.

I want to say in closing that we have a teacher shortage and it is reaching crisis proportions. Teachers are teaching out of their subject areas. We need to attract more teachers to the system. There is competition for teachers. We are looking to attract them to education. Their options are areas like science, business, accountancy, law or the arts, so we are now actively competing for graduates in education. We need to pay them salaries that will bring them to education and not allow them to drift into those other areas if we want our children to have the best. That is a point that I want to finish on. A consideration of this motion should be all about what is in the best interests of the young people in this state — our children and our grandchildren. That is what we should be interested in. As a grandparent I want the best for my grandson in the years to come. I think my view would be shared by every parent and grandparent in the state of Victoria.

We know and the government knows that the quality of students' education is largely determined by the quality of the person who stands in front of the classroom and instructs them. We need to have the best. A starting point to achieving the best in the classroom is to pay our teachers well. That is why we need to be on top of the game. We need to be paying teachers at levels that

are equal to the best in Australia. That is what this motion does. Again, as a final urge, I ask members to support the motion.

Motion agreed to.

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (JUDICIAL PENSIONS) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

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

COURTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ASSOCIATE JUDGES) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

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

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

**Debate resumed from 15 April; motion of
Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and
Climate Change):**

That the Council take note of the annual statement of government intentions for 2008.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — In my taking note of the statement of government intentions I would like to commend the government for its proclamation and enunciation of major initiatives to improve children services, streamline the planning system, modernise the universities, tackle alcohol abuse, control agricultural diseases and increase the efficiency of public administration and financial reporting.

When we read further we also see in the statement of government intentions that the Deputy Premier points to a throughput of between 80 and 100 bills each year. So far the government seems to have developed a legislative hiatus, as the paucity of legislation before this house serves to highlight. How much variation and reordering of the priorities proclaimed by the government as part of its agenda is yet to be seen? I will be particularly interested to observe what elements of

the legislative programs and statements of strategic intent will be 'amended or deferred', to quote the statement under the heading 'Key themes and initiatives'. When it comes to the actual delivery of an integrated approach to education, this government will need to ensure that its declared program to modernise all schools over the next 10 years is in place, because so far we have experienced much promotion of the \$1.9 billion tranche, which makes up the government funding initiative, for the first four years.

But what is the commitment going forward going to look like when we get to 2012? What degree of commitment will there be and what degree will be waived? Will this announcement this year be rebadged and dressed up as new money some time in the coming years? For those who would now be dealing with the urge to call this a cynical view, let me remind such members that this government has consistently and flagrantly used its public announcements to rebadge, to re-order, to re-emphasise, to relaunch so much of its policies, so much of its already allocated funding, all dressed up as new money or fresh ideas.

Central to the government's education reform agenda will be the strategies the government will come up with to ensure low performing schools both gain and retain capable, rewarded, talented teachers who may otherwise wish to avoid practising in settings that are on a slippery slope as far as standards, resources and a culture of learning are concerned.

No matter how much hyperbole streams from the mouths of government members, this government refuses to bring remuneration of this state's teachers to parity with their colleagues in other states, as we heard in the debate immediately preceding my response to the statement. This government is deluding itself in that it expects a high level of teaching practice to continue without due recognition. Already teachers are stretched to the limit, managing gargantuan class sizes. I can attest that when I was teaching at Box Hill Institute I was continually teaching class sizes of 35 in that setting. They are also reeling from the obsessive casualisation of the teaching position, a crushing administrative and compliance burden, and no reward for managing a constellation of social problems in the front line.

By contrast a Baillieu government would spend \$396 million over three years boosting the pay of Victorian teachers, thus ushering in, and rightly so, a climate of fairness, equity, just reward and overdue recognition. In the *Age* of 28 March this year the Australian Council for Educational Research chief executive called for a boost in teaching standards,

improvement in the monitoring of needy students and increased relevance of curriculums and to bolster resources.

This government, unfortunately, has the habit of funding projects and programs in its safe seats. It does not take a holistic approach. In fact this biased approach assumes that support would flow to disadvantaged students in poorer suburbs. It is simply wrong to distribute funding towards education for disadvantage on the basis of where students live. I wish to encourage this government to start a measure and to outline a range of educational disadvantage. There are vast numbers of students who do not live in poor areas but who are disadvantaged as far as their requirement for extra support and help are concerned.

With respect to a preventive health policy platform, as enunciated, I am very concerned that in June this year we will see the cessation of funding by VicHealth for the walking school bus program. I can report and detail this in that the Whitehorse council originally received funding of \$29 430 for the year 2003–04, but this funding plummeted to just a mere \$9000 in 2005–06, and the Whitehorse council was in fact forced to supplement and match the government's contribution. In June this year that funding dries up completely, and we have to ask why. The Nillumbik Shire Council's program is going to dry up this year as well. This comes at a time when we are looking at measures to curtail childhood obesity and to get children to have a greater appreciation of their immediate built environment. It staggers me that the Nillumbik council which has a flourishing program of walking school buses snaking through the streets is penalised in this way. I will repeat: how can the government justify this position?

When we evaluate the government's pledges which emanate from its \$10.5 billion plan to build a so-called world-class transport system, we see no commitment whatsoever for grade separations at level crossings and no reference to the rapid transit systems that this state and the metropolitan system in Melbourne needs. I find it fascinating because I know that a lot of people leave this state on trips, conferences, excursions, briefings and study tours to acquaint themselves with transport systems that work in Asia, North America and right throughout Europe, in the UK, where there is plenty of evidence of what a rapid transit system can deliver for its taxpayers, and I wonder why this government is totally avoiding a commitment to systems that will actually get people to and from their place of employment rapidly. We do not actually have the word 'rapid' in the government's lexicon when it comes to transport or transit systems. We understand this would

require a paradigm shift in the government's thinking and its approach in general.

Much of it has been a bandaid process, lurching from one poor decision to another, and clearly we see certain areas where the government is choosing to choke those communities off by not providing any investment or any infrastructure backbone whatsoever. This is evidenced by the fact that rolling stock and signalling systems are shambolic and failing constantly. The government has created a gridlock in the transport system without alleviating the pressure on level crossings that cannot increase the number of trains going across these level crossings and it cannot actually deal with the increased capacity of passengers. The government is resolute in its refusal to extend rail to Rowville and to build any form of transport infrastructure for Doncaster.

I will conclude by saying that whilst I think the government has set out to create a positive plan and future direction for its responsibilities in this state, there are so many areas where we are waiting to see the twists and turns, the reshuffling of priorities and further evidence of poor funding regimes and areas of mismanagement and political opportunism that it is certainly not going to be serving the interests of the people of the state of Victoria.

Mr PAKULA (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the statement of government intentions issued by the Premier in February.

I want to focus on chapter 1 of the Premier's statement headed 'Delivering an integrated approach to education'. As we have just heard for the last 3½ hours, the opposition believes the only matter that it will now deliver, the only thing that matters now, is teachers salaries. That has been what has been posited by the newfound workers' friends on the opposition benches, despite their previous attachment to WorkChoices and all that went with it. But I have made my contribution in that regard and I do not propose to restate it now. I also want to focus on chapter 1.1 of the Premier's statement, which is early childhood development, and particularly the comment that we as a government need to improve integration between maternal and child health services, kindergartens and school education.

The Premier, as part of the statement he delivered in February, indicated that a discussion paper on a blueprint for early childhood development and school reform would be released early in 2008. In fact it was released last week by Maxine Morand, the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, and Bronwyn Pike, the Minister for Education, both in the

other place, and that discussion paper will form the basis of the blueprint that will be released and finalised later this year.

The discussion paper which was released by the government last week invites submissions over the next month, and I would certainly encourage members of the community generally, but particularly members of the community in Western Metropolitan Region with an interest in this subject, to take advantage of the opportunity to make submissions towards the establishment of that blueprint, because it is amongst the most important work that this government or indeed any government will ever undertake.

In the foreword to the discussion paper on the blueprint the Premier states:

We know that a child's learning starts from day one, and that a child's early experiences have a direct impact on their future prospects.

The discussion paper deals with that reality in a number of ways throughout its pages. It talks about quality relationships with adults in the early years significantly impacting on a child's development. It discusses the fact that early intervention, particularly up to the age of eight years, is more effective and far less costly than intervening later in a child's life or indeed once that child reaches adulthood. It discusses the fact that close links between schools and the broader community ensure not just better educational outcomes but better community strength more generally and a far more engaged and cohesive community focused around the local school.

I would put to you, Acting President, that many of us would be able to reflect on our own experiences to know that most, if not all, of what I have just referred to is absolutely true. We know that early intervention, care and attention from maternal child health-care nurses can help to overcome health issues with young babies, and I will come back to that to discuss a personal experience in a few moments.

We know that early intervention with kindergarten-aged children can be enormously effective in dealing with things like speech difficulties, behavioural problems and learning problems that those small children might be experiencing. We know that early intervention can lead to remedies for children who have underdeveloped gross motor skills or underdeveloped fine motor skills. We know from our own experience that a good primary school can be the central focus of an entire community. We know that a good local primary school can be a social network for mums and dads and that it can be a support network for

parents who have difficulties in their lives and for sole parents.

We know that a proper integration between a local primary school and a local government kindergarten can do wonders for the way children adjust to going to school and that it can have an enormous impact on their self-esteem and their wellbeing, not just in the early years of school but right throughout their school life. Those early experiences of school become very telling factors in the way that children react to school, how enjoyable they find it and, as a consequence, how much they get from their education experience.

The discussion paper goes into all of those matters both in proposed actions and in the improvement targets that it hopes to generate as this blueprint is developed. It talks about partnerships with parents and communities. It talks about engaging families so that a child's learning and development are not simply a function of how good their teacher is but are also a function of how well and how closely engaged the parents are in the child's education. The discussion paper talks about developing schools as community hubs, and I would say that that builds on the work that the government has already started with its school rebuilding program, in which particular weight is being given to schools which integrate services with the local community, whether they be swimming pools or libraries, to try to make such a school more than just an educational institution but also a focus and a focal point for an entire community.

I certainly know from my own experience the way that a local government primary school can become almost by default a hub for community activity, and this statement of government intentions and the blueprint discussion paper that arises from it build on all of that.

The discussion paper talks about greater continuity in the approach to learning and development for children up to 8 years of age, particularly in the transition to school. The type of support services provided when children go from their preschool to school and the approach taken to early childhood development in that regard should not be functions of geography. They should not be left to the vagaries of an individual kindergarten or an individual school principal. This notion of greater continuity across the state in the way that children make the transition from preschool to school is a laudable objective, and it is going to be very important that that kind of transition is available across the state in a coordinated way.

There is now very well-established data about what types of early intervention services and what transition

programs from kindergarten to school work well for children, and it should not be that in some parts of the state they are done in an excellent, integrated and coordinated way and in other parts of the state they are done in a haphazard way. There should be a coordinated approach. I have seen this with my six-year-old who has been through kindergarten — as Mr Barber's little one will, no doubt, in a number of years.

Mr Barber — Yes, but not everybody gets there, do they?

Mr PAKULA — I am sure Mr Barber will manage to find a very good local kindergarten for his child, and hopefully his experience will be as good as mine was, because there was a brilliant transition program from my son's state-run kindergarten to the state-run primary school. There were visits to the school when my son was in four-year-old kinder. Familiarisation with the school and mentor programs between a preppy and a grade 6 kid or a grade 5 kid make the progression and the transition from kindergarten to school for the child in question much less intimidating. It can be enormously intimidating for little children to start at primary school, and having friends who come with them from their kindergarten to the school, having a big kid in the school who looks after them — —

Mr Barber — I wish I had that when I started at my school!

Mr PAKULA — If Mr Barber had been a happier child, he might not have ended up in the Greens! For a child, those things mean that the school has a very welcoming feel, and it delivers better learning outcomes because the child is happy to go to school and consequently does better.

The discussion paper talks about joint professional learning between primary schools and early childhood services, and it is essential that the development programs are seamless and complementary. You do not want a situation where, again, we have a lack of continuity in the types of professional learning that primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers are undertaking, because what they do in kindergarten and the way that they prepare the child for primary school need to be absolutely integrated and coordinated. One delivers an outcome to the other.

The discussion paper also talks about a range of improvement targets, one of which is in maternal and child health services. The target is:

Increase the proportion of children attending maternal and child health services developmental checks, particularly at three and a half years.

I think the maternal and child health service is one of the most important services that the state government provides.

I refer again to my situation with my daughter. At birth, the maternal and child health service attendance rates are very high. You get a reminder at the hospital, and someone comes to visit you — and we took advantage of that. My daughter had a hip-displacement problem that was not picked up in the hospital or by the paediatrician but was picked up by the maternal and child health nurse. It meant that she was in a brace for three months, but if it had not been picked up it would have meant a significant operation when she became an older child and may have led to her needing a hip replacement as a teenager.

Whilst the uptake of the maternal and child health nurse service is excellent during the first year of a child's life, at three and a half years there is a big drop-off in the number of parents accessing the service. Unfortunately that occurs overwhelmingly with those who need the service most; those in the most disadvantaged areas are the least likely to avail themselves of the service when their child is three and a half years. So as a government we have an obligation to raise awareness — to remind parents of the availability of the service — because all sorts of problems that three-and-a-half-year-old children might have can be picked up by the maternal and child health nurse at that check-up. This is an age when the children are still young enough for the diagnosis to make a difference. The diagnosis could be of a hearing problem, speech disorder or some kind of behavioural problem.

The discussion paper talks about raising to 95 per cent the proportion of children in all local government areas attending four-year-old kindergarten. Four-year-old kinder is a vital developmental year. A number of children turn five in their four-year-old kindergarten year, and they could technically go to prep, but many of them are not ready for school even though they have turned five. It is a year of incredible development in their speech, their level of socialisation and their confidence, as I noticed with my son and a number of his kindergarten friends. With all those children the teachers paid great attention, gave great advice and recommended support services. I know from speaking to a lot of parents that they are very relieved that they sent their child to four-year-old kinder in that year rather than putting them straight into primary school.

As I said, the blueprint was flagged in the statement of government intentions. It has the potential to make an enormous difference to the lives of thousands of children, and particularly to their opportunities later in life. It is a blueprint that could only come from a Labor government. As Mr Thornley indicated in his contribution to the debate last night, we are a government that believes in investing in people. We believe in working cooperatively with the community sector. We are optimistic about the ability of people to do better with the right support structures, when we care for one another and when we invest in developing real solutions to real problems. We think that is a far better approach to public policy than the zero-sum game approach — when you pit one segment of the community against another and try to make sure that you are on the side of the bigger bit — that the Liberal Party has engaged in for decades. The statement of government intentions is a valuable signpost to the way the government will enact its legislative program over the forward period. I commend it to the house.

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I intend to speak on the 2008 annual statement of government intentions spin document and, in doing so, give it the amount of time it truly deserves — a long, drawn-out pause. Thank you!

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I am pleased to speak on the annual statement of government intentions. This is the first time in the history of the Victorian Parliament that the Premier has outlined the government's main legislative agenda for the coming year. As I said, this is an annual statement of government intentions, so we will be seeing one each year. This is the first time that the government has laid out in advance, for the public as well as for the whole of Parliament, its legislative priorities as well as its policy agenda. It does not necessarily cover all the legislation we will deal with in the year, but this is our plan and it sets out our priorities. The statement of government intentions sets out our broad agenda for the year ahead. It is not only the first time this has been done in the Victorian Parliament, as I said, but also the first time in Australia.

I am very proud to be part of a government that is setting out its intentions in terms of its policy agenda and legislative program. This builds on the many progressive changes we have made in the state since coming to government in 1999, and I will talk about those later. The introduction of the annual statement of government intentions goes a long way towards ensuring that Victoria is a representative democracy — one where the community is able to participate in the democratic process, and one where the government is

open, transparent and clear about its plan for the future year.

The annual statement of government intentions sets out and focuses on providing key services to families, dealing with issues to do with climate change, upgrading public transport, improving local planning, improving community safety, driving more jobs and growing the economy through good financial management, not just in Melbourne but right across regional Victoria.

I noted that one of the speeches I listened to from the opposition yesterday, which was a good bit longer and a lot more thoughtful than that of the previous opposition speaker, was from Philip Davis. He was very critical of the statement of government intentions. He claimed that it did not mention rural and regional Victoria and did not go far enough in talking about what the government intended to do for rural and regional Victoria.

That is an absolute fallacy, because we have not only clearly stated this but by our actions have also clearly demonstrated that we are governing for all Victorians, not just those who live in Melbourne but also those who live in rural and regional areas. You only need look at the amount of investment that is happening in regional Victoria and the amount of jobs and housing growth to see how people from Melbourne and people from other states, and internationally, are seeing rural and regional Victoria as a great place to live, work, invest, do business and raise a family. They are moving there in considerable numbers to enjoy the lifestyle that rural Victoria has to offer.

Within the legislative program set out in the statement of government intentions are policies and pieces of legislation that very specifically go to dealing with those who live in rural and regional Victoria. Right across the spectrum of delivering services to family, whether they be human services, health services, community services or education, justice or community safety services, you can see by the actions this government has taken, the legislation it has already put in place and the programs it has developed and funded that it is putting in place right across Victoria programs for all of Victoria — not just those in Melbourne, but people right across the state.

As I said earlier, the statement is the latest in a whole series of reforms this government has put in place since it came to office in 1999 which really improve on the democratic processes within this Parliament as well as its openness, transparency and accountability as a government. I am proud to have come into government

in 1999 with Steve Bracks as our Premier and to now be working with John Brumby, who has taken over since Steve Bracks resigned.

We have certainly improved democracy, openness and accountability. We have done such things as restore the powers of the Auditor-General and enshrine the independence of the Ombudsman, the electoral commissioner and the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Victorian constitution. We have put in place regional parliaments that have sat in a number of regional areas since we came to government in 1999. That was a first in Victoria and has been very welcomed by constituents who live in country and regional Victoria. We have also brought in community cabinets, which have been very successful since we came to government.

On top of that we have also reformed this place. We have put in place reforms to the upper house to make it more democratic and more representative, and which more accurately reflect the wishes of Victorian voters. We put in place four-year terms so that we went from having two terms to one term, and made changes to ensure a stronger system of accountability within the upper house. The electoral commission changed our regions to work with our move to proportional representation and our multi-member electorates here in the upper house.

I am proud to have been part of all those changes that have taken place since 1999. The annual statement of government intentions is another building block added to all those things we have already done to ensure that in what the government is doing there is accountability, greater participation and greater transparency.

I want to talk briefly about a couple of issues that are dear to my heart, representing an electorate in northern Victoria where water is a very big issue. We are experiencing the longest drought in living memory while we are also going through climate change. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Premier on the historic agreement that has been reached on the Murray–Darling Basin. It will deliver new protections and improvements in water security for Victorian farmers and for the environment. That involves the many farmers in my electorate in the Goulburn Valley who rely on irrigation in that area.

The commonwealth will now invest up to \$1 billion in stage 2 of the food bowl modernisation project. That will help to deliver approximately 200 billion litres of additional water to Victorian irrigators and to the Murray River. This is the most significant investment in water infrastructure upgrade in Victoria's history. This

is the most money that has ever been invested by a government in one project in a regional area in Victoria. It will come on top of the \$1 billion that the Brumby Labor government has already committed as part of the Victorian government's water plan. This will deliver massive water savings to irrigators, to the community and to the environment and will go a long way to guaranteeing water security for the region.

As part of the funding agreement with the commonwealth, the water savings gained from stage 2 will be shared equally between the irrigators and the Murray River. The total water savings from stage 1 and stage 2 will be approximately 425 billion litres of water a year.

We have won very important concessions from the commonwealth with this agreement, including provisions that give all the state water ministers the right to disagree with the Murray–Darling Basin plan and to send back to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for further work issues that we are not satisfied with. The plan that was put forward by the previous Howard government did not even give Victoria a seat at the table, let alone the right to send back issues that we disagreed with.

The agreement not only gives us a say in the future planning of the Murray–Darling Basin but also gives Victoria and other states an opportunity to work through any disagreements we may have with the commonwealth plan. The agreement also locked in Victoria's current state water shares under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, which had been under threat in the original water plan that was released by the previous government. It has locked in our water shares, it has given us a seat at the table, it has given us an additional \$1 billion of investment in the food bowl modernisation project, and it will deliver water security to the region.

I also want to talk briefly about the savings that have been made, particularly by Melburnians, who have taken up water use as a serious issue. People no longer view it as simply being something that is just there when you turn on the tap. We understand it is a very precious and valuable resource and we need to use it wisely.

The latest water usage figures released show that Melbourne households, as well as Melbourne businesses and industry, have slashed water consumption under the stage 3a water restrictions. After one year of stage 3a, which was introduced on 1 April 2007, Melburnians are saving water as if stage 4 restrictions were in place. Householders have

responded incredibly well to the water restrictions, and have certainly cut back their water use around the house, whether it be the way they use their washing machines, the time spent in the shower and the way gardens are watered, or in fact not watered, or their use of recycled water or tank water for that purpose.

Melbourne's per capita water use is 34 per cent lower than it was in the mid-1990s. We are becoming more aware, particularly with the campaigns the government has put in place to educate householders to be more aware of using water wisely. They have had an effect. The new campaign that was recently launched by the Minister for Water in the other place, Tim Holding, the advertisements and the kits that are being sent out as well as the television and newspaper advertisements also add to the work that is already being done in making people more aware.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Premier, John Brumby, on the annual statement of government intentions. I am proud to be part of this government that is being so open with its forward agenda not only for legislation but also for its priorities in programming and policy. I commend the statement to the house.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to make a statement on the annual statement of government intentions delivered by the Premier in February of this year. It has been interesting listening to contributions from government members about this document being a panacea for the ongoing ills of Victoria. Unfortunately the document is scarce on detail and the contributions thus far by government members seem to have little correlation with the content of the document.

Ms Darveniza interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take up the interjection from Ms Darveniza as she departs the chamber. While she talked about Melburnians having slashed their water usage, she failed to mention that the government has introduced water police to ensure that Melburnians do not use too much water. Why are they not allowed to use too much water? Because there is not much water to use. The government would have you believe that it is a result of the drought. There is no denying that the drought has been significant, but fundamentally it is a reflection of this government's inability to plan for the future and to address the supply side of the supply and demand equation.

As we heard last week during debate on the Auditor-General's report into the proposed new water infrastructure, in particular the north–south pipeline, the

pipeline linking Melbourne and Geelong and the desalination plant, it is clear the government had no plan for Victoria's water future, despite the fact that inflows into the catchments have been down now for a decade. Prior to the government being elected inflows were below average. There has been a clear pattern, yet the government did not do anything until the middle of last year when it decided it needed a silver bullet to solve the water crisis. It wants to plunk an enormous industrial facility, a desalination plant, on the pristine Bass Coast. It wants to break a bipartisan 50-year agreement not to take water from the north to the south. The Auditor-General has also reported that the cost of the Geelong–Melbourne water pipeline has blown out by 50 per cent before it is even completed. It is an indictment of the government, but what is worse is that the government did not take these policies to the last election.

While the statement of government intentions is full of nice words the government has demonstrated that by not being honest with its intentions at the last election the statement is meaningless. Having said that, I am happy to address some of the issues that the statement of government intentions skips over. It is very scant on detail. The statement refers to rail safety, which is a serious issue. If the government's investment in the elimination of railway crossings continues at the same rate it will take 75 years for all intersections to be adequately protected. The recent announcement by the minister that level crossing speed limits will be reduced in some instances to 80 kilometres an hour is merely an admission that adequate safety measures have not been put in place to ensure that those crossings are indeed safe.

This statement of government intentions, with its comments about rail safety and about public transport more generally, will be cold comfort to the commuters who live in Lakeside who want to get on a train. They have to depart from Lakeside and drive to either Officer or Pakenham, where they will be lucky to get a car park. If they get a car park and can get on a train, they will be lucky if the train leaves on time, and they will be lucky if by the time the train arrives at Berwick it is not full to bursting. That is the reality of the public transport system at the moment. The statement of government intentions does not commit to a new railway station at Lakeside, as is desperately required, and it does not commit to new railway stations in the electorate represented by Mr Rich-Phillips and Mrs Peulich.

The document, if it is indeed a vision for the coming 12 months, should give more detail as to what can be anticipated from the government. What has been instructive this year is how short the parliamentary

sitting days have been. Whilst the government makes comments about the number of bills that will pass through the Parliament, the important things that will be addressed and the program the government has, if you actually look at what has been passed thus far, now that we are the best part of one-third of the way through the year, if you look at the debates that have taken place in this place, if you look at the legislation the government has introduced and if you look at the agenda that the government has brought before the Parliament thus far, you see that it has been scant indeed. We have not as the Council sat once on a Friday this year, and we have rarely sat past the dinner break. On many occasions we have finished early. On 6 February, for instance, we finished at 5:42 p.m., on 7 February at 5:40 p.m., on 26 February at 6:54 p.m. and on 10 April at 5:05 p.m.

I think the people of Victoria, rather than taking at face value the marketing document that the statement of government intentions in effect is, can ask whether they are getting value for money from this government, bearing in mind the bills it is introducing and the work it is doing in the Parliament, and whether it actually has an agenda for this, its third term in government. Looking through the bills that have come before the house this year, there is only one conclusion that can be drawn: this government has run out of steam, it has run out of puff, it has no agenda, it has no plan, and we are seeing a government that is reactionary and has little vision for the future.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to be able to rise and make a contribution to debate in support of the inaugural annual statement of government intentions, which was delivered by Premier Brumby on 5 October 2007. As we have heard, this is a first for Australia and for Victoria, and this initiative will provide greater accountability of government and will strengthen our democracy.

The government has indicated to the community that more than 60 bills are intended to be legislated on during the course of this year, and the Premier has invited the public of Victoria to comment on these proposals through a dedicated website at: www.yoursay.dpc.vic.gov.au. The Premier has indicated that the statement is not exhaustive and that priorities may change as a result of community consultation and as new challenges emerge, but the statement means that the community now knows in advance what legislation is to be debated by this Parliament during the course of the year, and I think this is something that all of us should warmly welcome.

I think there have been some very well-considered contributions during the course of the debate. I noted

that members of the opposition such as Bruce Atkinson actually gave some thoughtful consideration to the value this statement can provide in strengthening our democracy. It is a shame Mr Dalla-Riva chose to treat the debate in such a flippant way.

One of the areas I want to touch upon briefly is at page 21 of the statement, where there is a reference to the review of the Planning and Environment Bill. In particular it refers to the fact that an expert committee will be established to advise the government on reforming the now 20-year-old Planning and Environment Act 1987 and that the proposed legislation may not be ready for presentation to the Parliament until 2009. In this case we see an early indication to the community that a significant piece of legislation that relates to our planning system is going to be looked at during the course of the year and that there will be opportunities for community and local government consultation.

The issue of strengthening our livable communities is an issue that the Premier has made one of his key priority areas since he took office as Premier. We all know that Victoria's population is growing at a historically high rate. In the year to September 2007 Victoria's population grew by 78 095 people, which is an average of almost 1502 additional people in Victoria per week. In the year to June 2007 Melbourne's population grew by 61 719 people, which was substantially more than any other capital city in Australia. We have heard how Bernard Salt, the demographer, has flagged the fact that Melbourne will outstrip Sydney in a few years time as Australia's largest city. This means that we need to ensure that we have adequate housing in our state to keep housing at affordable levels.

It is important to note that recent reports by development industry bodies acknowledge Melbourne's relative affordability compared to Sydney and Perth, with vacant lot prices in Melbourne being significantly lower than in those cities. The reforms to the Planning and Environment Act should ensure that we build on reforms the government has already made to provide for an efficient statutory planning system, in particular the reforms that have resulted in cutting red tape and streamlining our planning system to ensure that state and local government planning processes operate more efficiently.

I also want to indicate my very strong support for the priority given in the statement and in the Premier's speech to further work in responding to the critical issue of climate change, and I congratulate the Premier and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change for

the significant climate change summit that was recently held in Parliament House. I particularly welcome the further initiatives announced during the course of this week, recommitting the government to work with the Clinton Foundation and working on our renewable energy targets. I commend the statement to the house and welcome the community's feedback.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to also place on record some responses to the Premier's annual statement of intentions, or as was commonly referred to: his state of the union address. He promised to consider the needs and issues facing the state of Victoria over the Christmas holidays and to come back with a plan. Unfortunately this government has a rich history of plans but a very poor track record on delivery of outcomes.

As a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region I have made it my priority, my statement of intention, to hold this government accountable for the undertakings it has given to South Eastern Metropolitan Region, to hold it accountable for its actions and its broken promises, and to speak on behalf of the residents, along with Gordon Rich-Phillips, where Labor MPs have failed them. The list is extensive and growing longer each day. I will continue to lobby for the integration of a better road system across the south-east and the completion of various crucial road projects such as the Dingley arterial, and to continue to put pressure on the Labor government to provide more police, as required, across the region.

I will continue to also highlight the Labor government's mismanagement of our public transport system. I make particular reference to the Cranbourne, Frankston, Glen Waverley and Pakenham rail services, with Frankston and Pakenham being by far the worst performing.

The state has been arguing for years about the inequity of federal grants to Victoria. It is about time it stopped being hypocritical and looked at how it conducts itself and maybe thinks about returning more of the tens of millions of dollars it collects in gaming revenue each year to South Eastern Metropolitan Region, which is the originator of many of those funds and certainly a very rare beneficiary of the dispersal of the Community Support Fund.

The same can be said of the high cost of stamp duty in the state and the collection of other exorbitant taxes and charges that hit ordinary families, that create unaffordable housing and make getting about their business on a daily basis much more frustrating and much more difficult.

A big issue across South Eastern Metropolitan Region is the need for improved infrastructure, especially new infrastructure in growth areas. This particularly affects the municipalities of Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Monash and Casey. As shadow parliamentary secretary for education, obviously education is something I am very passionate about, so I will approach this statement of legislative intent from that perspective, as well as in my role as shadow parliamentary secretary for communities.

What do we have? I have outlined my intentions. How do my intentions measure up with the 'state of the union' address. Let me say that it is a very significant disappointment to me, and it should be a very significant disappointment to people in the south-east. This inaugural statement of government intentions was made to a joint sitting of both houses in the Legislative Assembly by the Premier on 5 February 2008. Its purpose was clearly to draw a line under the very lacklustre performance during the preceding eight years of the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments.

An honourable member — I think that is the truest word spoken.

Mrs PEULICH — It is — absolutely. It is to draw a line and to separate what has happened in the past and to try and create some sort of an agenda, some sort of focus or direction for this new Premier. The reality is that there is no line that should be separating the first eight years from the time that follows until this government is eventually defeated. We must not forget that Premier Brumby was Treasurer Brumby. He pulled the levers, he controlled the purse strings, he culled and vetted the legislative agenda as well as shaping the budget and appropriation and the financial management of this state. He has a lot to answer for.

All the things I enumerated in my opening statement about my priorities as one of the members for South Eastern Metropolitan Region are a response to this government's failure to deliver what people and communities can legitimately expect — that is, to have their various needs, their social needs and their needs for improved capital met by an honest and accountable government that is inclusive and participatory, and for it to do all those things and provide all those things with the lowest possible financial penalty to them as Victorians and as families. The hallmark of this government and this Premier has been basically a squandering of nine years of opportunity — nine years of significant income that the government has been able to command, to dispose of and to direct with very little happening to show for it.

We have heard the debate today on education. Premier Brumby says education remains his government's no. 1 priority. Words are very cheap for this Labor government. The Labor Party is very good at words, very good at strategies, very good at blueprints, very good at public relations and pamphlets and documents, but it is appalling at the execution of those plans and the delivery of outcomes. I will not recap the lengthy debate on education and why it has clearly not been the no. 1 priority for this government, unless it is an inverted triangle, because under this government we still have declining literacy and numeracy standards.

We have looked at comparative results across mainland Australia, the growing maintenance backlog and the government's failure to deliver new schools in growth corridors and adequately make provision for schools right across the state, and the government has now embarked on an amalgamations-closure-merger program in Labor's heartland in a bid to generate more funds.

The government has been unable to provide a safe learning environment, with the incidence of violence in classrooms rising, and supposedly across the South Eastern Metropolitan Region education remains the government's no. 1 priority — it is probably no. 2, because infrastructure is probably even more pressing than education. Premier Brumby says:

Staying true to our values of fairness was also important. By fairness I mean striving to give every Victorian every chance to reach their full potential in their education.

It is almost laughable, especially as we have a teachers strike and promises by Prime Minister Rudd of an education revolution, but the revolution basically petered out before it started. The promise to provide laptop computers has all but fizzled out and has clearly not been budgeted or accounted for. This government will need to pick up the tab for cheap election promises made by Prime Minister Rudd, and I want to know what cuts are going to be made in the education budget in order to pay for Prime Minister Rudd's commitments on the hop to deliver an education revolution.

With the rising problems in our education system being mismanaged by poor education ministers, enrolments in government schools continue to decline, yet nothing in this legislation seems to shine a light in the direction we need to go. I know this government is going to be thrown a lifeline by all the supposedly state-federal cooperative initiatives, and the Rudd ideas and the Julia Gillard ideas will become this government's ideas. I bet my bottom dollar that the next statement of legislative intent will be a carbon copy of federal Labor's direction.

After nine years of this government we do not have an additional body of water to augment our water supply. The water restrictions are here to stay. Despite the fact that our population increases, our water supply continues to diminish. Water levels are marginally better than they were 12 months ago but at huge cost to the community. Certainly many suburban gardens have all but gone, sporting grounds are less accessible and children are less able to participate in their regular sporting competitions. This is at a time of concerns about fitness, obesity and so on. The left hand of this government does not know what the right hand is doing.

In 2008 planned amendments to the Transport Act, it is claimed in the statement, will 'provide a stronger, more integrated approach to transport planning and service delivery', with that new approach streamlining the delivery of critical road and rail infrastructure. Doesn't that sound good! But public transport is being run by a minister who does not want to hear complaints, even by email. It is marred by mismanagement, poorly built imported train carriages and numerous level crossing accidents.

The Bracks and Brumby governments have continued to raise taxes and charges and renege on promises to abolish road tolls and build better roads and rail infrastructure. The costs to the community are tolls on the Frankston–Mitcham EastLink and possibly on completion of the Dingley arterial; increased public transport costs for patrons — I will not say too much about myki and initiatives such as the early bird fiasco; the neglect of secondary roads; the diversion of funds to more popular projects; and more accidents and deaths on Victorian roads and rail networks, despite the fact that there has been a drought for five years, which on the whole tends to reduce the road toll. The Bracks-Brumby Labor government turned its back on the people of Melbourne when its promise to construct the Scoresby freeway turned into a backflip and it announced the EastLink tollway.

The state Labor government is hell-bent on throwing money at expert panels, advisory bodies and reports, but it is long overdue on delivering to the community. Victorians deserve better transport, better hospitals and health services, better law and order, better water security and better education facilities. The days of this inept, incompetent, reactive government need to come to an end, and this shallow, hollow statement of intentions shows that it has lost its way. In fact it was probably never on the right path to begin with.

The housing affordability issue we have debated in this chamber is one of this government's greatest failures. It

has created an environment where the cost of housing is soaring. New families find it more difficult to get into housing, rents are skyrocketing and public housing has diminished. There has been a cluster of policy failures in this area, but the government continues to do nothing about it.

It also talks about a new police act which will be developed in three stages over more than 12 months, supposedly to strengthen the effectiveness of the force. That does not need a lot of comment, except to say that the government has been so effective that now it is looking at widening the Office of Police Integrity. Relations between Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police and Mr Finn's favourite, Christine Nixon, and Police Association secretary Paul Mullett are at an all-time low. One can only ask how did this happen. Ms Nixon has refused to deal with Mr Mullett, and the issues of crime and community safety continue to plague debate in the media, with concerns being raised about how the crime statistics are put together and whether or not they are massaged. Certainly there is a lot of concern in the community that they are massaged. I have anecdotal evidence that many victims of smaller crimes are never given the opportunity of making a statement, and one has to ask why. Public concern over reported crime statistics is often used to support claims for increased police resources and power, but we are yet to see an enhanced or more visible police presence, despite government claims.

Moving on very quickly, the second police bill will cement the role of the Office of Police Integrity as Victoria's pre-eminent police anticorruption watchdog. A damning report by the OPI tabled in state Parliament on 7 February recommended that criminal charges be laid against former assistant commissioner Noel Ashby, former police media director Stephen Linnell, and Mr Mullett. The report accused the men of engaging in betrayal, collusion, deceit and abuse of authority in pursuit of their aims. It is obvious that actions of this kind are rife in the police force and that the OPI is not putting in place effective strategies to eradicate this sort of behaviour in Victoria Police. The question that has to be asked is: what has the government been doing for nine years?

The third bill will replace the Police Regulation Act, providing more accountability, but at the same time crime continues to rise. In the city of Casey crime against the person has increased by 72.8 per cent since 2000–01. The rate in the city of Greater Dandenong for crimes against the person has risen 33.52 per cent in just two years. Last year's crime statistics for Kingston municipality show that sexual attacks are up 65.8 per cent, rape is up 44.4 per cent, robbery is up 34 per cent

and drug manufacture is up 15.5 per cent. Now the government has the audacity to tell the community that the government has a handle on law and order issues, which is clearly not the case. The other outstanding issue in the region is the government's promise to build a police station at Carrum Downs — a promise made at the 2006 election — but there has been no movement at the station on that promise.

The Premier also claims that there will be an increased focus on the needs of working families in outer suburbs, which is a welcome relief, but he has failed to do anything about the frustration people experience during the hours they spend each week stuck in traffic congestion and their frustration at the delays and cancellations on the Frankston, Glen Waverley, Cranbourne and Pakenham train lines, their frustration that the secondary schools in Casey are overcrowded, with parents having to send their children to school miles away from their homes, and further frustration at the higher cost of kindergartens.

The Liberal Party has promised a free kindergarten for most four-year-olds. Clearly this policy would address the needs of many families, but it is not the case under the Brumby Labor government. People are frustrated about the rise in the incidence of crime in South Eastern Metropolitan Region, frustrated at the rise in the cost of gas and electricity — some charges have risen in excess of 17.6 per cent — and frustrated at the enormous cost of stamp duty and land taxes imposed by this greedy government.

I could go on — I have a very lengthy document — but instead I will say that making our community healthier, safer and fairer is an objective that government members have failed to deliver on. They have failed to take the cost pressure off owning a home. They have failed to make Victoria the safest state. They have failed to put in place planning provisions that the community is comfortable with, and we now see a discussion paper being issued by the Minister for Planning which has many in the community experiencing significant angst. The closing date for submissions is this Friday, 18 April, and there have been very few consultations across metropolitan Melbourne.

The decision made will dramatically affect the landscape of the urban community. People are concerned about their streets, so the Minister for Planning must listen and extend the time line to ensure that people have an opportunity to shape the new planning policies of their suburbs and communities. Those planning policies belong to the communities, not to the government.

In closing, let me say that the government has failed on water and failed on reforming the process of disposing of industrial waste, which is a big issue for those who live in the area surrounding the Lyndhurst toxic waste site. The Minister for Environment and Climate Change is here in the chamber, so I will tell him that there are significant concerns in the communities around Lyndhurst. People have been seeking meetings with the government but have had no response and no success. I urge the minister to agree to a meeting and to talk through those issues; if there are any that we can do anything about, then we will work together and I will give him my support. If we cannot do anything, then we would have at least given those people a decent hearing.

The blame game has ended for this government, which has been wasteful and failed to deliver to the community over a period of nine years. If this statement is an example of its future, then dare I say that this government's future will continue to be disappointing. I urge government members to make sure that they talk to the Premier so that he starts listening to the community and delivering on the projects that the community needs rather than wasting and squandering the wonderful opportunities the government has had over the last nine years. I do not commend the statement, but I will monitor it very carefully.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — After listening to that contribution from Mrs Peulich, I sometimes think that we must be living in parallel universes. Mrs Peulich was a member of the Kennett government, but now she comes into this chamber and talks about the need to invest in service delivery areas that this government has been delivering on proudly, and we can go through them. This statement shows the freshness and vigour of this government in its ability to deliver to the community after having been in government since 1999.

The statement shows the vigour and freshness of the government and its intention to continue to deliver for the community, to rebuild the education system that was so seriously damaged by the previous government, to invest in another 8000 teachers and more schools, and to rebuild our school system and its infrastructure across the state. We are investing billions of dollars back into our health system — employing an additional 4000 nurses and rebuilding our hospitals across the state with new facilities in just about every town and in every single hospital in Victoria.

Mrs Peulich talked about public transport, and this government is re-establishing its commitment to public transport. This government has had fresh ideas about

public transport. The previous government's fresh idea about public transport was to flog it off. This Labor government has been investing in new rail stock, bringing in additional services and looking at a timetable restructure to add to the increase in demand, which is a vote of confidence in the public transport system from the people of Victoria. We have significant increases in demand on the public transport system, and that is what the government is responding to.

The government has been investing in ensuring that we have water security, and that continues in this statement. We only have to listen to Mrs Peulich talking about the need to create more water to know that there is an inherent contradiction between the views of the Liberals and those of The Nationals. At the last election The Nationals ran on a statement in my region that Melbourne was stealing Gippsland's water and, to use their words, 'sending back its poo'. That was the line The Nationals were running out constantly during that election campaign.

What are The Nationals saying in northern Victoria? They are saying, 'We do not need the north-south pipeline; we will dam the Macalister or Mitchell rivers'. Why would you dam the Mitchell or Macalister rivers? The only reason would be to send the water to Melbourne. The hypocrisy of The Nationals! In Gippsland they do not want to talk about damming the Mitchell and the Macalister; they only want to talk about it in northern Victoria.

Mrs Peulich said we need to create more water, but every water system in the state has dams that are not full. Building another dam is not going to increase the amount of water catchment. We cannot increase the amount of water if all the catchments are not currently filling the dams that we already have. We have to look at the alternatives, and they are simple: reuse more water, use less water, create a grid and then create more water through the desalination plant. That is the strategy and there is no alternative. Building another dam, as The Nationals propose, will not do it. This statement outlines the government's commitments in the area of water security for all Victorians.

This statement also outlines the government's commitment in the area of climate change and areas such as carbon capture and storage, which is a vital investment in my region, particularly in the Latrobe Valley. We believe the Latrobe Valley has a strong future as part of the climate change solution if we can get carbon capture and storage and decent carbon trading. Those needs were ignored by the previous Howard government. This government has been

investing in renewable energy and new technologies, such as carbon capture and storage.

I will not speak for long on this because of other commitments of the house, but I will say that the examples I have just given are about the freshness of this government. After being in government since 1999, we are putting forward an innovative statement that outlines to the people of Victoria and to both houses of the Parliament the government's intentions for the coming year. The statement is a welcome addition to the processes of this Parliament and to the commitment we have to being open, transparent and accountable. I commend the statement to the house.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Ambulance services: Bendigo

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment debate issue tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place, Mr Andrews. It regards the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system operated by Rural Ambulance Victoria in Bendigo. My request of the minister is for him to conduct a thorough investigation into the effectiveness of the CAD system being used by Rural Ambulance Victoria to dispatch Bendigo paramedics.

Bendigo-based paramedics believe the CAD system is undermining their emergency response, because it often misrepresents the severity of the call-out. Examples given by paramedics include an ambulance recently being sent to an explosion and fire with potential casualties, only to discover the job was a child who had spilt hot tea on themselves. Paramedics are regularly being dispatched to bogus jobs. The mobile intensive care ambulance unit is not being dispatched in life-and-death situations, and paramedics are regularly receiving messages on their pagers to attend accidents in Brisbane and Sydney.

The system works by operators entering data from patient calls into the computer system, which diagnoses the severity of the case. The information is then transmitted to a central controller, who makes a definitive call on the level of response. Reports in the Bendigo media claim that Rural Ambulance Victoria management has been ignoring concerns raised by

paramedics and is refusing to act on reports against the faulty dispatch system. These operational reports have exceeded more than 30 complaints in the past four months. This has undermined the faith paramedics have in the CAD system. A paramedic quoted in the local press said:

We get sent to minor jobs under the illusion they are serious, so we are risking our lives and risking the lives of the public by driving at high speeds ...

Many paramedics believe it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt as a consequence of the CAD system getting it wrong. Therefore I call on the minister to conduct a thorough investigation into the effectiveness of the CAD system being used by Rural Ambulance Victoria to dispatch Bendigo paramedics, which has clearly put lives at risk.

Robinvale network house: education funding

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer, Mr Lenders. It concerns the fact that so many of our state taxes and charges are indexed or at least linked to rising prices such as stamp duty on properties. Our fees and licences in effect are all linked to consumer price index increases, and they simply go up as a matter of course. Therefore it is difficult to explain the government's failure to put in place a similar policy when it comes to those items where it actually has payments that need to be made on an annual basis.

I refer specifically to the amount the state government pays to organisations such as neighbourhood houses, in this case to run adult community education programs. I have received strongly worded letters from Robinvale network house, which, among other activities, has been running an adult community education program. Robinvale is clearly one of those communities which can benefit greatly from the courses that are run out of the neighbourhood house. It has low literacy rates, rates of social disadvantage and a very diverse culture. All of the issues and problems surrounding Robinvale are extremely well documented. I know the minister currently in the house is very much aware of those issues facing Robinvale.

Five years ago the state government provided Robinvale network house with \$6.11 per student contact hour. It is a very modest sum when compared to the \$9.42 per student contact hour paid to the TAFE system. That was a level which most recognise as appallingly inadequate. Five years later the network house now gets \$6.34 per student contact hour. Even if that amount of \$6.11 had kept pace with inflation over the five years, it would now need at least \$7.28 just to

maintain its level of operation. Effectively what it means is that the state has inflicted a 14 or 15 per cent cut in the payment for adult education in the Robinvale area. This injustice will gradually reduce the ability the neighbourhood house has to fund the programs which the most vulnerable in that community need to have available to them.

The action that I call for is that, when there is recurring government expenditure for ongoing programs, those payments to recurring programs be indexed to at least keep up with inflation, with expenses and with wages, because wages make up the vast majority of the costs in relation to education programs. I call on the Treasurer to align the payments out of Treasury for general revenue to be consumer price indexed in the way that fees and charges and taxes that come into government are indexed at the moment.

Bannockburn: community hub

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Community Development in the other place, Mr Batchelor. A very similar matter relating to the same project was raised in the adjournment debate in this place yesterday by Ms Tierney in a request for assistance from the Minister for Regional and Rural Development in the other place, Ms Allan, for the Bannockburn community and cultural hub. Earlier this year I received a letter from Mr Rod Nicholls, the chief executive officer of Golden Plains Shire, and, subsequent to that, a briefing from some of the Golden Plains shire staff about Bannockburn community and cultural hub. They provided some detail to me about what is a fantastic project happening in Bannockburn. The project already has the support of the federal government to the tune of \$450 300. Golden Plains Shire Council is contributing \$458 000 to the project as well as \$300 000 in kind based on the value of the land.

This project or this grand vision of the council for Bannockburn will see the existing public hall redeveloped to include a 200-seat multipurpose hall, neighbourhood house and community learning centre, development of a library and information services centre — this is phase 2 — multipurpose spaces for use by clubs and community organisations and an expansion of car parking area and of landscaping.

Bannockburn is in an area that is experiencing quite rapid population growth and, whilst it has a population at present of about 3000 residents, services used by Bannockburn's neighbouring townships certainly place additional pressure on Bannockburn, such that the medical centre services in the order of 10 000 patients.

Bannockburn has grown by an average of 12 per cent per annum over the last five years and it is anticipated that its population will reach 8000 to 10 000 by 2020.

The Golden Plains Shire Council is seeking funding of \$300 000 for the project under the Brumby Labor government's community support grants scheme. I congratulate the shire for developing this funding application, and I give it my full support. In particular, recognition must go to Rod Nicholls, Mayor Des Guinane, Lenny Jenner and David Spear at the Shire of Golden Plains. This project will create a community building that will encourage community participation and promote lifelong learning. It has the potential to provide significant benefits to this very rapidly growing township in regional Victoria. It is a project that will assist in enhancing the fabric of that community, and I ask that the minister approve funding for this project.

Croajingolong National Park: Narrows walking track

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Control. While visiting Mallacoota on 3 April I checked out some of the local walking tracks, as is my habit. For example, the Mallacoota walking track established by the Friends of Mallacoota and now maintained by the Department of Sustainability and Environment is in a very good state. It provides access to both forest and coastal environments.

One of the most accessible and popular walking tracks in the adjoining Croajingolong National Park is the Narrows track, or as described by Parks Victoria, the track from Buckland's Jetty to Captain Creek Jetty. It says:

The track between Buckland's Jetty and Captain Creek Jetty is a pleasant walk which meanders along the picturesque shoreline of the Mallacoota Inlet for most of the way.

However, I found in an hour's walk some 14 obstructions — that is, fallen trees or limbs — which indicated a grossly inadequate maintenance program. This, along with signs in a state of disrepair, represented neglect. I had previously been advised that two-thirds of all inquiries to the volunteers at the visitor information centre related to walks. There were concerns from local residents that Parks Victoria is not resourced sufficiently to maintain the park access tracks and amenities nor to maintain regular office hours.

I can confirm this latter fact from my own observation as I subsequently visited the Parks Victoria office on three occasions on that day, only to find it closed to the public. I did note that several vehicles were in the car

park. The Parks Victoria's information line advised that the office is scheduled to be open from 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. five days a week. However, the call centre has difficulty contacting that office by phone, as did I, when I rang the office.

This is, in my view, a deplorable state of affairs. I do note, however, that the Friends of Mallacoota have a contrary view about the performance of Parks Victoria in the area. They said in a letter to me recently:

Further to our conversation, our organisation would like to emphasise its support for the work done by the Mallacoota national park's officers. Given the lack of resources (financial and manpower) provided for an area as large as the Croajingolong National Park and the nearby marine national parks, we believe the officers do an excellent job. We always find them both helpful and supportive.

Having said that, it is quite evident that the position at Mallacoota is simply unacceptable. The general community view is that Parks Victoria is not able to keep up with the requirements of maintaining proper access to the community for both vehicles and walkers and, importantly, is concerned that there is an absence of officers from the regular office hours of the Parks Victoria office.

I ask the minister to ensure that Parks Victoria undertakes track and sign maintenance urgently on the Narrows walking track and ensures that all of its other duties are properly attended to.

***Hansard*: distribution**

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I start by complimenting him on recently announcing that there will be action undertaken to make this magnificent building we are in now a much more environmentally friendly and hopefully one day carbon neutral facility, which is a good initiative, because if we cannot fix our own Parliament House on this issue it is a bit hard for us to ask other people to get their house in order, so I would like to commend him on that.

One thing I would like him to request to be done and to be looked at in this process is the use of paper in a lot of documents which we get delivered to us on a daily basis. I suppose an easy example would be the copy of *Hansard* from the Assembly and Council of the previous day. In this day and age where I would say most of us would be able to access *Hansard* electronically — and I am not too sure if everyone slavishly reads both copies — we are trying to think more environmentally.

What I am now holding up for the house to see is an example of what we get; I know it is hard for Hansard to record this, but I am holding up two *Hansard* documents, and I must compliment Hansard on these documents. I would like to suggest that we look at the distribution of some of the documents that we get with a view to saving some trees. We could have a couple of copies in this chamber and if people wanted to read and revisit their glorious contributions from the day before — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LEANE — I am trying not to look at Mr Finn, but maybe he might want to check if the jokes that he stole from the *Two Romnies* worked on that particular day!

The action I seek is that during this process we look at this distribution of paperwork. I know it might be a small thing, but I think it is an important issue. I am a bit surprised that the Greens, especially Mr Barber, have not brought this to our attention before. Unfortunately his title as environmental warrior is slipping a bit in my eyes, so if the minister could do that, that would be fantastic.

Crime: Geelong

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place and concerns recent reports of violent daylight assaults in Geelong, and public complaints of an inadequate police presence in that city.

At lunchtime on Thursday, 3 April, a man was stabbed in a crowd at a Geelong cafe. It was reported that a young woman punched the man on the street and then after he sought shelter in the cafe, she followed him and stabbed him in full view of terrified diners. The owner of the cafe said that while she was fed up with the violence in Little Malop Street, it had not surprised her as 'this sort of thing happens nearly every day'.

Further, there was an unprovoked group bashing of a young male during a fight in Little Malop Street on Friday, 4 April. This violent assault on the high school student saw him sustain serious injuries, including shocking bruising to the head and face.

These are not uncommon occurrences as earlier on the same day security cameras captured a man using a baseball bat to shatter the windows of businesses in Little Malop and Moorabool streets. The same cameras also recorded two separate brawls on the footpath during the previous evening — one where a man had a bottle shattered over his head. Then, on Monday,

7 April, another vicious bashing of a 16-year-old girl, her mother and her grandmother took place as they walked along Moorabool Street. This unprovoked and bloody attack again occurred in broad daylight, at 1 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. Two young women have since appeared in the Geelong Magistrates Court charged over this assault.

It has also been reported that according to the Geelong city police station roster fewer than 20 uniformed police are on patrol during any given shift. Police are stretched to the point where they are not able to provide a satisfactory presence or deterrent on the city streets. This is despite the region's assistant commissioner, Sandra Nicholson, saying that Geelong does not have a police shortage and is very well looked after with sufficient police in Geelong. This was reflected recently in the *Geelong Advertiser*, which states in its editorial on 8 April:

Reports continue unabated of disturbing violence on Geelong's streets as police complain yet again of undermanning and the public complains of an inadequate police presence.

My request is for the minister to listen to the people of Geelong and to support the police by providing them with what they need to rid Geelong's streets of this violence.

Water: Hamilton–Grampians pipeline

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water in the other place regarding the Hamilton–Grampians pipeline. Just this morning the federal Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, the Victorian Minister for Water in the other place, Mr Tim Holding, the federal member for Ballarat, Catherine King, and the state member for Ballarat East in the other place, Geoff Howard, were in Ballarat to witness workers connecting the final section of the goldfields super-pipe at White Swan Reservoir.

As a result of this super-pipe, now backed with \$90 million worth of federal Labor government funding, not only has Ballarat's water supply been secured for the next 50 years but households will be \$180 better off with regard to their water bills. The next stage of the Brumby government's Our Water Our Future plan will see \$4.9 billion spent on major water infrastructure projects to provide the biggest boost to Victoria's water supplies in 25 years. Included in this next stage is the \$33 million Hamilton–Grampians pipeline. I call on the minister to announce the detailed route, the actual construction time lines and the cost of the Hamilton–Grampians pipeline.

Consumer affairs: owners corporations

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs in another place, and it deals with a vulnerable older woman in our community. This is the case of a Mrs Foster, and I am happy to provide her details to the minister. She has lived in Mount Waverley for some time in a unit in a block of units. She is frail and ill now, and she has had to sell her unit. She has been transferred to the Waverley Valley Aged Care centre. Mrs Foster is not a well-off woman. She is elderly, she is frail, and at the moment she is being intimidated by her body corporate.

As I said, she sold her unit and moved into an aged-care facility, and the settlement on her unit will take place in the next few weeks. The body corporate has been intimidating this woman for a significant time. It has said that she has incurred a huge and outstanding body corporate bill. Most of it is believed to be interest that the body corporate is charging. It is being completely obstructionist and is in fact intimidating this poor, frail woman. Members of the body corporate have even changed the date of their next meeting until after her settlement date so that they can extract money from her.

I think all of us here know of women who are frail and aged, and it is important for us to understand how vulnerable they are. Section 5 of the Owners Corporation Act 2006 — this government's very own legislation — states that owners corporations need to deal honestly and in good faith with people with whom they are dealing. I question whether good faith has been followed in this particular instance. The action I seek is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs to intervene in this particular situation to ensure that the proper due process has not been abused in the case of this frail, vulnerable woman.

Indigo: sporting facilities

Ms DARVENIZA (Northern Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in the other place, James Merlino. The matter I wish to raise concerns the latest rounds of drought relief for community sports programs and the grant application that has been made by the Indigo Shire Council for \$64 000 to implement drought-proofing measures. The two applications that the Indigo shire has made are for the Barnawartha Recreation Reserve and for the Coulston Park recreation reserve at Tangambalanga. The recreation reserves are very important facilities for those communities. They are the only recreational facilities and sporting facilities that are in that immediate area.

At Barnawartha they have two main ovals, a small golf course, parkland and a playground; and at Coulston Park there is a main oval, a bowls green and other associated parklands. At Barnawartha they have the Tigers football club, which has a seniors team and a reserves team. The reserves team made it into the grand final last year. The club also fields an under-17s team and an under-15s team. Barnawartha also has a netball club, with an A-grade team, a B-grade team and an under-18s team. Both the B-grade team and the under-18s were winners of the grand final in 2007. The club also fields an under-15s team and an under-13s team. It is a very important facility for Barnawartha. At Coulston Park they also have seniors and juniors football and cricket teams and a strong bowls club.

These grants will provide for the installation of bores as well as automatic irrigation systems. I am calling on the minister to support these applications and to provide the grant money so that these important sporting and community clubs, which are so vital to these communities that have been experiencing severe drought, can continue to water the playing fields and the associated parklands and can continue to field their teams, and so that members of the community can play their sport, walk their dogs, kick their footballs and generally enjoy these sporting and recreational reserves.

Yarra Ranges National Park: rangers

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I have been contacted by several constituents from the Upper Yarra region who are concerned at the lawlessness that appears to exist in the Upper Yarra area from Warburton and beyond. People in the Upper Yarra, which is only 80 or 90 kilometres from the city, often move to the area to live because of its natural beauty and quiet, friendly and safe lifestyle. Sadly, however, the reality is often far from this ideal. The residents of the Upper Yarra townships of McMahons Creek, Reefton, Warburton East and indeed Warburton itself live in close proximity to the Yarra Ranges National Park.

The Yarra Ranges National Park, as the minister would be aware, is popular with tourists, naturalists and others, and is home to a wide diversity of flora and fauna. It is also a critical part of Melbourne's water catchments. However, the Yarra Ranges National Park is also a haven for those who unfortunately do not respect the park and who abuse it: illegal deer shooters using spotlights at night; illegal deer shooters using dogs; and people using the parks to drink, cause damage and generally engage in mischievous behaviour. They

disturb the peace and harass those who use the park as is intended, or those who live near the boundary of the park.

One constituent who has contacted me tells me that she has been threatened by shooters, has had stray bullets pass near her house, and is concerned about a sense of general lawlessness in the area both within the park and within the towns surrounding the park. This situation is not aided by the fact that local police do not seem to have either motorbikes or four-wheel drive vehicles to chase those undertaking such illegal activities. It is clear to me and to the members of the Upper Yarra communities that action is needed from the minister and the government to bring order back to the Yarra Ranges National Park and other parks within the broader area. The growing of cannabis is also a problem.

The action I seek, therefore, is for the minister to increase the resources of Parks Victoria for the Upper Yarra region and provide those staff with four-wheel drives and motorbikes so that proper patrols and surveillance of the park can take place and lawlessness can be reduced so that locals and visiting park users alike can peacefully enjoy the inherent nature and beauty of the Upper Yarra region.

Parks Victoria: Otways draft plan

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and I am pleased to see he is at the table. It concerns Parks Victoria's draft proposal entitled *Caring for Country — the Otways and You*. The draft, circulated by Parks Victoria, has the potential to wipe out recreational fishing along the coast from Torquay to Princetown. It has the potential to affect not only fishing but also other major forms of recreation such as four-wheel driving, horseriding, camping and surfing. This will impact enormously upon the livelihoods of businesspeople who provide services to tourists on the coast and the Otways hinterland. The Labor government decimated the region by throwing timber workers out of their communities; however, it promised that tourism et cetera would be promoted, thereby leaving locals no worse off financially.

This proposal has the potential to wipe out most of the recreational fishing and surfing spots between Torquay and Princetown, as I mentioned before. Table 23 on page 62 of another document, the *Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park Draft Recreation and Tourism Access Plan*, names 17 recreational fishing and water sports access points, only 3 of which will be maintained. I do not want to go

through them all, but the document lists 14 beach or rocky reef places where people fish, surf, swim or whatever from Point Roadknight South to Hutt Gully, Cathedral Rocks and The Spit — they are all listed in the report — and basically says of all of them 'review access and suitability for fishing'. On previous form, when Parks Victoria says, 'review access and suitability for fishing', that is code for closure.

I believe this Labor government has over eight years in office basically closed down most of western Victoria's favourite fishing spots. This is in stark contrast to South Australia, where the government is opening more and more access spots to encourage fishers to come and spend their money. VRFish tells us there are 550 000 recreational fishers in the state, and it is upset at Parks Victoria's unwillingness to accept this family-friendly pastime that is participated in by probably 10 per cent of the state.

The action I seek is that the minister ensure that accessibility is the key criterion of this consultation process, so that Victorian families can enjoy the wonderful great outdoors which God left us for all to share.

WorkCover: medical records

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission in the other place. It relates to the handling of a WorkCover claim by one of the WorkCover agents — I can give the minister the claims number and the person's name at the conclusion of the adjournment debate. The claimant contacted their WorkCover agent, QBE Workers Compensation, seeking a release of documents in relation to their claim, which they are entitled to do under section 107 of the Accident Compensation Act. The agent very promptly — within 14 days of the request — provided 14 pages of documents, including medical records and invoices for medical procedures. However, of the 14 pages of documents, the large majority related to other people. Medical records and records of surgical procedures relating to 13 different people were supplied to this one applicant. Some of the people shared a surname with the applicant, some shared a first name with the applicant, and some had no resemblance in name whatsoever to the applicant. The agent, QBE Workers Compensation, provided medical records relating to 13 other people in response to this one request from a person seeking their own file.

Clearly it is not acceptable for the medical records of 13 other people to be disclosed to an applicant seeking

their own records, so what I seek from the minister is that he undertake an investigation into the particular circumstances relating to the release of these medical records and, more particularly, that he make sure that there are guidelines in place to ensure that when section 107 applications are dealt with by WorkCover agents the appropriate federal Privacy Act and medical record-handling procedures are complied with.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: chief executive officer

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I raise an issue for the Attorney-General in the other place in relation to some comments I read that were made by the head of one of his statutory authorities. Recently this Parliament debated and passed the Relationships Bill. It is a bill that I am proud to say I supported in the fair, free and democratic spirit that exists in Victoria. While I disagreed with many of the comments made by some members who voted against it — some from my own side — those members are fully entitled to make comments that accord with their conscience. I do not believe any member came to this chamber to state their opposition to the existence of same-sex couples or to denigrate any section of Victoria's wonderfully broad society.

I have noted comments made by the head of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Ms Helen Szoke. I would have thought that the head of any state government statutory authority would pride themselves on being independent, non-political and certainly not willing to engage in a political fight — but not Helen Szoke, a former Preston councillor. Ms Szoke took the utterly outrageous step as the head of the commission of writing a letter to the editor. The letter appears in today's Warrnambool *Standard*. In the letter Ms Szoke abused Mr Koch, who opposed the Relationships Bill, for his stance and comments. I say, 'Attention, Ms Szoke. We are in a democracy. Everyone has the right to freedom of speech. This is not Zimbabwe'.

What I found outrageous is that, even though Ms Szoke's job description includes the term 'chief conciliator', she conciliates with someone who has a different point of view by writing a letter to the editor of his local paper with the aim of denigrating him! I should take the time to advise Mr Koch that he should write to Ms Szoke's local paper and claim she is a militant socialist, a zealot, a left-wing Trotskyite and mini-me to the Attorney-General — all without seeking to conciliate with her first. If Ms Szoke's view of conciliation is public humiliation, then she is unsuitable for her current role, and frankly it is a disgrace that she

holds this role. The head of a state government statutory body should always remain independent, above politics and above petty public squabbling. But government puppet Ms Szoke has decided to dip herself and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission into the mire of politics and out herself as the sort of hypocritical, intolerant bully that she claims to be fighting against.

Tonight the action I request is simple: I call on the Attorney-General to sack Ms Szoke at once for politicising her role.

Planning: residential zones

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Planning a matter that has been much discussed in this place in recent weeks — that is, the government's new residential zones. As members of this chamber would be familiar with, the new residential zones are proposed to strip away third-party appeal rights, the rights of individuals affected by planning decisions to appeal those decisions at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The loss of these appeal rights will severely affect individuals. It may mean that monstrous and unacceptable things are built immediately adjacent to their homes; it may mean that their neighbourhoods are changed irrevocably; it may mean that their quality of life, their amenity of life, is severely affected, and they will have no recourse whatsoever through the legal system.

I believe the removal of these appeal rights is fundamentally anti-democratic and will breach provisions that have been available to Victorians for many, many decades at least. One of the major distinctions of the Victorian planning system has been the inclusion of third-party appeal rights, which has meant that we have had a more balanced and satisfactory system. It has also meant a system where corruption and some of the other unsatisfactory aspects of the New South Wales planning system have not been present in anything like the same way in Victoria over a longer period. Third-party appeal rights not only provide protections for Victorians against inappropriate development, they also provide protections against untoward activities. I therefore draw the minister's attention to these matters and ask him to provide a clear step and rule out absolutely any action that would remove the rights of Victorians to appeal against planning decisions.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Leane raised a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, I imagine, dealing with an issue regarding the

printing of hard copies of *Hansard*, the number of copies and who it is distributed to et cetera. I remind the house that these matters are dealt with only by the presiding officers. The changes to the standing orders do not allow a member to directly raise a matter with me in the Chair. I simply say this: it is not a matter for the minister, and Mr Leane is more than welcome to write to me to seek a meeting to discuss the matter. I will deal with it in coordination with the Presiding Officer of the other place.

Responses

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — Thank you, President, for the opportunity to respond to a number of adjournment matters that have been raised by members this evening. To make sure that I get the sequence right, I inform the house that I have written responses to adjournment matters raised by: Mr Atkinson on 5 February; Mrs Petrovich on 26 February; Mr Vogels on 26 February; and Mr O'Donohue on 27 February.

I hope members of the Council present this evening do not convey to my ministerial colleagues what I am about to do, because it is my intention to refer all the matters and to follow up the matters that have been raised with me for further consideration. That is the basis of my as-objective-as-possible assessment of the value of the matters raised this evening.

Ms Lovell raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other house, seeking his review of the appropriateness of the computer-aided dispatch system that is used by Rural Ambulance Victoria in allocating its responsibilities out of the Bendigo office.

Damian Drum raised a matter for the Treasurer, seeking his support to apply consumer price index adjustments to benefits or grants or program funding that agencies such as the Robinvale neighbourhood house may receive.

Mr Drum — Recurrent funding.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, that is another way of saying exactly what I have just said, Mr Drum.

Gayle Tierney raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water in the other place, seeking his advice and the provision of information about the timing, costing and construction timetable of the Hamilton–Grampians pipeline, a very important project in western Victoria.

Andrea Coote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs in the other house. Subsequent to her raising her adjournment matter she gave me the details of Mrs Foster, whom she mentioned in her contribution when she asked for the minister's intervention to make sure that her legal rights have been protected under the appropriate legislation covering her matter.

Mr Koch raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place, seeking that he review the current spate of violent incidents in Geelong and respond to community concerns and provide support and guidance to the police in discharging their responsibilities within that city.

Kaye Darveniza raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs in the other place. I am very sure that the primary reason she did it was to make sure that I was able to say Barnawatha or Tangambalanga. If I satisfy that requirement and pass on that request to the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs on behalf of the Indigo shire, I am sure we will be well placed.

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission in the other house, identifying what seems to be poor administrative practice. On the bona fide example it looks like being about perhaps a poor administrative practice and not the protection of privacy provisions. He is seeking review of a case. He will provide me or the minister with those details.

Mr Guy raised a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General. I will not discharge that matter this evening, even though I am fairly certain that the Attorney-General will not agree with what Mr Guy specifically requested, because I am certain that the Attorney-General wants to reply to the member on that matter. I would be very confident that he would like to take up that opportunity. The only thing is — I do not mean to be completely gratuitous about it, because I think many of the principle points Mr Guy raised are extremely valid — that the nature of some of his extravagances in description perhaps erred on the side of reciprocating in a way that probably does not reflect well in dealing with this issue as a matter of principle. I draw that to his attention.

David Davis raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, seeking an undertaking from him to rule out the potential to remove appeal rights within the planning regime.

Jaala Pulford raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Development in the other place, seeking his support for an important community development program in Bannockburn.

Philip Davis raised a matter for my attention, seeking that I review the current work practices and performance of Parks Victoria staff at Croajingolong National Park and try to provide for a safe amenity for people who want to use that park. I shall do so.

Shaun Leane raised a matter that the President has already addressed.

Mr O'Donohue raised with me community concerns in the Yarra Valley about the Yarra Ranges National Park, where it is alleged that certain unsafe practices are being undertaken. I am very pleased that the opposition member has raised a community safety matter in relation to concern about the behaviour of hunters or shooters within national parks, which is very rare. I appreciate that Mr O'Donohue has done that. He is a bit out of kilter with the way the opposition normally deals with these matters. It would be my intention to investigate and decide what the appropriate response is.

Mr Vogels raised a matter relating to the management plan proposed for the Great Otway National Park. He is concerned about access to fishing opportunities along the coast. I agree with him in the spirit that it is important in terms of tourism activity for people to have opportunities to fish and that access is an important issue. Whether it is the most important issue is something that may be contested between us in terms of balancing environmental considerations. I take it in the spirit in which it was given, which was in relation to providing access and enhanced tourism opportunities rather than dampening them down through the management regime. I will certainly be mindful of that in my considerations of that management plan.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.57 p.m.