

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Tuesday, 12 September 2006

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¹ Ind from 17 September 2004
ALP from 10 November 2005

² Ind from 7 April 2005

³ Ind Lib from 30 November 2005

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Tuesday, 12 September 2006

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

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Neil Benjamin Trezise, AM

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 20 August 2006, of the Honourable Neil Benjamin Trezise, AM, and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Geelong West from 1964 to 1967 and Geelong North from 1967 to 1992 and as Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation from 1982 to 1985 and Minister for Sport and Recreation from 1985 to 1992.

The last day this house sat nine members of the house went to Geelong to Neil Trezise's funeral to pay their respects for his life and his great contribution to the community. That a number of members from all sides of the house attended his funeral on a sitting day is an indication of the broad support and respect for the man.

My sympathy, those of the government and the whole house certainly go to his wife, Joan, his children, Ian and Helen, and his grandchildren on the loss of a great Victorian.

Neil Trezise was a school teacher and sports store proprietor. He grew up in Ballarat and went to Ballarat High School and Ballarat Teachers' College, so he was well and truly a Ballarat boy. He was married to Joan for 48 years. It was a very long, successful and fruitful marriage. Obviously Neil was particularly keen for life. He used to catch the train from Ballarat down to Geelong — which I will get to in a moment — to play his football. He was a very passionate man and had a long history with Ballarat and Geelong.

He made contributions to his community in a very big way. I have mentioned his family life. In the community the passion for which he is known as holding strongly was his affinity with the Geelong Football Club. That club might not be to the taste of all members of the house, but everyone would acknowledge the extraordinary contribution that Neil Trezise made to that club, whether it be as a player or the captain — he wore the number 28 for a long time, playing 128 games. He also coached one of the Geelong teams for a while and later he was president of the club. So he certainly made a huge contribution to the club in all those facets: as a player, official and

coach. His sporting interests were not just in Australian Rules football and the Geelong Football Club. He had an enormous role as an amateur boxer, cricketer and jockey and he had an abiding love of horses, which he followed after his time in politics.

Speaking of politics, his contribution is obviously one that we wish to particularly note in the house today, as we commemorate a former minister and member for his time. Neil joined the Geelong West branch of the Australian Labor Party back in 1952. He was the president of Geelong Young Labor in 1964, which sounds like a long time ago, and he led that young Labor movement in Geelong then. He contested Geelong West for the Labor Party in 1961 and lost but, being persistent and tenacious, he ran again in 1964 and won by 64 votes and became the first Labor member of Parliament out of Geelong. From then on he was there for the long haul. In 1967 he was re-elected, as the member for the new electorate of Geelong North, and he proceeded to represent that electorate in the state Parliament until he retired in 1992. During the last 10½ years of his parliamentary life, for the whole life of the Cain government, he was Minister for Sport and Recreation as well as having a stint as minister for youth.

It is interesting to reflect on the man who spent 28 years in Parliament, including 10½ years as a minister, and on his legacy in a professional sense. There are just dozens and dozens of instances of community sport and recreation and youth issues to which he made a contribution. That is a story that people who were touched by his life and organisations who were touched by him will know. I would like to reflect on two areas where Neil Trezise the man made a contribution to the state. One of them was convincing the then Victorian Football League to keep the grand final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. These things are always collective and team efforts and Neil Trezise was always a very modest man, but he was there in the thick of it in convincing the VFL to keep the grand final at the MCG. It is certainly one thing that can be put down as a particular tribute to him.

The second one relates to being part of John Cain's government. John Cain was also a passionate tennis fan, but keeping the Australian open as a tennis major and the construction of facilities for it is another of the legacies of Neil Trezise, a modest man among a group of people who did it. If you look back and ask what were some of the contributions he made, that was certainly one of the iconic ones.

He left also an extraordinary personal legacy. There would be no-one in this Parliament who does not know

Neil's son, Ian. It is not often that when a member of Parliament retires there is such an extraordinary connection for those who did not know the member but know him through his son. In this case, we certainly know Ian. Speaking of his father and his father's style of politics, he said:

... you need to be playing the ball, and not the man. That's exactly how he led his life.

That was Neil's son, Ian, referring to Neil.

In talking about Neil's attributes, you have to say that Neil's is an extraordinary legacy. He made an extraordinary contribution to sport and politics. He lived his 75 years well. You can see that legacy in his family — Joan, Ian and Helen, and the grandchildren — and in the community, through sports and politics.

I have great pleasure in moving this condolence motion to celebrate 75 years of a life well led.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — What an epitaph in the *Geelong Advertiser*:

Geelong Football Club legend and former Cain Labor government minister Neil 'Nipper' Trezise has died, aged 75.

That description in the *Geelong Advertiser* of a member of Parliament from Geelong and as a Geelong Football Club legend is a great testimony.

I did not know Neil Trezise well, but I had met him on a few occasions. I often feel inadequate when we speak about past members who we did not serve with in Parliament, but Neil Trezise was a man with a great reputation within the Parliament and across the political divide. He was one of those people who, as the Leader of the Government said, played the ball and not the man, and for that reason he had a great deal of respect across all political parties.

Obviously this is a time of sadness, but it is also a time of to celebrate someone who had 28 years in Parliament — that he served 48 years in marriage is testimony that also needs mentioning.

Neil Trezise, as has been said, came from the Ballarat area. He was educated in Ballarat, at both the high school and the Ballarat Teachers College. In 1949 he was recruited from the Ballarat league to the Geelong Football Club, where he had an illustrious career playing from 1949 to 1960. He was captain in 1959 and coached the reserves from 1960 to 1964. He was vice-president of the club for 13 years from 1960 to 1973 and was president from 1973 until 1975.

He was also a primary school teacher with the education department from 1948 to 1952, after which he was a sports store proprietor for 30 years. He sold the sports store because of the apparent conflict of interest when he was sworn into the Cain government as Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation, a portfolio he held for three years. For the remaining period of the Cain government he held the portfolio of Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Neil Trezise had a good career in politics. He served as shadow Minister for Transport from 1970 to 1974, shadow Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation from 1974 to 1982 and shadow Minister for Tourism from 1977 to 1980.

The legacy we all think is most important is what we leave behind in terms of our family and friends and how the community views us. There is no question but that Neil Trezise was an advocate for his community. I turn to his inaugural speech, which was delivered on 9 September 1964. Some of us here will turn to our own inaugural speeches in time to come and wonder how they will stand the test of time when others reflect on them in the future. Neil Trezise certainly made a contribution in his inaugural speech that will stand the test of time. He advocated about issues that affected not just his own community but regional Victoria in general. He said:

As I am a comparatively young man I should like to focus attention on matters which I believe are important for the future welfare, progress and development of the state. I refer to recreation, decentralisation and education.

It is important to know that when Neil Trezise got up to speak it was not with platitudes, not with gushing enthusiasm about being a member of Parliament and all that comes with the style and trappings of office, but to talk about issues that would have a material effect on the direction of public policy. That was the way he represented his community.

Neil Trezise will be remembered as somebody who played the ball and not the man in politics, just as he served the Geelong Football Club so well in his various capacities as a player and administrator. I offer my condolences to his family, including his son, Ian, who serves in the other place. As the Leader of the Government said, it is unusual to have that connection. For that reason I am sure all of us here today are thinking more about this condolence motion than perhaps we have about others. Neil also leaves behind his wife of 48 years, Joan, his daughter, Helen, and of course Ian's and Helen's respective families. I wish them all well.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — It is my great pleasure and honour to associate the Victorian Nationals with this condolence motion expressing our sincere sympathy at the passing of Neil Trezise.

Much has been said and written about Neil. What has impressed me most is the message that has come through from all those expressions about Neil's sincerity and the respect that he gained from all quarters. It has already been said that he gained the respect of members of this place, with nine having attended his funeral on the last sitting day. I observe that he also had respect from all sections of his own party, from the opposition, and certainly from The Nationals.

I came to this place in 1988 and Neil Trezise was the Minister for Sport and Recreation at that time. In fact, he was the sport and recreation minister for 10 years, from 1982 to 1992. With his interests, he was well suited to that position and was the sort of minister who really loved the role that he played as the sport and recreation minister.

I have two lasting impressions of Neil Trezise that I want to convey to the house. The first one is from when I first came to this chamber. It was rather daunting for young members of Parliament in their first few days here to approach and meet members, particularly ministers of the government and especially when they are in the other chamber and you do not get to see them on a daily basis. But Neil Trezise was a minister who easily solved that problem for me because one day he stopped me as I was walking down the corridor and introduced himself. Not many ministers did that at that time, nor probably do they now. He just wanted to meet me and say, 'Hello', obviously because we shared some similarities in background, both having played football for the Victorian Football League as well as being former schoolteachers. He wanted to stop to meet me and say, 'Hello' and to wish me well, and I appreciated that.

My other lasting memory is of when Neil came to the town of Meeniyah in South Gippsland in his position as Minister for Sport and Recreation to open the new sports stadium down there. Tom Wallace, as the member for Gippsland South, and I, as a member for Gippsland Province, attended the opening and sat in the front row. Neil Trezise was up the front, as ministers are, and went through the normal procedures of making an opening speech and duly cutting the ribbon. Then it came time for the official photographs. I can vividly recall Neil Trezise beckoning Tom Wallace and me over to join the official photograph. He said to us, 'You

are the local members down here; you should be in the photograph'.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I cannot recall it happening before where a minister from the opposing party has invited me, as a local member, to be part of a photograph — nor equally, I might say, can I recall ministers of governments of which I was part too often inviting me to join in official photographs. But such was the nature of Neil Trezise; he was humble, inclusive and respectful of the positions we all jointly held. Those two particular instances impressed upon me what a thoroughly decent man Neil Trezise was.

I never saw Nipper in action on the football field but I understand that he played the game like he played his politics, with determination and absolute fairness; he played it with pride but also with great humility. As has been said, he had a very distinguished career at Geelong Football Club where he played 185 games. He played in two premierships, in 1951 and 1952, was club captain and also, as the Leader of the Government has said, served a time as president after his playing days. I do not know if he was ever a club champion at the Geelong Football Club, but I know in my mind and in the hearts of all those who knew Nipper Trezise that he will always be regarded as one of the very best and fairest people that we have known.

Neil's family and friends are obviously experiencing a time of sorrow but equally they should be experiencing much pride and good fortune in having shared such a valued life as that of Neil Trezise. The condolences of The Nationals are extended to his wife, Joan, his daughter, Helen, and particularly to his son, Ian, who is our parliamentary colleague and a very nice gentleman too, and to their families and friends. We in The Nationals extend our sincere condolences to those people.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I believe I speak for all of us here when I say we were saddened by the recent and sudden passing of Neil Trezise on 20 August. I will spend a few moments paying tribute to the former Geelong footballer and Victorian Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Neil Trezise was warmly known as Nipper. It is one thing to have a nickname while you play football, but to retain that affectionately beyond your football career reflects the way in which Nipper was well and truly embraced by the broader community over and above his football achievements. His career and his dedication

to the Geelong Football Club spanned six decades and that is pretty remarkable because often football clubs, as we see these days, are more politically charged than politics itself.

Given that I understand he was a tough footballer and good at reading the play, his longevity and loyalty, not so much in politics but at the Geelong Football Club, is remarkable. His highlights no doubt were the 1951 and 1952 premierships. I understand he had a genuine knack for positioning himself and taking possession of the ball, but a great reflection of the sort of man he was is that he coached the reserves for a number of years at Geelong and was playing coach across a number of those years as well. It is not the sort of position that players who have played senior football at league level take on easily. They normally take off and leave the club going as it is.

Neil was dedicated to his community, as we saw throughout his parliamentary career, but he was also dedicated to the Geelong Football Club, and his commitment reflected that. He was prepared to continue his contribution to the development of young footballers by playing in the reserves when he could have been on the fringes of playing in the seniors on a regular basis. He was dedicated enough to say, 'I am going to contribute to the reserves and help the development of young footballers', which reflects the sort of fellow he was. In 1983 he received the Reg Hickey award for outstanding service to football, so his commitment was recognised and I am glad that was the case.

I want to also reflect on his roles as Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation and then Minister for Sport and Recreation from 1982 to 1992. There have not been many ministers for sport, only a handful, and he is the first one to have left us in that sense. There was Ian Smith who was sports minister for six months before the inimitable Brian Dixon, who seemed to have been minister for everything by the end of his parliamentary career. Nipper had the difficult task of stepping into that environment following Brian Dixon. Then there was Tom Reynolds followed by me.

I understand things were a little difficult when Nipper became minister. I am not sure if this is true or just a myth or legend, but Brian Dixon, on the eve of an election that his party lost, had forward committed a fairly substantial sum to a number of projects, which did not leave Nipper with a lot to work with in the later years, but he certainly did some great things.

It is also worth appreciating that not only was he Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation but he also

had responsibility for racing at the time. He made a significant contribution to racing, and I am told he loved his racing. I asked around the department for a few stories about him, and — on the theme of longevity — there are still a handful of characters in the department who have very fond memories of Nipper. Some of their stories were very entertaining. There were a couple of people in the department who lived in Geelong and who used to commute back and forth, and apparently every now and then when Nipper was leaving the office he would ring downstairs and say to those two guys, 'Do you want a lift? I'm going back to Geelong'. They would all get in the car and they would get to the top of Bourke Street, where the newspaper sellers were quite vocal, and Nipper, who loved his horses and his form guide, would pull up, jump out of the car and buy the *Truth* with the form guide in it.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson — How many blokes reckoned they liked racing to justify buying the *Truth*!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — No, this is testimony from the department. He would get the *Truth*, he would take the form guide out and he would throw the rest over to the troops in the back of the car!

The people in the department also said he was a straightshooter and a simple talker in the sense that he did not want to complicate the English language in any way. One of the stories I heard was that the then director-general of the department, Neville Barwick, was known for his elaborate public service speak, which we have all heard from time to time not only in and around the halls here but in all sorts of forums. Apparently this gentleman raced into Neil Trezise's office and said, 'Minister, Minister, I hasten to envisage the following scenario', to which Nipper responded, 'So you reckon, do you?'. He was that sort of man.

He had great interpersonal skills and, as I said, was a straightshooter. His record of achievements in his portfolio is quite remarkable and in some ways understated. In terms of his racing responsibilities, he was a pioneer of Sunday broadcasting and Sunday racing. Those initiatives helped maintain the popularity of racing and helped the development of the racing industry, which is why it is so strong today.

Neil Trezise secured the future of radio broadcasting of races in conjunction with radio station 3UZ, now known as Sport 927, and he also approved funding for major capital improvements for city and country racecourses. All those developments led to a significant growth in turnover and improved industry revenues. Neil was from the country, and I understand he was

very enthusiastic about country race meetings and enjoyed them immensely.

In terms of his sports portfolio, he was a great advocate for sport and recreation, and he laid a solid foundation for the sports development we have in Victoria today. It is worth appreciating, as the Leader of the Government mentioned, that Neil Trezise assisted in making sure that the Australian Football League grand final stayed at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). That was a turbulent time in sports history, because as members will remember the AFL put a lot of pressure on the government of the time to move the grand final out to Waverley. Keeping the grand final and the vast majority of the AFL season at the MCG meant we were able to retain the wonderful facility we have today. A lot of other countries around the world and even other states in Australia have not kept cricket and football at the same major stadium, and that has meant a great loss to both sports. It is great testimony to Neil Trezise that he was able to lock in the AFL grand final and keep it at the MCG. That also guaranteed the redevelopment of the Great Southern Stand, which Neil was no doubt instrumental in.

The development of the National Tennis Centre was quite controversial, because to move tennis from Kooyong was a big step forward and a big change in tradition. The change from grass courts to synthetic surfaces was quite controversial in itself, so at a time when it might have been easier to take a step back, Neil Trezise took a step forward and led from the front.

Neil also helped establish the Victorian Institute of Sport and VICFIT, a regulatory group for gymnasiums. He also assisted former health minister David White in the establishment of VicHealth. When tobacco sponsorship of sport was withdrawn Neil Trezise made sure that funding for sport was not lost. He made sure that revenue went back into sport, and that is still the case today. VicHealth is still very strong and influential in the sports sector because of that funding. I understand Neil also helped establish the Werribee Equestrian Centre. I have named just a few of Neil Trezise's initiatives.

A few of the other things that are probably not big ticket items but which have obviously made a great difference to people's lives include a program that commenced following a number of people having been lost in the bush in one place or another. He was involved in establishing the notion of letting someone know before you go, so that people like hikers and so on make sure they let somebody know before they go off into the bush. It is simple but effective and has no doubt saved many lives.

Just before that government lost office a very significant and influential forum called Tomorrow's Pools Today was set up. It got people thinking about the value and virtue of community pools over and above competition swimming pools. Today we see that view reinforced by the huge acknowledgment of the importance of swimming pools. If anyone tries to change them or close them — or even threatens to close them — there is outrage in the community. That is because following that conference people appreciate that pools are as much about families and leisure activity as they are about competition swimming. Other matters addressed by Neil at that time included accessibility of recreation facilities, and accessible outdoor playgrounds and the like were created. The Melbourne Major Events Company was also established during his time as minister. Although the Premier of the day was instrumental in that, no doubt Neil had to manage the sport side of those arrangements.

Neil Trezise made an enormous contribution through his portfolio, but we also hear people speak very generously about the sort of person he was in his local community. Members of his family speak very fondly of him. The loyalty, integrity, honesty and straight talking for which he was well known are reflected in the profound contribution he made to public life. He was a great man in Victoria's history, and on this day we express our sympathy for his loss to both the state and his family.

Hon. DAVID KOCH (Western) — Neil Trezise was born in Ballarat in 1931, in the middle of the Great Depression. His father was a hardworking foundry worker. Times were tough and money was scarce. As Neil grew up he was left in little doubt by his father that by being an active and competent sportsman many opportunities might come his way. Although a good student he was keen on cricket and football as a young bloke. One of his other favourite out-of-school activities was successfully assisting in local stables both before and after school. Not only did he have a great affinity with animals, this also gave him a small amount of money that assisted in making things better in the tough times that prevailed during his younger years.

As Neil got older his sporting prowess was recognised locally, especially in cricket, which was his favourite sport. By 1949, when he was 18, local Ballarat talent scouts for the Geelong Football Club also noticed his football skills, and although he was only small in stature they encouraged Neil to have a run at Geelong. After further working on his remarkable youthful skills and attending several training sessions at Geelong, Neil was invited to train permanently with the Cats.

Fortunately in those days there was a good train service between Ballarat and Geelong, which allowed Neil the opportunity to get to training, but his days were very long by the time he returned home to Ballarat.

Seen as a slightly built and small young man at a time when tall and solid blokes were sought after for football teams, Neil's on-ground speed and ball handling skills quickly earned him a permanent place in the Geelong Football Club's senior team. Neil gained the nickname 'Nipper' during this period because of his youthfulness and small frame. Having moved to Geelong before marrying, Nipper went on to play 185 games for the Geelong Football Club. He played in the 1951 and 1952 premierships, rose to team captaincy and later became president of his great club, which he put so much time into.

It was during this period that Nipper offered his services to coach the reserves, and he again enjoyed success with the reserves premiership in 1964. That was the very same year that he entered Parliament as the member for Geelong West in the Legislative Assembly. Neil later served as the member for Geelong North and then the member for Geelong during his distinguished parliamentary career of 28 years, for the last 10 years of which he was minister for sport and recreation.

Neil had a lifetime affinity with sport. His knowledge in that field was unsurpassed in the then Parliament — and that possibly remains the case to this very day. He always responded to questions in the house with certainty on all aspects of his portfolio; and he won the respect of his parliamentary colleagues on both sides of politics and of sporting bodies and their respective committees over many years.

Neil Trezise retired from the Parliament in 1992 but continued to take an active part in community affairs and was active at sporting venues in Geelong. He regularly enjoyed following his old football club both at home and away, as well as attending race meetings whenever he could get to them.

On a more personal note, Neil always generously gave me his time to discuss matters in relation to the racing industry. I appreciated that his sound and extensive knowledge of all facets of the racing industry, both current and historical, was always freely shared. We saw each other on many occasions over the last three and a half years at various tracks and had many discussions during which he shared his knowledge and gave advice. This was always much appreciated by me, and in many ways race meetings for a lot of patrons will not be the same without Neil's presence.

Neil Trezise passed away on Sunday, 20 August 2006. His state memorial service was celebrated on Thursday, 24 August 2006, in the Fred Flanagan room at the Geelong Football Club. His final farewell, with some 1000 people in attendance, was testimony to Nipper's standing in both the Geelong and wider communities. The eulogies by his son, Ian, and family friend Peter Loney, certainly outlined his full, colourful and caring life. My condolences are extended to his wife, Joan, and to his children, Ian and Helen, and their families.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I am very pleased to be able to support this condolence motion for Neil Trezise. Neil was in many respects somebody who stood out from the crowd. He made an enormous contribution to his community and to this Parliament. He was here for 28 years and served for 10½ years as a minister in the portfolio areas of sport and recreation.

I was in cabinet with Neil for about 12 months in 1991–92 at the end of the Kirner government's period in office. I must say that one of the things I liked about Neil — this has been said before — was that he showed that little blokes could make their way in football and could do all right in politics as well. I could have an eye-to-eye conversation with Neil, unlike what happens with the present Minister for Sport and Recreation, who has to sit down to have such a conversation with me!

In cabinet Neil was a steadying factor. When around that particular period — in that last year — everyone else seemed to be in some respects almost panic stricken about what the result of the election was going to be, he had a way of calmly and unassumingly putting a point of view and bringing the discussion back to what needed to be done in that cabinet. He was of course passionate about his portfolio, and he was highly respected in the racing industry and by the sporting fraternity generally.

I remember just how devastated he was by the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society and its impact on Geelong. He fought tirelessly within the then government for assistance for the people of Geelong following that collapse. I think it affected him personally. It was very clear from the way he presented himself in cabinet that he felt a personal affinity with the people who had suffered in relation to the collapse.

When you can see that a government might not be doing so well, it is a measure of courage if you can continue to keep your cool and work for your constituency, and that is exactly what Nipper did.

In the best tradition of the Labor Party he came from humble beginnings but he left his mark on Victoria and in particular on Geelong. I attended the service, which was fittingly held at the Geelong Football Club, and what came across to me was the extent of the respect he enjoyed across parties and the extent to which people recognised his contribution, as well of course as the deep sense of loss at his passing. To his wife, Joan, and to Helen and Ian and the rest of the family, I wish to pass on my sincere condolences.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I too would like to join in this condolence motion for Neil Trezise. As a young boy I attended school in the Geelong area, and I think I can safely claim that I am the only person in the chamber today who not only saw Nipper play football, but also saw a couple of Carlton blokes — Hall and Madden — run around too. I enjoy my football, and it was one of the reasons I went to his memorial service at Kardinia Park.

As young lads we used to get the opportunity from time to time of going to Kardinia Park to watch Geelong. I saw him play in the As, but I saw him play more often in the Bs. As the Minister for Sport and Recreation said, it is rare for someone to go from playing at the senior level to the next level down, but what is often forgotten is that in 1960 he won the Gardiner Medal for the best player in the reserves competition, so he could well have been playing in all the games for the As that year.

The thing I remember about him as a footballer was his uncanny ability to find space and to be where the ball was. That was an attribute he carried into his political career; and frankly I think anyone who does 28 years in Parliament deserves a medal. I am giving up after 14 years, and I am in awe of someone who had the capacity to contribute to his community for such a long time and in such an outstanding manner.

He will be greatly missed by the Geelong community. I do not think there is any doubt about that. There are some people who in their own areas get a status that does not come to many, and just as was the case with Ted Whitten — Mr Football — who was so well known in the western suburbs, that could be said of Neil Trezise. I remember that when I came back to Victoria in the late 1980s I was asked to go down and assist in the preparation of a campaign to take on Nipper at the 1988 election. I had only been in the job a short period of time and I went down and said to the troops, ‘Now, look, you are not going to win this seat. What we have to do here is fight really hard and make the Labor Party divert its resources into this area’. By the time I got back to Melbourne I had been labelled a defeatist because there were people in the room who

thought our chances of beating Nipper that year, 1988, were pretty good. But we did not win, and fortunately he decided he was not going to stand again in 1992. He was so well known and so well liked in that area and his contribution both to Geelong and to Victoria is a lasting one. Like others, I extend my condolences to his wife, Joan, and to his children, Ian and Helen.

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — As a member for Geelong Province I am honoured to join in the condolence motion for the Honourable Neil Trezise and acknowledge his life and contribution. In doing so I wish to offer my heartfelt sympathy to Neil’s wife, Joan, his son, Ian, and daughter, Helen, and their children, upon his passing.

I have known Neil only since he left his political life and his football career behind, but as a member for Geelong Province I know that his name is very much synonymous with Geelong. He has always been widely respected as a footballer, as a member of Parliament and as a very decent bloke.

Like other members of this place, on 24 August I attended his state funeral service at Kardinia Park. It was very much testimony to the respect in which Neil Trezise was held. The Premier, ministers, shadow ministers, the Leader of The Nationals, former parliamentary colleagues, representatives of the Geelong Football Club, representatives of the sporting and racing fraternities, and members of the wider Geelong community came to pay their respects to a man they honoured and loved.

We learnt about Neil’s very humble beginnings as a Ballarat boy growing up in the Depression and the hardships that he and his family faced. As my own parents grew up in the Depression, I could not help but think that there were many similarities in the hardships families confronted in the 1930s. We learnt of his sporting prowess and the amazing lengths he went to to play for his beloved Cats, and we have heard Mr Koch talk about him travelling on the train from Ballarat to Geelong and back again just to go to training.

I could not help but contrast the effort Neil Trezise made to play for Geelong with some of today’s footballers with the assistance they get to play footy today. I wondered how some of our young Cats who were at the memorial service reflected on how far and how hard he went to play for the team. He certainly made an enormous effort, and we owe him a great deal. Neil Trezise’s days at the Geelong Football Club are legendary. He played nearly 200 games, most famously in the 1951 and 1952 premiership teams. Of course, as Cats lovers, we hang onto those memories very dearly.

He went on to become captain of Geelong and always took a keen interest in the club, holding several key positions, including that of president. I know he still called in and talked to the players and the coaching team as recently as this season. The Geelong football team was very much in his heart, and his funeral was held at Kardinia Park. One could not have thought of a better place.

Ian said in his eulogy that when the Premier's department contacted the Trezise family about holding the state service at Kardinia Park there were a few raised eyebrows about holding a state service at a football ground, and Ian had to explain that to his dad football was his religion and Kardinia Park was his church. It was a very appropriate place to hold his dad's state service.

As I said, my knowledge of Neil Trezise has come since he finished his political and football careers. I very much know him through his contribution to the Labor Party, especially in Geelong. I moved to Geelong at the end of 1992, just as Neil was ending his political career. He had just retired from his seat of North Geelong after 28 years representing the people of Geelong in state Parliament.

We have always considered Neil to be one of the ALP's elder statesmen in Geelong. He joined our party in 1952, which would have been a difficult time I am sure, and was a member of the Geelong West branch. He maintained his membership of that branch and was one of its life members. As we know, he was elected in 1964 as the member for Geelong West by 64 votes. I could not help but compare that with his son, Ian, being elected in 1999 by 16 votes. There was a lot of similarity between the two elections, and I could not help but think that Ian would have been delighted to win by 64 votes, because 16 votes was a little too close in 1999.

Of course Neil was sports minister for 10 years between 1982 and 1992. We have heard that he was an exemplary minister who is very fondly remembered by all stakeholders. At Neil's state service we heard the former Premier, Mr Cain, say that Neil was completely on top of his portfolio and he could rely on Neil's advice implicitly. I could imagine it was a portfolio that Neil would have enjoyed. It was one from which he gained much respect. Around Geelong there are many things that are testimony to Neil's role as Minister for Sport and Recreation. There are many plaques on sporting facilities which he opened, including the one at Leisurelink in Belmont, the local swimming pool and gymnasium. He is well remembered by the sporting fraternity and the wider community in Geelong.

Neil never lost his commitment to the values that the Labor Party upholds and always worked hard to represent those he saw as the battlers. After leaving Parliament Neil remained very active in the Labor Party across Geelong, campaigning to assist our members of Parliament and our candidates at every election, be it federal, state or local government. There was a great photo published in the *Geelong Advertiser*, known as the Addy, after his death. It showed Neil, with his great mate Gordon Scholes, letterboxing during the 2002 election campaign, and it looked like it was in Geelong West, which is smack bang in the heart of Ian Trezise's seat of Geelong. Here they were letterboxing a leaflet saying that the Labor Party would save the Otways. It was great to have that memento of Neil. It pretty much symbolised his efforts for the party and for our cause in Geelong.

Unlike in the 1999 election, when he did not know whether he had been elected until several days after the poll, in 2002 Ian romped it in. I am sure Neil would have enjoyed that victory — it would have been very sweet to him. We know that every time Neil stood for Parliament he increased his majority, and we hope Ian carries on his father's tradition.

I know that Ian and his dad, Neil, were great mates. Neil readily offered advice to Ian about campaigns, issues and strategies, and he was a regular visitor to Ian's electorate office. We will certainly miss his knowledge and his experience, especially in the lead-up to the next state election. It will be poignant for all of us, especially Ian, not to have Neil's contribution and advice. Geelong has lost a favourite son in the passing of Neil Trezise, and Victoria has also lost a great bloke. May he rest in peace.

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — Last month Geelong was saddened by the passing of former state minister and member for Geelong, Labor MP, Neil 'Nipper' Trezise. I was among the hundreds of mourners who attended the memorial service at one of the biggest churches in Geelong, the Geelong Football Club, to celebrate the life of this great man. People from all walks of life attended this memorial service, because Nipper was a man involved in all aspects of community life — from politics to sport to business. Nipper was Geelong, and Geelong turned out to mourn him.

Members would be aware that Nipper was not only a legend in Labor circles, he was well loved in the Geelong community, having been a captain of the Geelong Football Club, and one of those rare things in Geelong, a former VFL premiership player for Geelong. Back in the early 1960s when Nipper was

preselected to contest the then Liberal seat of Geelong West, he would have been considered what we call today a star candidate. This was back in the days just after the ALP split and the Democratic Labor Party vote was still deciding who would and would not be elected. I cannot imagine it would have been much fun being a Labor candidate back then, because the rough and tumble of politics would have literally been rough and tumbling.

Like his son, Ian, who won the seat of Geelong in the other place almost 40 years later, Nipper was elected by only a handful of votes. I am informed that Nipper first contested the seat of Geelong West in 1961, which was three years before I was born, and lost by only about 100 votes. He stayed on to fight the next election and won it by only 60 votes, which is about a 0.12 per cent margin. By the next state election, only three years later in 1967, Nipper had increased the margin to over 9 per cent and Labor has held the seat ever since. I remind members that back then members of Parliament did not have an electorate office as we have now; their office was literally their home.

It is also important to note that it has not always been an easy task for Labor in Geelong. For most of last century — indeed, since Geelong first sent representatives to the colonial Parliament in the 1850s — conservative parties have held a firm grip on political power in the Geelong–Barwon region. From time to time, Labor candidates took seats, a notable being Fanny Brownbill, who in 1938 successfully contested her late husband’s seat of Geelong, making her the first woman to hold a seat in the Victorian Parliament. It was not until Neil Trezise won the seat of Geelong West in 1964 that Labor could really say that it was here to stay and that we were no longer just a minor inconvenience to the conservative parties. Until that time you could never have said that Geelong had a safe Labor seat.

Years of hard work and dedication to serving the people saw Nipper make the seat of Geelong West, which after a redistribution became Geelong North, a Labor heartland. It is true that the seat was originally rural based and that the influx of migrants and workers to the industrial northern suburbs of Geelong helped, but no-one could say that Nipper ever took the seat for granted. He worked away, making sure that he was as popular for his community and political work in Geelong as he was for bringing premierships home to Kardinia Park. Nipper went on to represent the people of Geelong’s northern suburbs for 28 years as a local MP and state cabinet minister. Nipper was known to the Geelong public as a friendly, accessible Labor member of Parliament who was fiercely passionate

about sporting issues, and that culminated in his becoming Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation in 1982 in the Cain government.

On a personal note, I always found Nipper friendly and gracious. At times, politics, especially in Geelong, can be fiercely personal and bitter but I never once heard Nipper say a bad word about anyone on the Labor side of politics and I cannot recall his ever commenting on internal party politics. He was Labor through and through and would have thought that that kind of behaviour would not have helped Labor. Nipper was always giving advice on how to be a better member of Parliament. This was advice that I gladly accepted, as he was someone who obviously knew what he was talking about — you do not spend nearly 30 years of your life in Parliament without gaining an intimate knowledge of what it is all about. I am proud to have been preselected to contest the seat of Lara at the upcoming election. But for the redistribution and name change, it is essentially the same seat that Neil Trezise left when he retired in 1992. It is a legacy and responsibility that I do not take lightly.

People throw around the word ‘legend’ more often than they should, but today I am sure we can all use the term ‘legend’ when we talk about Nipper — Neil Trezise. My sincere condolences go to all his family. He will be sadly missed.

Before I finish my contribution, I would like to share with members a speech he made on 11 August 1992, when speaking on a condolence motion for Clive Philip Stoneham, a former member for the district of Maryborough and Daylesford, a former Labor leader and, like Nipper, a member of Parliament for 28 years. Nipper said:

There is no doubt that Clive was loved, particularly in the city of Maryborough, in the various capacities in which he served over many years. Honourable members who attended his funeral, including you, Mr Speaker, and people from the wide cross-section of the Maryborough population would have observed what the community thought of Clive Stoneham the man. At his funeral a number of Maryborough citizens told me that, although they did not vote Labor, they were always great fans and admirers of Clive Stoneham and they appreciated his services.

I endorse the remarks of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party in paying tribute to Clive Stoneham. His family can be very proud that they have had a father and grandfather of the calibre of Clive Stoneham. His name will always be held high in the Victorian Parliament.

Indeed, Nipper, so will you.

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — It is an honour and privilege to be able to speak on this motion

today and offer my condolences and those of my family — in particular my father, Frank Wilkes — to the family of Neil Trezise. Just as it is unusual for Ian Trezise to be a current member as we talk about his father, I imagine it is unusual for me to be able to speak today as a member on behalf of my father, a former member, but, more importantly, a friend of Nipper's.

My father entered state Parliament in a by-election in 1957, on the death of John Cain, Snr, and served for 31 years. Neil — or Nipper, as I knew him — joined my father in 1964 and went on to serve the people of Victoria for 28 years. I never called Neil 'Nipper' until my late teens — in fact I think it was almost my early 20s — as my father insisted I addressed all his work colleagues as 'Mr'. So Neil was 'Mr Trezise' when I answered the telephone. In fact, I never knew why Neil was called 'Nipper' until I attended the funeral the week before last. Mr Bill McMaster from the Geelong Football Club recounted how the then coach of Geelong, who was giving Neil a tryout in the firsts, could not remember his name as he stood at the end of a line and called him 'Nipper' and told him to get out on the field — and the name stuck.

When my family heard of Nipper's death on Sunday, 20 August, my father was particularly saddened by the news. My father has very limited eyesight but insisted on attending, along with his colleague Carl Kirkwood, the state funeral for Nipper held at the Geelong Football Club ground on that cold, wet Thursday, 24 August. It was a fitting celebration of the life of and send-off for Neil Trezise.

Last week I spent some time with my dad. I asked him what he would like me to say about his friend and colleague of so many years, as they served together for 24 years in this place. My father told me many strong friendships were formed during the party's long time in opposition, particularly in the 1960s, when there were only 17 Labor members of Parliament in the Legislative Assembly. He told me that Nipper became the first shadow minister for sport in 1967, when shadow ministers were introduced by the then leader, Clyde Holding. Nipper went on to become minister for sport in the Cain government and later the Kirner government. Dad went on to tell me that he had fond memories of playing cricket in the Premier's parliamentary side against the press at the Albert Park ground in St Kilda on a Thursday afternoon — wait for this — of a sitting week. Parliament used to be closed down for a cricket match with the press! The team was an all-party affair, my father told me. Nipper was both an excellent bowler and batsman and a valuable member of that team. In fact we know he was an excellent and talented footballer as well as a boxer —

an all-round, good sportsman. My father reminded me that in 1964, the year he was elected, Nipper was both the captain and coach of the Geelong seconds — and they won the premiership that year.

Nipper also bred and raised horses and my father told me he occasionally gave him good tips. I remember answering regular telephone calls, usually on a Saturday morning, and taking down the names of horses if dad was not at home. But I can assure everyone here that no-one in our family became wealthy on Nipper's tips! My father reminded me that he was minister for sport and recreation for 10 years and that that portfolio, with due respect to the present minister, was bigger than it is today — and that it also covered racing and gambling. Nipper was very well respected by people in all sections of the sporting world.

My father valued Nipper's friendship. They always ate lunch together and then walked around the Treasury Gardens. They confided in each other, and in fact were part of a coterie of eight members who supported each other because of their similar beliefs and principles. They called themselves the Koala Club. When I asked my father why, he said, 'Because we are an endangered species'. I think you have to understand the nuances of factionalism in the ALP to understand the humour in that. Of the members of the club, some, like my father, were unaligned, and some were members of a faction, but they normally voted together and supported each other. There are now only two of that group left; the other is Carl Kirkwood.

Neil Trezise was a valued friend and colleague of my father. They shared 24 years here, and they confided in and supported each other. He was a great sportsman, an excellent minister for sport and a truly wonderful family man. My family offer our most sincere condolences to Joan, Ian and Helen, their partners, children and extended family. Vale Nipper.

The PRESIDENT — I, too, want to be associated with the condolence motion for Neil Trezise, or Nipper as he was affectionately known, but before I contribute to the debate I will make a couple of comments on behalf of Ms Carolyn Hirsh, which she has asked me to do. She wrote to me and said:

Nipper Trezise epitomised everything that is good about the Labor Party.

His boyhood was shaped by the Depression, and he never forgot his roots. He remained in touch with ordinary people throughout his life.

I first knew of him when I saw him play for Geelong in 1955 and 1956, when I was at teachers college there. What a great player!

She went on to say:

I was so pleased to get to know him when I was elected to Parliament in 1985. I was pretty nervous, and he was extremely helpful to me in 'learning the ropes'.

He became a good friend over the years, and I was constantly in awe of his ability to get on well with so many people and his ability to cut through the nonsense.

She asked me to pass on her sincere condolences to Joan, Ian — who she says is so like his dad, even to the point of making notes on his hand — Helen and their families. He is missed by so many.

Neil was the member for Geelong West in the other place from 1964 until 1967 and, following an electoral redistribution, the member for Geelong North from 1967 until his retirement from politics in 1992. As the Honourable Bill Forwood said, he thought 13 years was enough, and so do I, but nearly 30 years is extraordinary.

In 1982, following the formation of the Cain government, Neil was appointed Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation — and later Minister for Sport and Recreation — a ministry he cherished and developed for a period of over 10 years. My driver, who used to drive Nipper on weekends, said every Friday night Nipper would ring him up and ask, 'Do you want to go to the racing or the footy this Saturday? Which one will we attend?'. He loved both racing and football — —

Hon. Andrea Coote — So did the driver — especially the racing.

The PRESIDENT — That is right. My driver said every time they drove through the city and saw a homeless person on the street, Nipper would say, 'When that person was born, they had a mother who loved them and would kiss them good morning each day'. He kept reminding my driver and others about the people that, as a minister, you should not forget and for whom you should do what you can. Nipper never forgot that.

To Neil, sport was his life. As a youth Neil was passionate about cricket, boxing and football. We have heard about his prowess at the Geelong Football Club, where he was described as a 'cool, canny and very courageous player'.

We owe a lot to Neil for the mark he made and the legacy he left all Victorians in the way he handled his

sporting ministry, as we heard the Minister for Sport and Recreation indicate. Former Premier John Cain has credited Neil for establishing the tennis centre at Melbourne Park and for keeping the Australian Football League Grand Final where it belongs, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. He also introduced other changes, such as the restriction of liquor at football matches and the ending of one of the most discriminatory rules regarding women at racecourses. We can attribute that to Nipper.

All in all, Neil was a natural for his roles as husband, father, MP, minister and sportsman. As we have heard, at the state funeral for Neil, which was held at Skilled Stadium in Geelong, his son Ian, the member for Geelong in the other place, told the gathering that it was fitting to have Neil's service at the Geelong ground instead of in a church, for Neil was not a religious man in the normal sense — football and Geelong were his main religion.

Neil is survived by his wife, Joan, and his children, Ian and Helen, and their families. Fittingly, one last quote sums up Neil 'Nipper' Trezise perfectly. As Ian, his son, said, 'Neil used to say, "In our house, if you don't vote Labor and you don't barrack for Geelong, you don't get fed!"'. I send the Trezise family my sympathies and the sympathies of this house.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Neil Benjamin Trezise, AM, the house do now adjourn for 1 hour.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 3.12 p.m.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4.15 p.m.

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent on 29 August to:

Coptic Orthodox Church (Victoria) Property Trust Act

Coroners and Human Tissue Acts (Amendment) Act

Energy Legislation (Hardship, Metering and Other Matters) Act

**Environment Protection (Amendment) Act
Melbourne University (Victorian College of the
Arts) Act
Mineral Resources Development (Sustainable
Development) Act
Snowy Hydro Corporatisation (Parliamentary
Approval) Act
Victims' Charter Act
World Swimming Championships (Amendment)
Act.**

SURVEILLANCE DEVICES (WORKPLACE PRIVACY) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Wind energy: code of practice

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Energy Industries. In response to a question on 5 April the minister suggested that anyone who signed up to a national code of conduct on wind farms was stupid. Yesterday the federal government convened a round table discussion with representatives of local government, the wind industry, the planning industry, community groups and non-government organisations to progress the development of a national code for wind energy installations. Therefore I ask: will the minister support the efforts of the wind energy industry and other stakeholders to develop a national code or will the minister ignore them because he thinks they are stupid?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — The only person I think is stupid in here is the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I do not want to appear precious but I think the behaviour of the minister is unparliamentary, and I ask that he withdraw.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — On the point of order, President, this is a chamber for virulent debate — —

An honourable member — Robust debate!

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Robust debate, and as such — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has taken offence to a comment of the minister and has raised a point of order. The minister will not debate it. I will then rule on it.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — President — —

Hon. Philip Davis — Further on the point of order, President, I am sorry, but you have to deal with the point of order that is before the Chair, which is that I have asked the minister to withdraw.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister has 5 or 6 seconds to tell me what his issue is without debating the matter. I will then rule on the Leader of the Opposition's point of order.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — This is about precedent. There is an enormous amount of precedent for the words I used having been used in robust debates in this chamber, and I do not believe they were objectively offensive.

The PRESIDENT — Order! With respect to the issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition, he said he did not want be precious about it, but I agree with him that it is unparliamentary for the minister to call somebody stupid. I ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — President, of course I defer to your ruling and withdraw the statement.

Can I just say that the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition are brainless statements. They are the statements of somebody who has absolutely no understanding of what is going on. I, too, read what the so-called round table convened by Ian Campbell had to say and what the industry had to say, in particular Ms La Fontaine of the Australian Wind Energy Association, who said in her media release on this issue:

... the Victorian renewable energy target and South Australia's commitment to renewable energy are progressive policies that will address climate change. The federal environment minister's expression of support for wind energy is also an important step.

If the federal environment minister went to this meeting and expressed support for wind energy, as this press release says, he is simply lying to the — —

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, you have previously made rulings in regard to unparliamentary descriptions of ministers of the Crown in other parliaments, and I would ask you to uphold your previous rulings.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As I have indicated to the house previously, I can rule that words used by a member about members of this house or the other place are unparliamentary, but under standing orders I have no control over unparliamentary language used by a member when referring to members of other parliaments. It is not appropriate to use such language, but I cannot rule it unparliamentary. I draw the minister's attention to my ruling and ask him to be cognisant of it.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Let us be clear about this —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Pullen — On a point of order, President, Mr David Davis called the minister a liar, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — On the point of order, President, the minister was condemned by a motion of this chamber as a liar.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member is well aware of the rules of this house, of which I have just finished reminding members. If the member did use such words against the minister in this chamber, it is unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — I withdraw.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The hypocrisy that the federal government is involved in here is absolutely breathtaking, because the situation with wind energy in this country —

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, President, I seek clarification from the Chair in relation to the last point of order raised by Mr Pullen. It has long been the practice in this place that a member who hears words or expressions which they find objectionable can themselves take a point of order and seek their withdrawal. It has also long been the practice that no-one can do it on their behalf. I put it to you, President, that Mr Pullen is without jurisdiction in seeking to have Mr David Davis withdraw words that the minister himself did not hear. I put it to you therefore, President, that a most unfortunate precedent has been established by your ruling.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Obviously the hour recess has got everybody terribly excited! However, with respect to Mr Forwood's point of order, it is the practice of the house that if a member is in the chamber when words deemed to be offensive are spoken, the member should call the point of order. If they have not heard the words, then another member has the right to raise the point of order. I accept Mr Forwood's comment that I did not give the minister an opportunity to say whether he had heard such words. If he had, then it would be up to him to seek the withdrawal. If he did not hear them, then there is an opportunity for someone else to raise the point of order on his behalf, so Mr Forwood is correct.

With respect to the point of order raised by Mr Pullen, I ask the minister whether he heard the point of order.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — On the point of order, President, the situation is that I did not hear the words. However, if I had heard such words used about me, then I would have taken exception and asked the member to withdraw them.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Honourable David Davis has accepted my ruling, and I accept the comments made by Mr Forwood. Mr Davis has withdrawn his remarks. The minister should now continue with his answer.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Thank you, President. The whole point is that we have a federal government which has taken a decision to remove the funding mechanism for wind energy in this state. It has dumped its own scheme. The mandatory renewable energy target has been dumped by the federal government. Just imagine this: we have a minister who has dumped a scheme which funds renewable energy and which funds wind power, and then he comes along and says, 'Why do we not have a national code for wind energy so I can come in when I feel like it and veto individual projects even though we are not providing any funding; the Victorian government is doing that through the Victorian renewable energy scheme?' — which we will be debating in this house.

The Victorian government established the scheme. Who would trust somebody like the federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Campbell, with a code? No-one. Look at his track record and at what he did. He tried to use his own act to knock off renewable energy. He could not get renewable energy knocked off using his own act in the Bald Hills situation. He could not find a single orange-bellied parrot, no matter how hard he looked. Now he comes along and says, 'I want a national code'.

I refer to what the industry said in a press release. It made it clear that the meeting was not about interfering with the responsibility of state governments to adjudicate on planning issues, and we support that.

Supplementary question

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I detected two lies in the minister's longwinded answer. He made a claim about the federal government's mandatory renewable energy target (MRET) scheme not providing funding. As a matter of fact there is a \$5 billion-plus subsidy to the wind industry and the renewable sector as a result of MRET, and that program is still in place. He also claimed that the Victorian renewable energy target scheme was somehow being directly funded by the Victorian government. That is a lie as well.

But I would like to turn back to the issue in principle. The ministerial working group which is to be established to develop the draft national code consists of members of local government, the Australian Wind Energy Association and community groups. I ask the minister if he can advise the house if these representatives are stupid, consistent with his comments on 5 April?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I think I have already said enough in this house about who and where I think it is stupid, and I do not want to go down that track again. I do want to answer one point, though. In relation to the mandatory renewable energy target (MRET) scheme, it is an absolutely well-known fact that there was an independent inquiry done, the Tambling inquiry, which came back and recommended an extension of the MRET scheme, and the federal government knocked it off. It did not agree with the recommendation of its own independent authority. It knocked off the scheme and that meant — make no mistake about this — that not a single wind farm would have been erected in this state without action by the Victorian government.

For Senator Ian Campbell to come along and try to somehow get in on the show — a show which is only happening because of the Victorian government — and for him to try to pretend that he is actually supporting wind energy when he is clearly not supporting wind energy —

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

Housing: affordability

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing. The minister has

previously informed the house of actions taken by the Bracks government to assist single people on low incomes who are struggling to find a home of their own. Can the minister please provide an update to the house on these initiatives?

Ms BROAD (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for her question and for her interest in the challenges that are sometimes faced by single people in putting a roof over their head. I am pleased to update the house on the actions the Bracks government is taking to provide housing assistance. The Bracks government does understand that it is tough for single people to find a place in the current housing market, and that is especially so given the federal Liberal Party's inability to keep its promises on interest rates. Because interest rates have risen several times now under Prime Minister John Howard, first home buyers who are missing out are seeking private rental assistance and private properties and are squeezing the private rental market.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms BROAD — It is very interesting to see how sensitive opposition members are about this. For our part, because the Bracks government believes that all Victorians deserve a decent place to live, we are acting to improve the supply of government-funded homes for single people. In particular I have had the pleasure of opening a number of complexes recently that demonstrate the success the Bracks government is having in housing people who the Liberal Party is happy to ignore.

I was recently in Balaclava to open an innovative apartment built above a council-owned car park as part of an important partnership with the City of Port Phillip. The Bracks government's investment was some \$3.7 million, and this is a project which has delivered 31 new homes for people who desperately need them. In addition to that, just two days later in Healesville I opened Kalymna House, which is a \$1.5 million investment by the Bracks government that has delivered 22 modern apartments for single people on low incomes.

In Melbourne's east another impressive facility has been completed in Hawthorn, where a 1970s building has been refurbished as affordable apartments for 17 single people on low incomes. I was recently in Melbourne's south with my colleague Mr Somyurek to open Bob's Place, a former bank building that has been purchased and converted to make a home for 11 single people and four families who may need short-stay

accommodation in times of housing crisis. I was very pleased to do that with my colleague Mr Somyurek.

That is 85 new homes in less than one month that have been delivered from investments by the Bracks government, and I am pleased to say there are more to come. I had the pleasure recently of turning the first sod on a new project in Maidstone for people on low incomes. That means there will be 20 brand new singles apartments ready next year.

Ms Hadden interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask Ms Hadden to be quiet.

Ms BROAD — These projects demonstrate in a very practical way what the Premier means when he says that the Bracks government governs for all Victorians, including single Victorians on a low income, in all parts of Victoria, including regional and rural Victoria. These are all very practical demonstrations of the hard work and the investments that the Bracks government is making to meet the challenges of delivering affordable housing for people on a single income.

Ms Hadden interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Hadden, that is enough!

Ms BROAD — These are people who are continuing to be ignored by the Liberal Party, a party which cannot even deliver a housing policy.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister's time is up.

Gas: rural and regional Victoria

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Energy Industries. During the 2002 election campaign the Labor Party made election commitments, either by media statements or through candidate announcements, to the communities of Wandong, Bright, Beechworth, Myrtleford, Alexandra, Bonnie Doon, Eldorado, Porepunkah, Nathalia and Yea, promising that these communities will be connected to reticulated natural gas. To date not one of these communities has been connected to natural gas, and I ask the minister: when will the Bracks government fulfil its election commitment to connect natural gas to these communities, as promised during the 2002 election campaign?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — The Bracks government has made commitments to the towns of Bairnsdale, Paynesville, Creswick, Maiden Gully, Barwon Heads, Camperdown, Port Fairy and Hurstbridge, and to 9 Yarra Valley towns, 7 towns in the Macedon Ranges, 5 towns on the Mornington Peninsula and a further 5 South Gippsland towns, and we will deliver gas to all 34 of those towns. The natural gas extension program is progressing very well. There are now many towns which have either been connected or are in the process of being connected. I was very pleased to be in Hurstbridge in the last few days to see the connection of gas in that area. The fact of the matter is that these towns are being connected progressively. We need to understand what that means. It means that every single family that connects to natural gas — —

Ms Hadden interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have warned Ms Hadden three times. Enough is enough. Pursuant to sessional order 31 Ms Hadden is suspended from the house for 30 minutes.

Ms Hadden withdrew from chamber.

Questions resumed.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — Can I just say that this natural gas extension program is one of which the government is very proud because every single household to which we connect natural gas in regional Victoria will be able to expect savings, on average, of somewhere between \$600 and \$1200 per annum. So when you go to a small community where there are 1000 houses to be connected you are talking in terms of perhaps \$1 million every year, maybe \$1.2 million each year, that that community does not have to pay. This is not a one-year event. This is something which goes on continuously for that community. If you multiply that by the number of towns that are being connected as a result of our program, you are therefore putting back into the pockets of people in regional Victoria around \$60 million every single year, and it goes on forever on the basis that they make connections to natural gas.

It is not only families, it is also businesses in regional Victoria that will benefit as a result of this program. The community is sick and tired of members of the opposition coming into this house and trying to make

political capital out of this issue because we never said we would connect to every single town. Let me say that we will connect, and we have connected already, to more towns and more people in regional Victoria than was ever dreamed of under the Kennett government.

Supplementary question

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — All the communities I mentioned fall within the area covered by the Labor Party’s north-east Victoria and Goulburn Valley policy document, which at page 11 states:

Labor will ensure that a range of communities in north-east Victoria benefit from the Bracks government’s \$70 million statewide program, from the RIDF, to extend the reticulation of natural gas to small communities in regional and rural Victoria.

Given that not one community in the Goulburn Valley and north-east Victoria has been connected to natural gas under this program, will the minister advise the house which communities in this region will be connected to natural gas in this term of government; or will the minister admit that this promise was just another attempt by the Bracks government to deceive Victorians with a commitment it never intended to deliver?

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Forwood, whose colleague has asked the question, will allow the minister to answer.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I want to reiterate that we went through a very extensive process, which was known to the Victorian community upfront, in determining which was the most commercial and the best value that we could get in connecting natural gas. As a result of that program, 34 towns will be connected, and a range of businesses is already connected to natural gas and making savings.

Opposition members can keep trying to make political capital out of this program, but not once have they come into this place and said honestly, ‘We are glad that gas has been connected’ to a particular town. That is the kind of attitude they have — they will never connect gas anywhere in regional Victoria.

Sport: anti-doping policy

Mr PULLEN (Higinbotham) — My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Honourable Justin Madden. I ask the minister to outline to the house how the Bracks government is working to

create a level playing field and healthy and safe environment in sport across all the community.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I welcome Mr Pullen’s question and acknowledge his great interest in and support for sport and recreation in this state. I know he is a great cricketer in his own right, so I appreciate the fact that he has a great interest in sport.

The Victorian government is serious about stamping out performance-enhancing drugs in sport, so we are encouraging local sporting organisations to help shape a new sport anti-doping policy. We want to make sure that the policy is relevant to Victorian athletes at all levels, particularly young people involved in community sport.

I want to give some background on why we are looking to develop a new policy, given that for some time we have had an interim policy. Last year we introduced the Sports Anti-Doping Act 2005 in anticipation of the federal government eventually bringing in its new legislation. Eventually it did, but it took a lot longer than it should have. Because of that we had to put in place an interim anti-doping policy.

Then the federal government finally got around to introducing its own legislation which saw those responsibilities change at a federal level from the Australian Sports Drug Agency Act 1990 to the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Act 2006, so the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) now takes on the responsibilities. It took the federal government a long time to get its act together. Given that we had the Commonwealth Games, it would have been nice for Victoria if the federal government had had that act ready in time for the Commonwealth Games, but it did not. It took the federal government a lot longer than it should have, so it did not regard the legislation as a priority. Since that time, because of the changes, we now have to implement policy that aligns with and basically complements the federal government’s new legislation, to ensure that we stamp out drugs across sport.

But it is not only about performance-enhancing drugs, it is also about image-enhancing drugs. What we are finding from examining the statistics — not only from America but also from Australia — is that young people are taking performance-enhancing drugs in small numbers but they are taking them and that there also seems to be an increase in the use of image-enhancing drugs of the sort used in gyms and the like. We need to tackle these issues urgently. Last

weekend I released a policy discussion paper in response to the need to form a new policy in this area.

What is particularly important is education to make sure that subelite athletes — those who might aspire to be elite athletes but are just below the threshold — who might be tempted to think they will make the grade or make the cut if they use performance-enhancing or image-enhancing drugs do not use such drugs. It is important that we educate broadly across the community — not only young people in relation to sport but right across the whole sector — to make sure that we make this state not only a better place to live but a place people can be confident is a better place to raise a family.

It is nice to know that we are doing the policy work — and we have done it consistently. I would be interested to see the opposition's policy. There have been very few policy announcements and very little policy on sport from the opposition. We went to Google to find out if the Honourable Bruce Atkinson had announced any policy, but the only Bruce Atkinson I could find was the UK poker champion. There is another Bruce Atkinson! I know that our Mr Atkinson holds his cards close to his chest, but somehow I expect we have a better chance of getting a policy announcement on sport from the UK poker champion than from the Bruce Atkinson in this chamber.

Housing: Gippsland Province

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Housing, Ms Broad. I ask the minister: is it true that people waiting for public housing in the Morwell region alone number 577 in total while more than 100 blocks of land owned by the Office of Housing in that region remain undeveloped?

Ms BROAD (Minister for Housing) — I welcome the question from Mr Hall. I commence by indicating that since coming to office the Bracks government has made an investment of some \$1.3 billion in increasing the supply of affordable housing. That investment has delivered more than 10 200 properties for Victorians who need access to affordable housing. As a result we have seen waiting lists for public housing come down by 14 per cent over the term in office of the Bracks government — since 1999.

In relation to the question of vacant land, which has had some notice in the press recently, the Office of Housing is a very large organisation with a very large property portfolio. Included in that property portfolio of more than \$12 billion in assets is less than 1 per cent held as

vacant land. Some 80 per cent of that 1 per cent is earmarked for sale, is in the process of being sold or is in the process of being developed. That leaves 20 per cent of 1 per cent which is being held for future development. In such a large property portfolio it is very important that the Office of Housing has the capacity for future development.

The Bracks government would like to develop all of that vacant land right now, and if it were not for the fact that the Howard federal government has cut \$900 million from funding for public housing in Victoria, we would proceed to do exactly that. For its part the Bracks government has invested more than \$453 million in public and social housing over and above what is required under its agreements with the federal government, but the fact is that that has not made up for that \$900 million which has been cut by the federal government. That means we are not able to develop as much of that land as we would like to, if those resources were available to the Bracks government.

The Bracks government will continue to meet the challenge of increasing the supply of affordable housing to Victorians who need access to it. We have done so over the life of the government, and our policies and plans for the future will ensure that we continue to do so.

Supplementary question

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — It is all well and good, what the minister has said, but the fact remains that there is a significant waiting list for public housing in the Morwell region. So I ask the minister: does the government intend to develop or sell the vacant 16 blocks in Morwell, the 45 in Moe, the 45 in Sale and the 10 in Warragul; and if so, when?

Ms BROAD (Minister for Housing) — In response to the member, I have advised him of the framework which the Office of Housing applies to its land which has not yet been developed — land which is in the process of being sold, is for sale or is in the process of being developed. In relation to the properties that he has listed, I am happy to take that on notice. He might appreciate that in a housing portfolio with more than \$12 billion in assets that is not information that I have at my fingertips in relation to particular blocks of land in particular towns, but I am happy to take that on notice.

**Information and communications technology:
international investment**

Ms MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — I refer my question to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, the Honourable Marsha Thomson. The minister has often informed this house of the Bracks government's success in attracting information and communications technology business investment into Victoria. Can the minister now inform the house of how multinational businesses choosing Victoria are helping to develop the skills of young Victorians?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I thank the member for her question. I know that she is very keen to see that young Victorians are getting the opportunity to develop their skills. I have mentioned in the house before that it is vitally important when we seek out investment in this state that we look at why people, including large companies, choose to invest here and to understand that. As I have already indicated to the house, one of the major reasons why major companies, major information and communications technology (ICT) companies in particular, choose to invest in Victoria is because of the quality of our graduates.

It is important that we maintain that standard if we are to continue to encourage investment attraction to this state and, more importantly, also grow our own home-grown ICT industry. One of the best examples of the way that multinational companies are now involving themselves in skilling up our young Victorian is probably IBM at Ballarat, where they have a development centre for the Asia-Pacific area. Now they have 500 people working at that development centre, and they are working very closely with the University of Ballarat in ensuring that as the students undertake their courses they are being provided with the best possible skills. IBM has an earn-as-you-learn program. They are participating in the curriculum development at the university and they also have guest lecturers. They are only one of many multinationals now linking to universities, helping to provide skills for young Victorians.

It is just under two years now since Satyam Computer Services Ltd established a 300-seat global software development centre here in Melbourne. It is their largest centre outside India. Last year the Bracks government facilitated a memorandum of understanding between Satyam and Victoria University to further develop the skills of undergraduates and graduates. They are offering internships to undergraduates. They are offering graduates they recruit the experience of working in either India or

China as part of their program for training graduates. On successfully completing their training, the students then either come back to work in Melbourne or can be offered jobs in any of the 46 locations that Satyam have around the world. Satyam have just recently completed the first part of this program with three students and intend to extend it to 25 students next year.

I was also pleased to be present last week when Satyam signed a memorandum of understanding with Melbourne University to offer this program to the students and graduates of Melbourne University, giving them the same opportunities to gain the skills that will make them employable anywhere in the world but more importantly will make this an attractive place to work and do business if you are in the ICT industry.

I had the opportunity to talk to one of the three students who went through six months at the Satyam campus in India, and he talked about the incredible experience that he had and the opportunity he was afforded by being able to spend that time in India and learn about the global model and how business is operating around the world. It provides our students with confidence, it provides our industry with confidence, and it is why we will continue to work with members to grow the industry.

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

Aged care: fire safety standards

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Aged Care, Mr Jennings. The Auditor-General in his recent report on the condition of public sector residential aged care facilities said of the Bracks government:

During our on-site inspection of facilities we applied the criteria relating to fire and safety, developed by the commonwealth government as our standard assessment. We found that 25, or 51 per cent, of the 49 facilities we assessed did not meet the standards relating to safety.

The minister said in a media release that each facility meets the criteria of the fire risk management strategy including the annual certificates of fire safety compliance. I ask the minister: did the Auditor-General get it wrong in the minister's opinion?

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — I thank the member for the question. It may have been a bit late coming, but I thank her for her question and I thank her for her concern, and I thank her most sincerely for the opportunity to set the record straight, because had she asked me the question, 'Do you stand by your statement that in fact all public sector

residential aged care facilities in Victoria are fire safe and compliant with the standards set by the commonwealth?', the answer would be yes, I categorically stand by that statement. If the federal minister were asked in the federal Parliament, 'Are Victorian public sector residential aged care facilities run by the state of Victoria fire safe and compliant with the standards set by the commonwealth as a requirement of accreditation?', the federal minister would get to his feet and reiterate what I am saying: the answer is yes, every single facility is fire compliant and fire safe.

The issue of the interpretation provided by the opposition spokesperson in relation to this matter, and in fact some media commentaries on this matter, is that they have not been complete in their understanding of what the fire safety regulations are. In fact the Auditor-General's assessment assumed that the Building Code of Australia 1996 standards — they are the standards that the Auditor-General relied on — are the standards that exclusively apply in total to new facilities and the important element of commonwealth accreditation. Indeed the Auditor-General would acknowledge that the fire standards required by the commonwealth would actually require the equivalent of the building code of 1996 to be complied with, and the equivalent means the installation of other fire measures in renovating — —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS — No, Mr Forwood. Let us stick with the facts. Mr Forwood wants to interrupt the flow, but he knows they are compliant; and the Auditor-General knows they are compliant. The Auditor-General's statement, taken out of context, is that if you applied the standards to new buildings, then they may not be fire safe, but in fact the important concept here is whether the modifications to existing buildings are fire safe, whether they meet the equivalent standard of the Building Code of Australia 1996 and whether they meet the safety standard required by their accreditation through the commonwealth. The answer to that question is that every single one does.

Supplementary question

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — Specifically will the minister confirm to the house that the fire compartmentalisation and/or separation, including adequate provision of fire doors — I want specifics here — and firewalls in all state-run aged care facilities will meet the commonwealth accreditation standards?

An honourable member interjected.

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — No, I do not think the federal minister had an interest in writing this question; in fact, I do not think he has the same interpretation as the opposition spokesperson on this. The federal minister will live or fall on whether the standards that he is responsible for under the commonwealth Aged Care Act are complied with — whether facilities around Australia are fire safe in accordance with the criteria the commonwealth sets for accreditation. Every single facility in Victoria meets that standard. Every public sector residential aged care facility in Victoria is compliant.

Hon. Bill Forwood — Some are more compliant than others.

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS — They are all compliant with commonwealth standards, regardless of the mischievous interpretation of the opposition that may be at the heart of this question. Every one of them is safe and compliant with the commonwealth standard.

Aged care: Colac and Geelong facilities

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — My question is to the Minister for Aged Care. Can the minister advise the house of recent actions by the Bracks government to improve access to residential aged care for older people living in Colac and Geelong?

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care) — Mr Eren has provided me with a fantastic opportunity to talk effusively about the commitment of the Bracks government to invest in public sector residential aged care right across Victoria, and indeed to provide quality services to the people of Victoria.

During the period of the Bracks government we have undertaken 43 reinvestments of public sector residential aged care facilities. A total of \$396 million has been allocated to this right across Victoria. Whilst the Leader of the Opposition was taking points of order on the first question, I had enough time to tally up the facilities I have personally supported and opened — that is, 19 facilities across Victoria. I have kick-started another 10 projects during my time as Minister for Aged Care in Victoria. It is a hallmark of this government that we have a commitment to quality aged care.

In the last week of August I had the good fortune to open on the same day — it never rains, but it pours — fantastic facilities in Geelong and Colac. Back in the days when the opposition spokesperson for aged care asked me a lot more questions than she does today, she asked me what we would do at the Grace McKellar Centre in Geelong. That was pretty much the first

question I received as Minister for Aged Care, and there have been a lot of questions and answers since.

On the last week of August I opened a state-of-the-art, \$19 million, 108-bed facility to care for the needs of older members of the Geelong and Bellarine communities in years to come. It is a glorious facility, but it was not the first. The year before, in the company of the Premier and local members such as Mr Eren, I opened a 90-bed facility to deal with complex care and mental health care needs. They are not the only facilities we are dealing with at the McKellar Centre. In the last budget we committed to a further 108-bed facility in Grovedale. I thank the member for having asked me this question in the early days of the Bracks government, because we have delivered in spades to the Geelong community. We have committed almost \$100 million to the breadth of services through the McKellar Centre.

Hon. Andrea Coote — This is why we do not ask you questions.

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS — I think the chamber probably understands why you do not ask me questions.

On the same day of the last week in August I opened Corangamarah, a fantastic \$14 million, 75-bed aged care facility in Colac. It is the hallmark of the dedication and great work of Colac Area Health, and it provided me with the opportunity to congratulate Jan Ross on the fantastic job she had undertaken as chief executive officer of that health service. The new, 75-bed facility was built on the previous redevelopment of the Colac hospital — a 50-bed, acute care hospital — and was a \$30 million commitment of the Bracks government. We now have a complete redevelopment on that site. It is an integrated model of care to provide acute and subacute care, to provide residential aged care for people in the Colac area.

When I came to this portfolio there was a bit of toeyness in the Colac region about whether this facility was going forward. In fact previously, like the McKellar Centre, under the Kennett regime the Colac facility was going to be sold. It was going to be flogged off. We kept it in public hands and reinvested significantly to support communities to look after older members of their community in times of need.

Greater Geelong: councillors

Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Local Government, Ms Broad. In answer to a question on 13 June regarding the ‘cash for council’ saga at

Geelong, the minister stated that complaints in relation to matters of conflict of interest are matters which the Ombudsman is pursuing and further that she expected the Ombudsman would report to Parliament when he had concluded those investigations. I ask: how far down the investigative track are we with respect to the conflict of interest allegations at Geelong?

Hon. D. McL. Davis — Just answer it! It’s a simple question.

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) — Indeed it is a simple question, and it is of great concern to all Victorians that the shadow minister could ask such a simple question and, in so doing, demonstrate such a lack of understanding of governance in this state, let alone at a local government level. I hope the opposition understands that the Ombudsman reports to Parliament and not to me. I am not informed about the progress of any of the Ombudsman’s investigations. They are matters which he independently conducts and reports to this Parliament on; and to the extent that any minister is responsible for his portfolio, it is the Premier and not the Minister for Local Government. Strictly speaking this question is not even in order.

I am quite confident that the Ombudsman is doing his job. I am quite confident that when he is ready and when he has completed his independent investigations he will report to the Parliament, and if the Parliament is not sitting, as the opposition should also know, he is free to release his report publicly. It is not dependent in any shape or form on my responsibilities as Minister for Local Government.

I hope I have enlightened the opposition and the shadow Minister for Local Government on these matters, and I hope that he in future understands how these matters work. The Bracks government will continue to strongly support the Ombudsman and his independence in relation to this and any other investigations that he has under way.

Mining: investment

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — My question is directed to the Minister for Resources. Can the minister advise the house of recent events in Victoria’s booming resource sector that will lead to new wealth and new jobs for western Victoria in particular?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Resources) — I thank the member for her question and for her interest in jobs and investment in western Victoria. I cannot say the same for the opposition.

It is with pleasure that I advise the house that I attended the opening ceremony for the Iluka Douglas mineral sands mine which was opened by the Premier on 30 August. This \$280 million mineral sands mine is located at Douglas near Balmoral in western Victoria. Its opening marks a new era for minerals exploration and development in the region. The project will generate — and I ask the opposition to listen to the figure because it is very important for regional Victoria — up to \$1.5 billion worth of export sales and will mean more jobs in regional Victoria for local residents. The Douglas mineral sands project will bring 150 long-term jobs into the area and an upgrade to local road, water and power infrastructure.

The Iluka Resources mine is expected to be the first of many projects in western Victoria and marks the emergence of western Victoria as the new centre for mineral sands in Australia. The mine is expected to commence operation next year and produce almost 250 000 tonnes of heavy mineral concentrate and 69 000 tonnes of rutile, which is used in paints and plastics. The mine is also expected to recover about 130 000 tonnes of zircon, which is used in glazes for ceramic tiles.

The discovery of mineral sands at Douglas was partly due to the geophysical and geological data produced by the Department of Primary Industries, and I thank it for that. The Bracks government has a strong track record of supporting large, export-orientated minerals projects that have revitalised parts of Victoria.

The Minerals Council of Australia has released a new economic report that highlights the importance of these projects, and the report shows that in this area alone, and in particular in the shires of Horsham and South Grampians, there have been new jobs and new wealth generated. It found that over 500 jobs are estimated to be generated directly or indirectly as a result of the Iluka project alone. In the dark years of the Kennett government this area of Victoria was left —

Hon. Philip Davis interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The people of Hamilton know that it was not so long ago — during the Kennett era — that you could go down the main street of Hamilton and see that a third of the shops were shut. Hamilton is a town which now has a new lease of life. It has new jobs —

Hon. J. M. Madden — And a new swimming pool.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — And a new swimming pool — as part of the infrastructure and the

jobs that are being delivered by the Bracks Labor government.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 5305, 7178, 7475, 7478, 7518, 7521, 7539, 7541, 7560, 7563, 7595, 7598, 7602, 7665, 7667, 7707, 7709, 7760–2, 7802–4, 7896, 7899, 7938, 7941, 7980, 7983, 8041, 8052–7, 8065, 8100–3, 8106, 8168–78, 8193, 8212–16, 8282–6, 8288–91, 8301, 8304, 8308–10, 8312–14, 8354, 8421–3, 8426, 8439, 8440, 8460–3, 8465–9, 8472, 8520–39, 8560–62, 8707.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Parliament: One Parliament project

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — Members know of my long-held concerns about the half-baked and poorly designed One Parliament project, and in particular its ham-fisted implementation. Last week the executive group met and the bizarre suggestion was made that the houses of Parliament, the Assembly and the Council, should come under the control of the Department of Parliamentary Services — a horrifying suggestion that is completely outside the processes of the Westminster system.

Recently I wrote to the head of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Dr Stephen O’Kane, and said:

... the survey form currently being offered to members is seriously deficient in that it doesn’t provide members with sufficient opportunity to provide feedback on decisions ... Frankly ... the department’s culture is aloof, dictatorial, petty and dismissive.

Last week three whole days were spent at a compulsory love-in for staff of the Parliament at the Novotel Hotel down in Collins Street. During that time — would you believe it? — not one negative comment was allowed. Staff members were allowed to say only good things about the One Parliament system because the facilitator, Ann Shannon, continued to bring them back to the positive things about the One Parliament project.

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

Police: Rye station

Hon. J. G. HILTON (Western Port) — During the break in parliamentary sittings I was very pleased to be present when the 101st police station built since the election of the Bracks government was opened in Rye. This is part of the Bracks government's commitment to community safety, which has seen the crime rate on the Mornington Peninsula decline by 19 per cent between 2000–01 and 2005–06. This has been due in no small part to the additional 1600 police who have been recruited since 1999.

Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network

Hon. J. G. HILTON — Also during the break I attended the annual general meeting of the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN). This organisation, under the chairmanship of Richard Butler and the leadership of Pat O'Connell, is making a significant impact on the career futures of many young people on the Mornington Peninsula. At the meeting a number of community groups gave presentations and described how helpful the LLEN had been in contributing to their success.

Liberal Party: performance

Hon. J. G. HILTON — Finally, in the last sitting week a senior member of the opposition raised a point of order while I was making a contribution on the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Bill. The point of order was that the opposition spokesperson for education was a female. I have recently spoken to the member for Nepean and as far as I can see he is very definitely a male. The fact that a prominent opposition member does not know the identity of the opposition education spokesman speaks volumes about the impact which the opposition is having on the community.

Merriang Special Developmental School: bus service

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) — Last Thursday night I, together with the Liberal candidate for Yan Yean, Anita Ivonosky, attended a carers meeting in Epping, which was arranged by Christine Stowe. Some very moving speeches were made by the carers of the disabled, particularly by Kathie, Rex and Stephanie, and I thank them for the poignant and dignified discussion that they brought to the debate.

But there was one issue that arose on several occasions involving the Merriang Special Developmental School. It has a major problem with the school bus. It continually has two more children than its limit — that is, there are 27 children needing this service, but there is only space on this bus for 25 children. It is unacceptable because the parents are placed under unnecessary stress due to a lack of certainty with this service. I ask the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt, the Minister for Community Services in the other place, to address this critical issue as a matter of urgency.

The people of Epping deserve better. They need to have certainty so they know that their disabled children are able to get safely to and from the special school every day. These people are under a lot of stress, and they do an amazing job with their young children. It is important that they are supported in every possible way. It is incumbent — —

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

Balwyn High School: multipurpose centre

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — On Wednesday, 30 August, I was delighted to represent the education minister in opening the year 9 Xplore and performing arts centre building at Balwyn High School. This \$2.3 million facility was partially funded by a \$600 000 grant from the government's Leading Schools Fund. Some \$1.7 million was raised or donated by the school community, which is an absolutely outstanding achievement. I congratulate the council president, Tim McMahan, and the principal, Bruce Armstrong, and those all around them, who must have worked extremely hard to see this ambitious project completed.

The new facility provides 360 square metres of open learning space for the year 9 Xplore program as well as five music instrumental teaching spaces, music technology and music classrooms, a drama rehearsal and presentation room, active and passive recreation areas, a year 9 coordinator's office, and student amenities and lockers. I toured these facilities, and they were all very impressive. The school has received much support from the staff, parents and student community, and in recognition of this has named rooms in the music facility in honour of staff and parents who have made substantial contributions to the programs offered by the school.

I was also extremely impressed by the high calibre of the musical performances at the opening event and congratulate the staff and students involved on the many hours of practice and work they have no doubt

put in to prepare for the event. I am sure that the new additions to the school's — —

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

David Hayes and Craig Williams

Hon. DAVID KOCH (Western) — I wish to congratulate horse trainer David Hayes, who trained the first five winners at Caulfield last week, and jockey Craig Williams, who brought them home — bringing home five consecutive winners at one meeting was a first in his riding career. Their combined talents, with a bit of good luck, enabled them to achieve a feat never before seen in Melbourne. This magnificent achievement tops off an exceptional year for Craig, whose successes during the year were recognised just two weeks ago when he won the Scobie Breasley award for Melbourne's best rider in the last season.

Craig, along with racing's other outstanding performers of the past year, were recognised at the Celebrating Racing's Heroes dinner, a highlight on racing's annual calendar. This is an opportunity for the racing community to award its star performers. Craig took home the prestigious Scobie Breasley Medal for Victoria's most outstanding jockey. Already this season he has ridden 18 winners, and his success at Caulfield builds on a great start in defending his newly gained title.

David Hayes has also had a great start to the season. He has trained 13 winners so far, which gives him a lead of 7 over Lee Freedman.

Again I extend my congratulations to David and Craig for their outstanding efforts and wish them continuing success as we come into another fantastic 2006 Spring Racing Carnival.

Findon Primary School: *After Ever After*

Ms MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) — On 30 August I had the great pleasure of attending the Findon Primary School biannual production *After Ever After* at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre. The play was performed by all 520 students from Findon Primary School and was staged over four nights, enabling all of the students' family members to attend. On the night I was there I saw a wonderful production with great acting and singing performances from the students and impressive sets, props and costumes. Looking through the program I was struck by the diversity of ethnicity apparent from the students' names.

The script and music was written by teacher Keir Jasper, who was recognised last year by the Department of Education and Training for teaching excellence. Findon Primary School has in fact been the recipient of many awards, particularly in the environmental area. I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone involved in the staging of Findon primary's play, principal Kerri Simpson, staff, students and parents for showcasing their school's talents and giving all the students an opportunity to work together on a project involving the whole school community.

Middleborough and Mitcham roads: bicycle lanes

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I wish to raise the concerns of local people in the Laburnum area about the failure of the government to consider bicycle lanes as part of the Middleborough Road grade separation. This project has caused a number of concerns in the community, particularly about the government's consultation on this project. The government refuses to look at the option of an island station that would allow a third track and stopping of all train services at Laburnum. The government has indicated to me that this project is to be funded over three years, which is quite inconsistent with what the community has been told is the construction timetable of the Middleborough Road grade separation.

But what is of particular concern to residents in this area now is the achievement of safe passage lanes for bicycles and pedestrians as part of the grade separation project. It certainly is a road that I think ought to be considered for bicycle lanes. I also put on the record that concerns expressed by residents of Mitcham about the lack of bicycle lanes along Mitcham Road, particularly south of Whitehorse Road, are also a high priority in this area. I urge the government to look very closely at the opportunities for bicycle lanes on these major roads and certainly on Middleborough Road.

Environment Protection Authority: Wangaratta office

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I was delighted yesterday to cut a green star cake to celebrate the opening of the new Wangaratta office of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), which is set to achieve a 5-star rating. The new office is based on environmentally sustainable design principles, minimising environmental impacts, providing a more comfortable and productive workplace and saving substantial amounts of money over the life of the tenancy of the building. It has set a fantastic example of a 5-star fit-out with features such as movement and

daylight sensors to switch lights off when they are not needed; a 'smart' airconditioner to adjust the quantity of fresh and recycled air; energy efficient flat-screen computers; bicycle parking and shower facilities to encourage people to cycle to work; and the purchase of 100 per cent green energy.

I congratulate Mr Michael Bourke, the EPA chairman, and Mr Fergal Grahame, the EPA regional manager, on this fabulous building. The new north-east Victoria office in Wangaratta is a sign of the EPA's commitment to serving the region well into the future. It has a long history of working in partnership with people in the north-east of Victoria to manage waste and pollution to increase resource efficiency and of course to improve business opportunities in that region.

Great Alpine Road: motorcycle access

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — Next weekend the 2006 Australian motorcycle grand prix will be staged at Phillip Island. As members would know, this event attracts enthusiasts from all over Australia and overseas. Literally thousands of motorcyclists from New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory journey through Gippsland as they make their way to Phillip Island. The Great Alpine Road from Wangaratta to Bairnsdale is one of Australia's most popular motorcycling routes.

But this year, because it is still the snow season, motorcyclists are going to be prevented from using this route because motorcycles, unlike motor vehicles, can not be fitted with chains. In this case there is going to be a terrible loss of tourism in towns like Omeo and others in the Tambo Valley. The fact of the matter is that there is no snow on the roads at the moment. Temperatures are forecast to be in the 20s this week, and the outlook for next week is good again. Dust is currently a greater problem on the Great Alpine Road than either ice or snow.

My appeal to the government is to authorise VicRoads to allow motorcycle access on the Great Alpine Road so long as weather conditions continue to permit, because this week motorcycles travel to Phillip Island and next week they return. It seems a commonsense provision. VicRoads warning signs could be quite easily placed at both Wangaratta and Bairnsdale advising motorcyclists of the openness or otherwise of this road, so I appeal to the government to do all in its power to enable the motorcyclists to use the Great Alpine Road.

Vietnamese community: volunteers

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — This is a great time to announce ceremonies to thank those who have volunteered their time to serve the Vietnamese community. On this coming Sunday, 17 September 2006, and on 4 November 2006, I will organise special events to nominate members of Vietnamese community organisations to receive a certificate of appreciation for their voluntary services.

The events will also mark the 150th anniversary of the Victorian Parliament and be an opportunity for me to thank people I have worked with closely in the 18 years since I became a councillor and then the mayor of Richmond and over my 10 years in the Victorian Parliament. I know a lot of people have spent their time on weekends and at night to help others settle into a new society. There are many people involved in providing services for youth, women, the elderly and others, including settlement services. Hundreds of people will be proud to receive thanks. On the day, the Speaker and a few other MPs will join with the community — —

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

Sir William Clemens

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — On Friday evening I was pleased to attend a function at the Burke Museum in Beechworth to commemorate one of Beechworth's famous sons, Sir William Clemens. Beechworth has a proud history in colonial Victoria and since Federation and has produced many community leaders, including a former Premier of this state, George Briscoe Kerferd. Sir William Clemens is perhaps a lesser known figure.

I think it is very important that the Burke Museum, which is very well-run institution, and Sir William's family have got together after all these years, bearing in mind that he died more than 60 years ago, to mark his birth at Silver Creek in Beechworth. The fact is that he got his first job at the then colonial post office, a building that is still in use as a post office to this day. Upon Federation in 1901 he transferred to the commonwealth public service and rose to be the head of the commonwealth public service and was knighted for that office.

It was great to see members of his family still actively involved in community affairs in Beechworth, particularly the Orton family. It was a well-organised function, mainly put together by Julie de Hennin, an

Orton family member. I congratulate the museum and the family for commemorating Sir William's service.

Sustainability Victoria: Tidy Town awards

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — I congratulate the Gippsland communities that did well in Sustainability Victoria's Tidy Town sustainable community awards announced in Benalla last week. The award for innovation in sustainability went to Koonwarra, which is well known by locals and visitors in Gippsland as a great place for stopping off for food or craft. Working closely with the Gippsland waste management group, Koonwarra undertook to become Australia's first waste-wise village.

Organisers established a waste trail, with waste disposal information at the community centre. Annual waste audits are held to monitor efforts, and to date the town has achieved nearly a 100 per cent removal of plastic bags from all activities.

Koonwarra is also the base for South Gippsland Freecycle, a global non-profit organisation interested in avoiding the dumping of goods into landfill by offering an Internet forum for those who want the goods. The Gippsland region already has 127 members who dispose of unwanted goods in this way.

The Community Pride Award went to Loch because of the work of the Loch Community Development Association, which has been the central coordinator for many local community groups and has organised the completion of an urban design framework and coordinated planning for new amenities while retaining the old. The result is a small town reflecting immense pride in the new amenities it has created and the many heritage areas that have been proudly maintained and featured.

Timboon P-12 School: multipurpose facility

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — Yesterday I had the absolute pleasure of visiting Timboon P-12 School to officially open its new education facility for years 5 to 8. This new subschool complex is a large multipurpose facility which creates flexible learning and break-out spaces that can be reconfigured to suit various learning experiences for middle-school students and teachers alike.

The students told me that they really liked working in their new facility, which utilises natural light, soundproofing and multimedia technology in its design. Two teachers in particular deserve to be acknowledged for their leadership in bringing the project to fruition: they are Ms Rosalie Moorfield and Mr John Ralph.

They have researched innovative curriculum practices both in Australia and overseas to ensure that students in years 5 to 8 at Timboon maximise their educational and personal potential. Their new years 5 to 8 educational facility includes design principles which reflect the values contained in Stephen Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I have to say I was really impressed by the students' interest and appreciation of the education they were being offered at the Timboon school.

The Bracks government provided \$550 000 funding for this project, and \$29 000 was raised by the school. We are very pleased to support education across Victoria by providing more teachers and new schools and by upgrading existing facilities. Well done, Timboon.

PETITION

Racial and religious tolerance: legislation

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 be repealed (29 signatures).

Laid on table.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 10

Ms ARGONDIZZO (Templestowe) presented *Alert Digest No. 10* of 2006, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Minister's order of 4 September 2006 giving approval for the granting of a lease at Whitehorse Reserve.

International Fibre Centre Limited — Minister's report of receipt of 2005 report.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 —

Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme — Amendment C15.

East Gippsland Planning Scheme — Amendment C46.

Frankston Planning Scheme — Amendment C42.

Maribyrnong Planning Scheme — Amendment C55.

Melton Planning Scheme — Amendment C55.

Nillumbik Planning Scheme — Amendment C46.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendment C46.

Swan Hill Planning Scheme — Amendment C11.

Victoria Planning Provisions — Amendments VC40 and VC41.

Warrnambool Planning Scheme — Amendment C37.

West Wimmera Planning Scheme — Amendment C8.

Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Amendment C54.

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment C53.

Urban Growth Boundary — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Frankston Planning Scheme — Amendment C35.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Amendments C86 and C91.

Wyndham Planning Scheme — Amendment C71.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 — No. 113.

Bail Act 1977 — No. 104.

Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958 — No. 112.

Estate Agents Act 1980 — Nos. 105 and 106.

Extractive Industries Development Act 1995 — No. 111.

Fisheries Act 1995 — No. 109.

Infringements Act 2006 — No. 103.

Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 — No. 116.

Land Act 1958 — No. 118.

Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 — No. 114.

Mineral Resources Development Act 1990 — No. 110.

Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968 — No. 107.

Plant Health and Plant Products Act 1995 — No. 115.

Valuation of Land Act 1960 — No. 117.

Veterans Act 2005 — No. 108.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Ministers' certificates of exemption under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 8, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 115 and 117.

Minister's certificate of exception under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rule No. 102.

Proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following acts:

Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 — Section 35 — 22 August 2006 (*Gazette No. S214, 22 August 2006*).

Planning and Environment (Growth Areas Authority) Act 2006 — Section 2(1) — 1 September 2006 (*Gazette No. G35, 31 August 2006*).

Werribee South Land Act 1991 — 8 September 2006 (*Gazette No. G36, 7 September 2006*).

OWNERS CORPORATIONS BILL

Second reading

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

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

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

In 1988, when the Subdivision Act was passed to govern the operations of bodies corporate, there were approximately 35 000 bodies corporate in Victoria in which 200 000 people lived and worked. Most were small suburban apartment blocks of between two and six units. Even a brief examination of the changing number and range of bodies corporate reveals that there has been a profound social transformation in the way Victorians live and work over the past two decades.

Today there are more than 65 000 bodies corporate in Victoria, incorporating over 480 000 lots. It is estimated that at least 1 million people, or approximately 20 per cent of all Victorians, own, live or work in bodies corporate. We have seen the rise of large multistorey apartment developments. While bodies corporate with less than five lots account for around 30 per cent of the total number of bodies corporate, those consisting of more than 100 lots now represent a quarter of all lots in Victoria. These different sets of numbers indicate two significant developments since 1988. Firstly, there has been an enormous increase in the number of Victorians living

and working in bodies corporate. Secondly, the average body corporate is growing in size, with more lots per body corporate.

In 1988, a much larger proportion of bodies corporate were under five lots, and were self-managed. A one-size-fits-all approach was adopted under the Subdivision Act and regulations, with the relatively minimal regulatory framework encouraging informal dispute resolution. However, the days when 'body corporate' only meant granny flats or small blocks of four or five flats are long gone.

Increasingly, bodies corporate are complex entities. Growing numbers of high-rise apartment buildings present a new set of policy challenges. These challenges increase when we consider the mix of uses for bodies corporate, which can relate to common property owned by residential, commercial, or industrial interests. Apart from the flats, units and apartments that first come to mind with the words 'body corporate', office blocks, hotels, retirement villages and farms can all belong to a body corporate.

This range gives some idea of why the existing regulatory regime, built for a different, simpler era, is no longer appropriate to contemporary needs. The primary challenge for the government in reforming the law in this area is to keep regulation to the minimum necessary to guide and support the operations of bodies corporate, while at the same time keeping pace with the increasingly complex and sophisticated body corporate environment.

It is against this background that the former Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr John Lenders, a member for Waverley Province, announced a review of body corporate law in September 2003. The review process, ably led by a member for Koonung Province, Ms Helen Buckingham, included the release of an issues paper in October 2003 and a future directions paper in March 2004. Over 200 public submissions were received in response to these papers. The release of an exposure draft of the new legislation in December 2005 to accompany the final report of the body corporate review resulted in approximately 100 further submissions.

This process, which has proceeded in tandem with a significant number of stakeholder consultation meetings, has been immensely helpful in identifying the major issues affecting bodies corporate. The main themes emerging from the review process are the need for better access to dispute resolution, clearer rights, duties and responsibilities of members and the body corporate, and sufficient powers and flexibility to enable bodies corporate and body corporate committees to operate effectively. Most submissions also highlighted the need for improved financial management and protection of body corporate funds, long-term maintenance planning and the promotion of more professional standards in the body corporate management industry.

Before looking at how the bill tackles these issues, I want to explain why the term 'body corporate' is changed to 'owners corporation' in the bill. The new term emphasises that the body set up to manage common property and services is the lot owners body, and something closely aligned with the interests of the lot owners. It is also consistent with the usage of the term 'owners corporation' in other jurisdictions such as New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. It also clears up the existing confusion whereby the term 'body corporate' can refer to both a legal entity created by subdivision and a company created under the corporations

legislation. To avoid unnecessary administrative costs, transitional arrangements will ensure that registration and the use of the body corporate name and seal will not be affected by this change. Consistent with the changes introduced by this bill, I will use the term 'owners corporation' to describe these bodies from now on.

As I have noted, public submissions have stressed the need for increased governance of account management and financial planning. In looking at this issue, it became apparent that the type of governance necessary will often depend on the size of the owners corporation. Generally, larger organisations are likely to manage greater sums of money, are more likely to be professionally managed and are less able to conduct their affairs informally.

Under the current legislation, there are no differences in the requirements for a two-lot subdivision and a multistorey high-rise. This bill recognises the problems inherent in such a one-size-fits-all approach. It exempts two-lot owners corporations from many of the requirements that apply to other owners corporations. This approach acknowledges that many parts of the bill are inappropriate where there are only two owners and reduces the regulatory burden on such owners. The bill also draws a distinction between the duties imposed on prescribed, that is, larger owners corporations, and the duties imposed on non-prescribed owners corporations. The threshold for prescribing an owners corporation will be set out in the regulations. Prescribed owners corporations will be required to prepare financial statements in accordance with prescribed standards, get financial statements audited, establish a maintenance plan and a maintenance fund and obtain five-year valuations of common property for insurance purposes.

One issue that is critical to all owners corporations, whether large or small, is the need for a comprehensive dispute resolution system. Under the current legislative scheme, there is no formal complaint-handling system. Dispute resolution options are limited to services available for resolving neighbourhood disputes, or, if a dispute relates to the act, regulations or rules, applying for a formal order from the Magistrates Court. These options are too limited for the diverse range of disputes and parties operating in today's complex owners corporation environment.

The new scheme will remedy this deficiency by setting out a three-tier approach to dispute resolution. The policy behind this approach is to encourage a sense of personal responsibility in the parties for resolving disputes, sometimes with the assistance of government dispute resolution services, rather than relying on direct state intervention or punitive sanctions to resolve all owners corporation issues.

The first tier is a requirement that the owners corporation must have an internal dispute resolution process, with a default process set out in the model rules which will be drafted with the regulations. The bill also establishes a formal, fair and transparent complaint-handling process which may apply when the informal process fails.

The second tier is the option of conciliation or mediation processes offered by Consumer Affairs Victoria. These processes will be available to parties who are not satisfied with the result of the internal process.

Finally, the bill provides the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with powers to resolve a broad range

of disputes, including the power to impose a civil penalty for breaches of the rules. The parties may only apply to VCAT if the dispute resolution process has been exhausted.

In keeping with this scheme, the process for collection of owners corporation fees from lot owners is clearly set out in the bill, so that all parties will know where they stand. There will be a mandatory 28-day notice upon failure to pay fees. A second and final 28-day notice is discretionary, but the owners corporation cannot go to VCAT unless this final notice is given.

The dispute resolution process will be supplemented by increased measures for education, information and advice. Public education will be a crucial component of the new system, and Consumer Affairs Victoria will provide specialist information services to assist owners corporation members in understanding their dispute resolution options. These services will include telephone advice, and print and web-based information in the form of information sheets.

Another issue that was frequently raised in submissions was the regulation of owners corporation managers. Approximately 1000 people are employed full time in the management of owners corporations, a number that has risen sharply in recent years. Under the present legislative framework, managers must have professional indemnity insurance, must report to the annual general meeting and can be removed at a general meeting.

This bill will introduce much-needed additional professional and performance standards through light-handed regulation rather than a full licensing system. The bill recognises that with 65 000 owners corporations, it is owners corporations themselves that will be best placed to ensure that managers provide the services they require.

Paid managers will be required to register with the Business Licensing Authority. They will not be able to be registered if they are insolvent or do not have professional indemnity insurance. It will be an offence to act as a professional manager without being registered, or for a manager to supply false or misleading information to the BLA.

A public register will also enable lot owners and members of the public to have access to information about registered managers, and allow CAV and the Business Licensing Authority to disseminate information to managers and to owners corporations that are managed by registered managers, including details of any orders made against managers. The bill imposes a duty on managers to act honestly and in good faith, to exercise due care and diligence, and not to make improper use of their position. Managers must also return financial records to the owners corporation within 28 days of termination of their services as manager. The bill also clearly states the process for appointment of managers.

The bill imposes specific performance standards on property developers. The current legislative framework is silent on the role of the developer in establishing the owners corporation. Feedback received during the public consultation phase included cases where developers had awarded themselves irrevocable proxies, or entered into long-term service contracts with subsidiary or related companies that are not cost competitive. These practices cannot be allowed to continue. The bill therefore imposes duties on developers for a period of five years following registration of the plan of

subdivision. These duties require developers exercising a majority vote to act honestly and in good faith, to exercise due care and diligence, and to act in the interests of the owners corporation.

More specifically, developers will be required to pursue contractual remedies against builders for any defects in the common property, and will be prohibited from requiring owners to provide proxies or powers of attorney as a condition of purchase. At the initial meeting of the owners corporation, developers will be obligated to table any contracts or leases entered into, any maintenance plan, and any relevant accounts or records.

As these provisions acknowledge, the provision of accurate and up-to-date information in a timely fashion is crucial for lot owners and purchasers. The current legislative framework includes minimal record-keeping requirements, and records are not available to purchasers.

The bill will require that records be made available for inspection by purchasers and that copies must be provided for a reasonable fee. The bill also introduces the concept of an owners corporation register of important current information. This can be accessed by lot owners, mortgagees and lot purchasers. Unlike the current situation, the owners corporation certificate must now be provided within 10 business days of an application and in addition must also be attached to the vendor's statement required by section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962, ensuring that potential purchasers can obtain details of fees and other important matters before committing themselves. The bill also introduces provision for those persons whose details are recorded to apply to VCAT to restrict access to personal information in exceptional circumstances.

Under the existing regulations, there is only limited guidance on committees. Committee powers are not defined. The duties of committees and the procedure by which they must operate are also not clear, and no performance standards are imposed.

This bill will clarify that the committee may do all the things that the owners corporation can do by ordinary resolution, except those that the owners corporation itself resolves can only be decided at a general meeting. It also clarifies committee procedures and how committee meetings are called. The bill requires committee members to act honestly and in good faith and not to make improper use of their position.

Accountability is also built into the bill by the requirement that the committee must report on its activities to the annual general meeting. This provision is reinforced by a requirement that the agenda for the annual general meeting must include an insurance update, consideration of the owners corporation budget and any delegations, and a complaints handling report.

The current regulatory scheme for bodies corporate is not serving Victorians well. The regulatory scheme is sparse and limited in the guidance it provides to bodies corporate and lot owners. Parts of it are not clear or appear contradictory, and in many areas little guidance is provided to individuals trying to run these community organisations we call bodies corporate.

At a minimum this bill will fix this situation. It provides much more detail on the roles and responsibilities of the participants

in the owners corporation, the office bearers and the lot owners. It provides clearer procedures and clarifies provisions that in the previous act and regulations were unclear or contradictory.

In addition, this bill also provides for a range of new features to assist in the smooth running of owners corporations. It provides for more types of decisions by ballot, it allows owners corporations to establish maintenance plans and maintenance funds, and it provides for much better access to key information needed to run and participate in an owners corporation.

This new regulatory scheme should benefit everyone living in an owners corporation.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned for Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) on motion of Hon. Andrea Coote.

Debate adjourned until next day.

CATCHMENT AND LAND PROTECTION (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated for Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) on motion of Hon. J. M. Madden.

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

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

Weeds and pest animals pose a significant threat to primary production and biodiversity in Victoria. They reduce farm and forest productivity, with the direct cost of weeds to Victorian agriculture estimated at more than \$900 million per year. Weeds displace native species and contribute to land and water degradation. Invasive species are recognised internationally as the second most significant threat to natural ecosystems.

The Victorian government works hard to reduce the impact of weeds by anticipating potential weed problems, responding to existing weed problems and assisting landowners to meet their responsibilities with regard to weed and pest animal control. This work requires the support of a strong legislative framework under which weed and pest animal control can be regulated.

In Victoria, this is provided for under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994. This act forms a fundamental part of the legislative framework for land management in Victoria and contains the provisions which govern responsibility and control for all noxious weeds and pest animals. The act places responsibility on landowners to eradicate or prevent the growth and spread of certain types of noxious weeds and to eradicate or prevent the spread of established pest animals on their properties.

The government works cooperatively with community groups such as Landcare to implement control programs for weeds and pest animals. However, where some land-holders continue to fail to meet their responsibilities, it is necessary to enforce the requirements of the act. This enforcement action not only ensures that weed and pest animal problems are in fact addressed, it also ensures that the cooperative efforts of the rest of the community and the government are not in vain.

However, a significant deficiency in the act has been in the ability to enforce requirements for landowners to take measures to control pest plants and animals on their properties in a timely manner. To that end the Catchment and Land Protection (Further Amendment) Bill seeks to amend the act to introduce new enforcement mechanisms, including the issuing of infringement notices, and improve existing enforcement mechanisms that will enhance the management and eradication of weeds and pest animals in Victoria. These provisions relating to enforcement will work in conjunction with and complement extension work in the relevant area.

The bill will improve existing provisions under the act enabling the issue of a land management notice. Currently, a land management notice is the principal instrument under the act for requiring land-holders to meet their obligations for weed or pest animal control. Such a notice is issued to a landowner who has failed to comply with his or her duties for pest control. The main existing offence under the act is failure to comply with a land management notice.

However, provisions relating to land management notices require the investment of significant time and resources in order to access the ability to establish and enforce land management notice requirements. Currently, where there is more than one landowner, the secretary must attempt to reach agreement with each landowner on the carrying out of a program to deal with the issues of concern before issuing a land management notice. This can take a significant amount of time where landowners are not involved directly in the management of the land or are overseas or interstate.

Therefore, the bill will amend the act to replace the requirement to reach agreement with each landowner with a requirement to serve the land management notice on each landowner. Provisions relating to land management notices will also require that a landowner advise the secretary of the work carried out in response to a land management notice, where previously the landowner only needed to advise that the notice had been complied with. An infringement notice may be issued where this requirement is not complied with.

Where a land management notice is subsequently issued and not complied with, significant time must be invested in attempting to gain compliance before a prosecution in the Magistrates Court can be achieved. Therefore, two new statutory notices are to be introduced whereby landowners in specified geographical areas and specific properties can be required to undertake weed or pest control activities. Where these notices and related requirements are not complied with, an infringement notice may be issued, thus enabling enforcement action to be taken at an earlier stage.

Activities targeting the eradication or control of weeds and pest animals are normally undertaken within a targeted geographical area to enable the efficient use of resources and to involve the local community. This bill will provide that the minister may declare an area to be a 'priority area' by way of a statutory notice that will require each landowner within the

area to undertake control measures on his or her property. In addition to this, the bill will provide that the secretary may issue similar notices to individual landowners to target specific properties with a pest problem.

A landowner will be required under the amended act to advise the secretary in writing as to what control measures have been carried out in response to a notice. Where this requirement is not met or the land-holder has not undertaken the required control measures, an infringement notice imposing a penalty may be issued.

In creating these new notice provisions and amending existing notice provisions, the bill provides a suite of enforceable provisions that support and complement existing weed and pest animal control activity by communities and government. It also streamlines compliance and enforcement processes to ensure resources are used efficiently.

The act is also to be amended to further support compliance activities under the act.

The act is to be amended to allow authorised officers to gain access to municipally-held ratepayer information for name and address details of landowners.

The act is also to be amended to improve warrant provisions. Currently authorised officers may be required to enter land and clear weeds where the owner fails to do so. This may take several days or weeks to complete. However, a warrant for this activity can only be issued for one day. The act is to be amended to allow a court to issue warrants for longer periods.

The act is also to be amended to allow an authorised officer to seize specified items under a warrant which an officer can search for under the warrant.

The bill makes further amendments directed at issues relating specifically to noxious weeds. Noxious weeds are declared under the act within a range of categories according to the appropriate way of dealing with the weed. However, limitations on how weeds are declared are proving to be an impediment to weed management at both the state level and national level, insofar as Victoria contributes to the national program for weed management. Therefore an amendment is to be made to clarify and improve these provisions to enhance our response to weed problems.

The bill also introduces a prohibition on the possession of noxious weeds for the purposes of display without a permit authorising the display. This will target the display of noxious weeds as part of garden and landscaping displays which may encourage people to propagate weeds. Planting and propagating noxious weeds will also be made an offence under the act.

Finally, the bill will make a minor amendment to the act to allow authorised officers to take samples of plant materials from land, in addition to an officer's existing power to take samples of soil, stone or other similar material.

This bill represents an opportunity to significantly improve the control and eradication of weeds and pest animals in Victoria. With the creation of enforceable requirements and the overall improvement of the act as it relates to weeds and pest animals, this bill will ensure that the problem of weeds and pest animals are properly addressed for the benefit of the agriculture sector and the environment.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

Debate adjourned until next day.

VICTORIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries).

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — It has been a long afternoon waiting to get to the debate on this bill. Before I speak to it in detail, I wish to bring to the attention of the house something I believe is apposite in regard to debate on the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill. On 18 April 1902, speaking in the commonwealth Parliament — in the physical building of the Parliament of Victoria which was handed over to the commonwealth — George Reid, the then Leader of the Opposition and member of the Free Trade Party, spoke in these terms, and I quote from a debate on the Customs Tariff Bill:

I suppose that during our long struggle to lighten the burdens of the people, we have incurred the dislike of men who have crowded those galleries, and infested the lobbies of Parliament, not to promote the public good, but to gain private advantage. I have no doubt that we shall be regarded with bitter aversion by those who have so strenuously endeavoured to win the aid and countenance of the legislature in order to exploit the necessities of the poor.

In so reading that into my preamble to this debate I want to put a context around what I believe, and the opposition believes, this legislation is about. During the course of this debate the government will purport that this bill forms part of the government's platform to deal with greenhouse abatement. The reality is that the mechanism adopted in this bill achieves very little in terms of reducing greenhouse emissions. I am sure no member of this place would say other than that the phenomenon known as global warming is a matter of significant public concern and therefore a matter properly in the forefront of public policy deliberation.

However, it is our view that this bill is about a government which has resorted to a mechanism to effectively tax consumers to the benefit of the rent seekers in the wind farm development industry. It is about seeking government preferment over the ordinary men and women of Australia, and I think that what George Reid had to say in 1902 when speaking on free

trade and a tariff bill was as apposite then as it is today in respect of this scheme.

What is it that this bill purports to do? The government says the bill is intended to develop the renewable energy generation industry in Victoria through the establishment of a scheme that will involve the creation, acquisition and surrender of renewable energy certificates. It also intends to amend the Essential Services Commission Act 2001. It proposes to require electricity retailers to purchase an additional 3274 gigawatt hours of energy from renewable energy sources by 2016, and 49 110 gigawatt hours of renewable energy in total by 2030 at a default penalty price of \$43 per megawatt hour in 2007 real dollars, which equates to a transfer price of \$2.112 billion from consumers to windfarm developers.

The bill purports to establish a scheme of renewable energy certificates. These certificates will be produced by competitive power stations and will be created for electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as wind, biomass, solar, hydro et cetera. It further purports to establish targets for the purchase of energy generated from renewable sources by retail and wholesale purchases of electricity for use in Victoria. This target will determine how many certificates will be required to be surrendered in order to reach the retail and wholesale purchases every year for the life of the scheme. The bill will specify penalty rates for any shortfall of purchases, initially set at \$43 per megawatt hour.

The bill will establish the Essential Services Commission as the authority responsible for the administration of the act, to register persons to create certificates, accredit power stations, monitor the registration, transfer and surrender of certificates, enforce and monitor compliance.

The bill further provides that certain energy users may be exempt from complying with this bill. Of course, the minister has already acknowledged that we should read 'Alcoa' in this. I do not have anything against Alcoa at all, but I will come to some details shortly about the fact that the minister has made a public claim about sovereign risk. It seems to me that the minister's claim does not stand up and I will argue that case later.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — That is not what the industry says!

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — The minister interjects and I retort that the minister well knows that the Alcoa contract expires in 2014 and 2016 and there is no reason at all why Alcoa, under the principles of the bill,

should not be treated like any other business. It is another question entirely whether for policy reasons it should be treated in the same way, but given that Alcoa is the largest energy consumer in the state, the government owes it to the community and the Parliament to have a great deal more to say about the policy justification for that exemption. I am not making any point at all other than that this should be a matter for a proper public policy debate.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — So you want us to charge Alcoa?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — The minister has an extraordinarily aggravating habit of trying to misconstrue things that members of this house say in goodwill. When we are endeavouring to have an informed and sensible public policy debate, he stoops so low as to try to misconstrue things that people have said. What I have said stands on the record. The Parliament deserves a proper explanation for the exemption that is afforded under this bill to the major power consumer in Victoria. It is not good enough for the minister to say that it is something to do with sovereign risk, as if he does not understand the notion. He full well understands the notion. There is no sovereign risk issue here; simply there are contracts in place at the expiration of which in 2016 Alcoa ought properly be brought under the control of the act. However, there is a public policy issue as to whether that would be beneficial for the economic development of the state.

I suspect we all agree that the important elements about energy are its availability, security and price. They are the keystones of a modern economy. Victoria is progressively losing its competitive advantage due to internationalisation. We know that we have an extraordinary resource in brown coal in the Latrobe Valley — a resource that is estimated at the present rate of consumption to be in excess of 500 years supply and in terms of energy value to exceed that of the energy reserves of natural gas on the North West Shelf and in net present value terms worth in the order of \$100 billion or more to the state of Victoria.

I think we would all agree, notwithstanding where we have come from in this debate, that privatisation of our energy sector has been a resounding success, with churn rates up in the retail sector and a sustainable competitive market throughout the supply chain. The difficulties faced by the government of the day and the strength required by it in pursuing privatisation of the energy sector are a lesson to us all about the importance of strong leadership and clear honest debate. The fact of

the matter is that the preceding Cain and Kirner governments had led the state into economic chaos.

For two policy reasons the government of the day resolved to privatise and disaggregate the energy industries, the net result of which was to obtain a significant premium on the value of the assets and to discharge the debt that had been accumulated over a decade by the former Labor government. At the same time it introduced a level of competition which has driven prices down every year since that privatisation occurred. Consumers are the beneficiaries of that, both at a retail and business level.

Victoria has natural reserves of brown coal and gas which place us in a unique situation in the world with regard to energy generation. This is important given the nature of the economy, which is manufacturing based, and the unique advantages of other economies with which we hope to cooperate and compete — that is, China and India have low wages. So our competitive advantage is energy; theirs of course is the work force.

The last major step forward in Victoria's energy infrastructure, the Hazelwood lease extension, was an enormously difficult process that does not bode well for other investors looking at investment in Victoria's energy industry. This is a fundamental —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — The minister talks about sovereign risk; I will talk about sovereign risk in regard to Hazelwood. International Power had a reasonable belief upon acquiring the Hazelwood asset that it had an undertaking from the sovereign government of Victoria in regard to access to coal. The minister changed the rules. He should not talk to me about sovereign risk. This is a fundamental issue of trust in government. Sovereign risk is difficult to legislate away; it can only be addressed by real leadership from our parliamentarians and leaders, and I do not see any leadership in this place at the present time.

Real leadership is also needed to ensure that we have a legitimate debate on climate change. Investors throughout the supply chain are worried about where government policy is going to go. Everyone, from the investors to the users, deserves to have honesty in the debate on renewable technologies and carbon emissions. In almost every policy area, every state in Australia has come to the conclusion that any substantial and important regulatory system requires national cooperation. Mr Theophanous is the one exception. If we continue down the path of partial regulation of the energy sector we lose all the benefits

of a fluid national market and consistent environmental regulations. We support the work by the current government, by the way, in regard to further developing the national electricity market.

At this point I want to introduce an important issue which has to be addressed. Some call it the elephant in the corner — the issue that some people in the energy sector do not particularly want to talk about, but which is just not going to go away. Just to put a context around this, I will read some comments:

There are ominous signs that the earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically ...

The evidence in support of these predictions has now begun to accumulate so massively that meteorologists are hard pressed to keep up with it.

...

Climatologists are pessimistic that political leaders will take any positive action to compensate for the climatic change, or even to allay its effects.

Those comments were extracted from an article in *Newsweek* of 28 April 1975, entitled 'The cooling world'. It might well have been written recently in connection with global warming fears. There is absolutely no question that the issue of climate has been on the public policy agenda for a very long time.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the contribution greenhouse gases make to global warming. However, despite this uncertainty, the risk that greenhouse gas emissions may have serious impacts justifies taking action. The international debate on what action to take is now under way. The outcome is uncertain. The developing world has indicated it will not accept greenhouse gas emissions targets, leaving the vast majority of global growth in greenhouse gas emissions outside the reach of the Kyoto protocol. For example, China, which sits outside Kyoto, has a present economic growth rate which means that its total emissions discharges are increasing in proportion with its growth in energy demand and at a rate equivalent to the whole of Australia's emissions every 9 to 10 months — that is, Australia's whole emissions are being replicated in less than one year by China's growth.

Differing targets in developed countries can increase domestic energy costs and accelerate the shift of new investment abroad, including to developing countries which already enjoy low labour costs. As a result of global energy demands there will be a significant increase in greenhouse emissions by 2030, of which 85 per cent will be accounted for by developing countries.

Mr Viney — So they should pay the price?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Are you going to let me give my speech or are you going to help me?

With respect to the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill, this policy, as far as we are concerned, is an elaborate pricing transfer scheme — from consumers to wind farm developers. As I stated earlier, it will be in excess of \$2 billion over the life of the scheme. There is no evidence that this scheme will produce any significant greenhouse gas abatement. It is an unreliable scheme in the sense of it being designed specifically to capture and benefit the wind farm sector. There are problems with wind in terms of security of supply and the additional ancillary services charges that go with this unreliability.

However the scheme the minister has concocted is apparently a magic pudding. The Minister for Energy Industries has devised a scheme which he claims at a cost of less than \$1 per month to each household, with the price of electricity coming down, by the way, will be able to transfer \$2 billion into the pockets of wind farm developers over the life of the scheme. He has effectively refused to release the government's complete modelling on this program.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — The minister interjects that he released. What did he release? He partially released some data, which is something I will come back to shortly.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — You don't agree with the data?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — No, I do not. I do not agree with the modelling. If the modelling the minister released is what the government based this \$2 billion program of taxing consumers on, it is just a disgrace. If that is the best the government has — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Rubbish.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — In question time today the minister asserted that the Victorian government is investing in wind energy. The minister claimed that, knowing full well that the government has introduced a pass-through tax mechanism from consumers to wind farm developers.

Most profoundly of concern is that as part of the government's policy we are seeing implemented the most profound changes to Victoria's landscape in 150 years. It is hard to imagine that the people who are

promoting this massive transformation of Victoria's countryside and landscape are the same people who argue that not a single tree should be cut down on a private farm. I will be interested to hear the government's response to that, because it is a dichotomy that people in country Victoria simply fail to understand — why the government can hogtie farmers with regard to their legitimate business of maximising their productivity on their farms but at the same time is quite happy to support the industrialisation of Victoria's landscape.

Mr Viney — So you support the cutting down of trees and more greenhouse gas. You're going well, Phil!

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — The interjection from Mr Viney deserves some mild rebuke. The situation is that on Victorian farms an enormous effort is being made by land-holders to increase the area of vegetation, but that is a different notion from the ability of a land-holder to properly deal with their land in a sensible commercial way.

It is useful for us to have regard to what others say about these questions. I will turn to the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry summit held here at Parliament on 8 November 2005, and in particular the task force report entitled *Energy*. I think it is useful for us to remind ourselves of what the VECCI summit said at that time:

... a sustainable global solution will have to improve upon Kyoto by being more:

equitable, by sharing the abatement burden across all sectors (business, households and government) in all countries, developed and developing;

realistic, by looking at a more feasible time frame for targets to be achieved;

effective, by focusing on technologies that will deliver maximum abatement and by directly encouraging their diffusion throughout all industries.

And further:

The key principles of greenhouse policy as it relates to the energy sector should be as follows:

greenhouse abatement measures must be implemented in a way that minimises their cost while distributing the cost burden equitably and transparently across the community;

greenhouse policy should provide certainty for all long-term investments, including those in greenhouse gas abatement technology and infrastructure, while supporting increased economic performance and investment generally;

given the scale and time frames of energy investment, the introduction of any greenhouse abatement policies must be phased in over a reasonable time frame that allows prudent decision making;

recognising that the benefits of greenhouse abatement will be widely dispersed across the whole community and across generations, the cost burden of adjustment must be borne by the whole community;

energy and greenhouse policy should not confer any unfair competitive advantages or disadvantages on particular industry sectors.

I cannot see where the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) fits into that program!

Further, which is of interest to me, under the heading 'An alternative technology policy: strategic RDDC policy' the same report says:

The development of lower emissions technologies should not involve the process of 'picking winners'. However, if the Victorian government does want to act strategically in the technology arena to position the state for a carbon-constrained future, any such action should focus on Victoria's comparative advantages and its geographic and economic realities.

In practice this means understanding that renewable energy sources will be unable to displace brown coal as Victoria's major energy source for the foreseeable future. As a cheap, secure and reliable source of electricity, brown coal provides 85 per cent of Victoria's electricity, meaning that Victoria will remain reliant on its extensive coal reserves well into the future.

A strategic approach along these lines would involve governments increasing their commitment to seeking methods of reducing the greenhouse-related emission intensity of brown coal energy.

The investments required are significant, though not as costly as the subsidies required to make renewable energies cost competitive.

It is instructive for us, some 10 months or so on from that summit, to realise that the minister did not get it, that he did not get the message that came out of the VECCI summit, and here we have legislation before us today which completely repudiates the principles adopted by the Victorian summit. The first recommendation from that summit was:

Federal and state governments should ensure funding for greenhouse abatement technologies is focused on technologies that will deliver the highest abatement for a given cost, rather than targeted at specific energy types — for example, renewables. On this basis, it may be less expensive to reduce greenhouse emissions from brown coal than it is to make renewables more economic.

I go to the issue of consistency. I was pleased to have the opportunity to have a debate about a month ago with the Minister for Energy Industries at a Victorian

Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry energy forum, which was reasonably well attended by interested parties, and where VECCI put out a policy overview on energy. In so doing it essentially repeated the propositions that evolved from the Victorian summit in November last year.

I make the point that when it presented this document, which arguably is an abridged view of its earlier policy, it made this point in particular:

The Victorian government has recently announced plans to impose a 10 per cent mandatory renewable energy target by 2016.

... the full implications of this decision remain unclear. The government has indicated that the changes will create up to 2200 jobs, yet it is unclear where these jobs will come from. Government estimates put the additional cost to households at less than \$1 per month from 2008, however, the broader effects on industry and the wider economy need to be made transparent in order to accurately assess the full costs and benefits of such a scheme.

I note that the minister has still not made transparent the full cost. If the minister is resorting to rely entirely upon the one paper which has been circulated and which deals with this issue — that is, a submission or report to the government by McLennan Magasanik Associates — then I would have to say to the minister, 'It is pretty thin'.

The key messages for policy makers included the following VECCI statement:

Other energy sources will have a [complementary] role in meeting future energy demand. However, the use of alternative energy sources should be subject to full cost-benefit analysis and objective consideration.

Unnecessary and costly interventions and distortions put both new and existing investment at risk.

I thought that rather than spend all the time in this debate talking narrowly about the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET), it is important to have a wider context around it. I note from having a look at what all state jurisdictions, and indeed the commonwealth, are doing in regard to energy policy and abatement issues that unfortunately we do not have any attempt to develop a nationally consistent approach. All of the state Labor jurisdictions have divergent views about how to deal with this issue.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — We put out a combined joint paper on it.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Come in spinner! I am delighted the minister interjected. That is the only thing that bears any semblance of consistency on my analysis — that a paper, with every Labor state and

territory jurisdiction nominally putting their logo on the front, was produced. I agree, Minister, there was a document produced. What does the document argue? The document is called *Possible Design for a National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme*. I must give credit to the state jurisdictions for putting this document together, but I make the point before we go very much further that not everybody was proud to be associated with it. It was released on 16 August; the Queensland government was nominally a signatory, but what did the Premier of Queensland, who has just been re-elected, have to say about it on that day? He said:

I'm always excited by carbon trading. You know I was the last to sign it. I believe in carbon trading, but I also believe that we need to examine the successful technologies like clean coal technology. I refuse to support projects that sound good but deliver buggar all.

The next day Queensland Premier Peter Beattie had something more to say. He did not think he had said enough, so he said:

I don't see carbon trading as some sort of panacea in all of this, I see the answer lying with clean coal technology and then you have carbon trading after that.

He went on further to say:

At the end of it all, if we look at greenhouse emissions, we have got 1.5 per cent of the world. That is chicken feed. If we stopped polluting tomorrow it would change very little. China is 15.6 per cent and growing. India is growing. If we can develop clean coal technology in this country, we can put it in our own generators and China can put it in their generators and we can get them to be part of the partnership.

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I have to say that Peter Beattie has form on this. He had previously flagged his views, and he said on 19 July this year:

It is crucial for us to get clean coal technology right first.

Once we reach a satisfactory stage in producing clean coal technology we can move progressively into a carbon trading scheme.

What happened? The day that report was released — and according to Mr Theophanous all states signed up to this document — the Queensland government walked away from it. But it was not just the Queenslanders. What did Alan Carpenter, the Premier of Western Australia, have to say? He is reported as having said in a press release on 16 August this year that he:

... would not commit Western Australia to any form of national greenhouse gas emissions trading until there was more evidence that WA interests would not be adversely affected.

The press release goes on to quote him as saying:

'I would also want assurances that any trading scheme would not adversely impact the state's capacity to rely on energy sources such as coal'.

I have to say to Mr Theophanous: it is a pretty big flop, isn't it!

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — We will see.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — But I will tell Mr Theophanous that, having read that report, amongst all the other reports one has to read in this role, I found it very interesting, and I will acknowledge that it contains some sensible comments. I am not sure which consultants put it together, but they did a workmanlike job within the brief I presume they were given, and there are some sensible things about — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I will not take offence at that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(**Hon. R. H. Bowden**) — Order! The Chair has twice asked Mr Viney to refrain from making comments across the chamber. He will have adequate time — he is listed to speak — so I ask him to extend to other speakers the same courtesy he will receive.

Hon. Bill Forwood — He is not going to get it from me.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(**Hon. R. H. Bowden**) — Order! He will if I am in the chair.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I was going to be complimentary and read some extracts from that report because they are comments I think we would all sensibly agree with, but it is quite obvious that Mr Viney does not want to hear what is sensible in this report, so I will go straight to what is not — —

Mr Viney — You cannot bring yourself to do it.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — No, I was going to do it, but Mr Viney made a mess of it, so I will quote from page 103 of the report. Table 6-1, headed 'Additional expenditure by residential customers, \$/week' shows that if this model were adopted in Victoria every Victorian household would be paying on average an additional \$89.96 per week.

Might I say that rather than taking a bipartisan approach to this debate, obviously Mr Viney wants to play

political games, so I will just pass over it and move on to *The Business Case for Early Action*, the report issued by the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change.

It is an interesting paper, and I am sure Mr Theophanous has read it in detail. He loves sitting around reading reports. Last week, when we were in Bendigo together having a debate about resources policy, he was pleased to remind me of a couple of reports that the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics had produced, and I will refer to those momentarily. He might like to go to the library and get them. He will need to have them, because they do not actually say what he claimed in Bendigo last week when we had that debate on resources policy.

There is a claim in the report about the direction we should be taking on climate change. I found it hard to accept the bald statements, because they were inconsistent with other research I have read. The primary claim is made on page 5 of the report.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Who did the report for the business council?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Let me come to that; I will tell the minister in a moment. The report says:

The research found that it is possible to deliver these significant reductions at an affordable cost and endorses the case for early action.

The premise of this program and the key findings of the report are about unilateral action on the part of Australia in regard to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

In Victoria we have the model of state-based unilateral action, but the report entitled *The Business Case for Early Action* published by the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change says under the heading 'Independent research quoted by CSIRO':

CSIRO concludes that reducing emissions in developed countries by 60 per cent or more by 2050 as part of an international response would prevent some of the worst-case scenarios of climate change in Australia.

I reiterate that this is not about unilateral change.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — They are a reputable group, aren't they — the CSIRO?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I am supporting the case. Mr Theophanous does not listen. He is so self-opinionated that he cannot listen to another member of this house make an argument. I am making an argument. He should sit there quietly, listen to it and

then respond. I say to Mr Theophanous that the report contains this statement:

The CSIRO concludes that reducing emissions in developed countries by 60 per cent or more by 2050 as part of an international response —

did the member hear that it says 'part of an international response'? —

would prevent some of the worst-case scenarios of climate change in Australia.

That is fine. Further, as I said, the claim is made by this report that:

The research found that it is possible to deliver these significant reductions at an affordable cost and endorses the case for early action.

I looked at source documents. I thought it would be useful to see what other documents and reports said — indeed reports that have fed into this paper. It is true that the work was done for the business round table by the CSIRO and the Allen Consulting Group, but the paper I am reading from is inconsistent with the reports provided to the business round table. In fact what it advocates is unilateral action, whereas CSIRO — and clearly the Allen Consulting Group — argued that unilateral action was of little value. I have to say that, for me, that is a disappointment, because I would have thought that such an auspicious group as the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change would have relied entirely on the objective information provided to it by its consultants.

I refer to the Allen report of March 2006. I make the point that the report is entitled *Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions — Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia*. It says in part:

The science of climate change is still uncertain in some respects. The precise nature of the link between global warming and climate change is not yet fully understood. The extent of the rise in global temperatures required to bring about 'catastrophic' shifts is also relatively uncertain.

Further it says:

It should be noted that the results of this analysis are heavily dependent on a number of assumptions. The most important of these refer to the necessary assumption of global action, the rate of feasible technological progress and the possibility of increased energy conservation.

In conclusion, in referring to this document — I think this tells it all, notwithstanding the claims in the business round table paper — the Allen consultancy says:

Any large-scale unilateral action by Australia would constitute bad policy in that it would impose significant costs

on the community while having a negligible impact on climate change.

I close the case on the Allen consultancy. The minister has misrepresented the Allen consultancy on other occasions and in my view the business round table members have misrepresented the Allen consultancy in that respect.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — So you are criticising the business round table?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I am saying that the case they make does not stand, according to their own report.

Mr Viney — What a morally bankrupt argument you are putting forward!

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I do not think it is. In fact, as I said, in recent weeks I had the joy of debating the Minister for Energy Industries in a couple of different forums. On each occasion he referred to Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) reports, including one released in July and entitled *Economic Impact of Climate Change Policy — The Role of Technology and Economic Instruments*. I refer particularly to that report and I quote:

Unilateral action to achieve deep cuts in Australia's emissions is estimated to cost the Australian economy significantly more than not undertaking that action and offers no perceptible additional benefits to the rest of the world — neither in economic terms nor in terms of global environmental benefits ...

As recently as last week the Minister for Energy Industries alluded to a further report and again showed the paucity of his argument. He suggested, in support of his case for VRET, that ABARE was supporting his case. What ABARE says in its research report 06.1 released in January and entitled *Technological Development and Economic Growth — Inaugural Ministerial Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate* is:

Both technology 'push' (for example, research and development policies) and 'pull' (for example, emissions trading) will be required in the long term. However, it will be important to ensure that sufficient funding and support policies are provided to reinvigorate energy research in both the public and private sectors and that the necessary technologies to substantially reduce emissions actually exists and are capable of deployment before technology 'pull' policies are adopted.

I make the point very simply that there is no point in taking unilateral state-based or indeed national action without having an understanding of where that fits into a global context. I have made the point previously that

every state has a different view about what needs to be done. There is only one solution to dealing with this public policy debate and that is developing a national framework to move forward and, having developed the national framework, negotiating that at an international level.

Coming back specifically to the bill, various reports have been released by the government in support of its claims that VRET is some panacea for Victoria's contribution to abatement. The reports by McLennan Magasanik Associates, that have been professionally done — no doubt within the terms of reference given to them by the government — do not convince me at all that there has been sufficient modelling. If this is all the modelling that has been done, it is extremely disappointing. The report entitled *Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Abatement from Wind Farms in Victoria* is not appropriate for a baseline study for the purposes of introducing a policy which will cost Victorian consumers \$2 billion over the life of the scheme. It does talk about capacity factors in generation and states that wind generation in Victoria has only a between 33 and 35 per cent capacity factor, taking into account its reliability.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — If you can believe it. We will come to that; thanks for the invitation. I will get there in the end.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I need all the help I can get from Mr Theophanous because I want him to understand it. His advisers have not been able to make him understand it. They have given up; it is quite apparent they have given up trying to get him to understand it.

I make the point that the claims the minister makes that there will be job increases and all the rest of it are not supported by the analysis of his own consultants. The second report that was released more recently, which was undertaken by McLennan Magasanik Associates Pty Ltd, which is entitled *Additional Analysis of Benefits and Costs of a Target for Renewables in Victoria* and which is based on modelling results completed on 17 May 2006, says in part:

However, this employment will fall off after that date —

referring to the 2016 date —

unless more renewable generation is mandated or sustainable export markets are established for renewable energy products and services. Furthermore, there would be offsetting losses of

jobs in manufacturing and service provision for the fossil fuel generation industry.

I refer to that to make the point that the minister has been trotting around the place and talking about the jobs that will be created from ripping off \$2 billion from consumers and passing it through to wind farm developers — —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — To the rent seekers, as I described them earlier — I thank the member for his help.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — But you do not account for the job losses, you dill! Mr Theophanous claims it is a magic pudding. I have never found one. If he knows how to make a magic pudding, he should be the Treasurer. Mr Brumby should get out of the way, because if Mr Theophanous can make a magic pudding, if he can spend \$2 billion and not cost jobs by ramping up the profits of international wind farm developers, I have to say to the minister that he is a genius, and I have to say no evidence of that has been apparent in this place.

I would like to refer to the more objective analysis which was undertaken for the Energy Users Association of Australia by Access Economics, a very reputable consultancy business which does work for governments at all levels. Without going to the summary of the results in detail, Access Economics says with regard to its analysis:

These costs peak in 2010 where real consumption (economic welfare) is \$106 million below BAU —

business as usual —

levels (though if the 10 per cent share is maintained beyond that year costs would continue to rise). Welfare costs are driven by increased electricity prices that put Victorian producers at a cost disadvantage, and also penalise Victorian electricity consumers. The welfare cost of the policy is projected to be \$829 million in net present value terms over the simulation period 2006 to 2015 ... This is accompanied by a reduction in employment that is projected to peak at around 1140 full-time equivalent positions at 2010 ... The measured welfare impact does not include the economic costs associated with any direct subsidies provided to ...

the wind provider.

Further, I refer to three quick points from the conclusions section. The analysis by Access Economics makes the point effectively that there is a policy conflict, because of the simultaneous pursuit of multiple

objectives. There are trade-offs entailed, imposing higher economic costs to reduce emissions and develop the wind industry, which is a questionable policy decision.

In conclusion the report said:

In terms of the proposed policy approach, the main question to consider is whether the Victorian government is best placed to pick the appropriate technology, scale and time frame to best facilitate the transition to a low-carbon world. The idea of 'picking winners' in this, and indeed most government, contexts is fraught with danger. This is particularly the case when considering the proposed policy is estimated to cost considerably more than an approach that avoids selecting a particular technology.

The message that comes through to me — and if the minister has not had an opportunity to review these documents, I suggest that he take them home tonight — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — On a point of order, Acting President, I have been listening very carefully to the member and I am very concerned that he is quoting selectively from documents. In particular he is quoting very selectively from the Access Economics document without making it clear to the house that it is based on a completely different scheme to the one we are debating today. The Access Economics report is based on a 2010 scheme and has nothing to do with what we are debating.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — On the point of order, Acting President, the minister has demonstrated why he has cooked the magic pudding — because he does not have the first fundamental of understanding about economics.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(**Hon. R. H. Bowden**) — Order! The Leader of the Opposition should remain seated. I have considered the matter. It is a debating issue, and the document is wide ranging. The Leader of the Opposition has been specific in the clauses he has referred to and other references he has made. There is no point of order.

Sitting suspended 6.32 p.m. until 8.03 p.m.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I do not really recall where I got to, so I think I will start from the beginning.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Lenders — The time limit is good.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I understood I got an extension because I was interrupted.

An honourable member — No.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — If that is the case, I should be brief and deal with the particular points I want to make in the next 9 minutes and 1 second. Firstly, I will deal with the issue of reliability. Much has been said and claims have been made by the government about the contribution that installed capacity will make. The claim by the government is, in effect, that Victoria will have a much more reliable wind energy sector than other countries, such as those in Europe. I think that is a fanciful notion. I rely on the experience of the largest wind energy producer in Europe, indeed in the world, E.ON Netz, and its *Wind Report 2005*. The company has an installed wind power capacity of over 7000 megawatts in the E.ON Netz grid area, which has accounted for over 40 per cent of German wind power capacity and more than the entire wind power capacity of the United States of America.

Under the heading ‘Summary’ the report states:

Consequently, traditional power stations with capacities equal to 90 per cent of the installed wind power capacity must be permanently online in order to guarantee power supply at all times.

That is an interesting point, and I want to drill into it and understand precisely what it means. Further on, under the heading ‘Guaranteed wind power capacity below 10 per cent — traditional power stations essential’ the report says:

In 2004 two major German studies investigated the size of contribution that wind farms make towards guaranteed capacity. Both studies separately came to virtually identical conclusions, that wind energy currently contributes to the secure production capacity of the system by providing 8 per cent of its installed capacity.

I found that interesting, particularly from the point of view that it is impossible for us to rely — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — What company is this?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — You do not know, Minister? It is E.ON Netz. It is the world’s largest wind farm provider. It has supplied more than 50 per cent of all the wind power in Europe. Its wind production is bigger than the whole of the USA wind industry.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — On a point of order, Acting President, since the member has raised the issue I need to ask him again about this company, because my understanding of the company is that it is not a wind farm company at all; the company E.ON is a transmission company. The member should correct the record — he has tried to pretend that it is a wind farm company.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I thank the minister for using up my time! On the point of order, Acting President, the fact is — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(**Hon. J. G. Hilton**) — Order! I am happy to rule on the point of order. I do not believe there is a point of order; it is a point of clarification to which the member may respond if he chooses. I ask the member to continue his contribution.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I suggest that if the minister reads the report for himself, he will be better informed. Indeed I recommend that the minister read all the reports to which I have referred in the course of the debate, because clearly the minister is too lazy to do his homework. He relies entirely on his competent advisers, who have given up advising him because he just does not take any notice.

I now refer to something that the minister may have read more recently. An article in the *Age* says in part:

A spokesman for the National Electricity Market Management Company has confirmed that greenhouse-friendly power sources such as gas and hydro are likely to be the first to be shut down when wind energy enters the grid. The last to be displaced is brown coal, the worst for the environment but also the cheapest.

The point of the article is to contrast the government’s claims in regard to the contribution the \$2 billion cross-subsidy to the wind farm developers will have in terms of emissions abatement with other views. Further the article goes on to say:

... wind ... has priority over other electricity generation. During normal to low demand, other generators will be closed down or their power sold cheaper. The first to go will be gas and hydro. They are the next-most-expensive to wind, but they are also relatively greenhouse friendly, so wind displaces generator forms that are already causing lower greenhouse harm.

The article concludes:

‘Brown coal stations are at highest efficiency when they are running flat-out, that is also when they produce their least greenhouse gas ...

Those comments are attributed to Richard Elkington. I know he will be well known to the minister as a fellow traveller, and he is the general manager for power at Loy Yang Power. The article concludes by reporting him as having said:

‘Our station’s output is 2000 megawatts maximum and we can cut it to 1200 megawatts, but we produce more greenhouse gas per megawatt, the lower we go. Anything lower than that and the cost of generation starts to rocket dramatically’.

The *Age* article, which was written by Geoff Strong, makes a very strong point — that is, that the claims of the government are spurious. The claims of the government about the magic pudding, to which I have alluded earlier during the debate, are nothing more than fanciful.

I refer to the energy policy the government released for the 2002 election. Under the heading 'Fair prices for power users' the guarantee is given that:

Labor will continue to protect Victorians from unjustified energy price rises.

I point out to the minister that what he is doing now is legislating to increase the price of energy to Victorian consumers. If governments were to legislate in this way in respect of petrol prices, the community would be marching in the streets.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Are you still going to repeal the legislation?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — Does the minister want me to get to the conclusion? I am happy to do that. I also note the minister has failed to meet his objective of 1000 megawatts by 2006 as set out in that policy.

I note that the wind farm proponents — they are listed in terms of the projects which are on foot, either already up and running or proposed — are mostly international or interstate-owned companies. There are very few beneficiaries in terms of domestic investors who are going to come out of this scheme with a benefit. The jobs case has been demonstrated to be illusory and I argue that in fact there is going to be a net loss of jobs. It is important for us to note that from the point of view of even the domestic-based businesses, the primary beneficiary is going to be Pacific Hydro, which is controlled by Industry Fund Services. IFS is owned by the union superannuation funds.

Given the time limits placed on this debate, in conclusion I make the point further that the Liberal Party strongly supports the renewables industry. It will have a bright new future as inevitably the price of carbon is factored in to emissions abatements from fossil fuel generators. There is absolutely no question that over time the renewables sector will be more price competitive going forward. There is an enormous conflict between what the government-stated aim of this policy is and the legislation before the house, and achieving the objective of sustaining a vibrant economic base in Victoria and ensuring that we retain a competitive advantage in energy.

The opposition opposes this bill. I confirm, as I have said a number of times in other places, that the Liberal Party will repeal the proposed Victorian Renewable Energy Act when it is in a position to do so simply because it does not believe this is good policy for the community. I need to say that in the context of this debate so that no investment decisions are made based on any uncertainty about our position going into the next election.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I am pleased tonight to have the opportunity to put the views of The Nationals on the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill. One of the objects of this bill is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I will set out some sort of context for my comments on the bill by talking first about The Nationals position on climate change and renewable energy versus fossil fuel-based energies. I will try to do that as succinctly as possible.

In my mind and in the mind of The Nationals there is no doubt that global temperatures are increasing. That is an indisputable fact and there is no argument about that. It is debatable whether this is due to a natural cyclic pattern of global warming and cooling or due to the influence of man. That is not an area I am going to go into at great length tonight — because I think we could debate that particular issue for an hour — except to say that in my view man has never matched the power of nature. In looking at recent earthquakes and tsunamis, which no reasonable person could attribute to any climate change, one sees the disastrous impact of those natural events on humans and their habitation.

That is on a broader scale, but even on a minor scale man has never matched the power of nature. I cite for example the channel entrance at Lakes Entrance. We have searched for a solution to prevent the entrance from closing over and have not found one as yet. We have found temporary solutions by dredging the ocean entrance, but invariably the power of nature continually brings that sand back in and closes the entrance.

In respect of climate change and increasing temperatures, global temperatures are increasing. I do not know why they are. I cannot give an exact answer to that because it is part of a wider debate. However, in response to the issue of global warming The Nationals think it is prudent to adopt a precautionary but practical approach to addressing the impact human habitation may have on the bigger environmental issues such as climate change. In that respect we take as proactive and pragmatic approach as we can.

Furthermore, we strongly believe in the importance of resource sustainability but we need to consider the

impact our actions have on the greater balances world wide. Again I draw for example on resources sustainability in the timber industry. It is fine for Victoria to be seen to be protecting its timber resources. But at the same time our demand for timber resources means that we rely on others to supply us with that product. We are not achieving that resource sustainability when we are replacing home-grown resources with resources from other areas.

That same resource sustainability principle extends to the energy sector. We simply do not have endless global supplies of oil, gas and coal, so we need to develop alternatives to fossil fuels. There is some work being done with biofuels, and of course renewable energy comes into play there as well. I say categorically and quite clearly that The Nationals realise the importance of developing renewable energy technologies. We are going to desperately need such technologies in the future. As I said, the supply of oil, gas and coal is not endless and so we are going to have to develop alternatives to energy production in the global world in which we live. We recognise the important role for renewables.

Aligned to that is our belief that all sections of our society should share the cost of our actions. We need to share in the cost of renewable energy both physically and financially.

What I am saying is that all of us should make a contribution in some way towards the increased cost of meeting our energy needs. Indeed I think there will inevitably be an increase in cost, whether we continue to use fossil fuels in some form or another or whether we move to a greater reliance on renewable energies. Part of that increased cost will be financial and part of it will be physical. In terms of physical cost, I am talking about the establishment of alternative generation facilities for renewable energies. Wind energy will of course have a great impact, and there are also other forms of renewable energies that will have a physical impact as well as a financial impact.

To highlight my point about the need for all of society to share in the cost of resource sustainability, I draw on the example of vegetation clearing. People in the timber industry, and indeed in the agricultural industry, often get blamed for contributing towards climate change and global warming because of their vegetation clearing, but 75 per cent of vegetation clearing in Victoria is done to create areas for cities, for housing and for roads rather than for agriculture or for timber production. Not many people take that fact into account. We are too eager to point the finger at our timber industry and our agricultural sector when it is actually the expansion of

the urban sector which contributes more to vegetation clearing than anything else. We need to recognise that issue, and the cost of addressing that issue needs to be shared equitably throughout all our different communities.

When decisions are made to take action to address issues like climate change, they need to be practical, they need to be cost effective and they need to be within the reasonable expectations of the people living in our communities — that is, we need to maintain living standards. I do not think that people can be reasonably expected to share in the cost of addressing issues like climate change if it leads to a reduction in living standards, and indeed I do not think there needs to be such a reduction. No matter where we live, we all need to share equally in addressing these issues.

We also need to take a pragmatic approach. I think we all accept that fossil fuel use will not be replaced overnight or indeed in any significant way unless we adopt nuclear power as an alternative base-power generator. I am not by any means advocating that we do that, but what I am saying is that by taking a pragmatic approach, renewable energies will not replace fossil-fuel-based power production in any significant way overnight. There needs to be a gradual introduction of renewable energies, and I think the government recognises that as it moves towards having 10 per cent renewable energy production by 2016, according to this legislation. I will talk more about that target later in my contribution to debate on this bill. Let us make sure that we set the ground rules that renewable energy has a role to play but will not replace fossil-fuel-based power generation in a significant way in any short period of time.

The view of The Nationals is that if we are to address the issues of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in any significant way, then a lot of our efforts need to address the improvement of the technology with which we use fossil fuels, because by improving that technology and making it more efficient we will achieve the greatest gains in greenhouse gas reductions. I know that the Victorian government is contributing to greenhouse gas reductions in part, along with the federal government, but the view of my party and my personal point of view is that the greatest gains in reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be achieved by improving the technology with which we use fossil fuels. That issue needs to be considered in the context of debate on the piece of legislation we have before us this evening.

The last point I want to make about this general issue of climate change and the use of renewable energies

versus fossil fuels is that we need to have a greater focus on the issue of demand management of electricity. Some of the greatest gains in reducing reliance on power can be gained by demand management methods or techniques. The minister is on record as saying that if we switched all appliances off at the power point instead of leaving them on stand-by, then we could achieve something like a 12 per cent reduction in electricity use in domestic households. It seems to me that we need to focus more on the issue of demand management, because it is an easy way to reduce the amount of electricity we use without inconvenience and therefore reduce the demand for power generation, and that can assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We need to increase our efforts in terms of demand management.

They are some of the general comments and views of The Nationals in respect of the issues of climate change and the use of renewable energies versus fossil fuels. I will summarise those views as succinctly as I can. We acknowledge that there has been a change in our climate and that global warming is evident. We are not sure in our own minds whether human activity has contributed to that change or whether it is a natural cycle. Nevertheless, we need to take a precautionary approach to it, and where possible we should try to reduce the impact that humans have on the climate in which we live.

The Nationals believe that, taking a practical approach, our reliance on fossil fuels will be around for quite some time and that the greatest gains in reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be made by improving the technology with which we use fossil fuels. We say that renewable energies have an important role to play in the future. There is absolutely no dispute about that. We have probably not even thought of some of the ways, yet to be discovered, in which we will generate energy in the future. It is necessary to focus on that fact because in time to come, when our oil, gas and coal supplies become depleted, there will be a greater reliance on renewable energies.

That is the context in which I make these general remarks about the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill. I appreciate the sentiment in which the government has put this bill forward. I understand where the government is coming from. It wants to see a greater promotion of renewable energy in this state, and so do we in The Nationals. But when we consider this bill we need to be pragmatic and practical and take into account the reasonable expectations of the people which I outlined in my background comments.

After a fair bit of consideration and a fair bit of soul-searching on this issue, The Nationals have decided to oppose this bill. I want to spell out, in the context of the background position I have outlined, six reasons why we intend to oppose the bill. In some cases those reasons will overlap those general principles I have outlined. I do not apologise for that, but I needed to set that background to give the house a context for the six reasons we came to the conclusion that we should oppose the bill.

The first of those reasons is that, as I said in my summing up, we believe the best option for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is by improving the technology with which we use fossil fuels. Some 85 per cent of our electricity needs in Victoria still come from brown coal, and no matter what energy system we have in this state, we will need a base load power generating system to supply day in, day out — every single day of the week and every minute of the day — a base load level of power. It will be supplemented by gas, by hydro and by other renewable energies from time to time, but we will still need a steady base load supply of electricity. What I believe can be achieved — the minister would already know this, as I believe he made a comment about it when he turned the sod for a new coal-drying demonstration plant in Latrobe Valley — is a saving of up to 30 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions from brown coal by a drying process before that coal is actually burnt to produce electricity. The Nationals believe that in the long term Victoria will rely on brown coal for somewhere between 80 per cent and 85 per cent of its energy requirements and that 15 per cent to a maximum of 20 per cent will come from other sources.

Nevertheless, if our sole intention is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, then we are going to make far greater gains by achieving efficiency in the use of the product that generates 85 per cent of our power than we will by replacing it with about 10 per cent new renewable energy. We will achieve greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by improving the technology for the use of brown coal. What we say in respect of this, the first issue on which we oppose the bill, is that what we should be doing is balancing the introduction of renewable energies, which this bill seeks to achieve, with an equally strong emphasis on reducing the emissions that come from brown coal. We do not believe that balance has been achieved. We think there needs to be greater effort, and more can be achieved by increasing our efforts in researching, developing and demonstrating that technology.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — But you won't bring it to market without an emissions trading scheme.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I think we will. The minister interjects that we won't bring it to market. I think that natural forces mean we will in the long term accept increases in the cost of the production of electricity, just as I think people have reluctantly had to come to accept increases in the cost of petrol, which is a form of energy in itself. We have come to accept that because of shortages, and we are looking for alternatives. As members would know, I, for one, have been promoting the issue of biofuels in this Parliament, and I am pleased that in some respects the government has accepted some of my arguments for the greater use of biofuels. In time our communities will accept that we need to pay more for our energy needs, and I think they will do that with greater willingness if we look at reducing emissions as practically, effectively and cheaply as we can, and one way to do that is by improving the technology for the use of fossil fuels.

Let me go to the second issue, which is a cost issue. The government claimed that the introduction of this bill is going to cost consumers in Victoria less than \$1 a month, at least in the first instance. I have had a look at some other reports. Newspapers suggest it could be up to an \$80 a year increase in cost to consumers. In truth I think the figure will probably be somewhere in the middle. I do not have the technical ability to argue the case one way or the other. I have had a look at the documentation used by the government that was obtained by my colleague Mr Baxter under freedom of information.

I am not afraid to admit that the report entitled *Additional Analysis of the Benefits and Costs of a Target for Renewables in Victoria*, is a very technical document, and I would welcome a briefing at some time from its authors, because it is difficult for a layperson to understand it. I am not by any means saying that the report is incorrect, but I am saying that I still have difficulty in understanding the content of that report and I would value some other opinions on the subject or at least a briefing from the people who put it together.

However, there are issues about the costs. I accept that in the future energy costs are going to be raised, but I still think those costs can best be minimised by attacking not only the expansion of the renewable energy sector but also the efficiency of the brown coal sector.

The third point I want to move to is that the government will claim that the Victorian renewable energy target contained in the bill will promote investment in regional Victoria. I want to ask why renewable energy projects are confined to rural Victoria. As I said in my

opening comments, it is the view of The Nationals that we should all share equally in such change. It seems to me that in the wind energy sector, for example, the focus for the location of all these wind energy turbines appears to be along the coastline of rural Victoria.

Mr Viney — What about metropolitan Melbourne?

Hon. P. R. HALL — That is a good question Mr Viney. I could ask you what is wrong with the Mornington Peninsula, the Bellarine Peninsula or around Port Phillip Bay? Some of those areas have just as much wind as some of the coastal areas of country Victoria. Why — —

Mr Viney — There is a planning process.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Why is there a planning process? There is a planning process, and indeed there should be a planning process for wind facilities as well, but the fact — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — There is not, because it goes straight to the government. There is no opportunity for people in country areas like Bald Hills or Dollar, where there are a couple of issues regarding the location of wind farms, to have a say in the planning process. There is no opportunity for local councils to have a say in the planning process; it is determined by government. We say there needs to be an equitable sharing of these resources. If it is good enough for Bald Hills in South Gippsland, why is it not good enough for the foreshore of Williamstown, the Bellarine Peninsula or the Mornington Peninsula? I think country people would be more accepting — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Is that what you would do?

Hon. P. R. HALL — Yes. As I said before, there should be an equitable sharing of the need to have a greater reliance on renewable energy. We should all share in that cost. Why should country people bear the total physical cost of these structures? It is just not fair. That is why people in country Victoria have their backs up on these issues. They can see that the cost burden is not being shared equitably. The interjections show that the government still does not seem to understand that country people have always shown they are prepared to accept their contribution towards dealing with issues. We are prepared to accept our contribution towards addressing this issue so long as people who live in metropolitan areas are also prepared to do it. Why not have wind towers on top of some of the tall buildings in Melbourne, which can be quite windy? There is no

physical reason why that cannot be. It is surely a matter of perception, and we say that is not taking a consistent approach as between people who live in the country and people who live in the city. We say that country people have consistently been used to resolve the environmental problems of this government and absolve the people who live in Melbourne, and that is not fair.

The fourth of the six points I want to make concerns what I believe is the failure to embrace other renewable technologies. In terms of this debate, clause 22 on page 22 of the bill is headed 'What is an eligible renewable energy source?'. The list includes hydro, wave, tide, ocean, wind, solar, geothermal, hot dry rock, energy crops, wood waste, agricultural waste, food waste, food processing waste, bagasse, black liquor, biomass, landfill gas, sewage gas and any other energy source, so it is all encompassing. I acknowledge that this bill addresses all sorts of renewable energies, but it seems to me that the focus of renewable energies, the concentration on developing renewable energies in this state, is directed towards wind, and I think it is an unhealthy reliance on one form of renewable energy.

Even if you look at the table in the document obtained under freedom of information showing where our different renewable energies come from, you see that in 2005 in Victoria 65.1 per cent of renewable energy was hydro, 16.9 per cent was biomass, 17.9 per cent was wind and only 0.1 per cent was solar. I think there is great potential in developing some of the other renewable energies that we have available to us today, and one of those is solar energy. I think it is amazing that so little focus — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — It is eligible, but I think there is little focus — excuse the pun — on solar energies.

Mr Viney interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — Mr Viney asks how we are going to get a focus — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! Mr Viney and Mr Theophanous can make contributions later in the debate. I suggest they let Mr Hall complete his contribution without interjection.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I listened to Mike Rann, the South Australian Premier, on the radio at the weekend when he spoke about what the South Australian government is doing to develop solar energy over there. He spoke about its program to power a lot of the public

buildings in Adelaide, including the Parliament itself, by solar means. That state is moving towards total reliance on solar energy for power use in those public buildings. I say to the Victorian government that there is an example of a Labor government in another state putting its money where its mouth is and investing in renewable technologies other than wind for the public benefit, and I think there is great potential to do it here.

I have listened to and watched programs presented by the ABC — *Catalyst* in particular — where solar technologies that are being developed by the National Solar Energy Centre and others have been demonstrated. They have shown a series of mirrors with the sun's rays being reflected off them and concentrated to a single point of focus on a reasonably large tower. Commercially that sort of technology will be very viable in the future for powering whole cities, not just houses. I heard one scientist suggest that all of Australia's power needs in the year 2030 could actually be provided within a 50-square-kilometre area in the centre of Australia.

All I am saying about this point is that it seems to me we are hearing scant about renewable energies other than wind, and I think there is an unhealthy reliance on wind — —

Mr Viney — That is because of your focus.

Hon. P. R. HALL — No, it is not my focus. Mr Viney's government comes out and talks about these great wind projects for Victoria every second week. What I am saying is that there seems to be no diversification of renewable energies. There are other renewable energies that have great potential, including, as I said, solar energy. Solar offers a lot of opportunities for electricity replacement, particularly in heating; we have seen that already in terms of solar hot water services.

The fifth point I want to make is that renewables will never meet the increased base load and the increase in peak load demand in this state at the moment. Annually, base load is increasing by around about 2 per cent per annum and peak load is increasing by about 2 to 3 per cent per annum. Those growth rates pretty much match the economic development growth rates of the state of Victoria. Thus over the next 20 years the demand increase will require an additional 50 per cent more generation capacity in this state. I am quite happy that a lot of it will come from renewable energies; there is no doubt about it whatsoever. But I am also saying that we are still going to have a continual reliance on base load generation, and because of the variability factors, which the Leader of the Opposition spoke about

before, and a range of other matters, we are still going to be reliant on fossil fuels to provide much of that base load generation.

I know that if you had a multitude of renewable energies, then because of the variance between them perhaps you would reach a point where there was a consistent base load amount being generated from a variety of renewables. But in that case the amount of investment that you would have to have in renewable energies would need to far exceed the 10 per cent specified in this bill; you would have to have about 80 per cent to achieve a reasonable base load coming out of various renewable generators.

To be pragmatic about this, the fact of the matter is that we are still going to need fossil fuels if we are not going to move to nuclear energy. I am not advocating nuclear, but it is the only other base load generator that would provide us with that consistency. Since we are going to need to have a consistent base load generator, we are going to continue to rely on fossil fuels and on greater use of fossil fuels. That is why we in The Nationals believe that there is a need for further base load generation to be developed in this state. I hope the exploration licensing process that the government currently has under way regarding brown coal in the Latrobe Valley leads to an increase in base load generation. There is no doubt in The Nationals view that in the very near future the state is going to need that increase to meet demand. Even the government's own scale of development of renewables will not, according to this bill, meet our demand in 2020, so we will need greater levels of base load generation.

The sixth and last point I want to make on why we oppose the bill is that the government is guilty of inconsistency in its attempt to achieve uniformity in these matters. I know that the Victorian minister and other Labor states around Australia sought to introduce a national carbon emissions scheme. It was quite valid that they sought to do that, but at the same time it seemed to me totally inconsistent that they refused to participate in national guidelines for wind farm planning. I do not believe that you can have it both ways. The best way is to have national uniformity in a whole range of matters. If the Victorian government were sincere about trying cooperatively to set up a national carbon emissions scheme, it would also look at setting up national planning guidelines for wind farms, which constitute one of the major renewable energy generators. In that case we would have had a greater chance of moving forward in terms of national consistency in this whole renewable energy debate.

These six points, which I have tried to set out logically and sensibly, are the reasons why, after much consideration, The Nationals will oppose this bill.

For the sake of the record, this bill sets out a scheme for the creation and acquisition of renewable energy certificates. It sets a target of achieving 3274 gigawatt hours of new renewable energy by 2016. That target will be incrementally increased until it is reached in 2016, so it is not expected to all come at once. The bill will require electricity retailers to have reached their share of that target each year as prescribed. 'As prescribed' means there will be a lot of regulations related to this legislation. We do not know the full details of that at the moment.

As I said at the outset, I can understand where the government is coming from with respect to this, but I do not believe that its approach is balanced or practical. It has not been pragmatic about the whole issue of encouraging investment in renewable energy technologies. We support that encouragement, but the government has been unbalanced in that regard instead of acknowledging and recognising that we are going to have a continued reliance on fossil fuel production and will therefore need to have appropriate investments into the way — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Are you also promising to repeal it?

Hon. P. R. HALL — We are opposing the bill. That is what I am saying, Mr Theophanous.

I could — but deliberately will not — turn to issues that have been reported in newspapers regarding a whole range of factors in relation to the government's reliance on wind energy. I will not do that because I am trying to be balanced in what I am saying tonight — —

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I am trying to be balanced, Mr Forwood.

Hon. Bill Forwood — I was not suggesting you were not, but do not expect me to be balanced.

Hon. P. R. HALL — I am trying to be balanced. I have pointed out six reasons why we believe this is an unbalanced approach — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL — This is an unbalanced approach towards addressing what I think is an important issue, and that is the reduction in greenhouse

gas emissions. It is a practical issue in that people expect their living standards to be maintained. Moreover, it is a denial of where we can make the greatest gains in greenhouse gas emissions — that is, by improving the technology with which we use fossil fuels in Victoria, particularly brown coal.

For the reasons I have outlined The Nationals have come to the conclusion that we have no other option but to oppose the bill.

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — I am pleased to speak tonight in support of the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill. In so doing I wish to congratulate the Minister for Energy Industries for his vision in bringing this bill to the Parliament and for his work to place Victoria on a sustainable footing, not just for now but into the future.

Tonight we have heard contributions from Liberal Party and Nationals members, who I am pleased to say acknowledged that climate change exists, that it is a reality, that it is here to stay. But that is where their contributions began and finished, because they basically said, ‘Yes, climate change is a huge threat to Victoria, to our nation and the world, but we are not prepared to do anything about it’. I think it is a very unfortunate attitude on the part of Liberal Party members in particular to say that they are not prepared to address one of the most important issues affecting our planet today. It is an indictment of them that they came in here and put forward that argument tonight.

Climate change indeed poses a very severe threat to Victoria, as it does the whole nation. The CSIRO has informed the government that we can expect a rise in temperature of some 6 degrees by 2070. As a consequence of that rise in temperature as a result of global warming there will be a 20 per cent reduction in rainfall across the south-west of Australia, and sea levels will rise by up to 88 centimetres over the next century. That is a very serious warning indeed from the CSIRO. It is one that no government can afford to ignore, and our government certainly is taking the issue of climate change and its impending consequences for our state and our nation very seriously. We believe we have an obligation to attempt to reduce Victoria’s contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, to play our part in this national debate and indeed this world debate. We believe we have a part to play, and that is what sets us apart from the Liberal Party and The Nationals, because they admit there is an issue but are not prepared to do anything about it. We are admitting there is an issue, but we are prepared to roll up our sleeves and do something about it. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking such a proactive role in addressing climate change.

Recently the Premier, the Minister for Energy Industries and the Minister for Environment in the other place, Mr Thwaites, released our environmental sustainability action statement. The statement contains some 150 actions and provides an additional \$200 million in funding aimed at reducing Victoria’s environmental footprint. We are preparing our state for a sustainable future. We are looking after not just ourselves but the generations to come. One of the actions that was announced as part of the environmental sustainability action statement was the introduction of the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme. This scheme will place Victoria at the forefront of the development of the renewable energy industry in Australia. Specifically it commits Victoria to ensuring that 10 per cent of our electricity will be derived from renewable resources by 2016.

The Bracks government would have preferred not to have to go it alone on this issue, but in the absence of federal leadership we have no choice. It would be much more preferable if we could, as a nation, confront the most serious issue threatening our future together, with a consistent approach across Australia. Sadly this is not going to happen under the current federal government. It has its dead hand on the exploration of renewable energy options in our nation.

Last year I was very pleased to be invited to a forum that was run by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Dr Ian McPhail. He invited industry leaders, the electricity industry, environmental groups and members of Parliament — in fact he invited members from all parties — to a forum to discuss the issue of climate change. It was very interesting to take part in that forum and to listen to what industry and the environmental groups had to say. They both wanted the same thing. They wanted certainty, and they wanted leadership. They also wanted action. It was very interesting that the only representatives of a parliamentary party who turned up were representatives of the Labor Party. There were no Liberal or Nationals MPs. The only people from this place who were interested were Labor Party MPs — the government MPs. I think it is incredibly disappointing that the others failed to take that opportunity to discuss in an open forum the severe issue of climate change, its impact on our state and some options for addressing this very serious issue.

Of course it is incredibly disappointing that the Howard government has failed to increase the mandatory renewable energy target. It is prepared to consign Australians to the ravages of climate change. It has a head-in-the-sand attitude. It is failing in its obligations to the Australian people. This builds on its failure to

realise our global obligations by refusing to sign the Kyoto protocol. It is an embarrassment internationally that we are not prepared as a nation to sign that protocol. It puts us to shame. Future generations will look back and ask why we were not prepared to do it. It is, to quote the title of the film that is about to be released, an inconvenient truth for the federal government that it is not prepared to address this very serious issue. We had an indication last week of how seriously it takes the climate change issue when we had the climate change conference taking place and it had entertainment which involved a burlesque dancer with balloons for the audience to pop! They were red balloons; they were not even black balloons. That shows the seriousness with which the Liberals take the issue of climate change. How disappointing.

Hon. Andrea Coote — For goodness sake!

Ms CARBINES — The truth hurts, doesn't it, Mrs Coote? It does hurt. It is very sad.

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT

(Hon. J. G. Hilton) — Order! Mr Forwood's comment was totally inappropriate. He is not in his place. If he wishes to make a contribution to this debate, he is on the list of speakers. At the moment he does not have the call, and I ask him to show the speaker who is on her feet some respect.

Ms CARBINES — Victoria has now decided to introduce its own renewable energy target, and will pursue a state-based market scheme. VRET will trigger up to \$2 billion in new investment in renewable energy projects across our state. We have already seen some of that confidence in Victoria's approach to renewable energy bear fruit, including an announcement that at Mount Gellibrand in the Colac Otway shire a wind farm of some 116 turbines will be constructed, which will deliver 232 megawatts of power. The whole shire is behind and supportive of that wind farm.

VRET will see a reduction in greenhouse gas pollution by some 27 million tonnes. That is 1.13 million tonnes per year, which is the equivalent of removing about 3 million cars from Victoria's roads for two years. That is a fantastic outcome. But it does not stop there, because it has an economic benefit as well. It involves \$2 billion in investment, which will generate over 2000 new jobs. That will be a very good outcome for our state.

The VRET scheme commences on 1 January next year. It is predicated on a system of renewable energy certificates which can only be created by an accredited

power station for electricity generation up to 1 January 2031. They will only be eligible if the power comes from renewable resources — wind, solar, wave, hydro, biomass and geothermal. That is an exciting future for our state with investment in all of those renewable energy processes taking place. I am proud of the role that our government is playing to reduce our greenhouse footprint and to source more and more of our energy from renewable resources.

Power stations must report each year on the amount of energy produced from renewable resources. There will be interim targets established as we move towards 10 per cent from renewable resources by 2016. Power stations must meet these targets. Failure to do so will result in financial penalties. The scheme will be administered by the Essential Services Commission. The Bracks government will provide \$1.5 million to establish the VRET scheme.

There will be a small increase in electricity prices over the years for Victorian households of an estimated \$8, which is a minuscule cost for households to bear but a huge benefit as we move progressively to more and more renewable energy resourced across our state.

There is no easy answer to climate change. No-one is pretending that. We all recognise that it is here — it is not fantasy, it is fact, but there is no single solution. It poses a very severe threat to our economy — to the economy of our state and our nation. It also poses a severe threat to our environment, an environment which we rely upon in Australia as part of our way of life.

Our government has an obligation to reduce greenhouse gas production and to source more and more of our energy from renewable resources. The introduction of the VRET scheme is a good step in the right direction. We are leading the nation by taking this step.

I condemn the federal government for having an ignorant attitude towards climate change. It is prepared to say that it exists, yet it is prepared to do nothing about it. In fact, not only is it prepared to do nothing, but it tried to stop states such as Victoria from having their own progressive policies in relation to renewable energy resources. One only has to look at the debacle over some of the wind farm proposals in our state to see the absolute hypocrisy of the federal government in relation to climate change and how to address it.

I congratulate the Minister for Energy Industries for introducing the bill. It will certainly place Victoria at the forefront in Australia in relation to renewable energy, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I rise to speak against the legislation before the house tonight. My starting position was what the government was attempting to achieve through the legislation. I started with the second-reading speech which outlined four key areas as reasons for introducing this legislation, starting with the issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. That is a topic on which Ms Carbines spent most of her contribution speaking about. I would venture to say that she created a few greenhouse gas emissions herself during that contribution.

Ms Carbines — You are an ignoramus.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Very sensitive.

Ms Carbines — It is ignorant of you to say that — acting like a silly schoolboy.

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Mr Forwood in an earlier interjection used the term ‘pious’, which I think was very accurate.

The second-reading speech talks about boosting Victoria’s energy production from renewable sources to 10 per cent and curiously makes a comment about targeting the wind sector for an extra 1000 megawatts of new investment in wind before going on to refer to investment in rural jobs and rural investment.

The content of the bill does not live up to those promises. The cynic in me had me asking the question about whether this had more to do with Greens preferences for the Legislative Council in the upcoming election than it did with addressing the issue of greenhouse gases that Ms Carbines spoke so long about.

What is the mechanism this bill introduces? The bill puts in place a requirement for organisations buying electricity in the wholesale market to have certificates for the prescribed percentage of electricity they purchase as coming from a renewable energy source. It sets up a mechanism by which generators of renewable energy are allowed to issue those certificates. If at the end of the year the purchaser of electricity does not have the requisite number of certificates for the required percentage of electricity, they are then liable to a penalty. The legislation sets that penalty at \$43 per megawatt hour that they are short of the renewable energy certificates. The price of the penalty is indexed in accordance with the consumer price index and will therefore go up over the life of the legislation.

The bill sets out a target in 2016 of an additional 3274 gigawatt hours of renewable energy — that is, from new sources — being purchased under the Victorian renewable energy target system. The penalty for not doing that is an indexed \$43 per megawatt hour, so the total cost of the scheme in 2016 will be more than \$140 million per annum. That assumes that the certificates are sold by generators at the maximum price. In effect, by having a penalty of \$43 per megawatt hour indexed, that will dictate the price of the certificate, or just below that indexed price, so effectively renewable energy producers will be able to sell their certificates in that year at \$140 million in 2007 dollars.

Despite the commentary about \$8 for households, and substantially more for industry, it is clear that the total cost to Victoria in 2007 dollars will be a substantial amount — \$140 million — once the target peaks in 2016, and then going forward at that cost for each year into the future. It is not without substantial cost to the Victorian community that this scheme is being introduced.

I turn to the issue of environmental impact. I make the point at the start that the bill does not seek to reduce the production of greenhouse gases in Victoria. There is nothing in the legislation that will result in a reduction in the level of greenhouse gases. The only way you can reduce the level of greenhouse gases produced in Victoria would be to take some existing coal generation off line. That is not what the legislation will do. This legislation is looking to introduce renewable energy. It is not looking to take off existing coal generation, so there will not be a reduction in the level of greenhouse gases as a consequence of this legislation.

What the bill talks about is abatement. It is important that we make the distinction between reduction and abatement, because they are not the same thing. We will not see a decline in the level of greenhouse gases resulting from energy generation in this state. In the second-reading speech the minister indicated that the target is to abate the level of greenhouse gases by 1.13 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. In her contribution Ms Carbines said that this bill is important to the environment, to — —

Hon. Bill Forwood — Saving the world!

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — To saving the world. It is worth putting that 1.13 million tonnes of CO₂ in context, because that accounts for less than 1 per cent of Victoria’s annual emission of greenhouse gases, it accounts for less than 0.2 per cent of Australia’s annual greenhouse gas emissions, and it is

less than 0.0028 per cent of the global greenhouse gas emissions. My leader Mr Davis spoke about the rapid industrialisation in China creating further greenhouse gas emissions. He mentioned that every nine months Australia's entire production of greenhouse gases is being overtaken by China and that this is confirmed by the Commonwealth Greenhouse Office.

The reductions or abatement created by this legislation, the 1.13 million tonnes per annum, will be overtaken by China in a day. So the amount of greenhouse gases that are proposed to be abated by this legislation will have been created every day that China is developing. A substantial penalty will be imposed upon Victorian individual consumers and industry through either the penalty mechanism or the need to purchase certificates, which by market forces will be priced at the same level as the penalty — \$140 million per annum — with no tangible impact on the environmental outcomes in terms of global greenhouse emissions.

There is no doubt that there will be an impact on Victorian industry. Tonight I had the opportunity to look at some of the information on the National Electricity Market Management Company (NEMMCO) web site. I highly recommend it to members who have not looked at it because it has a lot of very good data on the electricity market in south-eastern Australia — on pricing and demand. It is a very good way of getting a good understanding of how our electricity market works. I can tell the house that, for example, at 8.00 p.m., when Mr Davis resumed his speech, the wholesale price of electricity in Victoria peaked at \$90 per megawatt hour. Over the course of today's trading it had hit \$90 four times and it had traded between \$90 and \$20 per megawatt hour, which demonstrates that it is a very volatile trading market. As a matter of interest for the house, there is also some historical trading data which indicates that on 24 February demand for electricity peaked at 4.00 p.m. at 8700 megawatts and the price at that time peaked at more than \$9000 per megawatt hour, which is more than 100 times the price that electricity was trading at tonight. Again it demonstrates that with market forces in the national electricity market the price and demand are very volatile.

One of the key competitive advantages that Victoria has had over many decades has been cheap electricity and that has been the basis on which much of Victoria's manufacturing has been developed. That is something that members need to keep in mind when we are looking at the impact of this legislation on Victorian industry. NEMMCO reports some very interesting statistics on the wholesale price of electricity in Victoria. Due to capacity constraints, over the past six

years the wholesale price of electricity in Victoria has increased by more than 46 per cent: in 1999–2000 it was \$26 per megawatt hour and for the current financial year it is more than \$38 per megawatt hour. By contrast, in Queensland the price has fallen by 40 per cent, in New South Wales it has increased by 32 per cent, and in South Australia it has fallen by 28 per cent. So over the life of this government Victoria has experienced a substantial increase in wholesale electricity prices and in contrast other states have actually had substantial falls in prices.

At the same time, we have seen a major drop off in Victoria's share of investment. We have seen manufacturing investment in this state fall from 37 per cent of national manufacturing investment in June 2001 down to less than 25 per cent in June of this year. We have seen total private sector investment by industry fall from 26 per cent in December 1999 to 21 per cent in June of this year. So there has been a very clear pattern between the growth in the wholesale electricity price in Victoria and the fall off in manufacturing investment. That is something we need to keep in mind when looking at the impact this legislation will have on Victorian industry while not delivering any tangible environmental benefits.

As Mr Davis said, the bill provides a major subsidy to wind power generators. It is curious that the minister and the government are targeting wind. The bill provides for renewable energy from 20 different sources but the only one the minister refers to is the wind industry, despite the fact that within current capacity in Victoria and NEMMCO wind is a very minor player in renewable energy relative to hydro — and landfill gas, which is another of the Victorian sources. The Australian Wind Energy Association has had prepared for it a paper in which it is concluded that by 2020 the cost of wind energy generation will converge with the cost of brown coal energy generation. So there is already a trend of convergence on costs, which raises the question of why we need to have this subsidy/penalty arrangement in favour of wind energy. By the minister's own figures the bill clearly does not produce any tangible environmental benefit. It comes at great cost to Victorian industry.

The Liberal Party will oppose this legislation. It has indicated that in government it would repeal this legislation.

Mr Viney — That's a disgrace!

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Mr Viney says that that is a disgrace. I have to say that if Mr Viney

thinks that supporting Victorian industry and Victorian jobs is a disgrace, then indeed it is he who is a disgrace.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN (Ballarat) — I really believe that this is an incredibly important debate. I have often talked about water but what we are talking about here is energy. Energy is increasingly involved in global conflict and what is going to drive our economies and the health of our economies globally into the future. We in Victoria have a number of challenges. We have the challenge of trying to clean up a dirty brown coal industry, through which we do get cheap electricity. We have to fix that problem.

We also have the challenge — and this is what the bill is about — of promoting and encouraging alternate energy sources. I am a little constrained tonight because I have had a phone call from a company director from the federal government. There are currently some proposals in front of the federal government that relate to solar energy, which is a very exciting project. It will be very exciting when it is announced, hopefully in the next month.

Hon. Bill Forwood — The previous government speaker slammed the federal government. You have to get your stories straight.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — Excuse me, Mr Howard —

Hon. Bill Forwood — That will do.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — Sorry, Mr Forwood.

Hon. Bill Forwood — That is all right — ‘Mr Howard’ will do.

An honourable member — You have been elevated.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — Yes, you have been elevated to Prime Minister.

I am of the view that the energy debate is incredibly important, and at the moment — during the second-last speech I will ever make in this place — it seems to me that one part of the equation is the Howard-Bush argument that we need to promote new technologies. They are right; we must find new technologies to resolve the issues of dirty brown coal et cetera, and we need to promote alternative energies.

The other part of the equation is that we need to assist alternative technologies to be viable. What we as a government are doing here today is crucial to that debate. We need to assist emerging technologies — and

I am not talking about wind, I am talking about solar and other technologies. I support wind technology and the wind debate. It is very important, but I must add that the wind technology we are talking about is not Victorian or Australian — it is overseas technology. What I am talking about are Victorian inventions, Victorian technologies, which we have the intellectual property to promote and profit from.

This debate, incredibly important as it is, seems to be put in terms of two separate sides — that is, the side of John Howard and George Bush, the President of the United States of America, and the ‘Let’s sign Kyoto’ side. They appear to be on opposite sides of the fence, but they are not. They are both part of the same debate, which is about where we will get our energy.

The important question is, ‘Do we have a climate crisis?’. The answer is, ‘Absolutely, yes’. I have a vineyard, and I have had 10 years of drought and frost. The whole climate has changed in my area. Cairn Curran Reservoir holds 4 per cent of its total water capacity. We clearly have global change. As a nation, as a state government and globally we need to embrace all the answers, which are not just from one side — the right or the left.

I know of some very encouraging signs, but I cannot talk about them tonight because I have been told it is a bit close.

Hon. Bill Forwood interjected.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — Okay, ring John Howard and ask him about solar energy and how important it will be in the next 18 years, and you will get an answer. I will not talk about the particular company.

In terms of coal, we have an issue in Victoria that has not yet been identified. At the moment we burn brown coal to create electricity. As one expert said a few months ago, it is like burning wet socks to create electricity. If you take the water out of brown coal, you will have black coal. You can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the Latrobe Valley by 30 or 40 per cent instantly, but who will pay what I think is a cost of \$13 per tonne? In Victoria we have the technology to clean up 30 or 40 per cent of our greenhouse gas emissions, which would equate to Australia’s entire share of reductions under the Kyoto agreement. We have the technology; it is a matter of doing it. That is not easy, but we have the potential to do it.

The other issue regarding brown coal is that we talk about it as if it is just something to use to make electricity, but that is nonsense. The calorific value of

the Gippsland Basin — not the Latrobe Valley, but the whole Gippsland Basin — is four times as large as that of the North West Shelf. It is equivalent to Saudi Arabia's oil supply — that is what we have in Victoria. Right now an American company has the mining rights to the brown coal in the Gippsland Basin. It is serious about converting brown coal to oil. It can be done. It was done by a German scientist in 1916 and was replicated by Germany during World War II. Brown coal has been changed to oil and then to fuel. The question is how much will it cost.

There is the potential in Victoria to produce oil from brown coal using brown coal drying technology at the front end. This is very important. We talk about the resource-rich states of Western Australia and Queensland. This could be the largest resource development Australia has ever seen — and it will be in Victoria in the next five years.

I am a dreamer, but I am also pragmatic. I listened to the Honourable Peter Hall's speech. I also listened to the speech by the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips — and I have to say, Gordon, that that was really inane. It was really not understanding the energy debate. I am sorry; it was really inane.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!
Mr McQuilten should speak through the Chair.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — I am sorry. Mr Rich-Phillips's speech was really inane. It was not understanding the global significance of what our generation must face now. We really have to make decisions about global warming, and we have to make them now. What I am suggesting to this house, to my government and to every other government, particularly the Howard government, is that we must embrace the new solar technology and we absolutely must embrace the new cleaner coal technology. It is incredibly important that we do that.

I believe that what we can do is not normal; it is not normal to think that if we go down the environmental track we can create jobs. I really believe the greatest area of job creation globally is environmentally sustainable, clever technology. That is where the jobs will be created. In the solar technology I am talking about thousands of jobs will be involved, and in brown coal drying thousands of jobs will be involved. By going down the track of being smarter in using technology and resources and really searching for answers to global issues such as global warming we will create, not lose, jobs.

There are two projects in Victoria which I think are incredibly exciting. They are a mix of what the Howard government talks about — that we must find new technology. They are here, so we should support them. There also needs to be a scheme, like the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme we have here, to assist business. In December I met with the head of International Power in London. His name is Phil Cox. I need to explain who Phil Cox is. He owns Hazelwood and bloody half of Loy Yang.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I ask Mr McQuilten to make sure his language is parliamentary.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — I did not say anything unparliamentary, did I?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The member should be careful about what he says.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN — I asked Phil, 'What do we need to do in Australia?'. He said, 'What you need to do is get Australia to sign up to Kyoto'. Here is a guy who is running a £15 billion company which has about 30 per cent of its investments in America, 45 per cent of its investments in Europe and 20-odd per cent of its investments in Australia. He said that we need to sign up to Kyoto. That is the voice of private enterprise. We need to do our bit as Victorians to try to convince the rest of Australia and to try to convince the Prime Minister, John Howard, that global warming is a serious issue, but we need a number of answers. There are lots of answers, and we have to really put our minds to the solutions. There will not be one solution, there will be many solutions.

I have to say that I thought the contribution of Mr Hall was slippery. He slipped and slid. He was half right, half wrong, half this and half that. If you are absolutely serious about what is happening in terms of global warming and using technology, you have to put the whole package together. You cannot just do bits and pieces; you have to do the whole package.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I welcome the opportunity to spend a quarter of an hour on this piece of legislation. I am sorry that I will not have more time. I come to this debate having been the shadow minister for environment prior to the last election and also having spent some time as the shadow minister for energy and having taken an active interest in this issue.

Mr Smith interjected.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — My views, to use Mr McQuilten's expression, could be slightly characterised as slippery, because I change my mind from time to time on various aspects of the debate. I entirely agree with Mr McQuilten that technology is part of the solution to the problem. But let me start my contribution with a quote that I was reminded of as I listened to the contribution from Ms Carbines. I know honourable members are well aware of The Lavoisier Group, which is not one the government often quotes, but let me quote from the introduction of a publication of the group, which I think applies to the contribution we heard from Ms Carbines:

People who know that they are morally superior to the rest of mankind are often tempted to ignore the moral norms on which Western civilisation depends. One of the most important of these is telling the truth. The Ninth Commandment states 'Thou shalt not bear false witness ... Environmentalism, however, is a form of religious belief which fosters a sense of moral superiority in the believer, but which places no importance on telling the truth. As the former Canadian Environment Minister Christine Stewart put it:

No matter if the science is all phoney ... there are collateral environmental benefits ... Climate change [provides] the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world.

The legislation before the house today is the Bracks government's contribution to bringing justice and equality to the world.

In the short time available to me I want to deal with some of the issues of climate change and what it actually means. Then I want to turn to the issue of the policy before the house and ask: if the policy works exactly as the government claims it will — which I think is a matter of some great dispute, but if it does — will it make a difference? Then I will move to the question of whether it will work the way it should and test some of the claims the government makes about it, particularly its claims about the benefits that will accrue from investment and the number of jobs created. I should say that in my contribution I have been greatly helped by two rocket scientists I know well, both of whom have obtained PhDs from Harvard at some time or another. One of them did a calculation for me, which I know honourable members will be interested in. He worked out that the — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Back of the envelope, was it?

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Yes, he had a long conversation with the minister's advisers first. The guy is reputable. He came up with the fact that the total subsidy of the wind farm program, as evinced through the legislation, is \$2.898 billion, which leads to a

maximum annual subsidy of \$217 million, a minimum annual subsidy of \$16 million and an average subsidy of \$114 million — and the government claims that 2000 jobs will be created. If you do the maths on that, you will see that the capital subsidy per job over the life of the project is \$1.5 million. In capital terms we will be spending \$1.5 million to create each job. But more to the point — —

Hon. J. M. McQuilten — I would like one of those jobs.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Yes, I am sure you would. But Mr McQuilten should listen to this, because this is the bit — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — So would Mr Forwood.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Yes, I would. This is the bit that in annual terms we should focus on. Taking the average, the annual job subsidy of the 2000 jobs created under this program is \$57 000. We will be taking money from the ordinary consumer in Victoria and creating 2000 jobs at a cost of \$57 000 per annum per job.

Hon. J. A. Vogels — Why do you say 2000? I think it could be less.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — If it does not create 2000 jobs, then let us double the subsidy. That would mean that each job would be costing us \$100 000 a year, and one wonders whether that is the policy direction we should be going in. However, let me just turn to the reason that we are doing this, because I have the letters here from the Premier to his colleague the former Premier of New South Wales, Mr Carr. On 15 July 2004 the Premier wrote to Bob Carr saying that:

On 26 June 2004 a meeting of state ministers for energy agreed to establish an inter-jurisdictional working group to recommend ways to increase the MRET from the current level and time frame. The working group will discuss opportunities for collaboration on ways to increase MRET and provide more certainty for renewable energy projects in Australia.

I propose that this working group also specifically consider the development of a model for state-based legislative schemes to stimulate renewable energy generation. The scheme could operate through mirror legislation in each of the jurisdictions, with the objective of driving greater growth in the renewable energy sector than that proposed by the commonwealth ...

In other words, the Victorian government taking the lead again under Mr Theophanous, as is his wont, sought the cooperation of the other states in developing a national scheme to be put in place by complementary

legislation. This of course was going on hand in glove with the work on the establishment of an emissions trading scheme which my leader spoke about in some detail in his contribution earlier tonight.

The Premier of New South Wales replied, and in his reply he did not leap to the suggestion made by the Victorian Premier on the urging of the Victorian minister — and I think that is disappointing. But he did say that:

The New South Wales government is strongly supportive of renewable energy and I recommend that the working group established to examine MRET investigate and determine the most effective mechanism to support the development of the renewable energy industry. The working group should undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the use of MRETS and their impacts on the energy market compared with a more conventional industry policy approach where there are transparent subsidies provided to renewable options.

He went on to say that he looked forward to continuing cooperation.

What is very disappointing to those of us who are interested in this whole process is that Victoria has gone it alone. It was all right for the pious cant of the member for Geelong who promised to come in here and have a crack at the federal government, but as others know, one of the problems about this is that no other state is coming with Victoria on this particular frolic.

Hon. J. M. McQuilten — They should.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — They should; that is right, they should. We have an assertion from Mr McQuilten that they should, without any evidence to demonstrate it! I will go back to my point.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — The rent seekers of this world will always put their hands up for the subsidy. Where was I up to? You have thrown me, and I was in the middle of a very important point.

Hon. J. A. Vogels — The other states did not come on board.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — The other states did not come on board.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — They have not yet.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — They have not yet and nor are they going to. Let us get back to the fundamental point which is that even if this policy works as the government hopes it will, which it will

not, it will not do a single thing to save the world. Members do not have to believe me, they can believe Bob — what is his name? — Beattie.

Hon. J. A. Vogels — Peter Beattie. He called them idiots over there.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Peter Beattie recently said, and all honourable members should — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Did he do that? Peter Beattie made the point that Australia's emissions are so small, that the Chinese economy is growing at the rate of 15 per cent, that the American economy is coming down and China is catching up. What we know is that even if this works and even if we act locally and think globally and all the rest of it, this policy is not going to do much to save the world.

Some members of the government are a touch cynical about this. They think this is good politics, that you get out there and scare the punter as much as you possibly can, then you come up with the answer, 'We will bring in a VRET scheme'. The fact that it is not going to make the slightest bit of difference does not work. My friend said to me the other day, 'In this I guarantee you that this government is spinning more than Shane Warne will in the whole of the summer against the English'. That is his view about the way this particular process is working.

I am not so cynical as to suggest that this policy is about this government giving a windfall gain to the rent seekers. I know others make this sort of claim. Let us look at Pacific Hydro, which is a big player. We know that Pacific Hydro is owned by IFM Renewable Energy, which is ultimately controlled by Industry Fund Services. If members go to Industry Fund Services, they will find IFS is owned by AustralianSuper, CARE Super, Cbus, HESTA, HOSTPLUS, MTAA, TWUSUPER — —

Hon. J. M. McQuilten — Moral investors!

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Moral investors, thank you. If members look at the board of Pacific Hydro, you see Garry Weaven runs it. I know that all members take great interest in who runs the super companies. I am aware that the chair of Cbus is Ralph Willis, on the board is John Sutton from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and of course the wonderful Bernie Fraser with the gravelly voice who we know was the worst governor of the Reserve Bank this country ever saw and gave us the recession we had to have — and he runs it.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — On a point of order, Deputy President, I have been listening to the member and I really cannot see how it is relevant to the bill for him to continue to go off on these tangents about what people are involved in, what they might invest in and whether there are superannuation funds involved and so forth in particular operations. That has absolutely nothing to do with this bill before the house.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order!
Mr Forwood is getting a bit broad in the range of his contribution to the debate. I ask him to come back to the bill in the short time he has left.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — In the minute and a half I have left, let me make the point that I have had a net-present-value and return-on-investment exercise done, and what it demonstrates is that there is a great transference from the many to the few — from the consumers who pay more for their electricity to the few who receive the subsidy. Who are the few? The few are those in the trade union movement, because they are the major investors, through the superannuation funds.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — No, it is absolutely true. I could go through each of the owners of Pacific Hydro and demonstrate their close links to the union movement and point out to the — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — You want to knock off the wind farm, do you?

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I do not want to knock off the wind farm, I want people to know what is happening.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — So you do not want the Portland project to go ahead?

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I am quite happy for the Portland project to go ahead. I just want people to know — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — No, you are not! Tell the truth. You want it knocked off.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — No, I do not. I am quite happy for the Portland project to go ahead.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Yes, you do. That is what you are saying.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — No, I am not saying that. Do not put words in my mouth.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I ask Mr Forwood to return to the debate.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — How about telling him to shut up so I can?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Back to the debate!

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — I am really looking forward to the committee stage of the bill, when I hope to get more time to explore some of the detailed issues with the minister.

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — I am very pleased to stand tonight and speak in support of the Victorian Renewable Energy Bill 2006. In opening can I say that I have been very disappointed with the contributions of members opposite. For Mr Forwood to come in here and attack my parliamentary colleague Ms Carbines on the ground of moral superiority is the height of hypocrisy. It is the height of hypocrisy, Bill.

Hon. Bill Forwood — On a point of order, President, I do not want to be too precious, but the member really should not call me 'Bill'.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I uphold the point of order. I have advised members in this house before to use the correct titles of members, and I remind Mr Viney to do so.

Mr VINEY — It is the height of hypocrisy for Mr Forwood to come into this place and attack Ms Carbines on the ground of moral superiority when he is the man who comes in here repeatedly attacking person after person from the great moral high ground of his position as a member of this place using parliamentary privilege. He did so again in his contribution tonight, attacking people like Bernie Fraser and other good people who are involved in the management of superannuation funds. Mr Forwood then went on in his contribution to talk about the job-to-cost ratios in relation to the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme.

The VRET scheme will produce 3000 gigawatts, yet Mr Forwood and the federal government supported the mandatory renewable energy target (MRET), which had exactly the same ratios and exactly the same support and which produced some 9300 gigawatts. The argument Mr Forwood has put forward tonight is absolutely bankrupt on the basis that he and the federal government supported exactly the same scheme with exactly the same relationships of subsidies and outputs.

Mr Forwood then went on to attack a number of people who he called rent seekers. It was the mob on the other side who flogged off the State Electricity Commission in the first place. They are the ones who privatised the whole system, and for him to come in here and attack this government over what he called rent seekers seeking a subsidy is just ludicrous. Mr Forwood then talked about government members seeing this legislation as good politics. We do not see it as good politics, we see it as good policy. I can tell Mr Forwood that the good politics of this debate have been in the contributions of opposition members. Their contributions have demonstrated the moral bankruptcy of their argument.

We had Mr Philip Davis, the Leader of the Opposition, who said that we should do nothing in relation to VRET. He said we should not do anything because 85 per cent of greenhouse gases are going to be produced in the Third World by the developing countries. He was putting forward a proposition that developed countries should do nothing about greenhouse gas emissions because the developing countries are starting to produce massive amounts of greenhouse gas. That is the most morally bankrupt argument I have heard in this place.

It is an absolute disgrace to suggest that people in the developed countries who have had all the benefits of high energy use for 100 years and more and have contributed massively to greenhouse gas emissions across the globe no longer have the responsibility to do something about it because the Third World will be producing more greenhouse gases. What an incredibly morally bankrupt argument that was! Mr Philip Davis then went on to say that the other reason he was objecting to this bill was that there was a change of landscape.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I have been listening to the honourable member misrepresenting me for the last several minutes. I take objection to a member coming in here, reprising the debate we had and misrepresenting the comments I made. The member knows full well that my contribution to the debate tonight was to say specifically that this bill does not seek to achieve the government's policy objective in any material way.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Leader of the Opposition cannot debate his point of order. If he is saying that the arguments Mr Viney has put forward in rebuttal of the comments put by the Leader of the Opposition and others are inappropriate, I do not uphold the point of order. That is a debating point. Mr Viney has an opportunity to put those arguments, as

did members sitting around and behind the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Viney is following the speaker from the opposing side, and he is entitled to debate the issue.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a further point of order, President, I accept your ruling, but I do not accept that a member has the right to misrepresent what another member has said in a contribution to a debate.

Mr VINEY — On the point of order, President, I did take notes when Mr Philip Davis was speaking, and my notes show that he said that 85 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions will come from developing countries.

Hon. Philip Davis — Further on the point of order, President, it is quite clear that the member is going to continue to try to misrepresent the argument I put. I do not care what notes he took. He should read *Daily Hansard* in the morning.

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis went on to say that in comparison to developing countries, in Victoria we produce much less greenhouse gas, and the extension to his argument was that not only would he not support this bill for this scheme but that in fact when his side comes to government — whenever that happens — it will repeal this legislation. That is what he said. What I am saying is that the logic of that argument from Mr Davis and the opposition tonight is morally bankrupt, because it suggests that there is no role for the developed countries in the world to accept their share of responsibility for climate change. We have to do that.

The other thing I feel has been incredibly disappointing about the contributions of members of the opposition to this debate has been the lack of understanding of the government's policy for dealing with the climate change issue. This government has funded \$105 million for the development of innovative technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the coal industry, and the Victorian renewable energy target scheme is part of the total suite of policies this government is putting in place to develop a responsible response to the climate change issues that we face globally. As part of that the government expects a range of initiatives, including, as Mr McQuilten referred to in his contribution, the drying of brown coal, geosequestration and the conversion of brown coal into other energy forms. A raft of opportunities exist for Victoria to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our incredible coal resource.

In addition, we need to look at renewable energy. This bill introduces for the first time in Victoria a scheme that will encourage investment in the renewable energy

sector, into areas like solar, wind and biomass. I am sure a raft of other opportunities will be presented through innovative industries to look at new technologies and at new forms of producing energy in a way that is renewable and will enhance the efforts that this government and this nation should be making to reduce greenhouse gas for a better future.

In his contribution Mr Rich-Phillips offered the ridiculous argument that VRET will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It was the most illogical presentation I have heard in this place. How can it be that with growing energy demands of about 1.5 per cent per annum, and a scheme put in place in Victoria to look at 10 per cent of our energy coming from renewable energies, that the scheme does not reduce the gross impact of greenhouse gas emissions that this state is contributing into the atmosphere? Mr Rich-Phillips presented an absolutely illogical argument.

Hon. Philip Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis has had his opportunity. Mr Viney should speak through the Chair!

Mr VINEY — Thank you, President. I will respond to the interjection from Mr Davis by saying that if you put in place a system of renewable energy that contributes to the total energy needs of a community — in this case Victoria — then logically it has to follow that it will reduce the amount of greenhouse gas that would otherwise be produced by that community if it were using other non-renewable energy sources.

What policy options has the opposition put forward in this debate tonight? What single policy option has it put forward to deal with climate change? It is a fat zero. The only thing we know is that the opposition will repeal this bill if it ever comes to government, and that the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, wants to investigate nuclear energy. That is what the opposition is presenting to the people of Victoria. In the absence of any other policy initiative, one is left with the conclusion that the opposition is not convinced by the science on climate change; it is not convinced by the science on greenhouse gases; and it is not convinced that this state and this globe faces serious problems in the future in relation to climate change. Ultimately that is the most disturbing thing about the contributions that we have heard in this place tonight.

The most disturbing thing about the contributions from opposition members tonight is that they do not understand what is facing this planet. They refuse to acknowledge the science and refuse to believe that we

in this Parliament have an obligation to our children, our grandchildren and their children to do something about climate change. All of the arguments that opposition members have put up are incredibly shallow because we have to start and we have to get on with it. This is one of the suite of policy options that this government is putting in place to deal with the problem confronting this globe.

I am disappointed that members of The Nationals are not coming on board with this. I understand they see political opportunity in opposing wind generation in some of their electorates but I think they understand as people who represent rural and regional Victoria, and as people who I hope have an understanding of farming and country Victoria, that the whole country, including farmers and our food producers, need to deal with this problem. I had hoped they would rise above politics in relation to their concerns on wind generation and deal seriously with this. However, I thought their contribution was far more considered than that of members of the Liberal Party opposition whose contributions to this debate tonight were incredibly disturbing because they deny the obvious truth and they deny the science. It was incredibly disturbing because in my view their arguments were morally bankrupt. They do not believe developing countries have an obligation in this regard, and they do not believe that we in Victoria have an obligation to do everything we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to deal with the matter of climate change.

I am very proud to be a part of a government that is putting forward legislation such as this to deal with the issues of climate change, and I support the legislation.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western).

Debate adjourned until next day.

ADJOURNMENT

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Transport Accident Commission: WorkCover claim

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I wish to raise my matter with the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC. It concerns the director of a company who has approached me regarding a transport accident involving a truck owned by the company. The truck was returning to Melbourne from Adelaide and was

involved in a head-on accident in South Australia near the Victorian border. Both drivers were injured in the accident and in fact a medivac air ambulance was called to take them to the Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide. Both drivers had serious injuries but fortunately both survived.

The police charged the employee with negligent driving and a conviction followed. As a result of the charge it was deemed to be a Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) claim and not a Transport Accident Commission (TAC) claim, and relevant costs were incurred by the transport company. The driver later appealed the conviction in the South Australian Magistrates Court and after three years was rewarded with the overturning of the conviction. In fact he was granted costs in that case. In his summing up of the matter the chief magistrate in the Adelaide court suggested that based on the information provided there was a likelihood that the other driver was probably at fault in that he was 18 inches on the wrong side of the white line and that had been the key contributing factor to the accident. Armed with that information the transport company approached its insurance company and requested that the claim that had been lodged with the VWA ought now properly and reasonably be transferred to TAC as a road accident claim.

This issue has not been resolved at this time. I am happy to provide the minister with details of the company and the person involved because it is a serious claim that has now been outstanding since 1998, which was when the accident occurred. It seems to me that in the circumstances established by the courts this ought properly be a TAC claim rather than a VWA claim. Obviously there are significant costs for the employer in terms of ongoing associated premium costs and so forth, to the extent that the company no longer remains in business. I seek the minister's attention to this matter with a view to resolving the circumstances and status of this claim.

Lorne: pier reconstruction

Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western) — I raise an issue for a minister responsible for the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Honourable John Thwaites, the Minister for Environment in another place. The issue concerns the rebuilding of the Lorne pier. The Lorne Aquatic and Angling Club is hopeful that commonsense will prevail and will allow a lower landing to be constructed while the pier contractor and machinery are on site during the building of the new pier. This landing would be used as a safe landing site for rescue and retrieval of persons in trouble at sea and

for recreational and sporting events such as the pier-to-pub swim, fishing, sailing and so on.

It has been identified in the tourism strategic plan for the Surf Coast region that there are limited boating and fishing facilities such as jetties, moorings and boat ramps. Good business sense alone would suggest that it would be very cost effective to do the required work — the construction of a lower landing — while the contractor is on site. To bring a contractor back at a later date to complete the lower landing would be very costly and would lead to further disruption to the community, business and tourism. The action I seek from the minister is to ensure that the lower landing is constructed during the present pier construction. Time is of the essence, as the current construction of the pier is well advanced.

Bushfires: Grampians

Hon. DAVID KOCH (Western) — My matter is for the Minister for Environment in the other place and concerns the bushfire threat this summer in the Grampians National Park. Volunteer firefighters and land-holders whose properties adjoin the national park have formed the Grampians asset protection group (GAP) to give them a united voice in calling for action to implement additional fire prevention measures in the Grampians. Volunteer firefighters and land-holders whose properties border the Grampians have repeatedly called for action from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, which listens to their calls, draws up fire prevention plans and then fails to act. As early as March this year DSE said it would undertake a fuel reduction burn in autumn at the back of Mount Sturgeon in the southern Grampians. That burn still has not taken place.

GAP has also prepared a comprehensive submission asking for a major rethink on the whole fuel reduction burning process. This was sent to the Premier, senior government ministers, local politicians, including me, DSE and Parks Victoria. The submission was signed by 4 group officers and 12 brigade captains covering the southern and eastern Grampians. It included a proposal for an extensive burning program in the Serra and Victoria ranges over the next 10 years and called for better track maintenance and a major effort to construct new fire dams accessible to firefighting aircraft like *Elvis*.

My colleague the Honourable David Davis and I last week met with several land-holders whose properties adjoin the eastern boundary of the Grampians National Park. They reinforced the views of GAP, calling for improved fire breaks along boundary fences and more

water provision for firefighting purposes in the national park and on private property.

At the fire recovery public meeting held at Willaura in early February this year, 130 people heard Mr Peter Boadle of DSE say that the department would clear a 3-metre strip on the national park side of boundary fences and remove destroyed fences and debris. This has not happened, and land-holders have been left to clear up fallen trees and destroyed fences. Land-holders endorse a 20-metre cleared strip on the national park side of boundary fences to prevent naturally falling trees from damaging their fences while providing a reasonable fire break and better DSE access. Land-holders and GAP members are extremely concerned that DSE's current fuel reduction plans are not aggressive enough and will not be completed, effectively preventing adequate burns before this summer.

My request is: will the minister act on the submission from GAP, listen to the concerns of land-holders bordering the Grampians National Park and make every effort to prevent a repeat of last January's devastating bushfires?

Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network: transition workers

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — My adjournment issue tonight is directed to the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs in another place, the Honourable Jacinta Allan. The issue is my extreme disappointment that the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network missed out in the allocation of the new transition workers, whom I believe will play a key role in assisting our young people who have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, from further education or meaningful training and employment. One of the reasons or excuses offered as to why the northern Mallee network missed out was that a number of our young people had part-time jobs during their education and that there was therefore no need for transition workers. Let me say that that it is a load of nonsense. Whilst a few of our young people may pick up a bit of part-time work, a fair slice of that is helping out on the block or in situations similar to that across other industries.

In the northern Mallee we have all the relevant ingredients, except one — that is, the transition workers. We have the young people, we have unmet demand for employees and apprentices and we have excellent educational and training facilitators and providers. But the key link is constituted by that interface between all of these organisations and

industry sectors and our young people. It would seem to me and to many others, including the Mildura Rural City Council, that the statement that the workers will be employed in regions where there are high numbers of disengaged youth fits perfectly the Loddon–Mallee region, particularly the north-west Mallee region.

The Sunraysia region is a great example. There we have high numbers of sole-parent families, a high proportion of public housing, high rental stress and a low labour force participation rate that I strongly believe could be addressed if the correct initiatives were put in place. Sunraysia has seen rapid expansion in irrigated horticulture and viticulture, and the service industries are always searching for people, especially those with particular agronomic and engineering skills. The area is also a popular drawcard for seniors, who like the lifestyle and the services, which, when added to the tourist industry, provide a strong demand base for employment.

The action I request from the minister is to appoint two transition workers to the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network to meet the needs of our disengaged youth, who have the ability but not the focused support or real understanding of how to make a significant contribution to both their own wellbeing and the economic development of the region.

Cann River P-12 College: videoconferencing system

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place. It concerns the continuation of the ISDN (H320) videoconferencing system in East Gippsland.

This matter was brought to my attention by the Cann River P-12 College — a small college in far East Gippsland. Because of the small number of students it has, particularly in Victorian certificate of education (VCE) areas, the college uses videoconferencing to network some of its students with other students in the Far East Gippsland Cluster, to enable the delivery of some of the important programs, particularly those at VCE level. The Far East Gippsland Cluster operates on this particular system of videoconferencing but has been notified by the department that it is about to discontinue the system, and perhaps by the end of the year will no longer support the particular ISDN (H320) videoconferencing system.

I am advised in this letter from Cann River P-12 College that the far east cluster has recently purchased an IP-based videoconferencing system and is in the

process of testing and implementing it, but it does not have the confidence that this system will perform to the same level as the current system and is unsure whether it will be online and operating sufficiently well to accommodate some of the student needs next year.

The request of the Cann River P-12 College is to ask the Minister for Education and Training to give a guarantee that the current ISDN (H320) videoconferencing system will be supported by the department and remain in place until such time as it is proven, without doubt, that there is an adequate replacement system.

Responses

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) — The Honourable Bruce Atkinson raised for the attention of the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC a request for the minister to assist in resolving the status of a Transport Accident Commission and WorkCover matter from 1998, and he has provided some details about that matter. I will refer those to the minister for his attention.

The Honourable John Vogels raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment in the other place concerning the construction of a pier, and I will refer that matter to the minister.

The Honourable David Koch raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment in the other place concerning fuel reduction burning in the Grampians on private land and in national parks and drew to the attention of the minister the importance of fuel reduction burning in relation to prevention of bushfires. I will refer that request to the minister.

The Honourable Barry Bishop raised for the attention of the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs in the other place a request for the appointment of workers to the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network. I will refer that request to the minister.

The Honourable Peter Hall raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in the other place concerning a request for the continuation of an ISDN (H320) videoconferencing system until such time as the efficacy of a replacement system can be resolved, and I will refer that matter to the minister.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 10.10 p.m.

