

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 5 October 2006

(Extract from book 13)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

Lady SOUTHEY, AC

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Cabinet Secretary	Mr R. W. Wynne, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — The Honourables W. R. Baxter, Andrew Brideson, Helen Buckingham and Bill Forwood, Mr Gavin Jennings, Ms Mikakos, the Honourable R. G. Mitchell and Mr Viney.

Standing Orders Committee — The President, the Honourables B. W. Bishop, Philip Davis and Bill Forwood, Mr Lenders, Ms Romanes and Mr Viney.

Joint committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): The Honourable S. M. Nguyen and Mr Scheffer.
(*Assembly*): Mr Cooper, Ms Marshall, Mr Maxfield, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells.

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

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables H. E. Buckingham and P. R. Hall.
(*Assembly*): Ms Eckstein, Mr Herbert, Mr Kotsiras, Ms Munt and Mr Perton.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Andrea Coote, D. K. Drum, J. G. Hilton and W. A. Lovell. (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Ms Lindell and Mr Seitz.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): The Hon. D. McL. Davis and Mr Smith.
(*Assembly*): Ms McTaggart, Ms Neville, Mrs Powell, Mrs Shardey and Mr Wilson.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), the Honourables B. N. Atkinson and Andrew Brideson, Ms Hadden and the Honourables J. M. McQuilten and S. M. Nguyen. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr Cooper, Mr Leighton, Mr Lockwood, Mr Maughan, Mr Savage and Mr Smith.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Richard Dalla-Riva, Ms Hadden and the Honourables Geoff Hilton and David Koch. (*Assembly*): Ms Beard, Ms Beattie, Mr Hudson, Mr Lupton and Mr Maughan.

Library Committee — (*Council*): The President, Ms Argondizzo and the Honourables Richard Dalla-Riva, Kaye Darveniza and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): The Speaker, Mr Carli, Mrs Powell, Mr Seitz and Mr Thompson.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): Ms Argondizzo and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Mr Baillieu, Ms Buchanan, Mr Dixon, Mr Nardella and Mr Smith.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables W. R. Baxter, Bill Forwood and G. K. Rich-Phillips, Ms Romanes and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr Clark, Ms Green and Mr Merlino.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables B. W. Bishop, J. H. Eren and E. G. Stoney.
(*Assembly*): Mr Harkness, Mr Langdon, Mr Mulder and Mr Trezise.

Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables J. M. McQuilten and R. G. Mitchell. (*Assembly*): Mr Crutchfield, Mr Hardman, Mr Ingram, Dr Napthine and Mr Walsh.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Ms Argondizzo and the Honourable Andrew Brideson.
(*Assembly*): Ms D'Ambrosio, Mr Jasper, Mr Leighton, Mr Lockwood, Mr McIntosh, Mr Perera and Mr Thompson.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Ms D. G. Hadden, the Honourable J. G. Hilton, Mr R. F. Smith and the Honourable C. A. Strong

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Mr JOHN LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Government:
Mr GAVIN JENNINGS

Leader of the Opposition:
The Hon. PHILIP DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:
The Hon. ANDREA COOTE

Leader of The Nationals:
The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:
The Hon. D. K. DRUM

Member	Province	Party	Member	Province	Party
Argondizzo, Ms Lidia	Templestowe	ALP	Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	Melbourne	ALP
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Koonung	LP	Koch, Hon. David	Western	LP
Baxter, Hon. William Robert	North Eastern	Nats	Lenders, Mr John	Waverley	ALP
Bishop, Hon. Barry Wilfred	North Western	Nats	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	North Eastern	LP
Bowden, Hon. Ronald Henry	South Eastern	LP	McQuilten, Hon. John Martin	Ballarat	ALP
Brideson, Hon. Andrew Ronald	Waverley	LP	Madden, Hon. Justin Mark	Doutta Galla	ALP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Melbourne North	ALP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Jika Jika	ALP
Buckingham, Hon. Helen Elizabeth	Koonung	ALP	Mitchell, Hon. Robert George	Central Highlands	ALP
Carbines, Ms Elaine Cafferty	Geelong	ALP	Nguyen, Hon. Sang Minh	Melbourne West	ALP
Coote, Hon. Andrea	Monash	LP	Olexander, Hon. Andrew Phillip ³	Silvan	Ind Lib
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard	East Yarra	LP	Pullen, Mr Noel Francis	Higinbotham	ALP
Darveniza, Hon. Kaye	Melbourne West	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	Eumemmerring	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	East Yarra	LP	Romanes, Ms Glenyys Dorothy	Melbourne	ALP
Davis, Hon. Philip Rivers	Gippsland	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Monash	ALP
Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin	North Western	Nats	Smith, Mr Robert Frederick	Chelsea	ALP
Eren, Hon. John Hamdi	Geelong	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	Eumemmerring	ALP
Forwood, Hon. Bill	Templestowe	LP	Stoney, Hon. Eadley Graeme	Central Highlands	LP
Gould, Hon. Monica Mary	Doutta Galla	ALP	Strong, Hon. Christopher Arthur	Higinbotham	LP
Hadden, Ms Dianne Gladys ²	Ballarat	Ind	Theophanous, Hon. Theo Charles	Jika Jika	ALP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Gippsland	Nats	Thomson, Hon. Marsha Rose	Melbourne North	ALP
Hilton, Hon. John Geoffrey	Western Port	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Chelsea	ALP
Hirsh, Hon. Carolyn Dorothy ¹	Silvan	ALP	Vogels, Hon. John Adrian	Western	LP

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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Thursday, 5 October 2006

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

PETITIONS**Hazardous waste: Nowingi**

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) and Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) presented petitions from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the Legislative Council abandon the proposal to place a toxic waste facility in the Mildura region (676 and 891 signatures respectively).

Laid on table.

Aquatic centres: Oakleigh

Hon. ANDREA COOTE (Monash) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying that the Oakleigh pool be restored to acceptable safety and operational standards and that the state government act immediately to provide financial assistance to restore the Oakleigh pool (663 signatures).

Laid on table.

Mount Erin Secondary College: Somerville campus

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the state government acquire the land located at 24 Bruce Drive, Somerville, adjacent to the Somerville campus of Mount Erin Secondary College and incorporate that land as part of the secondary college for educational purposes (78 signatures).

Laid on table.

Geelong bypass: service centres

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying that the proposed BP and APCO service centre developments to the northern and southern sides of the Geelong bypass do not go ahead (94 signatures).

Laid on table.

Dandenong Creek trail: rest areas

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying that the government assists with the provision of rest areas for the elderly and other Dandenong Creek trail users between Boronia Road and Bayswater Road (146 signatures).

Laid on table.

Stud Road, Bayswater: duplication

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying for the duplication of Stud Road, Bayswater between Boronia Road and Mountain Highway (452 Signatures).

Laid on table.

Gunbower Island State Forest: status

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria praying that the status of the Gunbower Island State Forest and other red gum forests or parts thereof along the Murray River floodplain remains unchanged and that — (1) these areas remain multiuse state forests; (2) access to forestry and firewood gathering continue; (3) local communities have input into the management of these areas; and (4) the Department of Sustainability and Environment be funded to a level that allows them to — (a) address pest animal and plant problems; (b) provide sufficient rubbish bins at forest exits; (c) improve and maintain access roads to protect forest areas from off-road driving; (d) employ more staff to look after forest areas; and (e) develop an ongoing education campaign to inform the public of their responsibilities while visiting and camping in forest areas (52 signatures).

Laid on table.

China: human rights

Ms MIKAKOS (Jika Jika) presented petition from certain citizens of Victoria requesting that the Legislative Council — (1) recommends to the federal government that it — (a) prevents Australian citizens from travelling to China for organ transplants; (b) prevents companies, institutions and individuals providing goods and services to China's organ transplant programs; (c) demands an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China; and (d) assists the Coalition to Investigate the Persecution of Falun

Gong (CIPFG); and — (2) recommends to the Victorian government that it — (a) ends the participation of Victorian funding agencies, medical organisations and individual health professionals in any government of China-sponsored organ transplant research, meetings or training; (b) informs residents that donor organs sourced from the Peoples Republic of China may be from non-consenting prisoners of conscience including Falun Gong practitioners; and (c) assists CIPFG with the research and investigation of the alleged harvesting of organs from, and the illegal detention of, Falun Gong practitioners (1108 signatures).

Laid on table.

HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSIONER

Report 2005–06

Mr GAVIN JENNINGS (Minister for Aged Care), by leave, presented report for 2005–06.

Laid on table.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 12

Ms ARGONDIZZO (Templestowe) presented Alert Digest No. 12 of 2006, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Alexandra District Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
 Alpine Health — Report, 2005–06.
 Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
 Ambulance Service Victoria — Metropolitan Region — Report, 2005–06.
 Auditor-General — Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria, 2005–06, September 2006.
 Bairnsdale Regional Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Ballarat General Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Ballarat Health Services — Report, 2005–06.

Barwon Health — Report, 2005–06.

Barwon Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Bass Coast Regional Health — Report, 2005–06 (three papers).

Beaufort and Skipton Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Beechworth Health Service — Report, 2005–06.

Benalla and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Bendigo Health Care Group — Report, 2005–06.

Boort District Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

Calder Regional Waste Management Group — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Casterton Memorial Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

Central Gippsland Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Central Gippsland Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Central Highlands Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Child Safety Commissioner — Report, 2005–06.

Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Chiropractors Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Cobram District Hospital — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Cohuna District Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

Colac Area Health — Report, 2005–06.

Coliban Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Dental Health Services Victoria — Report, 2005–06.

Dental Practice Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Desert Fringe Regional Waste Management Group — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Djerriwah Health Services — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Dunmunkle Health Services — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

- East Gippsland Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- East Grampians Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Echuca Regional Health — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- First Mildura Irrigation Trust — Report, 2005–06.
- Food Safety Council — Report, 2005–06.
- Geelong Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Gippsland and Southern Rural Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- Gippsland Southern Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Goulburn Murray Rural Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- Goulburn Valley Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Goulburn Valley Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- Health Purchasing Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Hepburn Health Service — Report, 2005–06.
- Heritage Council — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Hesse Rural Health Service — Report, 2005–06.
- Heywood Rural Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Housing Guarantee Fund Ltd — Report, 2005–06.
- Human Services Department — Report, 2005–06.
- Infertility Treatment Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- Inglewood and District Health Service — Report, 2005–06.
- Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986 — Report of Community Visitors for 2005–06.
- Kerang District Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Kilmore and District Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Kooweerup Regional Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Kyabram and District Health Services — Report, 2005–06.
- Kyneton District Health Service — Report, 2005–06.
- Latrobe Regional Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Lorne Community Hospital — Report, 2005–06 (three papers).
- Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.
- Maldon Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Manangatang and District Hospital — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Mansfield District Hospital — Report, 2005–06 (four papers).
- Maryborough District Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- McIvor Health and Community Services — Report, 2005–06.
- Mental Health Act 1986 — Report of Community Visitors for 2005–06.
- Mental Health Review Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Moyne Health Services — Report, 2005–06.
- Mt Alexander Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Nathalia District Hospital — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Northeast Health Wangaratta — Report, 2005–06.
- North East Water — Report, 2005–06.
- Numurkah District Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Nurses Board of Victoria — Report, 2005–06.
- O'Connell Family Centre — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Office of Police Integrity — Report, 2005–06.
- Ombudsman's Office — Report, 2005–06.
- Omeo District Health — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Optometrists Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Orbost Regional Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Osteopaths Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Otway Health and Community Services — Report, 2005–06.
- Pharmacy Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Physiotherapists Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Podiatrists Registration Board of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.
- Portland District Health — Report, 2005–06.

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994 — Orders in Council of 3 October 2006 of a nomination and application order and of an amendment to a nominated project application order.

Queen Elizabeth Centre — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Robinvale District Health Services — Report, 2005–06.

Rochester and Elmore District Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Royal Botanic Gardens Board — Report, 2005–06.

Rural Ambulance Victoria — Report, 2005–06.

Rural Northwest Health — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

South Gippsland Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

South Gippsland Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

South West Healthcare — Report, 2005–06.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Racing Act 1958 — No. 128.

Sentencing Act 1991 — No. 125.

Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 — No. 127.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Nos. 126 and 129.

Stawell Regional Health — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Sustainability Victoria — Report, 2005–06.

Swan Hill District Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

Tallangatta Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (three papers).

Terang and Mortlake Health Service — Report, 2005–06.

Timboon and District Healthcare Service — Report, 2005–06.

Tweedle Child and Family Health Service — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Upper Murray Health and Community Services — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health — Report, 2005–06.

Victorian Institute of Teaching — Report, 2005–06.

Wannon Water — Report, 2005–06.

West Gippsland Healthcare Group — Report, 2005–06.

West Wimmera Health Service — Report, 2005–06.

Western District Health Service — Report, 2005–06.

Western Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Westernport Region Water Authority — Report, 2005–06.

Wimmera Health Care Group — Report, 2005–06.

Wodonga Regional Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Wyndham Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2005–06 report.

Yarram and District Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Yarrawonga District Health Service — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).

Yea and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 2005–06.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS having given notices of motion:

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, I know that the notice paper is a place where people often like to make a statement, and they use a notice of motion as a vehicle for doing that. However, as this is the last day of the 55th Parliament I seek your ruling on whether it is appropriate for notices of motion to be put on the notice paper.

The PRESIDENT — Order! With respect to the matter the Leader of the Government has raised, at the conclusion of the day, if the house chooses to adjourn, a notice paper is printed the next day and notices that are given are incorporated into it. It will sit there until the Parliament is dissolved. I am assuming that the house will be adjourned at some point during the day to a day and hour to be fixed, which could be before that time, so we need a notice paper.

Further notice of motion given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Program**

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 21, the resolution of the Council adopted on 3 October 2006 relating to the government business program be amended to permit the order of the day, government business, relating to the following bill to be also considered and completed by 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, 5 October 2006:

Water (Governance) Bill.

I put forward this motion to amend the government business program. As was foreshadowed on Tuesday of this week, this is the last scheduled week of the 55th Parliament. The government does not move business program motions lightly. This motion follows on from the resolution on Tuesday. The house has been extraordinarily focused on getting through work this week. It has facilitated the government, and the government is extraordinarily appreciative of that. But this is the final item on the program that we flagged earlier in the week, and it is critical that it pass through this house. It enables the house to sit tomorrow if necessary to finish this important business for the week. I thank members of the house for their cooperation and I urge them to support this motion.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I will take this final opportunity in the 55th Parliament to make the point that the government has no need to introduce a government business program and certainly has no need to amend it, given that the house has the capacity to determine sitting days. I note that colleagues have given notice of important matters to be considered in the course of the next sitting weeks that are available to the Parliament. I note that all of the notices of motion which are on the notice paper have not been discharged; therefore the Parliament should be continuing to meet for as long as necessary to deal with all of the matters which are before it.

For the government to introduce and presume that it needs to introduce an amendment to the business program — a program we have opposed on the basis that it is not required to deal with the legislation before the house — is just another slap in the face of members of this chamber, who would rather work in a cooperative spirit and deal with the government's legislative program according to priority, but not be limited to the extent of a guillotine being applied to debate on legislation.

I conclude by saying that we do not support the business program amendment. We oppose it. We will

be making the point at every opportunity throughout the remainder of this parliamentary session that the government has used and abused its numbers and control of this chamber to gag debate, to limit debate, and to limit the opportunities for members of this place to properly put forward the views of the communities they represent. Therefore we oppose the motion.

House divided on motion:*Ayes, 21*

Argondizzo, Ms	Mikakos, Ms
Broad, Ms	Mitchell, Mr
Buckingham, Mrs	Pullen, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Carbines, Ms	Romanes, Ms
Darveniza, Ms	Scheffer, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Eren, Mr	Smith, Mr
Hilton, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
Lenders, Mr	Thomson, Ms
McQuilten, Mr	Viney, Mr
Madden, Mr	

Noes, 19

Atkinson, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Forwood, Mr
Baxter, Mr	Hadden, Ms
Bishop, Mr	Hall, Mr
Bowden, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Koch, Mr
Brideson, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Coote, Mrs	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Stoney, Mr
Davis, Mr D. McL.	Strong, Mr
Davis, Mr P. R.	Vogels, Mr
Drum, Mr	

Motion agreed to.**MEMBERS STATEMENTS****Members: felicitations**

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — Although I look forward to Parliament resuming on about 18 December, this is, according to the government's business program, the last sitting day of the 55th Parliament. I therefore acknowledge the incredible support which all members of Parliament and all members in this place have been given by the staff of the Parliament — Hansard, the library, the papers office and, dare I say, the Department of Parliamentary Services — and for those of us who enjoy the convivial company of colleagues in the parliamentary dining rooms when the Parliament is sitting, I acknowledge the work of the parliamentary dining room staff and the kitchen.

I particularly acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues, members of the parliamentary Liberal Party and the team I have worked with for the last four years.

I especially acknowledge the load carried by the manager of opposition business, the Honourable Andrea Coote, and the Opposition Whip, the Honourable Graeme Stoney. It is not an easy job managing the forum of the Parliament but all who have contributed to that have done an outstanding job.

There are two people I would especially like to acknowledge: firstly, the Leader of the Government, with whom I found it a pleasure to cooperate and get some agreement; and secondly, the President, who is retiring at this election. I thank her for her courtesy.

Peter Norman

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I want to take this opportunity to note the passing of Peter Norman, one of the great sporting legends of this country, and recall a famous photo of him at the 1968 Olympics with two African-American athletes with their gloves up in the air. Peter Norman was associated with the sport and recreation department for many years in one form or another. Initially his association was as an employee in the 1970s, and in recent years he has been involved as a great contributor to the department. I know all the people in the sport and recreation area, not only within the Department for Victorian Communities but those who follow athletics in particular, were shocked by his death earlier in the week. He was a champion in sport but also a champion in life. He was a straight shooter and a great character. He will be profoundly missed by many people not only in the department but in the greater sports community. My heart goes out to his wife, Jan; to his children, Emma, Belinda, Sandra, Gary and Janita. He will be sorely missed but he will also be ably remembered through that great photo and his great contribution not only to sport but as a humanitarian.

Patrick Gregory

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — Today is Patrick Gregory's last day in the parliamentary library. I wish him all the best as he goes from here to the State Library of Victoria. It has been disappointing to watch the parliamentary library decline in recent years. It is sad that people of the calibre of Gail Dunston and Patrick have left, but I wish them both all the best for the future. I hope that my single-minded battle against the One Parliament structure is picked up by people in this place in the future. The Parliament is too important to leave entirely to bureaucrats to run, no matter how well meaning they are. Members of Parliament should be involved in the process.

I recently had the opportunity to express these views to some staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services. I wrote:

... despite friendly, efficient service from many of the department's staff, the department's culture is aloof, dictatorial, petty and dismissive.

I think that this place is diminished when we have the Department of Parliamentary Services acting on behalf of itself rather than on behalf of the Parliament.

Member for Monash Province: representation

Mr SCHEFFER (Monash) — At the conclusion of the 55th Parliament, the seat of Monash Province will cease to exist. The Honourable Andrea Coote and I have had the privilege and honour to have been the last members to represent the people of this fantastically dynamic and challenging electorate in its present electoral form. I take this opportunity on the last day of the Parliament to thank the many individuals and organisations in the electorate for their support and energetic participation in the democratic process. More often than not the issues they have raised with me have not been simple and have required hard collaborative work to advance. I did not realise when was I elected how much of my work would involve matters to do with community building and helping — where I could — to strengthen understanding and good relationships amongst the many ethnic and religious communities in Monash Province. This has been enormously enriching work.

I have also been privileged to have worked with schools; health and welfare services; local businesses; neighbourhood residents organisations, including those with passionate interests in environmental and planning matters; the Port Phillip, Stonnington and Glen Eira councils; and countless others. I thank them all for the opportunity to work with them. My work has been made easier because Labor is in power in Victoria and there are so many good policies and programs that have afforded the people of my electorate a share in the resources of the state. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Andrea Coote for the collegiate relationship she has helped foster, notwithstanding the fact that we are members of different parties.

Sport: advertising

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I am amused at the whingeing from the big boys of sport — the Australian Football League (AFL), the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) and Cricket Australia — over their allegations of ambush marketing by Holden, which, as many Victorians would be aware, is now

operating an airship over Melbourne promoting the new VE Commodore.

For the Commonwealth Games the Liberal Party very reluctantly agreed to a raft of draconian laws proposed by the government which effectively locked up the sky and waterways around Melbourne to prevent ambush marketing. This was on the basis of protecting the interests of a one-off national event. The suggestion that such laws should now be extended to protect the commercial interests of the AFL, the VRC and Cricket Australia is ludicrous. It seems that the big boys of sport only like competition when the rules are stacked in their favour. The big boys of sport are multimillion dollar corporate entities. That they now want a legislated exclusive entitlement to market in the airspace around their venues demonstrates a new level of arrogance.

The fact that Cricket Australia claimed that the Holden blimp may be a safety hazard to players during the Ashes series demonstrates how little credibility it has on this issue. Airservices Australia, which controls airspace in this country, has confirmed that the Holden blimp did not pose a safety risk and has operated legally within the airspace around Melbourne.

The airspace around our nation belongs to all our citizens who have the right of free passage, subject to the rules of the air, whether or not the aircraft therein displays advertising material. Holden is to be commended for its creativity in introducing this new marketing initiative, which has clearly caught the big boys of sport flat-footed. Instead of calling for legislative protection, as if a flow of marketing dollars is their God-given right, the sports corporates should develop their own initiatives to put some spark back into their products.

All Saints Anglican Church, Mitcham

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — On Sunday, along with Tony Robinson, the member for Mitcham in the other place, and my colleague across the chamber, The Honourable Bruce Atkinson, I was pleased to attend a church service at All Saints Anglican Church in Mitcham. The service was in celebration of the combining of the parishes of Christ Church, Mitcham, and All Saints, Nunawading. The new parish is located at the premises of the Christ Church in Mitcham and has taken the All Saints name. The service was conducted by Bishop Stephen Hale and the new vicar of the combined parishes, Reverend Dianne Sharrock, who was the vicar of All Saints, Nunawading.

The closing of one church and the amalgamation with another could be seen as a sad occasion, but this decision was a joint one taken between the two congregations over a long period of negotiation. It was a grassroots decision that was agreed to unanimously by one church, with 95 per cent agreement by the other. It was a decision that was made with openness and dignity, as Bishop Hale reminded us.

The church service was dedicated to the new parish and was full of prayers and welcome, but also contained thanksgiving for the church that closed as well as the singing of beautiful hymns. I congratulate both church congregations for their decision to amalgamate and wish their vicar, Dianne Sharrock, and the new parish much joy, comfort and support from their new community.

Petro Georgiou

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM — I would also like to highly commend Petro Georgiou. I salute his questioning of the proposed changes to citizenship requirements in this country. He is a Liberal with integrity and a deep-seated belief in social justice. I hope he remains the conscience of the federal Liberal Party.

Members: felicitations

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I would like to wish well my colleagues in this place who will not be returning to the Parliament, certainly to the Legislative Council, in the next Parliament. It is possible that we might be recalled before the election, but in the event that we are not, there are obviously quite a number of members who will leave this place.

I particularly want to wish well the Honourables Andrew Brideson, Ron Bowden, Chris Strong, Graeme Stoney and Bill Forwood, and also Barry Bishop and Bill Baxter, all of whom I have served with since 1992, both in government and in opposition — and I know which I preferred! They have made an exemplary contribution to this Parliament and to the people of Victoria in their respective electorates, and I wish to place on record my admiration for their work and congratulations and best wishes for their retirement.

I might point out that Mr Baxter has now decided to contest a lower house seat. I have said to him privately that he is one of the members in this place that I have looked to in terms of developing my skills as a member of Parliament because he has a great deal of experience and has much to contribute.

I also wish to commend the Labor Party members who are leaving. I particularly want to place on record my best wishes to the Honourable Helen Buckingham, who has elected not to contest the election. She has been a very valuable member for Koonung Province.

Schools: literacy and numeracy

Mr SOMYUREK (Eumemmerring) — Last night I had the pleasure of reading the Department of Education and Training's annual report for 2005–06 which was tabled in Parliament yesterday. I was particularly interested in the standards achieved in literacy and numeracy for primary school children. I was pleased to read in the report that average class sizes continue to go down and students are meeting or exceeding literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

The report shows that the average number of students in prep to year 2 dropped by 3.5 students in seven years from 24.3 students in 1999 to 20.8 in 2005. The primary school student-to-teacher ratio dropped from 17.2 in 1999 to 16.1 in 2005.

This report confirms that the state government's initiatives in education are making a positive impact on the education of thousands of Victorian children. However, there is more to be done on literacy and numeracy. Investing in more teachers and lowering class sizes on their own will not solve the literacy and numeracy challenges that we as a community face.

State governments and the federal government need to place more emphasis on some of the underlying causal factors of literacy and numeracy deficits in children by putting in place interventions that more accurately identify students with specific learning difficulties and by providing funding for the employment of specialist teachers to teach these students literacy and numeracy skills using alternative methods.

Should I be re-elected to Parliament for a second term, I intend working closely with the education minister — —

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

Gas: rural and regional Victoria

Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) — At the last election The Nationals produced a specific policy for the extension of natural gas reticulation throughout regional Victoria. The Nationals knew that to make a serious impact on the towns, cities and communities throughout regional Victoria the government of the day would have to invest an amount of about \$150 million. Approximately two months out from the election the

Labor Party effectively stole that program — it cut it in half and called it its own.

Since then what we have seen from this government on natural gas is a string of broken promises made to a whole range of different communities throughout regional Victoria; those communities were promised natural gas but have had no chance of getting it. Worse still is the number of streets, roads and avenues that have been bypassed in all the communities that actually have had natural gas connected to them. We now have a whole range of communities where half the community has natural gas and the other half has been bypassed. If The Nationals get the opportunity to be in government, they will make sure that the government goes back into communities that have been bypassed in areas such as Bendigo, Gisborne, Sunbury, Woodend, and Lancefield — all these places which are having natural gas connected to them — and does the job properly, because this government has effectively left a whole range of small communities on the outskirts of the — —

Hon. R. G. Mitchell — Dianne Hadden's house?

Hon. D. K. DRUM — Mr Mitchell should be listening, because a lot of these places are in his area and he has just ignored them because he has been part of lazy Labor.

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

Housing: Glenelg Community Park

Hon. J. H. EREN (Geelong) — I was pleased recently to be with the Minister for Housing, Ms Broad, at the launch of the housing support for indigenous tenants project at the Glenelg Community Park in Corio in my electorate. Bethany Community Support will receive \$112 000 to run the project in the Barwon-South Western region in partnership with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative. This funding announcement will assist at-risk indigenous families in public housing, who will receive practical, hands-on support to prevent them becoming homeless. The Bracks government believes every Victorian family deserves a decent place to live, which is why it is working to prevent homelessness in indigenous communities. This government understands that indigenous tenants can sometimes face problems sustaining a tenancy, so it is providing practical, hands-on support to these families in response.

Whilst in Corio we also launched a plant bank for public housing tenants living near the Glenelg

Community Park. The plant bank will see new public housing tenants in the area issued with a gift certificate, which they can take to the botanic gardens to collect a plant. They will also be given a brochure which provides information about community gardens, tool pools and public gardens in the area. Planting more trees in Geelong not only helps the environment but it makes the area look more attractive and it also helps families to develop an interest in gardening. The Glenelg Community Park was established in 2004 and is maintained by public housing tenants with the assistance of Bethany Community Support, the Cloverdale Community Centre, Communities in Action and the Geelong Botanic Gardens. I was very pleased — —

Australian Labor Party: Northern Victoria Region candidate

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — I would like to make an offer to the Minister for Local Government, Ms Broad, one of Labor's two metropolitan-based MPs who will contest the country region seat of Northern Victoria Region at the November election and who has announced that if elected she will move to Daylesford. Unfortunately for Ms Broad and the constituents of northern Victoria Region, Daylesford is not in the Northern Victoria Region; it is in the Western Victoria Region.

The offer that I would like to make to Ms Broad is to sit down with her and a VicRoads country directory to show her on a map what areas of Victoria fall within the electorate she professes she wants to represent. The Northern Victoria Region is a vast area that starts at the South Australian border and spreads east along the entire length of the Murray River and south of Sunbury. It is an area that contains some of Victoria's most important regional centres, some of the most historic, picturesque and productive areas of our state, and yet Ms Broad cannot find anywhere she would want to live within an area that encompasses 48 per cent of the land mass of Victoria. Ms Broad's decision to live in Daylesford and divide her time between Daylesford and Melbourne would make it extremely difficult for her constituents in northern Victoria to gain access to their representative.

The people of northern Victoria deserve better. They deserve representatives who live in and are part of the community, representatives who understand the issues because they are also living them on a daily basis. The Labor Party has shown complete contempt for the Northern Victoria Region by preselecting two metropolitan-based MPs as the lead candidates on its upper house ticket. Unlike the Labor Party, the Liberal

Party has preselected five local representatives, who not only live in the electorate but also have an intimate understanding of the local issues.

The Nationals: policies

Hon. R. G. MITCHELL (Central Highlands) — It is disappointing to see that The Nationals still will not accept their role in the desecration of country Victoria during the seven dark years of the Liberal-National coalition.

Recently I received a letter, dated 5 September, written by the Honourable Barry Bishop, which states:

I would like to take this opportunity to straighten out the half-truths that you have put your name to. The Nationals were not solely responsible for the removal of the passenger train —

to Mildura —

nor the decision to build the hospital, as it was a Liberal-Nationals coalition in both instances.

I nearly fell off my chair when I received this letter, because seven years later he still will not accept the fact that the two parties desecrated country Victoria. That confirms that The Nationals were a willing part of the destruction of regional Victoria or they had no say in it as they were just subservants of their coalition master, the Liberal Party.

But either way it confirms, and Mr Drum proved it again today, that it does not matter what they say because at the end of the day they will never be in a position to have to actually implement the word that they struggle with called 'policy'. They have to do what the Liberals tell them or they will just keep running around. We already know that the Leader of The Nationals in the other place, Peter Ryan, would put the budget into about \$1.5 billion debt with his promises, and Mr Drum continues — —

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

Water: conservation initiatives

Ms HADDEN (Ballarat) — One of the current major concerns of most Victorians is water and drier climate conditions now that we are in the 10th year of drought. Many opinions are coming forward from ordinary people with decades of experience, consultants and experts with varied solutions to save water.

Melbourne's central business district (CBD) buildings could collect 4.2 billion litres of rainwater a year if water tanks were installed across the city. With an

estimated 8.5 million square metres of roof space, the Melbourne CBD grid could harvest enough rainwater to fill 83 000 backyard swimming pools each year. Commercial developers not only in Melbourne but across the provincial cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong should be forced by the state government to meet the same compulsory environmental standards as apply to new residential housing.

A recent report from Dr John Wilson, a civil engineering professor from Swinburne University of Technology, said that the construction industry needed to be convinced about the benefits of green practices.

The Bracks Labor government has had seven years to act on water shortages, but has failed. Its ludicrous proposal in the last four weeks has been to pipe precious water from the already stressed and drought-stricken Goulburn Valley agricultural food bowl into Bendigo and then south over the Great Dividing Range into Ballarat.

The government must now act to ensure that stormwater is harvested and reused, that new housing developments have grey-water or third-pipe reticulation throughout the developments and that grey-water treatment systems are available for existing homes, and provide adequate subsidies as a clear incentive to property owners and developers. As well, billions of litres of Melbourne's treated sewage is pumped daily into Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait by water authorities, when this could and should be recycled and reused productively.

Australian Labor Party: candidates

Hon. J. G. HILTON (Western Port) — Firstly I would like to wish Bill Puls in Mornington, Anne Marshall in Nepean and John Anderson in Bass, the ALP candidates, every success on 25 November 2006. I strongly encouraged two of the candidates to put their names forward, so I have some responsibility for the outcome.

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery

Hon. J. G. HILTON — On Saturday I will be attending the opening of an exhibition at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. During the time I have been a member I have attended as many of these openings as I have been able to and have increased my knowledge of the visual arts. I would like to congratulate Andrea May Churcher, the gallery director, and her team, who do such a wonderful job.

Arthurs Seat Challenge

Hon. J. G. HILTON — On 5 November I will once again be competing in the Arthurs Seat Challenge, a run-walk from Rosebud pier to the top of Arthurs Seat, and I will again be presenting a signed Melbourne Storm jersey to the first placegetter. This will be the seventh year I will have competed, and hopefully this year I will be able to beat my age.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Victorian WorkCover Authority: report 2006

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I wish to comment this morning on the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) annual report for 2006. I congratulate the authority on a very successful year and extend my thanks and appreciation to Greg Tweedly and his team for the support they have provided to me in my capacity as the shadow minister for WorkCover. I am the last resort for many people who have exhausted all sorts of processes as part of the WorkCover scheme. They see me as another opportunity for review of circumstances associated with their claims. On the occasions when I have had to proceed with inquiries to the Victorian WorkCover Authority I have found that Greg Tweedly and his staff have been most helpful.

I congratulate Elana Rubin on her first year and therefore her first annual report as chairman of the authority. I congratulate her on a job well done. The authority has many significant achievements this year. I believe it has provided an excellent focus on workplace safety. It certainly has managed the introduction of new occupational health and safety legislation which makes quite sweeping changes. My observation to this point is that that change has been quite seamless.

There is no doubt that there is a much greater focus on workplace safety today than there has been historically. I note from the annual report that there were 21 deaths in 2005–06, which is the lowest figure in five years. Clearly it is too high. Had we not had a disastrous period in April, we would have had a much better result than this, but for some inexplicable reasons there was a series of deaths in April. They were very sad and affected the statistic.

The figure for claims per thousand workers is also down. In fact it has fallen in the past five years from 13.89 to 12.18, and that is a significant achievement. It is not an achievement just of government policy, although clearly that has been a significant contributor to the reduction in WorkCover claims. When I talk

about government policy I am actually talking about the policy of successive governments, because workplace safety has been a continuum in policy terms. Some of the changes the Kennett government made to the workers compensation scheme and the benefits of those changes have flowed through under this administration, as well as subsequent changes that have been enacted by the minister here, have certainly contributed to a greater focus on workplace safety and improved outcomes in terms of programs.

One sidelight is that although claims per thousand workers have been falling I am concerned that the government, as the employer of public sector employees, ought to be doing a little bit more about claims in public sector agencies, where there has been a 2.5 per cent increase in claims. We do need to look at that.

I am particularly pleased to see the \$10 million return-to-work program that is reported on in this annual report. Rehabilitation and return to work are very important elements of the WorkCover scheme. We know that the trauma associated with workplace injury is significantly reduced when people are able to return to the workplace and maintain social interaction.

The workplace safety focus has been achieved not just by government policy or by work the Victorian WorkCover Authority has done directly. It has also been the result of some concerted effort by unions, which for the most part have been constructive, and certainly by employees, who I think have a heightened awareness of workplace safety, and employers. There is no doubt in my mind that employers are a lot more conscious of their obligations and the requirements of maintaining workplace safety.

I note the successful financial results for the VWA in the past year. It racked up a surplus of \$1 billion, an increase from \$775 million the year before. That included \$475 million from internal operations as distinct from investment income. It made a greater contribution to the state government in terms of tax — \$397 million this year. Following up my question yesterday, I just hope the government does not see this as an opportunity to take a capital return out of the VWA, as it did by taking \$600 million from the Transport Accident Commission in the current financial year. The very important thing is that the VWA recognises that the money that is in surplus is actually contributed by employers. There is a need to be consistent.

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

Law Reform Committee: Coroners Act 1985

Hon. J. G. HILTON (Western Port) — This is the last time I will be making a statement on reports, and I am very happy to be making a statement on a report I had some involvement in — the Law Reform Committee's review of the Coroners Act. I was very pleased to be on this committee, and I believe this substantial document is a very commendable piece of work. I think the government will be well advised to seriously consider the recommendations, which were made with a lot of thought and reflection. I believe the majority of them will more likely than not be implemented and that the Coroners Act will be significantly improved as a consequence.

I understand from my colleagues who went overseas as part of this inquiry — I do not have first-hand knowledge of this — that in Ontario, Canada, there is a phrase used in relation to the purpose of coroners investigations. I may not have this exactly right, but I believe the statement is, 'We speak for the dead for the benefit of the living'. That, indeed, is the purpose of coroners inquiries. They are not to apportion blame, but to find out why deaths have occurred and how they can be avoided into the future.

That is essentially the first point I would like to address. In the course of our inquiry we received evidence from a number of people who had had deaths in their families which had been the subject of Coroners Court investigations. When details of the deaths of their loved ones are being investigated, families are obviously very emotionally involved in that process. They would like to find out what happened, why it happened and how it could be avoided in the future. Unfortunately they can find themselves in situations where other parties that may be involved, such as hospitals or other organisations, are attending the inquiry not so much for the purpose of finding out what happened as to try to avoid blame and the need to pay compensation.

These families tended to believe — and I can understand why they believed this was the case — that coronial inquiries are not inquisitorial, which they should be, but adversarial, and that whereas large organisations could recruit top-quality Senior Counsel, the families, which did not have those resources, were at a significant disadvantage. They believed the purpose of the Coroners Court inquiries was not being fulfilled.

We made a recommendation, recommendation 115, which I would like to read:

That the government investigate the feasibility of providing legal advice and assistance to families affected by a coronial

investigation where this is necessary to enable them to effectively participate in the investigation.

The second point I would like to make is in relation to the issue of stillbirths and their investigation. The law as it presently stands says that stillbirths cannot be investigated by the coroner because a stillbirth is an indication that there has never been a death — that is, that life has never existed. I personally believe — and I stress to the house that this is very much a personal view — that this flies in the face of reality. There is a significant body of evidence that babies can be born from 28 weeks onwards — and even earlier — and, with appropriate medical support, survive and live a normal life. My view is that the definition of stillbirths is wrong. The coroner should have the authority to investigate stillbirths. I believe a stillbirth can still be considered to be a death, since life did exist before the stillbirth occurred.

I know that this is a very contentious issue. The recommendation we made was that the coroner not be given that responsibility. However, there is an existing organisation which does take responsibility for investigating stillbirth deaths, and we believe the organisation carrying out that responsibility should be investigated to see whether it adequately addresses that issue.

Finally, I would like to congratulate everybody involved in the inquiry, particularly Michelle McDonnell, who was the principal research officer, who made an excellent contribution. She has now left the secretariat, and I would like to wish her the best in her future career.

Harness Racing Victoria: report 2005–06

Hon. DAVID KOCH (Western) — I would just like to report on the annual report of Harness Racing Victoria (HRV). I have to say it is not a good report. The chairman's opening remarks would appear to be remarkably flat. He said:

Another financial year has come to a close and we welcome in the new 2006–07 racing calendar.

Normally a chairman would speak about the success of the previous year's activities, but in this case that did not come to pass, and the new Melton complex for harness racing seems to be far more important than increasing turnover.

Harness Racing Victoria has seen revenue drop by \$2 million over the last 12 months, compared to budget. With the trimming of other important projects there was a small operating profit of \$392 000, or 0.7 of 1 per

cent, but in anyone's mind that would be rather disappointing.

Sadly, Harness Racing Victoria has been happy to blame everything else for this revenue decline, including the Sky Channel-TVN dispute, the New South Wales government for not co-pooling the SuperTAB pools and further challenges from international thoroughbred racing, but, strangely, neither board policy nor harness racing management has been raised.

The flawed Vision Value Victoria (V3) strategy is only acknowledged as being encouraging. Given all the fanfare when this was introduced, I would have thought it would have held a far higher position than 'encouraging'. I must say it has probably been one of the worst-handled initiatives in racing history.

The opportunity taken by Harness Racing Victoria to pick off small clubs without warning, consultation or any consideration certainly bruised beyond belief the racing fraternity in smaller centres. It has undermined the small economies of these rural towns more than Harness Racing Victoria ever envisaged.

Importantly I notice the minister is not in here today. He was here yesterday for the first time in four years. He offered some small clubs his ear, and it is important to note that he travelled to St Arnaud in July last year to try to console those affected clubs. One of the things he did when he was in the box seat was indicate his support for a governance model whereby he was going to give the smaller clubs better representation.

One of the real concerns in relation to the V3 strategy is that HRV appointed a well-known and respected company, IER Pty Ltd, to undertake an investigation into what had transpired in the 12 months following the introduction of the V3 strategy. I believe that report was returned to Harness Racing Victoria by the end of March and was going to be discussed with industry stakeholders. At this stage, seven months later, that has not taken place, and whenever challenged or asked for this report, the chairman, Neil Busse, and HRV chief executive officer, John Anderson, run the line that it is the minister's responsibility to release it.

As recently as September in Echuca the chairman said, 'With all due respect to the minister, it is his responsibility to release the report'. Is it any wonder that the chairman has lost the respect of many of his former supporters? That is absolute rot because HRV, not the minister, engaged IER to undertake this finding.

I think Harness Racing Victoria has some big expenditure in front of it. I wish it well in the future. It

will be interesting and exciting to get the Melton complex up. Times are not easy in the racing industry across all codes, but greater consideration must be given to all participants right down to the grassroots. I wish harness racing well in the future, but, as I said earlier, I anticipate that tough times are not behind it at this stage.

Museums Board of Victoria: report 2005–06

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — Earlier this year I reported on the 2004–05 Museums Board of Victoria annual report. As a result I was privileged to visit the museum a number of weeks ago as a guest of the chief executive officer, Dr Patrick Greene. I was very fortunate to have a behind-the-scenes tour of our magnificent museum and to see where exhibits are prepared.

Dr Greene and museum employees showed me the array of live animals, reptiles and insects they keep for their exhibits, such as those in the Discovery Centre. Whilst I was happy to handle a lizard, I did decline the offer to pat the large brown python and was very glad that the huntsman spiders were behind glass.

I was also able to visit the taxidermy section, where dead animals, birds and fish are prepared for display. This was a fascinating section and one of the best departments of its type not just in Australia but indeed in the world. An exhibit on Antarctica will be part of a display next year, and the taxidermists were preparing the last two husky dogs to leave Antarctica. I hasten to add that the dogs died of old age, because I did ask.

I was also shown the carcass of a dolphin which had been washed up on a beach in Victoria. After a post-mortem by a veterinarian, it will also be processed by the taxidermists. The museum processes many dead creatures, including the famous blue whale whose skeleton is now hanging near the museum entrance. We are very fortunate to have such a world-class museum here in Victoria.

The 2005–06 Museums Board of Victoria annual report records the highest museum visitation results ever — a total of 5 million visits. Almost 1.5 million people came through the doors — that is well over a third of the population of Victoria — while another 3.5 million individual user sessions were recorded on Museum Victoria's web site. The Discovery program reached more than 60 000 people from schools, kindergartens, aged-care facilities, libraries and other community groups in regional, metropolitan and remote areas of Victoria — a truly remarkable service. Education groups accounted for over 350 000 visitations.

A major exhibition in this reporting year was 'Mummies: Ancient Egypt and the afterlife', which attracted 150 000 people, making it the most successful touring exhibition since the museum's opening.

During my visit I was able to see the new long-term exhibition 'Marine life: exploring our seas'. It was fascinating. It was also very busy, as it was the first day of the school holidays. In his chief executive officer's message, Dr Greene said that the annual report will allow readers to discover the astonishing breadth of Victorian museum activities, and it does just that. It tells us that there were 60 exhibitions, 97 publications by staff, 143 presentations and lectures by staff, and 24 research projects. The annual report notes that the museum will deliver vibrant exhibitions and programs in the coming year, including one on the Great Wall of China. It will also tour some of its exhibitions. A planetarium show about black holes will be produced, and the museum will actively participate in programs with planetariums in the United States of America.

It is very pleasing to note in this time of global warming and drought that the museum will continue to investigate and implement ways to reduce energy and water consumption as well as to reduce and recycle waste.

Whilst I was visiting the museum I met a volunteer who was showing the public how fossils were extracted from rock, which is a painstakingly slow and meticulous process, but a fascinating one, and one being watched by many children on the day.

In 2005–06 a total of 645 Museum Victoria volunteers contributed a staggering 55 240 hours. Some 67 volunteers speak 26 different languages, 135 of them are under 30 years of age and 154 of them are over 65 years of age. I salute and thank them all. As a former careers counsellor I was pleased to note in the report that 58 students participated in work experience programs at the museum. We are so fortunate to have this world-class museum in Victoria.

I encourage members to visit and support the museum. People should visit the forest gallery and the Discovery Centre and interact with the displays at the science museum. It is informative and it is good fun. I congratulate the president of the board, Harold Mitchell, the board members, the chief executive officer, Dr Patrick Greene, and all the employees on an excellent report that they have aptly named *A Network Museum in Action*. I congratulate them on their good governance.

Innovation, Industry and Regional Development: report 2004–05

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) —

I rise to make a statement on the report of the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD) for 2004–05. In particular I would like to focus on Invest Victoria, which is a business unit within that department charged with attracting investment to Victoria. The unit is under the leadership of Ben Foksett, the chief executive officer. I have had growing concerns over the ineffectiveness of that business unit.

The first area I would like to touch upon is the agency's web site, which is the key interface between potential investors in Victoria and the government. The government spent \$319 000 setting up the web site as an interface for investors, but until very recently, and only after my prompting the minister at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee estimates hearings, the web site did not include any information on any of the free trade agreements that Australia has with foreign nations. Even now it has out-of-date information about the taxation regime in Australia. Under the 'News' section only 5 of the 45 press release announcements relate to investments that have been attracted to Victoria; the rest are either rehashes of news reports or rehashes of press releases issued by ministers in other departments. Far from being an interactive tool for potential investors the web site is a joke, and it is ridiculous that it has cost Victorian taxpayers \$319 000.

The next area I would like to touch upon is the Victorian Government Business Office in Shanghai, which was announced by the Premier in late 2004. Ben Foksett, needing to recruit an executive director to that office, engaged recruitment firm Horton International. The firm was paid a consultant fee of just under \$26 000 to recruit somebody at the beginning of 2005. That process went on for most of 2005 and eventually, late in September 2005, Wendy Simpson was appointed to that role. Unfortunately Ms Simpson only lasted in the job five months. Having seen some documents under freedom of information I can understand why her tenure was so short: the management of that office was in disarray and the support provided by DIIRD through Invest Victoria back here in Melbourne was shambolic.

Ms Simpson departed from that job in early March of this year and to date the role remains vacant. We have had almost two years of paying rent on the office in Shanghai without an executive director in place. Ben Foksett has botched the appointment; Horton International as a recruitment consultant, frankly, has botched the appointment. Almost two years in since the

government started paying rent on that office in Shanghai we still do not have an executive director. We have paid \$165 000 in rent and there is nobody flying the flag in Shanghai in a permanent position.

I turn to some of Ben Foksett's activities. Mr Foksett certainly likes the high life. We have seen him take travel at taxpayers expense in 2004 to the United Kingdom, USA, Hong Kong, China, Japan and the United Arab Emirates. In 2005 he went to China again and travelled to Thailand and Malaysia. Questions on notice to the Minister for State and Regional Development suggest Mr Foksett has also been to India a couple of times. He likes to have a meal or two on the government credit card at all the best restaurants in Melbourne: Bok Choy Tang, where he spent \$400; Donovans; Café La at Sofitel Melbourne; Sails on the bay; a \$400 meal a couple of times at Waterfront Beacon Cove; and his favourite seems to be the Australian Club, where I understand he is a member and likes to take potential investors.

We would not object to this sort of wining and dining by the chief executive of Invest Victoria if it was producing results. However, the responses to questions on notice received from the Minister for State and Regional Development indicate that of the 263 investment projects listed in the department's annual report as 'under development' only 10 projects are attributable to Invest Victoria.

The government's key agency for attracting investment is responsible for around only 5 per cent of the investment projects that are being supported by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development. We really have to wonder, with Mr Foksett flying around the world so much and spending so much in Melbourne's top restaurants — on some days he is having lunch and dinner and then lunch the next day at taxpayers' expense — —

The PRESIDENT — I have lunch and dinner every day — don't you?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Not at \$400 a time, President, and not at taxpayers' expense.

We really have to wonder what we are getting for this expenditure. Invest Victoria has 30 people on its payroll yet has only delivered, according to the minister, 10 of the 263 projects that the government is working on. It is simply not — —

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

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: private investment in public infrastructure

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — I would like to take note this morning of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's report on private investment in public infrastructure (PFI). At the outset, because there was not the opportunity to do so yesterday when the report was tabled, I would like to thank Michele Cornwell, Trevor Wood and the staff of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) secretariat for all the hard work they have done to help the committee finally produce this report.

I would also like to thank my parliamentary colleagues, but I think it is a pity that Mr Forwood has chosen to breach parliamentary privilege by divulging a draft of PAEC's PFI report to *Age* reporter Farrah Tomazin. CPR should be aware that he is untrustworthy, operates on double standards and was prepared to ditch committee confidentiality to get a front-page story.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) relate to the private financing of public infrastructure. They were introduced in the 1990s in a climate where governments were reluctant to borrow and increase debt. The *raison d'être* for public-private partnerships in more recent years has moved to a delivery of value for money as a result of each PPP project. The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has grappled with some complex issues over the life of two Public Accounts and Estimates Committees — the PAEC of the 54th Parliament and the PAEC of the 55th Parliament — including what it means to deliver value for money and the complex matrix of considerations which impact on the success of PPP projects, such as risk, public interest, economic benefits, changes in international accounting standards, governance evaluation and accountability arrangements, and parliamentary accountability.

Over the years when some of these issues have been under public discussion and debate and through the work of the PAEC and other committees, the Bracks government has learnt a number of lessons from early PPP projects and taken steps to improve the Partnerships Victoria policy and practices. A more rigorous assessment of project briefs and planning of infrastructure projects as a result is now applied both to PPPs and to infrastructure which is procured by traditional means in the public sector. Members in this chamber have heard a lot from the Minister for Major Projects, John Lenders, about the Gateway Review which is part of that process for improvement of the procurement of public infrastructure projects.

The committee noted that public perception and confidence in PPPs are often negative, and it is suggested that greater reporting and in particular a succinct project summary signed off by the Attorney-General would assist public understanding and help with the continuing process of learning lessons from the experience of each public-private partnership project. It is the role of the PAEC to scrutinise and to suggest improvements for reporting on projects. We are a committee that has produced, in total during this 55th Parliament, 23 reports. In this Parliament we have heard Mr Forwood in a number of presentations talk a lot about PAEC scrutiny and accountability, but as always he is prepared to throw out the rules of Parliament to get a media story for himself.

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips — On a point of order, President, Ms Romanes has just cast aspersions on the Honourable Bill Forwood suggesting he is willing to cast out the rules of this place for his own benefit. I suggest that is unparliamentary and that she be asked to withdraw those comments.

Ms ROMANES — On the point of order, President, breach of parliamentary committee confidentiality is a very serious matter. There is no time for a substantive motion. My assessment of the situation is based on Mr Forwood's very unusual behaviour in the time leading up to the publication of this report, and I stand by what I said.

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips — Further on the point of order, President, it is not for Mr Romanes to determine whether Mr Forwood has breached the rules of the committees, and it is not appropriate for her to make that claim and to make those statements against Mr Forwood, and I ask that they be withdrawn. I believe this is the second time in Ms Romanes's contribution that she has made such allegations against Mr Forwood. I spoke to you earlier, President, because I was unclear about whether the earlier incident was an allegation against Mr Forwood, but having heard Ms Romanes reiterate those comments, I suggest she has twice now cast inappropriate aspersions on Mr Forwood. I ask that you direct her to withdraw those comments.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have been seeking advice on the point of order. Previously in this house the issue has been raised about members, or in some cases even ministers, referring reports to the media before they have been tabled in the house, and that is inappropriate. The concern that the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips has, and unfortunately I did not hear all of it because I was distracted by someone at the table, is that Ms Romanes made a reflection or imputation on a

member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and named Mr Forwood as having breached parliamentary privilege by referring matters that had taken place in that committee to the media.

The practice in this house is that allegations against the conduct of a member should always be made by substantive motion. If Ms Romanes wants to make allegations against Mr Forwood, the only way she can do it is by substantive motion. Although we all expect this to be the last sitting day on the parliamentary calendar, it does not take away the obligation on the member to refer to it via a substantive motion. On that basis I uphold the point of order raised by Mr Rich-Phillips. If the member wishes to make those comments, she must do it by substantive motion. They are inappropriate in this form of debate, and I ask her to withdraw them.

Ms ROMANES — President, I accept your ruling, and I withdraw.

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

WATER (GOVERNANCE) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 4 October; motion of Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government).

Hon. E. G. STONEY (Central Highlands) — It is my pleasure to be the lead speaker for the opposition on the Water (Governance) Bill, a large and complex bill of some 220 pages. Last night I received the revised copy — it was still hot — which has a number of government amendments incorporated in it. The bill is complex and covers a wide range of issues, and the opposition believes it should have been split. The difficulty we have is that the Liberal Party supports some sections of the bill but has serious concerns about other sections. We are now faced with 13 additional amendments, and because of those amendments the bill had to be reprinted. The amendments were announced by the government in a press release only a couple of days ago, and the public has had no opportunity to digest them.

The main amendments in the bill relate to the top 200 water users, and my colleague Mr David Davis will be covering that in detail in his contribution. He has been pursuing this issue in this place, and on 24 August, during the committee stage of the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill, he asked the minister to release the names of the 250 sites identified by the

Environment Protection Authority as those that use the most water. As she does, the minister obfuscated and made a statement along the lines that she had been advised that only after the stage when those processes and regulations had been developed and were in place, including consultation with the industry, would it be possible to identify and name the businesses. Six weeks later — surprise, surprise! — on 3 October a media release from the Minister for Water headed 'New legislation to highlight the top 200 water users' states:

An amendment to Bracks government legislation to be introduced in state Parliament tonight will allow Victoria's top 200 industrial water users to be able to be identified for the first time.

Here is the spin:

This is an opportunity for many of the top 200 industrial water users who are undertaking significant water conservation measures to be recognised for their water saving initiatives.

We have turned around and made a silk purse out of a sow's ear for the top 200 water users. I am sure they will be absolutely delighted. As Mr Baxter and I discussed over breakfast this morning, companies always seize an opportunity to show how environmentally friendly they are, and if there had been an opportunity for them to do it, they would have done so. This is more government spin and another chance for it to belt up big companies while pretending it is providing them with an opportunity.

The government is making policy on the run. As I said, the bill is complex and should have been split. The members for Benambra and South-West Coast in the other place and their office staffs, especially Royce in the office of the member for Benambra, identified errors in the bill. I pay tribute to Royce, because he has done a wonderful job for both the member for Benambra and the member for South-West Coast on water issues over the past couple of years.

The bill contains many provisions we cannot agree with. One I mention now — I shall mention others later — is the transferring of environmental entitlements from one catchment to another, which is inherently dangerous. We do not like the potential for conflict, especially the potential for manipulation of water use in future times by the government. On balance we oppose the bill, and three other speakers will put various reasons why we see fit to vote against it.

It is ironic that having said that I can now indicate that the last speech I will make on a bill in this Parliament will be on the biggest issue facing Victoria and

Australia — that is, water. Not that we talk about it in the party room, but I know that back in 1993 we had big debates on what were the biggest issues facing Victoria, and many of us then, some 13 years ago, identified immediately that water was becoming the biggest issue. At that stage the Kennett government started to address how to best handle it. It has now come to pass that water is the biggest issue, and many people are turning their minds to how best to manage it. At the end of my address I am going to quote from two eminent organisations that are looking at that problem.

Water is a subject that is literally on everyone's lips, and many people have a theory on how to solve this serious shortage. As with every important debate, parochialism creeps in, the hip pocket creeps in, and of course water is no exception. For example, irrigators feel under threat — which they are; environmentalists want more and more water for the environment, including all water supposedly saved from Lake Mokoan; the tourist industry around the inland lakes such as Lake Hume and Lake Eildon is suffering; the rural cities of Ballarat and Bendigo are eyeing off northern water; and I hear that the pipes which have been ordered are big enough to take the water to Ballarat to meet the government's promise.

The Liberal Party can support taking water from Colbinabbin to Lake Eppalock, but we certainly do not support taking water from Eppalock over the hill to Ballarat. The government has recently announced that there will not be any more dams. It also announced that Melbourne will not be drinking recycled water, but it got into a bit of bother with that because it was discovered through the *Herald Sun* that Melbourne had been drinking recycled water for years, which was really embarrassing for the state government, and I think the Premier — —

Hon. J. M. Madden — You've been drinking your own bathwater, have you?

Hon. E. G. STONEY — I am very careful what I do with my bathwater, Minister, and so should you be — that is, with your bathwater, not mine! I think the Premier saw the results of the poll up at Toowoomba. He probably thought he would jump on this populist bandwagon and announce that we will not be drinking recycled bathwater as the good residents of Toowoomba said they did not want to do. He made a populist decision for Melbourne, and of course he got caught.

Speaking of the government getting caught playing politics with water, the Minister for Water in the other place, John Thwaites, got a belting in the *Weekly Times*

a couple of weeks ago. I do not think I have ever seen such a flogging of a minister in any paper on any issue such as we saw in the *Weekly Times* of 6 September. It carried the huge headline, 'Condemned' and it says:

Goulburn irrigators and communities are reeling from another horrendous drought. So what does ... John Thwaites do? Offer to pipe their water into crucial Labor electorates.

Water minister John Thwaites has been condemned by farmers, local councils, green groups and the opposition for planning to divert yet more irrigation water for urban use.

Mr Thwaites is under attack for proposing to pipe 18 000 megalitres a year from the Goulburn system to Ballarat, only three months after announcing a similar plan for Bendigo.

The article goes on to talk about how Mr Thwaites has defended the \$220 million, 110-kilometre pipeline on the basis that the water would be bought from willing sellers and only represented a small percentage of the Goulburn irrigators' supplies.

But all of these things are incremental. It is really similar to the way the forest industries have had a belting over the past few years — they lose a bit here and they lose a bit there, until they become unsustainable. Every time they are told, 'It is only this little bit and that coupe' and, 'We will take this little bit here for a park'. It is the same with water. Irrigators are told, 'We will just take a few thousand megalitres for Ballarat, we will take a few thousand megalitres for somewhere else and a little bit more for the environment' and all of a sudden the irrigation industry becomes unviable, and farms and communities close down as the water is diverted elsewhere.

The mayor of the City of Greater Shepparton, Jenny Houlihan, is quoted as saying that the plan was at odds with the government's own white paper on water and ignored the crucial role of irrigation to the economy of the Goulburn Valley.

The *Weekly Times* of 6 September also carried an opinion piece which carried the headline 'Water grab is a cheap, cruel stunt'. The article says:

It is obvious that Mr Bracks and Mr Thwaites are drafting policy on the run as they gear up for November's election.

The strongest evidence for this was the fact that Mr Thwaites and his department had spent months developing their Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy that proposed delivering water to Ballarat from Cairn Curran, yet they opted for the quick-fix Goulburn pipeline solution.

It goes on to talk about how the announcement was labelled a cheap political stunt to shore up support in crucial Labor seats.

The article goes on to talk about the member for Bendigo West in another place, the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Cameron, who they say is meant to represent the state's farmers but who raced out to announce the Bendigo–Wodonga pipeline to take 18 000 megalitres of irrigation water. It goes on to criticise him for announcing the \$30 million in funding before the feasibility study and piping of Goulburn water to Lake Eppalock had been done. The *Weekly Times* got stuck into the issue and it did not finish there. The same newspaper quoted various people, and I make the point that right across the board that people were not happy with this announcement. The paper quotes the member for South-West Coast in the other place, Denis Napthine, the shadow Minister for Water, as saying it is:

The most ludicrous idea I have heard in 20 years of politics.

To balance things out, the Victorian Greens water spokesman, Louis Delacretaz, said it is:

A totally flawed idea.

The Nationals water spokesman, the member for Swan Hill in the other place, Peter Walsh, said it is:

Recklessly absurd.

The Victorian Farmers Federation president, Simon Ramsay, said it is:

Government must acknowledge the impact of taking irrigators' water.

The Environment Victoria water spokesman, Paul Sinclair, said it is:

Robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Jenny Houlihan, the mayor of Shepparton, said it is:

Irrigation water from the Goulburn system will be used to water the flower gardens of Ballarat and Bendigo.

Campaspe shire councillor Murray McDonald said that the plan:

... smacks of policy on the run without any real consideration of the consequences.

The minister took a flogging, rightly so, because he was playing politics with water and did not pay enough attention to the ramifications of this announcement on the run and got caught. The fallout from that will go on for quite some time.

The second-reading speech states:

The bill will introduce new governance arrangements for water authorities and bring all water authorities (other than

the metropolitan licensees) under the Water Act 1989. New governance arrangements for catchment management authorities under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 are also proposed.

It goes on to say:

The bill also introduces 'on-the-spot' fines for breaches of the restrictions and prohibitions on water use provided for in permanent water savings plans and drought response plans or water restriction by-laws.

The bill addresses a range of issues. It amends the Water Act 1989 and related legislation; it requires water authorities to have regard to principles of sustainable management; it provides stronger governance framework for water authorities; it brings Melbourne Water under the Water Act 1989; it establishes the role of storage manager and sets out the functions of this role in some detail; it provides a consultative process for the decommissioning of dams, and I propose to talk about Lake Mokoan later because this part of it came out of the absolute debacle surrounding the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan and the potential damage to the Mallee district. It also introduces on-the-spot fines for permanent water-saving plans and drought response plans or water restriction by-laws; it provides for the protection of public land by making it clear that water authorities are exempt from adverse possession claims; and it amends the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

Of interest to the opposition and something it supports are the amendments to the Werribee South Land Act 1991. That act provided for the revocation of permanent and temporary reserves at Werribee South, reserving those lands for tourism and recreation. The bottom line is that it facilitates the development of a marina in Wyndham in Werribee South. The opposition supports that and believes it is a good outcome. The bay is a very important recreational fishing and tourism area and has been underused. We think a marina in that area with associated infrastructure is important.

We are concerned about the right of neighbouring farmers to farm, because once you bring in people who do not understand about farming they get concerned about the use of tractors at night, picking in the middle of the night, watering operations, the operation of sprays and pumps — all the things that happen, especially in the industries at Werribee, which are extremely valuable to Victoria's economy and keep us in fresh fruit and vegetables. These activities may be threatened, so I strongly suggest that in the planning stage the right to farm be covered. It is most important to the people in that area. If people who will be going to a rural area understand what farming is all about, it might help move that through.

One section of the bill that caught my attention was the consultative process for the decommissioning of major dams. As I mentioned earlier, Lake Mokoan came to mind. This provision requires water authorities to advertise proposed dam decommissionings — and I do not know how many more will be decommissioned. The provision also requires water authorities to consider public submissions to give stakeholders the opportunity to put forward their views on the decommissioning and to engage the community in the decision-making process. To my mind this is an admission that not enough consultation was undertaken — or not enough notice was taken of what consultation there was — with Lake Mokoan.

The Lake Mokoan issue has been hot and strong for years. There are many issues surrounding it, including doubts that the claimed savings are real. Many people who are across this issue have said the savings are illusory. There are the questions of the security of supply for local irrigators and the drop in tourism to the Benalla district.

I mentioned forests earlier, and used this analogy. The argument is always made that if we close down forests, if we create national parks instead of having forestry, the tourists will come. Now the argument is that if we close Lake Mokoan, tourists will come to the wetlands. But it has been my experience that this is not the case, because if tourists want to come they would come anyway. It is just one of the furphies used in the spin to do something that goes against a certain group or a certain use of the land.

Another issue is the reduction in flood security for Benalla. This is a very real issue. In the past Lake Mokoan has provided great security for Benalla. Benalla is known for flash flooding. It has the Broken River, with the Upper Ryans Creek coming into it, and the tributaries of the Mokoan. They all converge in and around Benalla. If we have a downpour, as I think we did in 1993, Benalla will go under. Lake Mokoan can and does play a vital role in flood mitigation.

The big issue is the cost of decommissioning, which has blown out to enormous proportions and is still blowing out. Any supposed savings and value from this decommissioning is being lost because of the cost of decommissioning.

I will stick to the issue of Lake Mokoan for a little bit, because it is in my electorate. It is also in the electorate of Bill Sykes, the member for Benalla in the other place, and will be in the new electorate of Ms Lovell — the new Northern Victoria Region. The issue has attracted a lot of mainstream press. The *Weekly Times*

reports that locals have maintained the rage since the decision. There have been quite a few articles in recent times that show that locals are still fighting — and good on them. I quote from a letter written by David Anker from Broken Creek that was published in the *Weekly Times* on 9 August:

Water minister John Thwaites says our water security is 91 per cent, yet in the 34 years Lake Mokoan has been operating, our lowest allocation has been 100 per cent.

If Lake Mokoan is decommissioned and with full uptake of licensed volume, our security will be, at best, 80 per cent.

...

Mr Thwaites has repeatedly guaranteed 'that there will be no adverse impact on the security of irrigators' existing water entitlements'.

...

The initial budget of \$1 million to return Mokoan to a 'world-class wetland' has blown out to \$25 million and work has not started yet. The \$60 million budget for decommissioning and providing offsets also appears to be grossly inadequate.

The Mokoan people are fighting against a decision which will seriously affect them and the Benalla district.

On 18 June 2005 the *Herald Sun* ran an article headed 'Farmers feel left out to dry'. It states:

The Bracks government has been accused of welshing on a promise to protect irrigators' water rights, as part of a \$60 million project to increase flows to the Murray River.

...

Farmers quit talks with the government saying they had been betrayed by a government backflip on repeated promises to protect in full irrigators' water entitlements.

On 12 July 2006 the *Weekly Times* reported:

Angry Mokoan irrigators have set up a fighting fund in a last-ditch bid to secure their water supplies once the lake is drained.

...

Group convenor David Rush said irrigators had 'invested millions of dollars in their farms in the region and they are just having the rug pulled out from under them'.

Xavier Duff wrote an article headed 'Drain on lake costs' which appeared in the *Weekly Times* on 19 July 2006. He talked about a blow-out in costs to \$80 million, according to a leaked government report. He said the cost of rehabilitating the lake has jumped from \$1 million to \$25 million, which is on top of the original \$60 million budget for the project. The article states:

Local farmer Wayne Spinks, who irrigates from the lake, said the report showed the government's decision to save water ... was coming at a 'ridiculously high price'.

As I said earlier, the opposition supports parts of the bill, such as the marina at Werribee. It certainly supports the increase in lease times from 50 years to 99 years. That is very sensible. Any development like that needs long-term security. In the past commercial operators and tourism operators on government land have simply had too-short leases, too-short licences to invest, because of the lack of security. This is a very sensible proposal. As I said earlier, the bay is a wonderful resource.

Of widespread concern to the opposition is the pillaging of water authorities' money. I discussed this with Mr Baxter at breakfast. I am sure he will refer to it in his contribution.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — We had wide-ranging discussions, didn't we?

Hon. E. G. STONEY — We had wide-ranging discussions at our last breakfast. Mr Baxter and I are part of the breakfast club and we discuss affairs of state.

The opposition thinks Victoria should be using every available dollar to upgrade water infrastructure and to pipe water in the channels. It should not be using the proceeds of water authorities to prop up the state budget. We need to have huge investment in water in the future and raiding the coffers of the water sector is not the way to encourage that investment. The *Age* reflected that in an article which appeared on 26 September 2006. It states:

More than \$600 million has been plundered from Victoria's water sector by a Bracks government that admits to collecting more money than it returns in services.

As drought and the health of the Yarra River continue to hamper Victoria, revenue figures confirmed by the state government show that less than two-thirds of dividends recouped from Victoria's 20 water authorities has been spent on water infrastructure and services.

...

Opposition water spokesman Denis Napthine said the \$600 million gap in expenditure was damning.

'The government has collected over \$2 billion in water dividends and water taxes and they've spent just over half that in key water infrastructure,' he said.

That is of great concern. That money should remain with the authorities to be reinvested in the most important issue in Victoria.

In conclusion I want to refer the house to two of many books written about water in recent times. The first one is *Talking Water — An Australian Guidebook for the 21st Century*. It is sponsored by the Farmhand Foundation. It was published under the signature of Bob Mansfield, the foundation chairman. The other members of the foundation listed are Sam Chisholm, Foxtel; John Hartigan, News Ltd; Alan Jones, broadcaster; Kerry Packer, Consolidated Press Holdings chairman; Richard Pratt, Visy Industries; and John Singleton, STW Group Ltd.

I want to quote the opening foreword:

One of the most pressing problems confronting Australia is the vexed question of water — its conservation, its distribution, its use and its management.

Water, or the lack of it in crucial areas of this vast continent, has been a constant thorn —

which has —

left an indelible mark on the history of Australian settlement and growth. Added to this are droughts which affect different parts of the continent far too often.

It goes on to talk about how the Farmhand Foundation launched a drought relief campaign and then talks about solutions for water.

The other book is *The Business of Saving Water* published by Pratt Water. It is a very comprehensive book. The opening statement is very evocative. Under the heading 'The business of running a river' it states:

Most Australians now agree that water is one of the biggest challenges facing this country. Yet our water crisis does not stem from an overall shortage of water. Our water crisis arises from our failure to make better use of the water resources we have.

That is a very important statement which actually gives us some hope and a challenge. It further states:

For too long for the water debate in Australia has focused on making a choice between agricultural growth and the environment. I have never believed this is required. Provided we take the right approach, there is more than enough water available to satisfy the needs of our environment as well as the demands of our growing agricultural economy.

I am sure the house can see a theme emerging from Richard Pratt. I know he has taken an enormous interest in water. He was quoted the other day as saying water is too cheap. I am not going to comment on that, but I know Mr Pratt — and I pay tribute to him — has really invested his time and a lot of money in the issue of water. He is very knowledgeable on the subject and I congratulate him for the interest he has shown in this very important issue.

I will finish on that note and say again that the bill covers many subjects. It is very complex. We cannot agree with some provisions in the bill and we strongly oppose it.

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — This bill is a shocker. There is no other description I can employ to describe this piece of legislation. I am really concerned that we are having this presented to us on the last day of the 55th Parliament.

The water industry in this state over the last few decades has by and large been a bipartisan endeavour by this Parliament. I go back to the 1989 Water Act introduced by the Cain government, which brought together more than 100 separate pieces of legislation relating to water. That act was put together in a bipartisan fashion by the government of the day and the two opposition parties. It has stood the test of time. I do not think there is any doubt about that. In terms of the many amending bills since 1989, by and large those legislative changes have been supported by both sides of the house regardless of which party happened to be occupying the Treasury bench at the time — not entirely supported but by and large.

We have today an exceedingly complex piece of legislation, as Mr Stoney has already noted, brought in at the death knock of this Parliament with a heap of amendments made in the other place without notice to the opposition parties and simply notified by press release. It is destroying that bipartisanship. I think there is an ulterior motive in the bill before the house today. I believe it is an attempt by this government, this minister, this Labor Party to wrench back control of the water industry to a very centralised, dominant, unfeeling, uncaring bureaucracy such as we once had in this state.

I remember the days of the former Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. In its early days — it was formed in 1906 — the SRWSC did a tremendous amount of good work in providing water supplies to rural Victoria. It thereby enabled this state to become one of the wealthiest states of the nation, because of that extraordinary wealth produced by irrigation mainly through northern Victoria. But over time the old SRWSC became a monolithic organisation dominated by engineers. They were competent people — there is no doubt about that — but unable to see that you have to actually deal with your customers, clients and communities in a consultative manner and take them into your confidence, rather than dictating to them from Orrong Road, Armadale, which is what the old SRWSC eventually came to mean.

I well remember when I was a young irrigator — after I left school — Dr Alf Tisdale was the chairman of commissioners at the SRWSC. He was a man of extraordinary capacity, there is no doubt about that, but he came to believe towards the end of his tenure that he was God. We called him Dr No because whatever you wanted to do, Alf had a reason why you could not do it. We all recall that that eventually led to a revolt by the irrigators of this state. It takes a fair bit to get the irrigators of Victoria to rally in the streets of Melbourne and even more to rally in the streets of Armadale, but they did.

That led to the McDonald inquiry, which was set up by the then water minister, David White. There is no question that he was a very competent minister, and he was bold enough to recognise that the days of a monolithic water organisation in this state were at an end. He appointed the Honourable Stuart McDonald, a former member of this chamber, to conduct a review. As a result of that review the water industry in this state was decentralised with the formation of a number of rural water authorities, the principal one being Goulburn-Murray, with others in the south, the west and Sunraysia.

I do not think there is any doubt at all that those changes were mightily successful. We saw a coming together of the water authority and its customers. We saw them working together. We saw some confidence amongst the irrigators that they were being listened to. We saw water prices rise substantially and many millions of dollars in infrastructure renewal paid for by the irrigators, because they felt they had been given a say in the management of the industry and that their water charges were being properly expended. In my view they were able to focus on their particular areas, and we made extraordinary progress.

I particularly remember Goulburn-Murray Water under the chairmanship of the former member for Shepparton in the other place, Mr Peter Ross-Edwards. It built up an extraordinary reputation under the chairmanship of Mr Ross-Edwards and a competent board and chief executive. Attitudes in the water industry and irrigation industry changed dramatically. We no longer had the them-and-us syndrome that we had suffered for so long under the old water and rivers supply commission and its successor body, the Rural Water Corporation.

I fear that we are now seeing a reversal of all that progress. In this bill today we are seeing an attempt to dismantle that and to go back to the bad old days when the decisions were made centrally, down here in Melbourne. It has been subtly happening for a while. This bill speeds the process and gives it legislative

backing. But I have observed over the last three or four years that there has been a subtle pressure on the chairman and the chief executives of the water authorities to be much more subservient to the minister and the government. I particularly note that Mr Ross-Edwards's successor, the new chairperson of Goulburn-Murray Water, seems to feel very reluctant about making any sort of decisions without approval from those at 8 Nicholson Street. I do not think there is any doubt at all that the decisions of the current chairman are very much vetted at Nicholson Street before they are implemented.

Irrigators are not fools. They can see that that is happening, and they are growing concerned. They get agitated when they see that they are yet again the pawns in an industry they pay the full cost of running — there is no doubt about that. We know what water charges are, and they are pretty high. Irrigators see that they are now beginning to lose control. They were prepared to pay those water charges when they believed they were getting a fair return for the charges and the system was being run for the maximum benefit of customers and the communities they serve. The irrigators are now less certain about that.

I think this bill is capitalising on this subtle move that we have noticed over the last three or four years. This is turning the water authorities into instruments of this Labor government. That is what the government is doing. It is making sure it controls everything from the centre. We know that that is the ideology of the Labor Party anyway. You only have to look at its structure and its internal party machinations to see that. The Labor Party is a control freak, and this seems to be its nature. It now wants to reflect that nature yet again in the water industry.

I will look at a couple of the details of the bill. I do not propose to go through it seriatim, because it is a complex piece of legislation that amends an act that is 780 pages long.

Hon. E. G. Stoney — We have until tomorrow night.

Hon. W. R. BAXTER — Mr Stoney may have that time, but I do not. I am picking these details out at random and not necessarily ranking them in importance. What is the justification for changing the name 'water authority' to 'water corporation'? The second-reading speech does not explain that. Is it going to deliver one extra litre of water to drought-stricken farmers? No, it is not. Is it going to make the organisation more efficient? No, it is not. Is it going to cost money to do it? Yes, it is. Who is going to pay for

it? It is pretty clear that the irrigators are going to pay for it. Irrigators do not see any advantage in whole new signs going up on buildings and so on. In the overall scheme of things, this change of name is not going to cost a lot of money to implement, but it is symptomatic of what this government is on about — interference all the time, cosmetic changes for the sake of them and messing around without any sort of justification at all.

Proposed new section 122ZK in part 6C on page 83 of the bill refers to storage managers. What is the motive for inserting these sorts of provisions into the act? Water authorities already manage water storages. For example, Goulburn-Murray Water manages Lake Dartmouth on behalf of the Murray Darling Basin Commission. I think it similarly manages Lake Mulwala. The New South Wales water authority manages Lake Hume. That system to me seems to have worked pretty well over the years. Why are we now inserting in the act a whole raft of provisions that deal with storage managers? Does this mean we are going to take away the management of storages from the water authorities and insert some other instrumentality or authority as the storage manager? If we do, what is the purpose of that? Is the storage still going to be managed as an irrigation storage? That is what those storages — Eildon, Hume, Dartmouth and others — were built for; or is there some other motive in this?

Will the storages be managed for the environment, whatever that means? Does it mean, for example, that the new storage manager might decide that in years such as this when the dams are going to be basically emptied — certainly Eildon, Hume and less so Dartmouth — to supply water entitlements to irrigators that perhaps in the future we will not do that, that it might decide it is going to maintain some sort of minimum level in the storage, say 20, 30, or 40 per cent?

What is behind this? I can see no reason why we would be putting into the Water Act a whole section dealing with storage managers unless there was a proposal to radically alter the traditional way the storages have been managed for the last 30 or 40 years. That sets the alarm bells ringing as far as I am concerned, because we know that the pressures that have come on from time to time from persons who believe there ought to be a minimum level maintained in the storages for one reason or another have been firmly resisted by the water authorities — quite rightly in my view — on the basis that they were built as irrigation storages and that is the way they should be operated. I pose the question, and I sound the warning: what is the purpose of part 6C which is being inserted in the Water Act by this bill today?

Another alarming part of the bill goes to the issue of capital return. I invite the house to peruse division 3 in clause 54, headed 'Repayment of capital' and to proposed section 122ZI. We know — Mr Stoney has already alluded to it — how the government, since it has been in office, has ripped out of water authorities \$1.6 billion, much of which has not found its way back into expenditure on water infrastructure and water matters but has gone off into the great sinkhole of consolidated revenue.

We know there is a secret environmental tax that consumers are paying without it being open and transparent to them that they are being slugged. Now we have got a specific proposed section that:

The capital of a water corporation is repayable to the State at such times, and in such amounts, as the Treasurer directs in writing, after consultation with the Minister and the board of directors of the water corporation.

I do not see much safety in that. The Treasurer can consult his colleague the minister and he is not likely to get much difference there, I would not have thought, Mr Drum. They are both on the same tram so there is not going to be much resistance there. The boards are appointed by the government of the day, and, as I noted earlier, they are increasingly becoming subservient to this government; so there is not going to be a lot of resistance there either. Even if there were, there is nothing in this proposed section which says the board can resist and it will be taken notice of.

The board does not have a power of veto, it is going to have to do what it is told anyway, whether it agrees or not. It is very alarming that this will insert a direct capacity in the Water Act for the Treasurer to raid the capital of water authorities to prop up his budget or to go off on some other frolic, spending large amounts of money and extracting it via the side door, if you like, from the water consumers of this state. I resist it entirely, and I will not have a bar of it because I think it is simply wrong. I do not trust this government when it comes to financial arrangements. We know what Labor does when it comes to managing money, and the Parliament should not be giving the government the powers that are set out in proposed section 122ZI.

I could also say something about the repeal of section 161 of the Water Act. Section 161 might be considered to be a relatively minor part of the act. It goes to the issue of the advertising of bylaws in newspapers circulating in areas where the bylaws are to apply. Section 160 is the section which authorises the promulgation of bylaws — that is the normal practice, of course. Section 161 goes to the issue of the approval, notice and availability of bylaws. It states:

A by-law made by an Authority under section 160 has no effect until —

(a) it is approved by the Minister —

which is fair enough —

(b) notice of the making of the by-law has been published —

(i) in the Government Gazette; and

(ii) in a newspaper circulating generally in the area concerned.

This bill repeals section 161. What is the motive for that? Why is the government afraid to have the bylaws it might be promulgating advertised amongst the communities that are going to be affected by it? Is there a sinister motive there? I do not know, but I think that, in terms of openness, transparency and what has been traditionally the way things have been done in public administration in the state of Victoria, those things ought to be advertised in the districts in which they are going to apply.

In the second-reading speech there was absolutely no explanation as to why section 161 is being repealed. Maybe if we go into the committee stage later the minister might be able to give us some advice as to why section 161 is being repealed.

This bill aims to fix the mess that was made about water shares in the Water (Resource Management) Act 2005. I do not think the government has it right this time either. I acknowledge that mistakes were made in 2005 because the government acted clumsily and had done insufficient work on it. This is an attempt to fix it up. In some ways I regret that I will vote against the legislation when perhaps that part of the bill is of some merit, because it goes to rectifying errors that the government made a year or so ago.

The bill deals with the issue of exit fees for those who choose to sell their water and leave the industry. Now the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is beginning to say that exit fees are inappropriate, if not illegal. That ought to have been fixed up by the government before this bill came in, because in fact the notion of exit fees — or whatever name you might call them — has some merit. Persons who have been irrigators, who have captured an increase in land value because their property has had a water entitlement, might choose to sell that entitlement and capture that increase in value. In so doing, the costs of maintaining the system has to be spread around the remaining number of irrigators, and therefore their costs will increase as individuals.

It seemed to me that the notion of imposing an exit fee — a buy-out, if you like — had merit because many of these systems last for more than 100 years, so they will need to be maintained in the future. Someone who has used them for 20 years and has captured the increase in value to their land that water has brought is gaining an unfair advantage if they can suddenly cash out and wave goodbye and leave those remaining to carry a greater burden. I thought the concept of exit fees was one way of addressing that issue and signing off fairly and equitably. I am not blaming the government for what the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is now saying, but I would have thought it was incumbent upon the government to sort out a solution to that issue before we had this bill coming along today.

I want to briefly mention a couple of things that Mr Stoney referred to in terms of the pipeline proposals to Bendigo and Ballarat. I am not going to recapitulate many of the remarks I made in the motion I moved when the house last met on this issue, save to repeat that this idea has gone over like a lead balloon, as one would expect, in the Goulburn Valley. One has only to look at the petition that was presented to the Legislative Assembly yesterday by the honourable member for Rodney, which states:

The petition of the following residents of northern Victoria draws to the attention of the house our condemnation of a proposal by the Bracks Labor government to pipe precious water from the already stressed Goulburn irrigation system to Bendigo and Ballarat without any consultation of stakeholders.

I interpose there to remind the house that on the morning of the day the minister made his announcement about the fanciful Ballarat pipeline he was actually in Shepparton. Did he give any indication when he was in Shepparton about the announcement he was going to make in Ballarat later in the day? No fear, he did not — a very dishonest act, in my view.

The petition goes on to say:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure that no water be purchased from distressed irrigators in the Goulburn system for urban use in Ballarat and Bendigo.

The petitioners could have left it there, and many of the people who signed the petition wanted to leave it there, but those who put the petition together, particularly The Nationals candidate for Rodney, Mr Paul Weller, a pretty responsible person, acknowledged that Bendigo is in a parlous condition in terms of water supply, and Mr Drum has alluded to that often in the house as well.

The petition goes on to say:

The petitioners further request that Coliban Water and Central Highlands Water exhaust all water-saving options in their own system first, and as a last resort if water is needed from the Goulburn system, —

which refers to water being needed from the Goulburn system only if they are dying of thirst and cannot find any savings in their own system, which is the no. 1 priority; and I think we would all support that that is what they should look at first, which I think is what they are looking at —

the urban authorities fund water infrastructure projects to generate equivalent water savings for their needs.

The petitioners are saying, 'If things get that desperate that you actually have to get some Goulburn water, you should fund water-saving initiatives in the Goulburn system so that Goulburn consumers are left in a no-net-loss position'. In other words, find the savings, pay for finding the savings and take those savings rather than just taking water from Goulburn consumers. That is a very fair and equitable proposal by the petitioners, and I give them full marks for being as reasonable as that, because they could easily have got on their high horse and refused to give any consideration to it at all.

That petition was signed by 3077 persons in the Goulburn Valley in about 10 days. It just shows the strength of feeling that is in the Goulburn Valley over this pipeline proposal to Ballarat. It is a crazy notion. It was not mentioned at all in the *Our Water Our Future* document, which has been heralded by this government as the great plan forward. How could it be so that we would have the great plan forward in 2005 and, in less than 12 months, the government is proposing a major initiative that is not even mentioned in that document? It just demonstrates what a knee-jerk reaction it was and how the government is making policy on the run.

I briefly want to talk about farm dams as well because there is considerable unhappiness in the upper Murray north-east catchment about the farm dams legislation and the way it is being applied. There is no doubt whatsoever that it is being read as narrowly as possible by the water authorities in the way they are dealing with applications. There is quite a movement in the north-east to get a better deal for those farmers, and I certainly support them in that endeavour.

If one looks at what we in The Nationals are proposing in our policy, one notes that we say farmers in the north-east should be able to build a dam on the most logical, most economical and most efficient site on their property, even if it is on what is classified as a

waterway. We have had so much difficulty with defining 'waterway'. The department and the water authorities have defined a waterway in the broadest possible terms so that virtually anywhere you would sensibly build a water storage is now deemed to be on a waterway. Clearly that will not work if we are going to prevent people building dams on waterways because we define every logical site as being on a waterway. It is an oxymoron — you cannot do it that way.

We say you ought to be able to build a dam on the most logical and efficient site on your property, provided it is sustainable — in other words, provided there is sufficient water there to capture without denying your neighbour a supply of water, which of course they might already be tapping into, and they are certainly entitled to a fair arrangement. We also say that the subsidy arrangements that are in place at the moment, as good as they are, would be vastly improved if the purchase was not of a full water right but of the medium security product which was just coming into existence, because that would basically equate with the level of security upper catchment farmers have in any event, and it would be a much more equal proposition if that were the case. I know some farmers in the upper catchment are looking for a bulk entitlement to be allocated to the land east of the Hume Freeway. I am certainly prepared to entertain that idea. I think there are some issues and problems with it, but it could well be an idea that is worth exploring further.

I also want to move on a little to the misinformation that we get peddled around on water issues by people who ought to know better. I was galled the other day to see on television Don Henry, the executive director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, making two statements which were plain wrong and which Mr Henry must have known or at least ought to have known were wrong. One was when he was talking about irrigators being the biggest users of water. That is absolute rubbish. The irrigators are simply growing food for the people of this nation. It is the consumer in the supermarket who is the end user of the water, and it was simplistic of Mr Henry to be doing a beat-up and saying that somehow or other irrigators are wasting water, that they are the big consumers and that they are the ones that ought to be cutting back. If he wants to cut back on irrigation in this state, he has to acknowledge that the consumers, the citizens of Melbourne, will have to pay a lot more for their food. Was that what he was suggesting? I do not think so. He was on a populist excursion to paint a completely misleading picture.

Even worse, Mr Henry then went on to say that the Murray River in South Australia was being absolutely starved of water this season and that it was just

dreadful. That is just plain wrong. If we did not have the Hume and Dartmouth storages, the Murray in South Australia would be a series of puddles this year, this drought season. In fact the river is actually running pretty full. Irrigators in South Australia are getting 80 per cent of their allocations, which is more than I can say for those in the Goulburn system, and they are certainly getting more than those in the Coliban system, who are getting zilch — nil, nothing. Yet Mr Henry appeared on national television spinning a yarn that because of irrigation somehow or other the Murray in South Australia is dry. That is plain wrong. Without the storages on the system, yes, it would be right, but that was not the point Mr Henry was making in again trying to mislead consumers, citizens, voters, benefactors and donors to his organisation in the city by peddling misleading information.

There is no doubt it will rain again — some time, but soon, we hope — but it is basically too late this year for the grain harvest, and it is basically too late for many of the irrigators in much of the state. Understandably there is an extraordinary amount of stress out there. This morning I was talking to an irrigator who is endeavouring to irrigate a grain crop. It is not something he customarily does; he does not normally irrigate grain crops. But because it is so dry he is attempting to do it today. Because the conditions are so windy, that is causing the irrigated crop to lodge. It struck me how difficult it is to be a farmer, that when things go wrong it seems everything goes wrong. Not only is he having to irrigate a crop because rain is not coming from the heavens, but when he tries to irrigate it the wind conditions are such that the crop becomes lodged.

No wonder we are getting a lot of angst, concern and suicides in some cases, regrettably, in our country areas. For those people to now have foisted upon them a piece of legislation such as this, which is really going to make decisions even more remote from those people who are dealing with the very, very difficult conditions we have this year, and which we have had for the last five or six years, seems to me to be grossly insensitive by this government.

One can only conclude that its members are not interested in wealth production, they are not interested in a vibrant country community, and they see this as somehow or other giving them electoral advantage in the suburbs. I say to them that if they ignore what irrigation has done for this state over the years, they do it at their own peril. It will be a disaster for the state in the long run and a disaster for the Victorian community. This legislation ought to be rejected.

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — I am very pleased to speak in support of the Water (Governance) Bill — our last piece of environment legislation for this Parliament.

Everyone knows that Victoria is facing a critical issue with the sustained and prolonged drought which has gone on now for some 10 years. We know that climate change is having a ravaging effect on our natural environment and on the water flows in our rivers. The CSIRO predicts that our rivers and streams will have 8 per cent less water in them by 2020; and by 2050, on mid-range predictions, 20 per cent less water.

No government can afford to ignore that advice. The Bracks government has worked very hard under the leadership of the Minister for Water in the other place to critically address this frightening issue that is affecting our state and which threatens to undermine the way in which we live and the amenities that we enjoy.

In 2004 we commenced a critical examination of the water supplies in Victoria and how we should use and manage those supplies through the Our Water Our Future process. It was a hugely consultative process. The minister released a discussion paper, a green paper as he called it, which had many actions listed in it. He put that draft paper out for public comment and received over 600 submissions in response.

We held public forums around the state. I went to the one held in my home town of Geelong to discuss the ramifications of those actions and the implications for all of us. We wanted to look at how we use water in our state. Obviously the way we have used it historically is not going to be appropriate under the threat of climate change and in the sustained drought. We need to change the way we use water; we need to be much smarter about it and change the way Victorians think about water. We should think about how every one of us, no matter where we live or work, could manage our water practices more sustainably.

As our main four thrusts we have concentrated on the Our Water Our Future outcomes, which were released in 2004. They are conservation, increasing recycling, sourcing additional supplies and improving river health. As a result of these actions we are starting to see some dramatic change taking place. The government has introduced permanent water-saving measures across the state. This very sensible idea originated in my home town of Geelong, when Barwon Water proposed to the minister very early in this term that the government introduce a by-law to introduce permanent water-saving measures in Geelong.

The minister was so impressed by the Geelong community's preparedness to manage its water sustainably and to do sensible things — like not hosing down driveways and using trigger nozzles on hoses — that he has rolled that idea out across the state. In the Geelong region those permanent water-saving measures have saved our supplies by 5 per cent.

We are investigating very seriously a number of huge water-recycling projects, the most visionary of which is the project to recycle, reuse and pipe the water that currently comes from the Eastern Treatment Plant to Gippsland for use in the electricity generation industry. If that project were successful, it would augment our recycling to some 40 per cent in this state. Currently it stands at 14 per cent; across the state we recycle about 14 per cent of our water, which is a dramatic improvement on the situation when we first came to power in 1999. At that time we recycled only 2 per cent. Under the Bracks government we have seen a 12 per cent increase in recycling across the state.

We have certainly seen a change in the way people use water and their preparedness to conserve it. The government is very keen to see this continue. Since the 1990s Melburnians have saved some 22 per cent of their water — in other words, we are using 22 per cent less water than we did in the 1990s, which is a fantastic outcome.

We have introduced a rising block tariff so that the people who use the most water pay more. It is predicated upon the average family's water consumption. We have introduced regional water strategies. Mr Baxter stood in this place and said there was no mention in the Our Water Our Future process of taking water and using it for Bendigo and Ballarat, but the document released by the minister said the government would be developing regional water strategies in consultation with the community — and that is exactly what it is doing. Those regional water strategies are now being finalised. I know that in my region — the central region which includes Ballarat and Bendigo as well as Melbourne and Geelong — that document will be released prior to the election. There will be much interest across the state on the central water strategy.

The health of rivers is very important, and we want a change to the way Victorians have seen rivers historically — that is, purely for extractive purposes. We have established an environmental reserve to ensure that rivers have a right to have water in them, which is a challenging concept for some members of this place. We are building huge infrastructure projects to conserve water. We have strengthened the Eildon

Dam. We have committed substantial money to the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline — we were the first government to have our money on the table — which will see some 93 000 megalitres of water saved each year.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms CARBINES — Yes, we are decommissioning Lake Mokoan, because it is the most inefficient man-made lake in the state, from which some 50 000 megalitres of water evaporate every year — more than the city of Shepparton consumes in five years. It has been interesting to listen this morning to members of the opposition criticising the government and yet speaking in support of saving Lake Mokoan, when it is a very inefficient man-made lake. You cannot on the one hand criticise the government for its water program and yet support the retention of the lake, which loses more in evaporation every year than the city of Shepparton consumes in five years.

Our government is very proud of its record on water. We know we are tackling a very hard issue for this state and that some very difficult decisions have to be made. We do not shy away from that, because we want to secure Victoria's water supplies for the next 50 years. That does cause some concern in some communities who wish to see the water as theirs only, but I have got news for them — we are in this together. The water belongs to all of us and not just one particular community. This bill implements a number of the actions outlined in the Our Water Our Future initiative released by the Minister for Water in the other place, Mr Thwaites. I do not have time to go through all of the provisions in this bill, but I want to talk about some of them.

We are introducing on-the-spot fines for breaches of permanent water saving plans and drought response plans. That is a very important enforcement tool and a disincentive for people to be profligate with water.

Hon. D. K. Drum — Just shoot 'em!

Ms CARBINES — Mr Drum is just displaying his ignorance by making comments like that, and I think it would be better if he just sat and listened. If he did, he might learn something for a change, but that would surprise me.

It was very interesting this morning that neither of the previous speakers mentioned catchment management authorities (CMAs). This bill improves the governance arrangements surrounding the CMAs and reduces the number of members on the boards from a maximum of 15 to a maximum of 9. The 10 catchment management

authorities in this state do a fantastic job, and I am not surprised that the opposition did not mention them. The Liberal Party has spent the last couple of months bagging the CMAs and undermining confidence in them. I can tell you now that the Liberal Party can hang its head in shame, because the people who are working for CMAs and actually running the programs on the ground are frightened by what the Liberal Party has had to say about them. It is to the Liberal Party's discredit that it has criticised the CMAs. I am not surprised that The Nationals have not mentioned the CMAs, because they are intending to abolish them in the very unlikely scenario that they get into government. The Nationals obviously do not want that known, because the people in the CMAs are their people. I cannot see why they do not support them. They are the farmers who manage the land across the state, and they work with farmers. It is just nonsensical.

As a result of a house amendment made in the Legislative Assembly, this bill also requires water authorities to provide the minister with information on the top 200 water users in their areas as part of their annual reporting requirements under the Financial Management Act. This will be important information that will be available to the minister. The minister will be required to table the information in Parliament within seven days of its being provided to the minister. The release of that information will encourage those top water users to enter into conservation plans for their businesses and industry. I know that industry definitely wants to improve its water consumption rates. The Alcoa smelter in my electorate was the first big industry in Geelong to do a water audit. It wanted to conserve water not just because it was environmentally sound but also because it made good business sense; conserving water made economic sense to them.

I would like to say a few words about Dr Naphthine, the member for South-West Coast in the other place. He flits in and out of Geelong every so often and makes a few statements about what the Liberal Party would do in the unlikely scenario of its coming to power. He is quite disingenuous because he says one thing in Geelong and a different thing in Ballarat. The thing that we all know about country people is that they are not that stupid. He says in Ballarat that he is going to give Ballarat all of the water from the Lal Lal Reservoir and then comes to our town and forgets to mention that. The Committee for Geelong chairman, Mr Jim Cousins, has actually labelled Dr Naphthine and the rest of the Liberal Party as the enemy, because they have no vision for water provision in Geelong.

Last week Dr Naphthine was in Geelong saying that the Bracks government stripped Barwon Water of

substantial dividends. When we actually looked at the facts we saw that the Liberal Party drained \$17.6 million out of Barwon Water. That is in contrast to the Bracks government, which has taken only \$1 million out of Barwon Water to help provide infrastructure across the state but has returned an investment of over \$213 million for water infrastructure projects in the Geelong and Colac region. As I said on radio last week, we should beware and be very suspicious when Dr Napthine arrives in Geelong, making grand statements about water because he does not know what he is talking about.

He is an embarrassment to the Liberal Party and has been exposed on a number of occasions. He is lazy and does not do the work required, unlike the Bracks government, which has been working now for four years to come up with a comprehensive strategy to drought proof our state. I congratulate the Minister for Water for his leadership on water issues. He is right — we are all in this together. Together we will make sure that our state has enough water supplies for the next 50 years.

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (North Eastern) — At the outset of my speech I would like to say how appalled I was by the final contribution of Ms Carbines in personally attacking the member for South-West Coast in the other place, Dr Denis Napthine, who is a very good member of this Parliament. He is known for his consultative approach to issues. He goes out and does the hard work by consulting with communities, unlike the Minister for Water and the Minister for Agriculture, both in the other place, who refuse to meet with constituents who have real concerns about the environment, water and agriculture.

Water is certainly the biggest issue that has faced my electorate for a number of years. In more recent times it has been recognised as the biggest issue facing this state and indeed, this nation. It is the most basic of human needs. To supply water is one of the fundamental things that a state government can undertake to do. The Bracks government is totally failing to address the water crisis in this state and is also failing in its duty of care to Victorians to deliver to them the water that they need for their basic survival.

I was disappointed to note that Ms Carbines left the chamber straight after making her contribution, as most Labor members do — they do not stay around for the debate because they are not interested in hearing the concerns raised by other members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents.

This bill repeals the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958 and the Melbourne Water Corporation Act 1992; it brings the powers and functions of Melbourne Water under the Water Act. The bill legislates for and standardises on-the-spot fines for breaching water restrictions across Victoria for regional and metropolitan water authorities. It changes the names of all water authorities to water corporations. It corrects numerous procedural issues related to the implementation of the Water (Resource Management) Act 2005, especially in relation to limited-term transfers and environmental entitlements. The bill provides new board structures for water corporations and for catchment management authorities. It makes changes to the Werribee South Land Act 1991, especially to the plan of the land involved and the possible term of the lease. The bill also makes numerous amendments to clarify issues with respect to water trading, and clause 171 seeks to deal with issues relating to the impact of separation of water from land on the Valuation of Land Act and local government rates.

There are two main issues in this bill I want to address, and the first is the change of name from water authorities to water corporations. We are in the midst of a water crisis in Victoria, and the best that this state government and this Minister for Water can come up with is a distraction — ‘We’ll just change the names of water authorities to water corporations’. We have seen distractions like this from former Labor governments. The Keating federal government was very good at that. Whenever a problem or a crisis existed in the nation, Paul Keating would come up with, ‘Let’s change the flag. Let’s change the debate. Let’s get people’s attention away from the real issue’.

Changing names from water authorities to water corporations will not solve any of our water problems in this state. In fact it will probably only anger people in the irrigation districts who are paying for water they are not receiving. We see that on the Goulburn system irrigators have been allocated 21 per cent of their entitlement. Our Campaspe irrigators — the hardest done by of all irrigators in this state — have a zero allocation, as do the Loddon River diverters and the diverters from the Bullarook Creek on the Hepburn system. Diverters on the Broken River have only a 45 per cent allocation.

The irrigators will need to pay for 100 per cent of their entitlement, even though, as I said, on the Goulburn system they will receive only 21 per cent and on the Campaspe system they will receive a zero allocation. One of my constituents, who is an irrigator on the Campaspe system, has a \$27 000 water bill. ‘Give me \$27 000, thank you’, says Mr Thwaites, ‘I will put my

hand out for the \$27 000 you must pay me for the privilege of having water infrastructure so water can flow past the edge of your farm, but I am not going to give you one drop of water in return for that \$27 000'.

What is that \$27 000 to be used for? What will the payment that Goulburn and Campaspe irrigators make for their 100 per cent of water entitlement be used for? It will be used to change the names of the authorities to water corporations. Our irrigators can put their minds at ease, knowing that their money is being put to good use — ha, ha! The money they are paying for water that they are not receiving will be used to print new letterheads, new business cards, new signs, new corporate logos et cetera. I think they will be most relieved to know that that money is being put to good use!

The second issue I have with this bill is the provision that will enable the Treasurer to order authorities to hand over capital. Our irrigators are certainly contributing capital to the water authorities for upgrades to the system, and our Campaspe irrigators actually pay about three times as much for their water as other irrigators pay because the Campaspe Weir is in desperate need of an upgrade. They have an account that is in credit with Goulburn-Murray Water, but now the Treasurer will be able to just order the authority to hand over that money. What will happen when Goulburn-Murray Water gets around to upgrading the Campaspe Weir? It will have to borrow and go into debt, and again the cost of water for those irrigators will rise because it will be the users — the customers of Goulburn-Murray Water — who will have to service that debt.

The Campaspe irrigators are in a desperate situation. Not only do they have a zero allocation of water this year, but for the past two years they have received only 39 per cent and 32 per cent of their water supply. The year before last they paid for a 100 per cent entitlement and got 39 per cent; last year they paid for 100 per cent and got 32 per cent; and this year they paid for 100 per cent and got a zero allocation. They do not even know if they will continue to get stock and domestic water for the entire season; there is no guarantee of that.

For the past three years we have been trying to get a meeting for them with the Minister for Agriculture, Bob Cameron, and he has been refusing to meet with them. Finally about a month ago the minister agreed to meet with them. It was three years too late! We do not need a meeting eight weeks before an election. We needed that meeting three years ago when this problem first started. But members of the Bracks government want to bury

their heads in the sand; they do not want to address the water crisis in this state.

We have also been trying to get meetings with the Minister for Water, John Thwaites, to discuss the issues the Campaspe irrigators have. We managed to get one 5-minute meeting with the minister after we ambushed him in Shepparton during his visit there in his capacity as Minister for Victorian Communities. Minister Thwaites was obviously moved by the plight of the Campaspe irrigators, but he has done nothing to offer them any assistance since that meeting.

The Bendigo-Ballarat pipeline is a very contentious issue in the Goulburn Valley. Minister Thwaites was in Shepparton the morning that he announced the Ballarat pipeline. He did not make any mention of it in Shepparton — he spoke about channel lining and saving water in Shepparton, which was welcome — but then he went straight to Ballarat. At that stage the Goulburn irrigators had only 7 per cent of their supply. Although the Goulburn irrigators had got only 7 per cent of their water entitlements, he still announced that he was going to build a pipeline and pump water all the way from the Goulburn system, over the Great Dividing Range, to Ballarat. What a stupid idea!

This is a \$300 million pipeline to try to rob water from one stressed system and take it to another. The water is not there to be delivered to Ballarat. This is not cost effective. It is a cost-prohibitive project. It will also create environmental problems with greenhouse gas emissions et cetera, with the amount of energy that will be needed to pump the water over the Great Dividing Range. One of the great rules in water usage has always been that you do not take water from where it is scarce in the north of the state and send it to the south which has a higher rainfall. Yet this is exactly what this government has come up with in its desperation and attempt to say that it is doing something to supply water to Ballarat.

The government has created a very divisive debate and pitted community against community. It has pitted the community of Bendigo against the communities in the Goulburn Valley by saying, first of all, that it will take water from the Goulburn and send it to Bendigo. The government has said it will buy the water from willing sellers. There is no such thing as a willing seller. People are having to sell their water because the banks are foreclosing on them, and if that water is bought from so-called 'willing sellers' it will be water lost to production in this state.

The Liberal Party has, again, said that it would build that pipeline to Bendigo. We have reluctantly said that

after exploring all other avenues to try to supply additional water to Bendigo we have realised unfortunately that if we are to get water to Bendigo the pipeline needs to be built. But the Liberal Party has made a commitment that we will not take water from irrigators. We will require Coliban Water and both state and federal levels of government to make enormous investments in the Goulburn irrigation system to find efficiencies and savings on that system to supply water to Bendigo. We will not be taking water away from production, as the Labor Party intends to do.

The local Labor members in Bendigo — Bob Cameron and Jacinta Allan, from the other place — have totally failed their communities. They have known of this rising crisis for many years. It is a crisis that has been created under the Bracks government; it is not something that they can hark back to the former government not doing anything about, because Lake Eppalock was full and water spilled over the spillway in 2001. Bob and Jacinta have done nothing to address this crisis. In addition Bendigo has its former federal member, John Brumby, sitting at the cabinet table alongside Bob and Jacinta — three people who should know Bendigo very well, should have known the crisis that was looming for Bendigo and who did nothing to address the water crisis there.

All they have done is create this divisive debate which has pitted Ballarat against Bendigo, because as soon as they announced that Ballarat was to be connected to the pipeline as well, we had cries from the people of Bendigo of, 'They are not having our water'. There were cries from people from the Goulburn system area saying, 'It's not that we don't want to help Bendigo out and give the people water, but we can't afford to just give them water. We can afford to assist them if there is investment in savings and efficiencies in the system, but we can't afford to just give water away.' It is a divisive debate very similar to the farm dams debate that this government ran, which pitted the upper catchment against the irrigation district. Unfortunately, instead of communities fighting the common enemy — the Bracks government — they fought one another, and the government walked away scot-free.

The Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Agriculture in the other place recently visited Shepparton to view our frost damage. They did that last Thursday but did not mention that the very next day they were going to announce that another 36 gigalitres would be ripped out of the Goulburn system to supply their final environmental flows for the Living Murray commitment. The press release announcing that talks about the Shepparton irrigation area modernisation

project and mentions channel automation, which is just another name for total channel control.

We have had a trial of total channel control on the Central Goulburn No. 2 channel (CG2). There have been real problems with the trial that have not yet been ironed out. There are problems with measurements, problems with water not arriving when it is ordered and problems with water flooding people out when they have not ordered water. There are some real issues to be sorted out before total channel control can be rolled out to the entire system. At the moment we do not believe that one drop of water has been saved from total channel control. All it has done is reduce the measurement to irrigators. This will mean that 36 gigalitres will be lost to production in this state. It is not water that has come from savings to prevent seepage or evaporation in the irrigation area.

In closing I would like to say that the Liberal Party opposes this bill. We oppose it because it fails to address the water crisis that is facing Victoria. The best that this minister can come up with is the idea of changing the names of water authorities to water corporations.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — I am pleased to rise today to speak on the Water (Governance) Bill on behalf of The Nationals and to join my colleagues in our opposition to this bill. There is no doubt that the water issue is complex. This is a bill of 227 pages and, as the Honourable Bill Baxter said just a short while ago, the Water Act itself is in excess of 700 pages. I am certainly pleased to be able to make a small contribution on the matter today, and I commend the contribution made by the Honourable Bill Baxter. I suppose if you had been in this place for as many years as he has, you would pick up a fair bit of knowledge about water, but I think he has done far more than that. I am sure this house will be the poorer when he moves to the lower house after the next election.

Often in bills of this size and complexity there are good bits and bad bits, but there is no doubt in our minds that the bad bits in this bill outweigh the good bits. One of the issues that we strongly object to is the government's grabbing back of control to a centralised control area.

Let us have a look at what water means to us in Victoria. Irrigation is talked about a lot, and I believe a number of the commentators who talk about it really do not fully understand it. They do not understand the technology involved in irrigation which enables people in the country who use the irrigation system to efficiently grow clean, green food for the wider

community throughout the rest of Australia and indeed in other parts of the world. I feel for the irrigation farmers who this year are facing extremely low water allocations. They have set up their infrastructure, and in many areas the plants are set up as well, but the low water allocations have put them in a desperate position.

I move to discuss the stock and domestic area, which involves basic requirements, where a couple of days ago we saw the beginning of water carting in parts of Victoria for stock and domestic — which is something we have not seen a lot of for a number of years —

Hon. W. R. Baxter — Decades.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — Mr Baxter said, ‘Decades’, and I suppose that would be true. We have had dashed little rain this year. In grain-growing areas around Victoria the plants were planted on very little rain, and again I make the point about the great technology farmers now use. Mostly they were able to get their crops up and running and give them a real chance, but we have had little or no rain over the last couple of months in particular and of course the higher than normal temperatures have really knocked the crops about, which will have a huge impact across country Victoria because this year comes on the back of 10 years of very indifferent production and indifferent prices.

I am really concerned not only for farmers but for the service industries in our towns and regional centres that support agriculture right across Victoria. Obviously when it gets tough and the growers cannot afford to pay, they close their cheque books and our service industries suffer as well. So there are some real challenges in there for us all.

You would have to say that water is the most basic of commodities. If we get too much, we are in trouble, although we have not had too much for a long time. If we get too little, we are in trouble — and that is where we are at today.

But the real issue I want to concentrate on today is the management of water, for which you need a bit of vision and certainly some vision for the future. What disappoints me about this bill and the government’s attitude is that it has played the blame game for seven years. You have to ask yourself what it has done; and as far as I can see, not much of any consequence that is new has been done. There has been a bit here and a bit there, but with basic commodities such as water the government had a wonderful opportunity to grasp the nettle and move forward.

We might say amongst ourselves, ‘Does water pay its way?’. Of course it pays its way, and \$1.6 billion has already been dragged out of the system in relation to public sector dividend taxes, and the meter is still ticking over quite substantially. Then we come to the environmental tax — the below-the-line tax. We do not have a clue what it is, but an estimate of it would be around \$60 million a year.

As I said, we have not had a lot of rain this year but when we come back into the rain periods — and we have had the rain in the past — what have we done about stormwater? My colleague the Honourable Damian Drum has put forward some very practical initiatives for using stormwater, which can be a huge resource. I read somewhere the other day that in Melbourne the roofs, the roads and the hard surfaces around the city could produce the same amount of stormwater as Melbourne itself uses.

One might ask: can that be done? It might not be all that easy and while it is a challenge, it is also an opportunity. I think it can be done, because in the electorate that the Honourable Damian Drum and I represent there are a couple of quite small places, including Birchip and Beulah —

Hon. D. K. Drum — Wycheproof.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — And Wycheproof, where they have caught the stormwater and put it in dams. They then pump it onto their sporting ovals, which is a very efficient use of that water. So there is a precedent; it can be done and I think the opportunity is there for government to do that on a much wider basis than has been done previously.

Ms Carbines made brief mention of the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline and said the government had led the way. The government was dragged screaming to the cliff face in relation to that pipeline. That pipeline would not have been on the map if John Forrest, the federal member for Mallee, had not driven the process. John is an engineer and is passionate about water. He drove that process to such an extent that, together with some of his colleagues, whom I congratulate, he convinced the federal government to come up with the goods. The state government then had to chase along and do it as well, but it played politics all the way. That pipeline should have been completed years ago. If that had happened, the water savings would now be in place and we would not be seeing the water carting that is going on now in parts of Victoria.

All in all, when I think about water carting I must pay credit to a lady in the Wimmera area, Janine

Sounness — I spoke about this in the Parliament a couple of weeks ago — who works as a drought community development officer. She put forward some innovative ideas and practical suggestions on how to store water. She suggested rebates on water tanks and that Country Fire Authority fittings be put on them as well. As I understand it, those suggestions have been adopted. I congratulate her because she has shown vision. It has been a good thing for the government to pick it up too. That is also something the committee has driven along. I believe it is a good move.

I turn to the Sunraysia area, where the government has missed a great opportunity in the management of water. It is a highly efficient irrigation area with horticulture and viticulture, and it also produces vegetables and many other products. Some \$20 million has been made available in the Sunraysia area. That has been on the table for a number of years and a decision has eventually been made to allocate it to the Robinvale area. I agree with that because the area needs upgrading. If the government had been fair dinkum about a water management vision for the future, it would have done what South Australia did and would have joined up with the federal government and the growers in that area to implement what we call a 40-40-20 project. That has been a great investment for the future by everyone involved in it in South Australia, because that state now has world-class water systems.

It seems to me that we have gone in a circle. I can remember clearly the McDonald review on water, which turned the centralised system away from what it was and formed regional water authorities. We believe that was a great idea because it gave communities and customers a real voice on how their water delivery systems were run. We supported that community-driven process, but we believe this bill changes that. It has a strong centralising element to it. It puts the power back with the department or the minister. The key part of the bill that I object to most of all is that we think our communities should be able to get the message through of how they have their water delivered and managed. I believe they are responsible in that area, and the history of our water authorities has been good. I get the feeling, and it is quite strong, that our communities are much more under the thumb of government. I believe this bill puts them further under the thumb of government and will restrict innovation and the practical moves they could make.

It is interesting to see the government's process of water reform and the unbundling as we go along. I do not have time to go through that in detail, but I believe the government has got until 2008 to sort out some of those issues. All I can say is, 'Good luck', because it

will be very difficult to sort it out in that time. I do not believe the government has managed that process all that well.

I believe this bill does not give certainty to people around Victoria; in fact it creates uncertainty. Whatever we might have in life, I guess all of us desire a degree of certainty. What we in The Nationals think, and think quite strongly, is that this bill really does nothing for Victoria. We believe it particularly fails country Victoria, because it does not deliver certainty and it does not deliver clarity. We believe all it really delivers is centralisation, which we think is not a good thing, so we oppose the bill.

Hon. KAYE DARVENIZA (Melbourne West) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Water (Governance) Bill, and of course I rise to speak in support of the bill.

This bill is the latest step in the Bracks government's plan to secure the state's water supply for our future. It is a future where we are having to secure our water supply while at the same time managing climate change and population growth, particularly in our rural and regional areas, where there has been growth that we have not seen for decades. There has been economic growth as well as land use changes. On top of all of that we have been experiencing a sustained drought for some 10 years. As I travel around regional and rural Victoria I can see the devastation that a lack of water is causing in our rural and regional communities, not just in the sense of people being able to sow their crops, care for their cattle and do their jobs, but also in their having to wind down their activities or even move away from their land and their livelihood. All of this has an incredible impact on families and on individuals. There is also the emotional stress and distress and the need to manage financial hardship.

I am pleased that the Premier recently announced his drought task force, which includes senior ministers in the other place including the Treasurer, the Minister for Water and the Minister for Agriculture. I have been appointed by the Premier to support that task force, and I have been travelling with it and meeting with farmers in a range of areas. It has been a real opportunity for very senior members of the government, including the Premier, to go out in an informal way and meet with people who are experiencing this drought. Not only are they experiencing the drought, they are experiencing climate change and the need to change the way we utilise land.

The basis on which the government is dealing with these issues — and I think Ms Carbin's, the

Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, went through these in some detail — centres around four key principles. These principles are conservation — looking at how we can conserve our water; increased recycling and stormwater reuse; finding additional supplies; and improving the health of our rivers.

We are all aware that the government's white paper *Our Water Our Future* is the framework on which we have been moving forward in looking at ways in which we are able to sustain water supply. The Water (Governance) Bill primarily amends the Water Act 1989 and the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 to deliver key actions that are outlined in chapter 7 of the white paper, for the benefit of members who are familiar with that document. These initiatives essentially relate to improving the current legislation governing the water sector to provide for a capable, innovative and accountable water sector that is able to deliver the government's sustainability objectives for water. Those objectives, as I said before, centre around conservation, recycling, stormwater reuse, finding additional supplies and improving the health of our rivers.

I will refer quickly to a couple of amendments. The first is requiring water authorities to take into account principles of sustainable management and the second is the establishment of water authorities as statutory corporations for improving governance agreements. Victorian communities, organisations and individuals increasingly recognise the need to value how we use water, and change the way we use it so that we are able to protect and preserve what is a very precious resource. We particularly need to preserve it for future generations. The government considers that water authorities have a leading role to play and a responsibility to manage Victoria's water resources sustainably.

Under the Water Act water authorities did not always have a clear mandate to take a whole-of-water cycle approach to the management of water services and to address this it is proposed that water authorities have regard to sustainable management principles in the exercise of all their powers and in the performance of their functions.

The bill also brings Melbourne Water Corporation under the Water Act 1989. It introduces on-the-spot fines. I want to talk about that and the amendment introduced in the other place. The government is committed to reducing the demand for water and ensuring efficient use of water at all times. We have all experienced to varying degrees, depending on where we live, the water restrictions that have been put in

place. They are all about ensuring that we utilise water efficiently. The restrictions to achieve additional short-term savings to conserve supplies in a time of drought are particularly important.

We have provided a drought response plan and water restrictions by-laws. Individuals who breach these restrictions and prohibitions under the plans or by-laws may be prosecuted in court. On-the-spot fines are a way of enforcing and encouraging people to comply with the water-saving rules and restrictions so that we have a more efficient, immediate and appropriate way of enforcing compliance. We want people to value water and to understand that the restrictions are not just put in place for some people but are put in place for everyone.

I want to talk about the amendment made in the lower house. The bill will ensure there is information on major water users. The media has highlighted this in recent times, but this lower house amendment provides that Victoria's 200 largest water users be identified for the first time. Under these changes large industrial water users will be identified. Many of us will have one or more of these large users of water in our electorates and we could have a good guess at who they may be because certain industries use large quantities of water. This provision will ensure that the large industrial water users are identified. We will be able to highlight the water-saving efforts they put in place so that they are known to the broader community. That is particularly important.

I know that a range of industries that are high water users are also very good at putting in place measures to conserve and use water efficiently. We want to make sure that all sections of the community contribute to the overall water-saving effort. This will be a great opportunity for those water users to undertake significant water conservation measures and be recognised for them. This information will be tabled in annual reports from next year, so we will all be able to look at what water users are doing, what measures they are taking to conserve water and to ensure they are using it wisely.

Victoria leads the nation in water management, and this bill further strengthens the state's position on it by providing for an innovative and accountable water sector that is capable of sustainably managing our water resources well into the future and of providing water to all Victorians. The reforms outlined in this bill will do that. They will improve on measures the government has already put in place to that end. It is a good bill, and I believe it deserves the support of all members of this chamber. I wish it a speedy passage.

Hon. D. McL. DAVIS (East Yarra) — I will make some comments on this Water (Governance) Bill. My colleague the Honourable Graeme Stoney has already put the position of the opposition, as has my colleague the Honourable Wendy Lovell. We have serious concerns about aspects of the bill, but this enormous omnibus bill — and I invite the house to look at the size of it — also contains some useful additions to the situation. As with many of these omnibus bills, we are faced with the difficult decision as to whether to vote to support those sections with which we agree or vote against the bill and make our points known about the sections with which we disagree. On this occasion we will vote against the bill, because there is sufficient in it that concerns us.

In the time allocated to me I will make some comments about the process that has been followed. This is one of those classic bills that should have been brought in and allowed to lie over for a long period, because it is a long and complex bill. The member for South-West Coast in the other place, Denis Naphthine, and I were the members who went to the briefing on behalf of the opposition — and I thank the minister and the departmental staff for that briefing. It went for almost 2 hours, and there was much discussion about the complexity of the bill.

It is one of those bills on which it is difficult to come to grips with the detail. However, as I said, there are also issues around the process. The bill should have been left over for a longer period so that people could more adequately consult with those sections of the water industry and the catchment management authorities that need to have their say on the bill. On this occasion the period of time allocated has been insufficient.

The government then brought house amendments into the lower house just this week with very short notice — in fact, we first heard of this from the media. The house amendments are significant. They seek to highlight the top 200 water users. It is wrong in principle that these sorts of policy changes should be made during the passage of the bill in Parliament. We are not talking about tidying up errors or fixing drafting problems in legislation — nobody objects to those sorts of amendments. However, people do have objection to those in the lower house, in this case, being shanghaied with these sorts of significant changes to legislation on just an hour or two's notice. Even for us here today it will be just a day or so since we were made aware of these changes.

I make the point that the legislation seeks to introduce a system where the top 200 water users will be named, presumably in annual reports or through some similar

mechanism. The names of those top 200 water users will be made public — the name-and-shame approach. I do not have a problem with the 200 largest users being made public. Ms Darveniza rightly made the point that many of them are highly predictable — you could write a lot of the list yourself. One concern is that the government needs to be very clear that these are not necessarily people who are doing the wrong thing, often it is just that the nature of their industry requires significant water usage. In many cases those larger industrial water users are among the more significant water conservation-focused businesses in the state. Those businesses have their own incentives and their own reasons to focus on conservation, one of the main ones being cost.

However, it is interesting to contrast the government's decision to publish this list with what was said during debate on the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill in the chamber on 24 August. During the committee stage of that bill I asked the Minister for Local Government, Ms Broad, to explain who the government sought to apply sections of that bill to. To recap for the house, the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill contained provisions which sought to use the Environment Protection Authority in energy and water efficiency and savings plans with the largest 250 users of both energy and water in the state. It seemed to me that when passing such a bill the government must have known who these people were. I think it did but that was not the answer Ms Broad gave me — when I asked her to make available to the house the list of the 250 users, she indicated that she could not. She said:

I am advised that only after the stage when those processes and regulations have been developed and are in place, including consultation with industry, will it be possible to identify and actually name the businesses.

It appears the government has had a change of heart since that time and it now takes a different view. We sought publicly to have those lists made available, and I know the media has sought to have those lists made available. The government resisted that for some period. I find the change of heart in this case by the government interesting. I do not think the minister was fully frank with the house when the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill went through. She should have provided the list of, in that case, those larger users of water and energy the government clearly had in its possession.

Some other factors need to be put on record in the chamber today. I do not propose to review all of the points made by my colleagues, particularly Mr Stoney. However, I want to bring to the attention of the house

the comments made by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. Those who have been in the Parliament for a long time know that SARC has a critical role to play in protecting the rights of the community from laws that unnecessarily or unreasonably trespass on the rights of individuals.

It is interesting to read the SARC report on the Water (Governance) Bill. It talks, for example, about the amendments to the Water Act 1989 and the delegation powers set out for water corporations. I will quote from the SARC report because I think it is important that this be on the record in the chamber. It states:

The committee reports to Parliament pursuant to a term of reference provided in section 17(a)(vii) of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — ‘insufficiently subjects the exercise of legislative power to parliamentary scrutiny’.

The committee notes the width of the power of delegation. A water corporation may by instrument, delegate to, ‘with the consent of the Minister, any other person or body ... any function, power or duty of the water corporation’. The committee will seek further advice from the minister in relation to the wide delegation powers.

This issue of excessively wide delegation of powers does not apply to that section. There are amendments to the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 in sections of this bill. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee makes the following comments about them:

The committee notes the width of the power of delegation. An authority may by instrument, delegate to, ‘with the consent of the minister, and any other person or body ... any function, power or duty of the water corporation’. The committee will seek further advice from the minister in relation to the wide delegation powers.

That is a very broad delegation of powers that is being given to catchment management authorities under the amendments to the Catchment and Land Protection Act.

Under the section ‘Amendment and repeal of other acts’ the SARC report says:

The committee notes that the protection of water entities from claims of adverse possession in clause 161 may be seen as a modification of the common-law right of adverse possession. However, the committee notes the comments in the second-reading speech and the circumstances outlined.

Again, whatever points the second-reading speech may make, the question is: is it necessary to trespass on the rights of individuals in that way?

I note here also with the amendments to the Werribee South Land Act 1991, the SARC report says:

Changes the maximum period for which a lease may be granted for land within the area dealt with under the Werribee South Land Act 1991 from 50 to 99 years.

The committee notes that the Werribee South Land Act 1991 was unproclaimed as at 18 August 2006 and was the subject of comment in the committee’s report on the Statute Law (Further Revision) Bill of March 2006. The committee has received advice from the minister in this regard.

It is an ancient act in this sense; it is unproclaimed. The government is seeking to change the rights associated with it with perhaps not the best legislative practice. The Minister for Energy Industries, who I see is looking at me, agrees I am sure about these points of legislative practice.

I make the point with the issues around Werribee. Earlier this week in this chamber we dealt with some of the issues relating to planning matters with the ratification motion that impinged on green wedge land — the ratification motion that facilitated the Werribee South marina development. It is not my place to specifically criticise that project, which appears to have strong support in its community. My point here is about the process by which the government brought to this chamber those changes to the urban growth boundary earlier in the week.

It is important in the context of this bill to also place on record that urban growth boundary changes were made in a 15-hour period in the Legislative Assembly that extended from the introduction of the changes to the vote of the chamber, and with a deficient process in this chamber when the minister with carriage of the ratification motion was unprepared to make even a statement as to why the government was moving the motion. He merely read out a simple motion and failed to put on the public record an explanation of why the government was seeking to do that.

My point also is that unless we get these processes right with things like urban growth boundary changes we will have incursions on to green wedge land that will be difficult to control in the longer term. In this Parliament we need better processes to enable the chambers to scrutinise changes to urban growth boundaries. It adds to my concern about the processes surrounding projects of that nature that the government would seek to extend leases in this way. It may be that that is a perfectly legitimate increase in the lease periods and is required to facilitate the project. That is perfectly reasonable, but the point is that these practices are less than ideal.

In conclusion, given the shortness of time, my point is that this bill is the worst sort of omnibus bill because of its complexity. It is the worst sort of omnibus bill because it is changing water rights and allocations

around the state and disentangling or breaking the nexus between water and land in a robust way that should be a matter for broad public debate. It is doing all that in a way that has not had the proper scrutiny I think it should have had. For that reason and others, including the government's behaviour with the amendments to this proposed legislation, the opposition will oppose the bill.

Sitting suspended 1.01 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Treasury and Finance: report

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — My question is for the Minister for Finance. As the minister responsible for the Financial Management Act and as a minister who preaches transparency and accountability, why has the minister failed to organise the tabling in the Legislative Council of his own department's annual report?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I welcome Mr Rich-Phillips's question. I also alert him to the vision of the annual reports that have been tabled concerning my portfolio responsibility. I remind Mr Rich-Phillips that if it had not been for the direction of the Premier, by way of circular, to make this government more accountable than any government in the history of this state, then none of these reports would have been tabled; nor would any of the other reports been tabled. Mr Rich-Phillips should contrast that to the Kennett government, which he is a fan of —

Hon. D. McL. Davis interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr David Davis inanelly interjects yet again that this is the government here. The Kennett government closed the Parliament down for four months and went to an election without any scrutiny. Premier Bracks and this government — unlike any government in Australia to my knowledge — has insisted that every report be made available, so that the Parliament of Victoria and the Victorian community can scrutinise them. As Mr Rich-Phillips knows, that particular report is not part of my responsibility as Minister for Finance. That report is actually the responsibility of another minister.

If the report has not come in, that is disappointing, but in the context of this — again, both the shadow ministers do not seem to understand how many reports have been tabled — the irony is that as part of a poorly

executed stunt by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, when he was not dreaming of dodgy money he put up a trolley load of reports that was actually padded with reports which were not government reports. But let us leave that aside.

It is a dodgy stunt where one day the opposition says we are putting too many reports out, and the next day it says — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I know it is the last day, but I ask members to desist from interjecting or I will use sessional orders to remove them, including Mr Smith, Mr Forwood and Mr David Davis.

Mr Smith — I have not said a word!

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

The PRESIDENT — Order! Pursuant to sessional order 31 Mr Smith shall remove himself from the chamber for speaking while the President was on her feet.

Mr Smith withdrew from chamber.

Questions resumed.

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — Essentially the proposition put forward by Mr Rich-Phillips is one like the economic policies of the Liberal Party — that is, 'all things to all people'. The Leader of the Opposition said on Tuesday that the government had too many reports and now the shadow minister, because there is a TV camera in the place, says there are insufficient reports. It is like 'all things to all people'.

Perhaps the most pertinent thing on the last day of the 55th Parliament is to alert the house to an article on page 6 of the *Australian Financial Review* of 16 January 2003 by Michael Short, headed 'Dazzled by too much transparency'. Michael Short makes the comment that the Bracks government provides too much information, too much reporting and that it is dazzling by its transparency. The Bracks government, by giving the Auditor-General greater powers and by bringing this Parliament into — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Rich-Phillips's question is the 1801st question without notice asked in this

Parliament, we have had more than 8000 questions on notice, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has met on the budgets four times and has interviewed every minister, and there have been more committees than in any other Parliament. This government is open, transparent and accountable.

I welcome Mr Rich-Phillips's question. I look forward to him inspecting the report of the Department of Treasury and Finance because this government, as the *Australian Financial Review* said, is dazzled by transparency and is more open than any government in the history of Victoria.

Supplementary question

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — The minister might have all the rhetoric about accountability and transparency but it does not alter the fact that the minister is yet to table his department's annual report in this place. Given the other bodies that the minister is responsible for, such as the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority, Victorian WorkCover Authority and the Transport Accident Commission, finalised their annual reports in August, why did the minister delay tabling them in Parliament until this week?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — Mr Rich-Phillips, I would suggest, should take a couple of technical and further education courses, one being Government 101, another being Economics 101. If Mr Rich-Phillips actually inspects these reports, he will find that they have been produced in record time. The fact that the reports were actually out yesterday allowed Mr Rich-Phillips to ask a question on one report; Mr Atkinson asked questions on a report and the Leader of the Opposition also asked questions on reports because those reports were brought out earlier, I believe, than ever before.

Mr Rich-Phillips knows that Parliament has been in recess for two weeks. We are back, the reports are here, Mr Rich-Phillips can read them, the Victorian community can read them — all making this government open, transparent and accountable. I congratulate the Premier and all the departments and ministers for getting these reports out so the Victorian people can look at them, make a judgment before election day and see what is there, and not be under the cloud of secrecy that was the case under the Kennett government.

Climate change: government initiatives

Hon. J. G. HILTON (Western Port) — This will be my last question in this place. It is to the Minister for Energy Industries, the Honourable Theo Theophanous. Many people believe climate change is the single biggest issue facing the planet. Can the minister advise the house about the actions the Bracks government has undertaken or proposes to undertake in the energy portfolio to address climate change? How does this compare with alternative approaches?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I thank the member for his question. We on this side of the house believe climate change is the biggest economic and financial challenge facing Victoria and our nation. The Bracks government has a comprehensive approach to addressing climate change. We are fighting climate change with policies such as the following: \$103.5 million has been allocated for clean coal technology; we have led the process for an emissions trading scheme for this country, despite opposition from the federal Parliament and the opposition; and we have introduced the Victorian renewable energy target, which will lift our levels of renewable energy from 4 per cent to 10 per cent, will create 2200 jobs in regional Victoria and will result in billions of dollars of investment.

Hon. Philip Davis interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I know you hate our policies, but let me keep going. We have introduced the black balloon campaign in order to try and save energy. We are rolling out smart meters to every single home and business so that consumers are able to better manage their energy usage. We now have mandatory energy audits for the top 250 companies.

Let us contrast that comprehensive approach the Bracks Labor government has to addressing climate change to that of our opponents. We have the worst drought in our history, and the current Liberal leader doubts that climate change — —

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, you have consistently made rulings in this place that are consistent with other parliaments: that question time matters enable ministers to address government policy and administration. They are not an excuse for ministers to make observations about what may or may not be policies of opposition parties.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — On the point of order, President, I was asked — and the question was not ruled out by you, President, and there was no

objection taken in the form of a point of order — to outline the actions the Bracks government is taking on climate change and how this compares with alternative approaches. As the question was not ruled out of order and it specifically asked me to contrast the approach of the Bracks government with alternative approaches, it is appropriate for me to be able to discuss alternative policies, including those of the opposition, otherwise this chamber will not be able to debate these issues.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question clearly asked the minister to compare alternative approaches, but I remind the minister that in answering questions without notice, ministers' comments should not overtly criticise the opposition and should remain within the bounds of their portfolio responsibilities. That dates back to February last year. The minister is within his rights to answer the question and compare alternative approaches; however, I remind him of my previous ruling about not overtly criticising the opposition. The substance of the answer should refer to actions the Bracks government is undertaking in the energy portfolio to address climate change. That should be the substance of his answer, not details about alternative approaches.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — When the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, was asked about global warming by the *Sunday Age* — —

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I submit that the minister has flagrantly ignored the ruling you have just given by alluding to comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place. This is question time, which is an opportunity for the house to examine the detail of government policy and administration. It is not a time for debate about policies which may be provided by the alternate government.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I do not uphold the member's point of order on this occasion because, as I clearly indicated, the direction I gave the minister was not to overtly criticise; he has not done that. He referred to the opposition's policy. I made it clear that the substance of his answer was to be about climate change as it comes within his portfolio. I will be listening very carefully to the minister's response. If I believe he is straying against my direction, I will pull him up.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The opposition leader said, when he was asked by the *Sunday Age* about climate change:

I think there is climate change about us.

He went on to say:

I am not wise enough to conclude as to what causes the climate change.

Clearly, the opposition believes that human factors are not causing climate change. That is why it does not have a policy on climate change. Let me say this, President: it does have one policy. There was one policy put up by the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I do not wish to try your patience, but the minister is trying my patience. I would be pleased to hear from him matters that are relevant to his responsibilities. If he continues to pursue the line he is, this question time is going to take a very long time.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. As I said, I do not believe the minister has overtly criticised the opposition. He has referred to his portfolio responsibilities. He has just over 1 minute to conclude his answer, and I ask him to do so.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The only policy that has been released by the opposition has been a policy in which it wants to get rid of the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET). The opposition has said it is going to get rid of it — that is its policy. It is a policy which runs counter to addressing climate change. It is the reverse of addressing climate change. The opposition's policy is not about addressing climate change. It is a policy which would leave climate change on the backburner. Unlike the opposition and its policy, we on this side of the house want to address climate change through the policies that I have indicated are appropriate — the comprehensive policies that we want to deal with. But what we have instead is an opposition which wants to nobble VRET, which wants to nobble — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is enough. I have given the minister enough leeway. I have asked the minister to come back to the matter of the government's policies and his portfolio responsibilities. He has strayed beyond that and his time has expired.

Legislative Council: sitting days

Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA (East Yarra) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Finance, Mr Lenders. I refer the minister to his answer to a question on 6 June this year in which he stated that this house sits for 50 days each year. I ask the minister then to explain why in the last seven years we have sat for 50 days only twice, or is this yet another example of this government's smoke-and-mirrors trick and spin?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I am not sure why I am answering the question in the sense that I am the Minister for Finance, not the Minister for Parliamentary Sittings! But because I believe that question time is a good time, when there is a question to be answered I will be cooperative and answer the question.

Mr Dalla-Riva asked a question about my answer that we sat on more than 50 days a year. I would draw Mr Dalla-Riva's attention first and foremost to the annual report of the Department of the Legislative Council. If he goes to page 15 of the report, figure 2, he will see that the most recent figure for days sat is 54. I suggest firstly he look at the report. There is a very good picture of my colleague the Minister for Local Government, on the page.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LENDERS — This is the annual report of the Department of the Legislative Council, over the signature of the Clerk of the Legislative Council, which says on page 15 that the number of days Parliament sat in the last financial year was 54. I stand by the Clerk's figures over Mr Dalla-Riva's figures. It is also interesting to note that in 1999, the last year in office of the Kennett government, Parliament sat on 23 days.

The material thing is that Mr Dalla-Riva raises the point. Firstly, regarding his statistics, I urge him to look at the report of the Clerk, which says we sat on 54 days in the last financial year. Secondly, when this house meets, the government often cops criticism for the fact that there is not a lot of legislative business. We often get a bit of stick from the opposition on that. If you think through a Parliament meeting, what is the consequence if the legislation goes through promptly? That means it is well drafted and has bipartisan support, and all those sorts of things happen, but the fact that Parliament comes back day after day for shorter days means that Parliament is designed not only to have family-friendly hours but also to actually give the opposition a chance to scrutinise the government.

What happens on a day when Parliament comes back? You have 90-second statements, where every member of Parliament can actually speak for 90 seconds on any issue relevant to them. You have question time. If I am right, Mr Dalla-Riva's question is the 1803rd question in the life of this Parliament. So there are chances galore for questions. That is one of the issues when considering what is the purpose of having a Parliament meet. That certainly is one of the reasons for a Parliament meeting: there is a lot of scrutiny and questions. There are also adjournment debates; on

every one of those days that Parliament sits there is an adjournment debate, and members can be involved in that. There is also a capacity to debate reports.

I say to Mr Dalla-Riva: firstly, read the report of the Clerk of the Legislative Council as to the days sat last year; and secondly, reflect on what Parliament does. This is a vehicle for scrutiny. This Parliament meets month after month, with no winter recess, so this government is accountable. We are accountable, so I am not sure what Mr Dalla-Riva's problem is.

Supplementary question

Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA (East Yarra) — Clearly there is a lot of wax in the minister's ears because he did not listen to the question, which is typical of his government. He does not want to listen to the question; he only wants to respond with what he thinks is suitable. I said Parliament had sat for 50 days only twice in the last seven years, but the minister has picked out the figure for last year, which was 54 days. Well done, Minister!

The fact of the matter is that so far this calendar year we will have sat only 38 days, and this being the last sitting day for this year, does it not make a further mockery of the minister's statement that Parliament will sit 50 days each year, given the fact that over the last seven years we have only twice sat on more than 50 days. That indicates that the minister has made a mockery of the statement he made on 6 June. Does that make a mockery of the minister's statement that we sit more than 50 days?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I will say two things in response to Mr Dalla-Riva: firstly, how the leopard does not change its spots! We have an election coming up in this state, and I assume Mr Dalla-Riva — in the classic Liberal gentlemen's tradition — assumes that if you have an election, the Parliament will not sit again. Presumably, like the Kennett government, the opposition believes it is enough to adjourn the Parliament now. He is obviously letting the cat out of the bag, indicating the opposition has no intention of sitting if it wins government. The opposition takes the Victorian people for granted and does not want scrutiny.

Secondly, once again in Baillieu land the Liberal Party is all things to all people. The Leader of the Opposition in this place says it is a farce that we meet, that we should not meet so much, that there is not enough business to handle. That is the rhetoric we get time after time. The would-be Leader of the Opposition, Mr Dalla-Riva, among many would-be opposition

leaders over there — and we thought Mr Forwood was briefly this morning — says we should meet more.

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

12th FINA World Championships: tickets

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Following the overwhelming success of the ticketing structure at the recent Commonwealth Games, I ask the minister to inform the house of what ticketing system will be used at the upcoming 12th FINA World Championships and how the system will contribute to making these championships yet another world-class sporting event here in Victoria.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — I thank Mr Viney for his question, because I know he has a very passionate and personal commitment to developing sport in this state.

There is no doubt that this state delivered the best ever Commonwealth Games. Can I also take this opportunity to personally thank my ministerial staff, who assisted in so many ways in the delivery of the Commonwealth Games. Leaving that aside, the aquatic component of the Commonwealth Games was an outstanding success. There was huge demand for tickets.

Hon. D. K. Drum — Are you going to let families sit together?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I am very pleased — and I hope Mr Drum is pleased about this, too — to know that in March 2007 even more spectators will get the chance to attend bigger and better venues and bigger and better aquatic events at the 12th FINA World Championships — right here in Melbourne.

The highest profile athletes will provide spectators with every opportunity to see the greatest stars in the world performing at their very best. As well as that, we will utilise some of our best venues. The Rod Laver Arena will be used for competition swimming and synchronised swimming — I know Mr Drum is a great fan of synchronised swimming from time to time. The improvements at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre for water polo and diving — —

Hon. B. N. Atkinson — Does it say 'turn the page'?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I know Mr Atkinson is very good when it comes to backflipping and diving. Those things and fantastic public access down at

St Kilda for the open water swimming will mean that we have a marvellous event for everybody to be part of. I have declared the event under the Sports Event Ticketing (Fair Access) Act 2002.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson — And I have never seen so many excited Victorians!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — Can I just say that, whilst the opposition has never been supportive of that process, there has been outstanding success wherever an event has been declared under that legislation. Previously declared events have been the AFL grand finals over the last four years and of course the Commonwealth Games. We are ensuring that the state builds on its reputation not only in relation to major events but also the process of ticketing. The ticketing process for those games was a great success; we sold more tickets than were sold for any other Commonwealth Games. More people attended more events than ever before. I recently announced that the tickets that will go on sale on Monday, 16 October, for the FINA championships will not go through a ballot process; they will be sold directly by Ticketek by telephone, Internet and retail outlets. They will be the most affordable and accessible tickets in terms of world-class sporting events. The championships can be attended for as little as \$20, and it will cost no more than \$198 for the best seats in the house.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — It will give the likes of Mr Atkinson the chance to see some of the best swimmers in the world, like the Grant Hacketts and the Ian Thorpes — with form and fitness going according to plan — and of course Libby Lenton, Jodie Henry, Liesel Jones, Michael Klim and Stephanie Rice, as well as many others. In addition there will be Michael Phelps, and — a favourite of the Dutch community here — Pieter van den Hoogenband.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — He might even get the chance to wear some clogs into the Rod Laver Arena if the opportunity arises!

To demonstrate how affordable these ticket prices are, there will be a chance for people, families in particular, to attend Rod Laver Arena for as little as \$60. It is value for money, whether you want to see the swimming, the diving, the water polo or the synchronised swimming. It is fantastic. It is worth pointing out that the community can at no cost attend the open water swimming at the St Kilda foreshore.

This event will build on the reputation of the state and of Melbourne as the world's most livable city. It again reinforces that Victoria is a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Major projects: rural and regional Victoria

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Major Projects. Among the avalanche of annual reports tabled in the house this week was that of VicUrban. I note that the authority currently has 25 projects under way. Sadly, only four of them are in regional Victoria. I ask the minister why it is that under the Bracks government country Victoria consistently misses out on its fair share.

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Major Projects) — I can assure Mr Baxter that from Benambra to Bendigo, and from Ballarat to Benambra and back, the Labor government in Victoria is building major projects across regional Victoria. I am pleased that Mr Baxter has read the VicUrban annual report. Happily I inform Mr Baxter that VicUrban is only a small part of the major projects portfolio, but even VicUrban has projects. Last night Ms Darveniza asked me about Tower Hill in Swan Hill, but it could be the rail yards in Wodonga and Ballarat, the Western Wedge project in Geelong or, from the provincial Victoria statement last year in response to the mayors of all the regional municipalities, a unit being set up to facilitate development in any municipality that seeks it in the state.

Mr Baxter again refers to the VicUrban annual report, but even in the major projects portfolio or more broadly across government there are a lot of projects. The largest single public transport proposal in regional Victoria in the history of the state — the regional fast rail project — is a commitment of the Bracks government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Forwood, Mr Vogels and Mr Atkinson show their disregard for regional Victoria — —

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Atkinson! One more interjection and he will be out.

Mr LENDERS — They are unashamed Jeff yes-men who still believe that the beating heart of Victoria is Melbourne and that the regional areas are the toenails. They think a huge investment in public

transport in regional Victoria is a joke. This government is exceptionally proud of its projects in regional Victoria.

Hon. D. McL. Davis — Mismanagement!

Mr LENDERS — Mr David Davis says 'Mismanagement'. I would say that investing in the rail system in this state rather than that flogging it off with shoddy contracts, as the Kennett government did, and leaving regional Victoria in jeopardy and the Bracks government to pick up the mess of having no infrastructure investment, bad major projects and shonky contracts are things I would hang my head in shame about if I were sitting on the other side.

But back to Mr Baxter's question. The regional fast rail project is the largest single public transport investment in the history of the state. Also, money from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund has gone into facilitating dozens of regional projects. There are also the cattle underpasses, about which Mr Philip Davis sometimes laughs in this place. The number of cattle underpasses throughout Gippsland — —

Hon. Philip Davis — Major projects?

Mr LENDERS — Mr Philip Davis says, 'Major projects'. If you were a farmer in Maffra, Sale, Yarram, Trafalgar, Warragul or anywhere in Mr Davis's electorate and you have been dealing with issues involving cattle being knocked over by trucks, you would appreciate what the facilitation of cattle underpasses does in a rural communities. That is what the Kennett government did not understand: communities are small, they are micro, they are people and they have their own circumstances.

By implementing the regional fast rail project, by building cattle underpasses, by facilitating projects within every regional municipality, by moving the Transport Accident Commission to Geelong, the State Revenue Office to Ballarat and the Rural Finance Corporation to Bendigo, and by locating the Office of Housing call centre in Moe, this government shows that it cares about and has invested in regional Victoria. This government governs for the whole state. For the first time in four decades growth in regional Victoria is higher than in metropolitan Melbourne. This state is a success, but we can do better. There is more to be done in the delivery of projects into regional Victoria, and those who will do it are members of the Bracks government.

Supplementary question

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I am not sure that I got a satisfactory answer. If I were the minister I would not be too proud of a project that blew out from \$80 million to \$800 million. Also, as the minister who introduced cattle underpasses I have to say that I had never thought for one moment that they were major projects, as valuable as they are. Having told us all about major projects in Victoria and listed the cattle underpasses — and overlooked the \$2 million immigration museum at Bonegilla perhaps — does the minister care to deny that the toxic waste dump is the largest major project that the Bracks government has under way in regional Victoria?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — On the last day of Parliament I am disappointed that Mr Baxter would steal Mr Bishop's thunder. I thought The Nationals looked after each other more than that. I say unashamedly that the largest, single major project in regional Victoria in the history of this state is the regional fast rail project. This is the upgrade of a system and a commitment to public transport that the Kennett government never gave. It is a commitment to regional communities that the Kennett government never gave and no other government in this country has given. It is a huge investment in safer rail, in regular services and upgraded rolling stock. The fast rail project is not in my portfolio, but it is a major project. This government is proud to be delivering regional rail infrastructure upgrades across Victoria. We do not sell off railway lines; we build them. We do not cut services; we deliver them. That is a major project. They may be no bigger than a cattle underpass, but all of them are important.

Consumer affairs: product safety

Ms CARBINES (Geelong) — My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, the Honourable Marsha Thomson. The minister has spoken in the house before about the importance of product safety. The issue of product safety is particularly important for babies and young children, who can be exposed to dangerous products. Can the minister advise the house what the Bracks government is doing to ensure the safety of the youngest members of our community?

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — I thank the member for her question —

Hon. D. McL. Davis — And for her hard work over the last few years.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — I expect that Ms Carbines will be back in this chamber after the election.

Consumer product safety is one of the most important priorities in consumer affairs. Our babies are the most vulnerable people in our community. As I advised the house yesterday, the Bracks government has restored Victoria's position as the leading state for consumer affairs protection in this country — right across the country no-one can compare. The Liberal Party unfortunately failed to even recognise product safety as an issue when it launched its consumer affairs policy. The Bracks government therefore remains the only party that will ensure that consumers are protected in this state from unsafe products.

Product safety is particularly important for young children and babies. It is a startling figure that 400 children each year aged up to four years have overnight stays in hospital due to injuries that have occurred relating to faulty or misused infant and nursery products. The death of an infant is always a tragedy, but it is especially tragic if it could have been avoided. That is why the Bracks government is working to protect Victorian infants from unsafe products.

Death or serious injury can result not only from using unsafe products, but also from using safe products unwisely or in a way they were not intended to be used. That is why I am pleased to inform the house of the Bracks government's *Safe Products for Your Baby* guide, which I was proud to launch last month. The *Safe Products for Your Baby* guide arms parents and carers with the knowledge and skills not only to confidently choose safe products but also to use them safely. This guide was one of the commitments in A Fairer Victoria and has been launched as a pilot program in the cities of Casey and Latrobe. If successful, this program will be rolled out right across the state. It also comes with learning guides for soon-to-be mothers, parents, grandparents and others so that they can pass on the information in a wise and timely way.

The Bracks Government will continue to be vigilant on seizing banned products and products that do not meet minimum safety standards. Last financial year, Consumer Affairs Victoria seized 6000 infant and nursery products. Already this year 5000 infant and nursery products have been seized. In relation to recent concerns regarding babies' dummies, I have issued new safety minimum standards. Unsafe dummies that could prove a hazard to babies —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON — Yes, they have been tested. The safe ones we are happy to pass on to the Liberal Party for when its members next want to do their dummy spit!

It is important that parents are aware of what those standards are and how they can assess them. I made it clear at the ministerial council meeting held last month that whilst we in Victoria are happy to work towards national standards and a national approach to product safety, it had to be on a no-compromise basis. Only through a Bracks government can we ensure that Victoria remains a great place for everyone, including our children, and that it is a great place to live and raise a family.

State Netball Hockey Centre: finances

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I note that in his department's annual report the State Sport Centres Trust incurred an operating loss of \$2.47 million in the 2006 financial year, up \$1.8 million from the previous year. The deficit for the State Netball Hockey Centre was \$1.32 million in the latest period, which is to be compared with just \$119 000 in 2005, and was a major contributor to the trust's overall result. In view of these figures, I ask the minister what action he has taken to stem the losses at this venue and what his projection of the financial position of the State Netball Hockey Centre will be in the current year.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — That was one of the very few questions Mr Atkinson has asked in his role as shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation. It is good to see that on the last day of Parliament he has finally developed an interest in these things.

Each of the reports of the trusts that have been reported and submitted to Parliament over recent days shows that because of the substantial time the trusts spent in delivering the Commonwealth Games, there has been an operational effect on them. That operational effect has come primarily from the down time of those facilities in order to bump in and bump out the Commonwealth Games. Whilst there might be an operational deficit in this particular year, the great benefit to each one of those state trusts and their facilities has been — and Mr Atkinson would have appreciated this if he had read the reports in a bit more detail — a substantial increase in the asset base from the investments made for the Commonwealth Games.

What you will see down at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre is a brand-new outdoor, covered 50-metre pool because of the Commonwealth Games. If you go down to the State Netball Hockey Centre, you will see each one of the surfaces at that centre has been upgraded. Whilst there might be operational deficits in this particular year, they have been put in a very good position for future years in relation to the renewal, redevelopment and maintenance of their facilities.

Predominantly operating surpluses get reinvested into the maintenance of those facilities, but a substantial investment was made to upgrade the facilities in the years leading up to the Commonwealth Games. Whilst operations in this particular year were affected by the Commonwealth Games, over the long haul not only will they have a greater asset base but they will also be in a better position in the operation of those facilities well into the future.

We are very pleased that the legacy of the Commonwealth Games will be in place for the next 40 to 50 years. The great element of that is that each one of those assets, those stadiums and facilities, has been improved. Those facilities have been grown and developed, and they will be used week in and week out by Victorians, making Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Supplementary question

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I thank the minister for his answer and note that he said a number of venues suffered a reduction in income, and in the case of the State Netball Hockey Centre there was a real loss, as a result of down time associated with the Commonwealth Games. I therefore ask whether those costs have been included in the financial results that the minister published as the outcome of the Commonwealth Games or whether in fact the reports on the finances of those games do not actually reflect these results and are therefore not an accurate picture of the cost of the games delivered by his government.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Sport and Recreation) — One of the great things about the best ever Commonwealth Games is not only were they fantastic for all Victorians and not only will the legacy and the benefit extend for 50 years or so, but according to the special purpose report which comprehensively reported on expenditure right across government — it was not a report we had to do, but it was one of the reports we felt compelled to deliver in order to ensure transparency in relation to Commonwealth Games expenditure — the Commonwealth Games came in under budget. It is worth appreciating that the

Auditor-General left no stone unturned in relation to costs incurred by government through every portfolio. One of the great benefits of the best ever Commonwealth Games — —

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — The best ever Commonwealth Games — —

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I will say it for a third time: the best ever Commonwealth Games. I know it hurts Mr Atkinson when I say it, because it was not delivered by a Liberal government, it was delivered by a Labor government — —

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

Neighbourhood houses: funding

Mr SOMYUREK (Eumemmerring) — My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Neighbourhood houses play an important role in local communities, and I ask the minister to outline to the house what action the government is taking to support neighbourhood houses.

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) — I thank the member for his question and for his support for neighbourhood houses and the terrific services and facilities they provide. I want to put on the record the Bracks government's appreciation of the facilities, the services and the programs that neighbourhood houses provide for families right across Victoria, no matter where they are or who they are. That is why I am very pleased that from 1 October a total of 8391 coordination hours per week will be delivered and funded across the 337 houses that are included in the neighbourhood house coordination program; that is an increase of 39 per cent or 2353 coordination hours every week. That will allow more than 4700 additional hours of activities every week to be provided by Victoria's neighbourhood houses.

Importantly, 96 per cent of neighbourhood houses will be funded for 20 hours of coordination per week, with more than 60 per cent of houses receiving funding for at least 25 hours. That is a massive increase in hours of funding, and it comes on top of the 25 per cent increase in the hourly rate of funding delivered to all neighbourhood house coordinators from 1 July in recognition of the very important role they play in our neighbourhood houses.

All these changes together mean that the average level of funding per house will be 73 per cent higher this year than in the previous year. Since coming to office the Bracks government has tripled funding to neighbourhood houses. This massive investment is in stark contrast to the way in which the previous government ripped the heart out of the community when it cut 10 per cent of the neighbourhood house budget when it was last in office. In all, 45 neighbourhood houses suffered significant funding cuts of an average of 22 per cent.

In Wodonga, to use one example, the then four neighbourhood houses were told by the member for Benambra in the other place, Mr Plowman, that one of them should close. They were given 5 minutes to decide which one should close. I am pleased to say that they refused, and I am even more pleased that not only has the Bracks government restored their funding in Wodonga, it has actually funded a fifth neighbourhood house in Wodonga to meet the needs of the growing community. By its actions the Bracks government has shown its commitment to the total services offered by neighbourhood houses — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

Ms BROAD — President, even if opposition members do not like to hear it, it does stand in stark contrast to their actions as opposed to their promises, which they have no intention of ever implementing. The Bracks government is acting to deliver — —

Hon. D. McL. Davis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is enough!

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

The PRESIDENT — Order! For constantly interjecting after being reminded by me on a number of occasions not to, pursuant to sessional order 31 I ask Mr David Davis to leave the chamber for 30 minutes.

Hon. D. McL. Davis withdrew from chamber.

Questions resumed.

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) — The Bracks government is acting to deliver quality services for all Victorian families, no matter where they live or who they are.

Electricity: supply

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Energy Industries. Peaking power plants, including hydro and gas turbines, are critical to the security of Victoria's electricity supply. Given that the financial viability of peaking plants is contingent on extreme wholesale market prices during periods of peak demand, especially hot summer weather, it is implausible to claim, as the minister did yesterday, that a new peaking station would be dependent upon the \$43 per megawatt hour consumer subsidy provided under the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme.

On 20 September the *Age* reported a spokeswoman from AGL as having said that the abolition of VRET would not destroy the economics of the project. It quoted her as saying:

These are long-life assets, and we made a decision based on what's viable over a 30-year period.

I also note that the planning for the Bogong project was completed 18 months ago. I therefore ask: is it a fact that peaking plants will be in commercial demand irrespective of VRET?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I hope the member will not raise a point of order when I criticise his party's policy over this. Members of this opposition have come forward with a policy of abolishing the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme. It is their only contribution to the debate about climate change. Their contribution is to do nothing about it, and not only that, to abolish the only program that is in place and ready to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this state.

The fact of the matter is, as I said yesterday in the house, AGL supports the VRET scheme — it supports it! Does the opposition get it? Do you, President, know why AGL supports it? Because it is a responsible company. It does have interests in the brown coal production of electricity in this state, but it also wants to build wind farms. It also has the Bogong hydro plant, which is dependent in part for its funding — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Are members listening or not? It is dependent in part for its funding on the Victorian renewable energy target scheme. The company itself has indicated that a significant amount of funds will come to the company as a result of the VRET scheme — something in the order of \$4 million annually.

It may be that the Leader of the Opposition here hopes that once the opposition nobbles the VRET scheme and therefore nobbles that contribution to the Bogong project somehow the Bogong project is going to continue. He might live in dreamland where that might occur, but the reality is that members of the opposition want to knock off the scheme that partly helps to fund the Bogong project. AGL has made it absolutely clear that it will be applying.

What I know about this opposition is that it is led by somebody who has significant interests in both energy and mining companies. No wonder that with those significant interests — —

Hon. W. A. Lovell — On a point of order, President, the Black Rod is not in the house.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is very observant of the honourable member. It does not mean the house cannot sit. The Usher of the Black Rod will have it back in here very quickly.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — As I said before, President, when you have a Leader of the Opposition like Ted Baillieu, with all the interests he has in mining and energy shares, it is no wonder the opposition does not have a policy on climate change. How could he possibly produce a policy on climate change with the conflicted arrangements that he has in place in relation to his share portfolio? That is the situation that this opposition faces. It is so bad that the Leader of the Opposition in this place was nobbled on his original policy of supporting wind farms, which he made clear in 2001 when he came out in support of them.

Hon. Philip Davis — On a point of order, President, I am affronted by the comments of the minister. The minister is trying to make an assertion about matters that may be in policy contention within the opposition. It is appropriate that he respond in respect of my question about the position of the government, and the question was that the Bogong development was not — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The Leader of the Opposition does not need to ask his question again! The minister, to continue his response.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — I quote again what the Leader of the Opposition said back in 2001:

The opposition can support the general desire expressed by the ETU for more wind power.

He has been nobbled by Mr Baillieu because Mr Baillieu has a different view in relation to climate change. He does not care, and therefore this opposition

does not care about climate change in any way, shape or form.

Supplementary question

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — President, thank you for the opportunity to ask a supplementary question on this your last day presiding over this chamber.

Due to industrial relations activities the 320-megawatt power station to be built at Laverton North is more than a year behind schedule and is still not available for peak loads this summer. In the context of my original question and the minister's answer, I am interested in his response to the following: given the financial incentives for the operator to have this plant available, and given the forecasts by Nemmco that Victoria will be below the required reserve capacity, what action will he take to guarantee Victoria's peak summer power requirements?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Minister for Energy Industries) — I thank the member for his supplementary question, which is probably unrelated to his first question, but I am happy to answer it anyway.

Hon. Philip Davis interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — This government came to power when the energy system in this state was in a parlous situation. We have added 1700 megawatts of additional capacity in relation to the energy sector in this state. The opposition's record is zero. That is what it has added. It added zero, and we added 1700 megawatts. That is why I am confident that we will have the necessary power in the energy sector, and partly that is because we have brought on 600 megawatts of power by successfully bringing the Basslink project —

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

Government: scrutiny

Ms ROMANES (Melbourne) — My question is to the Minister for Finance, Mr Lenders. On Tuesday the minister tabled his formal response to the Auditor-General's report for the financial year. I ask: what other mechanisms are available in the minister's portfolio to allow the Parliament and the Victorian community to scrutinise the executive government?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I thank Ms Romanes for her question and acknowledge her ongoing interest in transparency of government,

scrutiny of government and accountability of government. Today is the 187th sitting day of the Legislative Council under this government and this question from Ms Romanes is the 1810th question asked of a minister at question time, of which I have had a fair share. There are probably about half as many again supplementary questions. So in answer to the first part of her question, which was, 'What scrutiny is executive government under', on a daily basis we are responsible for our portfolios at question time in this Parliament, and 8881 questions on notice have been asked in this Parliament.

Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips — How many have been answered?

Mr LENDERS — Mr Rich-Phillips asked how many have been answered. I can tell him that 8473 questions on notice have been answered during the life of this Parliament.

As Minister for Finance I have responded to the Auditor-General's report which Ms Romanes referred to. Every single one of the Auditor-General of Victoria's recommendations is responded to by the government. The government says what it thinks of the recommendations and how it is responding to them. That is an amazing thing in a government.

We also have the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, which I and every other minister need to face each year as part of the scrutiny of our portfolios in the budget period. We also have open freedom of information laws so the opposition parties can fearlessly go forward and lodge requests for information, as well as the public generally or the media. All of that has been done.

The other aspect I want to touch on is that in my portfolio every major contract is listed on a web site for the community to peruse once the contract has been concluded and the commercial-in-confidence issues are over. All of these are transparency issues that hold the executive government to account.

Further, this government has set up the pre-election budget update (PEBU) required by the Department of Treasury and Finance so that once a campaign is called all the accounts of the state are opened up by the independent departmental secretary for the community to see. People can make a judgment on the election policies of individuals and parties, including whether they are affordable and viable. PEBU — as we affectionately know it in government — is the filter that helps us detect where la-la land is. When people come up with crazy economic policies they can be tested by

the community against the accounts of the state. It is also a radar screen to show us where the magic pudding is, which again is something that members of the opposition are most excited about. Most of the shadow ministers think there is a magic pudding out of the Norman Lindsay book, from which you can take slice after slice and not be accountable for anything.

The Bracks government is an open, transparent and accountable government. Four times a year our state accounts are reported. We have an Auditor-General who has been encouraged to do work to check these things. So in my portfolio, and in every other minister's portfolio, we are accountable to the Auditor-General, accountable to the Parliament and accountable to the community, and that is the hallmark of the Bracks government. Not only do we restore services and build infrastructure, we are also open, transparent and accountable. That is the legacy of this government. That is something we believe the Victorian community deserves, and we will present ourselves as that.

In response to Ms Romanes we are accountable and I have outlined a series of our measures. It is one of the important things which makes Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to a further 126 questions on notice, which, as I said, brings the total number of answers to 8473. They are: 5401, 6865, 7441, 7526, 7555, 7565, 7568, 7588, 7679, 7681–2, 7721, 7723–4, 7733, 7770, 7773, 7775, 7777, 7812, 7815, 7817, 7819–20, 7854, 7859, 7862, 7902–4, 7923, 7944, 7946, 7986, 8010, 8018, 8039, 8086, 8104, 8138, 8145–53, 8157, 8164, 8167, 8223, 8225–30, 8234, 8237–8, 8294, 8299, 8315–16, 8322, 8352, 8357, 8361–2, 8384–5, 8392–3, 8397, 8407–9, 8411–20, 8442, 8446–7, 8449–51, 8457, 8501, 8506–7, 8623–4, 8632–3, 8635–8, 8656–8, 8662–75, 8681, 8684.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — On 3 August I wrote to the Minister for Finance seeking his assistance in getting some questions answered by the Treasurer. On 29 August I followed that letter up with an identical letter seeking his assistance in getting some questions on notice — not a lot — answered by the Treasurer. It is a bit galling to sit here on my last day in the Parliament and hear the minister trumpet the accountability credentials of his government when for the last two months he has been unable to get the

Treasurer to answer 12 simple questions. I suggest and request that he use the rest of the afternoon — my last afternoon in this place — to persuade his colleague the Treasurer to answer the questions that I politely requested two months ago be answered.

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I have a similar request to that just advanced by Mr Forwood with respect to question 8242 asked of the Minister for Local Government for the Minister for Transport in the other place. I wrote to the minister about a fortnight ago, making a plaintive plea that she might use her best endeavours to make sure I had an answer by 4 October — that is, yesterday.

I waited in vain yesterday and I was very hopeful for today, but an answer has not come to pass. I do not ask many questions on notice. This is a fairly simple question that would not have taken a lot of research. I am exceedingly disappointed that it has not been answered. I ask the minister to use her best endeavours to ensure that an answer is presented before the house rises today.

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — Yesterday Mr Forwood asked for a number of answers to be forthcoming, and I believe the ones directed to the Premier have come through. I will certainly seek to get the ones from the Treasurer, but whether I succeed this afternoon is another matter. Mr Forwood is more ambitious than I am, but I will certainly seek to get them.

There are two important things: firstly, I said yesterday, and I am not saying this lightly, that with the number of questions we are talking of here it takes an extraordinary amount of work by ministerial offices and departments to pursue the 8000-plus questions asked.

I do not say that as a point-scoring exercise, but when departments and ministers are chasing questions such as, 'What is the major capital works budget of the Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Committee?', there needs to be a filtering if those questions are to be answered. We will seek to do that and pursue them.

Secondly, on the transparency matter raised by Mr Forwood and Mr Rich-Phillips, the annual report of the Department of Treasury and Finance was tabled in the Legislative Assembly yesterday. Due to an error in correspondence from the Treasurer — either by the Department of Treasury and Finance or by the Parliament — that has been rectified, and that report will be tabled in the Legislative Council today. So far as transparency is concerned, the report was tabled for the

public yesterday, and it will be tabled in this house today.

I will seek to get answers to the questions asked by Mr Forwood, and the annual report is here for Mr Rich-Phillips.

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) — In response to Mr Baxter, I certainly recall receiving correspondence from him about this matter, and I have sought a response from the Minister for Transport. I will use my best endeavours to secure that response.

WATER (GOVERNANCE) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) — I appreciate the opportunity to talk on the Water (Governance) Bill, which The Nationals will not be supporting because it effectively gives the government even more control over the precious resource that we all know as water. The bill will effectively require chief executive officers of water authorities to go onto boards, and those water authorities will have their names changed. Any good Labor legislation that comes before the house always has name changes to try to justify what is happening.

The bill will further strip water corporations of any finances or resources they need to operate. The Nationals will not support a bill that gives more authority to a government that has been lazy and asleep at the wheel in relation to water management. That would be absurd, and we certainly will not support the legislation. To give more centralised power to a government that is effectively extracting more and more money out of water authorities would be ludicrous. Labor has been lazy and asleep at the wheel. It has been making up water policy on the run and has been found out.

I shall go through a whole range of issues pertaining to water. The smartest things said about the water debate, which came from the Leader of The Nationals in the other place, was that the answers to all of the problems associated with water through northern and central Victoria do not lie in one area. A whole range of issues have to be addressed properly and in balance, and I am going to go through some of them today to try to find the answer to getting through the worse drought on record.

In relation to water management and water planning the Bracks Labor government has been an absolutely

do-nothing government. Victorians are just starting to wake up to the fact that \$1.6 billion has been ripped out of water authorities since Labor has been in government, and we all know that only a fraction of that money has been returned to water infrastructure projects. We know that \$60 million per year is now being taken out of water authorities under the guise of an environmental tax. This sneaky Labor government has legislated to ensure that this levy will never ever appear on a water account, so the people of Victoria who are paying these additional secret taxes are never, ever going to know about them.

On top of that, today the acting Auditor-General stated that he believes the Bracks Labor government surplus to be closer to \$4 billion and not the \$800 million that was listed yesterday. We see a picture being painted of people in regional Victoria going broke, their businesses are going to the wall and they are struggling for minimal amounts of water, while the Bracks Labor government, which is based in Melbourne and has a city-centric attitude towards water management, is making money hand over fist. We now have zero water allocations in many parts of the state, especially in my area, for rural water authorities yet the government is expecting these rural —

Hon. Andrea Coote — Acting President, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Hon. D. K. DRUM — Country people are now paying for water they are not receiving. They are paying accounts for a 100 per cent water allocation which they simply do not receive. I would like to see a Labor government try to pull a stunt like this on the people of Melbourne. Imagine if they turned on their taps, nothing came out and then they were issued with an account for 100 per cent of water they did not receive. We know that a Labor government would never try a stunt like that in Melbourne, but it does it every year in regional Victoria. They not only force people to pay for water they do not receive, they then ask them to pay an environmental tax.

Bendigo is in crisis and businesses are facing a very uncertain future. Businesses such as nurseries are going broke; the car wash industry is going broke; and concrete plants are under threat which means we are effectively looking at shutting down the entire building sector. The situation is the same with almond, walnut and olive plantations as well as vineyards. The apple industry is under threat, as is the hydroponic industry. Schools are having trouble flushing their toilets because of a lack of rural allocated water. Stock is either going

to have to be shot or sold because farmers are no longer receiving their normal allocations.

Members might like to think this has happened overnight, but we all know in country Victoria that it has not happened overnight. We have had 8 to 10 years of sparse rainfall. The government has had 8 to 10 years to get its policies up and running and to be ready for this emergency. Our water storages have slowly become more and more depleted over the last five years. This situation certainly applies in and around the Bendigo region, and in fact the water level in Lake Eppalock is at less than 3 per cent capacity. There is also second-stage blue-green algae in that area which is getting to a dangerous stage.

What is the government doing about fixing up the leaks and making the system more efficient? Absolutely nothing! It has put a 15-year plan in place. It will take Labor 15 years to try to fix up the leaks and the inefficiencies in what we can say is Victoria's driest city. It is an absolute disgrace. Although the government continues to take the money, it refuses to put the money into investing in water efficiencies. What is the Labor government doing? Absolutely nothing! What is it doing about recycling water? I do not know if Victorians understand, but over 300 000 megalitres of water is being pumped into Port Phillip Bay every year. What is the government doing about using some of that water to look after our parks and gardens, racecourses, and golf courses and saving the potable water that is used for them? Absolutely nothing! It wants to send the water down to Gippsland and take fresh water from Gippsland. It is a joke!

What about capturing stormwater? We have put out a plan to the government about capturing stormwater, but it does not want to know about it. We cannot say the government is doing nothing about this because it has spent \$5 million to catch 9 megalitres at the Melbourne zoo. That works out at \$500 000 a megalitre! We have put in place a substantial plan that would have the opportunity to catch 10 000 to 15 000 megalitres if the government were serious about it. We have done all the hard work and the planning for the government. You cannot say that the government has done nothing about capturing stormwater, because it is actively working against the plan. It is working against one of the most commonsense plans in Bendigo's history to catch more stormwater.

Behind the scenes we have a government that finds politics more important than trying to catch stormwater. We have a government that actively goes out and works against the interests of the people in Bendigo in having more water available so they can carry on their

businesses and their life. The government has thrown up barrier after barrier, and hurdle after hurdle. It says, 'We can't mix stormwater with recycled sewerage water, because that may mean we end up having recycled sewerage water in our potable water supplies'. We then broke the story at Sugarloaf Reservoir that the government had been doing it for years. The Minister for Water has been denying that his government would ever do that. He said, 'We would never put recycled sewerage water into our potable water supply'. The government has been doing it for years. The minister is either ignorant of the facts or is being deceitful to the Victorian people. He can choose which it is himself. He cannot say one thing on one day and turn around and say exactly the opposite the next.

We have talked about building new storages. The fact is we do not have to build new storages. We can use the piping system being put in place for the Campaspe–Goulburn link and the Murray–Darling Basin cap which has become a problem. We will work through that. We will work with the Murray–Darling Basin cap and see if there is any way we can get access to more water coming down the Bendigo Creek. The Bendigo Creek is holding more and more water as the development around Bendigo increases, with more tin roofs and more sealed roads.

What is the government doing about using ground water? Absolutely nothing! To the east and west of Bendigo we have large quantities of ground water of varying degrees of quality. We have a genuine need to use some of the ground water that exists to the east and west of Bendigo, but the government is doing nothing about it. It has been caught asleep at the wheel. Bendigo has two ministers in the other place, the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Education Services, who have been exposed for making policy on the run. They have put all their eggs into the super pipe — Labor cannot do anything without putting a spin around the project, so they have called it the super pipe. They have been shamed into the pipeline.

Earlier today Ms Carbines talked about the water strategies that were put in place three or four years ago. I will tell the house about the water strategies of this government. It makes them up as they go along. On 7 April the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Education Services were reported on the front page of the local Bendigo paper as having said the pipeline would solve all Bendigo's problems. The problem is they were talking about a different pipeline. They said they had many years of data and strategies and that this would be the answer. That was on 7 April. Only six weeks later the Treasurer rode into town and announced a totally different project — one that we had been

calling for. To say that this government put in place strategies three or four years ago to fix this problem is an absolute lie. It announces one project one day, and six weeks later it announces another project. It does not know what it is talking about.

The Honourable Bill Baxter has spoken very clearly about The Nationals' stance on the pipeline coming across the Goulburn system. We are totally supportive of it, provided the water used for the project is generated out of savings. We all know that the Minister for Agriculture in the other place, Mr Cameron, will tell us that the savings are not in the system. Everybody who works within the system knows that he is wrong and that he is telling lies to the public. We all know the savings are in the system, we just need a government that has the will to do the right thing and invest in infrastructure savings.

At the moment the government is letting 5 megalitres of environmental flows a day run down the Campaspe River whilst farmers and all the industries with permanent plantations I spoke about before are going broke. As Mr Baxter said, if the government were to return the Campaspe River to its natural state, it would effectively be a series of puddles, like many other rivers in this state. So we have environmental flows continuing, and the minister does nothing about them. The government is doing nothing about water efficiencies or savings and stopping leaks — and there is a 15-year plan for that.

Regarding recycling, every year 300 000 megalitres of stormwater flows into the bay. Absolutely nothing is being done about stormwater catchments. What are we doing with the stormwater that is being diverted into the drains through the extra development in the cities of Werribee, Pakenham, Bendigo and Ballarat? Absolutely nothing! Ground water represents a huge quantity of water in our close vicinity, but absolutely nothing is done about that. The government puts forward one pipeline one day, another pipeline the next — it is absolutely crazy that it should put all its eggs in one basket.

We are coming into what is predicted to be one of the worst fire seasons on record because everything is so dry. How will the Country Fire Authority (CFA) fight fires when this government has done nothing about readying the countryside with water catchments? We need to look at these plans. It will be too late when the fires hit and the CFA firefighters are standing there twiddling their thumbs because they cannot fill their tankers with water. We need to put in place some projects or some infrastructure that will enable them to fight fires to save our cities, towns and communities.

What has the government been doing about this?
Absolutely nothing!

It does not matter which way you look at the water issue: the Labor government has been asleep at the wheel, making up policy on the run. Now it wants us to give it more authority, to give it a greater ability to take more money out of water catchments and to centralise the whole issue. The members of the government must be crazy. We hope that Victorians wake up to what this government is doing about water management — that is, very little. We hope that on 25 November Victorians tell the government loud and clear that it has been asleep at the wheel and that it has not been doing enough.

Hon. J. A. VOGELS (Western) — I will make some comments on the Water (Governance) Bill. I start by responding to a couple of comments Ms Carbines, the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, made before the luncheon break. One of her comments was that our rivers are entitled to have water in them. Everybody would love to see water in our rivers, but if it had not been for the foresight of our forefathers who built the Thomson Dam, the Dartmouth Dam and the other dams in our state, most of our rivers would not be running — they would have no water in them.

It is very nice to say, 'We want environmental flows', but the only reason they are there is because of the foresight of our forefathers in building dams for the future. They realised that we live in the driest continent in the world, that we do have droughts and that we need to prepare for drought. They built dams so that in seasons when we have run-off we can save some of that water for the future.

Ms Carbines also talked about the Lal Lal Reservoir, which I will talk about later. She then said the Bracks government will drought proof the state. No government will ever drought proof the state: that is in the lap of the gods. Nobody can say we will drought proof the state, but we can growth proof the state by putting in place the dams and facilities to make sure that when we have dry spells like this, we have enough water to see us through.

The first purpose of the bill is to make changes to governance provisions for Melbourne and regional water authorities and for catchment management authorities. The second purpose of the bill is to provide a longer term lease for land in Werribee South for a marina and housing project. Thirdly, the bill will make numerous amendments to clarify issues with respect to water trading. Fourthly, clause 172 seeks to deal with

the issue of the impact on rates of the separation of water from land under the Valuation of Land Act.

As I said before, we are probably in the driest period in Victoria since the First Fleet arrived, since we have kept records. One of the major purposes of this bill, as has been mentioned before, is to change the name of water authorities to call them water corporations. Who cares? No doubt this change will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars with the need to order new letterheads and stationery, but it will not deliver one extra drop of water. We have heard that since its election the Bracks government has collected in excess of \$1.6 billion in public sector dividend taxes from water authorities. It has hit the same authorities with an environmental tax from which it raises about \$60 million per annum. I believe most of these funds should have gone back into growth proofing Victoria to meet our future water needs.

Just as a rough figure I would suggest the Bracks government has collected about \$200 billion in taxes and revenue since its election. This year's budget is about \$34 billion. The government has been in office for seven years and the budget was around \$20 billion when it was elected so you could say the government has collected roughly \$200 billion since its election. The Auditor-General disagrees with the Treasurer's financial report which says there is a \$800 million surplus. We heard about the Auditor-General in question time. He says the surplus is actually \$3.9 billion, and yet the government has failed to deliver even 1 litre extra in water saving capacity. There has basically been no recycling. We have done a little bit here but there has been no real recycling, no capturing of stormwater and no searching for aquifers.

Rural and regional Victoria is basically out of water. In Melbourne you can still turn your taps on and do what you like and there is water. Look at Bendigo. We have heard about Bendigo. Bendigo will run out of water by Christmas of this year — it will have no water. As the shadow Minister for Local Government I have been to Bendigo many times. When I was up there four and five years ago they were talking to me about recycling — they could see the climate change and that things were changing. They suggested we start working on saving grey water but nothing has changed, nothing has happened. Ballarat is facing the same issue.

We are now talking about pumping water out of the Goulburn Valley to Bendigo and over the Great Dividing Range to Ballarat. Our forefathers must be turning in their graves. Following the Second World War many migrants came to Australia and worked on the iconic Snowy scheme. It turned water inland

because in Victoria the rain falls mainly south of the Divide. We spent 20 or 30 years on this fantastic icon of a scheme turning water inland — what is not sent off for environmental flows is turned inland and goes to the irrigators. However, we are now talking about pumping it over the Great Divide to Ballarat when it gets to the Goulburn Valley. People are even talking about pumping it on to Geelong. In my opinion this is absolute madness.

The Liberal Party has a plan for Ballarat and Geelong in my electorate. It is a very good plan. Ms Carbines says we do not talk about the Lal Lal Reservoir when we are in Geelong and vice versa because we are too frightened we will say one thing in one place and something else in the other. We are not. If you are living in Geelong and you look out of your suburban windows you can basically see the Otways. I would like to talk about the Otways. At this stage there is no need to put a dam in the Otways. In the Otways we have what is called the Newlingrook aquifer. Everybody has known about this aquifer for many years but this government seems to have been hiding the fact that it exists.

I have here a copy of the *State Water Accounts 2003–2004 — A Statement of Victorian Water Resources* report. On page 248 it refers to the Otway Coast Basin. It talks about the Newlingrook aquifer. On page 252 of this report it says the permissible annual volume that can be taken out of this aquifer without affecting anything is 75 000 megalitres per annum, which is double Geelong's present water needs. Why have we taken no action on tapping this aquifer? It is disgraceful and outrageous that we have not taken water from this aquifer to supplement Geelong's water supply. If we did that, we would free up the Central Highlands and the Lal Lal Reservoir to go to Ballarat. I do not have a problem with that. Why can we not pump some of this water to Ballarat if necessary rather than trying to pump it back over the Divide? You should never take water that is north of the Divide back to the south of the Divide. Anyone who suggests those sorts of things should have the living daylight beaten out of them, as Graeme Stoney would say.

It does not make sense to me. I talk to fishermen who fish in Bass Strait. They tell me there are thousands of springs in Bass Strait with beautiful fresh, potable water just pouring into the bottom of the ocean. They can actually dip a glass over the side and drink beautiful, fresh water even though they are 3 miles out to sea. This aquifer needs to be tapped. You are not reducing the capacity of this aquifer; you are not drawing down on it because the water just happens to be running away into the ocean and is completely and utterly wasted. I

have no doubt that in the future that is where a lot of the water for south-west Victoria will come from — the aquifers along the limestone coast under the Otways and onwards.

I would like to mention the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. It is another example of how this government cannot manage a major project. We heard the Minister for Major Projects talking about major projects. This project has been announced and reannounced, and we have seen no progress except in the cost of the project. It has gone from \$160 million to \$200 million, and I think we are now up to \$500 million but not one pipe has yet been laid. It is seven years since this government was elected, but nothing has changed.

Clauses 174 and 175 of the bill amend the Werribee South Land Act; the long-term development leases for the proposed marina are increased from 50 years to 99 years. As we said before, the Liberal Party does not object to this marina — it would be part of our policy. However, the hypocrisy of this government is interesting. I very well remember being at a local council before I was elected to this place in 1999 when a development was proposed at the Twelve Apostles, which was a very similar coastal park area. The then shadow minister for conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, was there on numerous occasions causing as much trouble as she could to stop the facility going ahead. As we all know, the Bracks government won and there was no facility built at the Twelve Apostles except a \$6 million toilet. On many summer days the toilet facility has no water, so you cannot use it anyway. They are the sorts of planning decisions you make when you are trying to listen to everybody. The local council supported it at the time, but the Bracks Labor Party, in order to score cheap political points off the greenies et cetera, opposed the project.

The other issue I want to mention in closing is that there is a concern with clause 172, which unbundles water and council rates. Municipalities in irrigation areas are concerned about the loss of rate income from unbundling. I would like to quote a letter the opposition received from the chief executive officer of the Mildura Rural City Council:

Thank you for the information on the above bill.
Clause 171 —

which is clause 172 in the reprinted bill —

appears to meet the concerns of council in relation to unbundling of water and council rates through until June 2008.

The bigger concern for council is the loss of rate income from unbundling, which the legislation does not cover. This is the

basis of ongoing discussion with the state government through the MAV.

An options paper is nearing finalisation. The paper should recommend transitional arrangements over a four-year period to lessen the impact of the new legislation on ratepayers and council's finances.

This position has the support of the affected councils along the Murray River and hopefully will be accepted by the government.

Thank you for your interest in this significant matter.

I wanted to read that into *Hansard* because I am not really sure from that letter that all of their concerns have been addressed. Hopefully they will be. The opposition opposes this bill.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I wish to make a few remarks on the Water (Governance) Bill. To start with I want to commend my colleagues in The Nationals, the Honourable Bill Baxter, the Honourable Barry Bishop and the Honourable Damian Drum for the way in which they have raised some very important water issues, particularly important in northern Victoria. Those who have driven in northern Victoria lately will understand the critical nature of water supplies in that part of the state. Last week I was in central Victoria around Castlemaine and Bendigo, and I went up to Wycheproof. I could see just by a casual look around those areas the dryness of that country.

In Gippsland Province there are also areas of great water shortage. The fact that irrigators in the Macalister district are achieving only 35 per cent allocation of their water right is a real concern for us when we rely on somewhere around 200 per cent. Most of the people on those farms are structured towards getting something like 200 per cent. Although we are getting something it is going to be barely enough for many irrigators in Gippsland to survive. Although across the Gippsland region some areas have had rain, others remain desperately short. Water is an extremely critical issue.

I want to concentrate on just two aspects of the whole water debate. They are different issues from those others have canvassed up to this point in the debate. I was prompted to talk about one of the issues as a result of an email from one of my constituents, Robert Hind, of Yinnar in the city of Latrobe. Essentially it is about water-saving incentives. He made a very valid point in terms of encouraging people to be better consumers of water and more efficient water users. If we are to put in place measures, he suggested that a pricing structure is a better incentive to encourage people to save water. He used Gippsland water tariffs, which I know are not much different from those of other water authorities,

because they are all approved by the Essential Services Commission.

I looked at the range of tariff structures at one point to note that they were not much different across the state. If we use Gippsland water tariffs, Mr Hind has a water usage of just 42 kilolitres per year, for which the cost is around \$40 for his actual water usage. He has a wastewater availability connection of \$350. He has a water availability charge of \$82 per year, so his annual water bill is actually \$472, of which only \$40 is for water usage. He is saying that less than 10 per cent of the total cost that he pays for water is actually for the water that he uses. So what incentive is there for him to reduce the amount of water that he uses? He would be reducing the total bill by only a fraction.

He also discussed the situation in regard to the average user of water, which is said to be some 200 kilolitres of water per year for the average household. With that amount of water use the actual charge for water usage would be \$189, but people would still have to pay the fixed charges of \$350 and \$82 respectively for a total bill of \$621. So that particular customer would actually pay less than 30 per cent of their costs for actual water used. Consequently any water savings that they implement would have a minimal impact on their total costs. Therefore the incentive to reduce water use is simply is not there.

Mr Hind also mentioned what a large water user, someone who uses 1000 kilolitres per year, would actually be paying. In the email he suggested that the tariffs should be restructured so that there is no fixed cost but the person is paying purely on the amount of water that they actually use. If it was structured that way, so that the average user of 200 kilolitres still paid the same amount, then someone in his situation as a small water user with just 40 kilolitres a year would be paying \$124 instead of \$470. There would be somewhat of an incentive to save water.

If a user who used larger quantities, perhaps 1000 kilolitres of water, paid on a tariff structure for just the water they used, they would be paying \$3100 instead of \$1375. Robert Hind made a valid point — that is, perhaps we should be looking at the way tariffs are structured within the water industry. A change to the tariff structure may create a greater incentive for people to use less water. I think that is a valid point, and I do not know whether it has been fully canvassed by the government when considering its governance of the water industry in this state.

I want to make another point about the use of recycled water. The Nationals have always claimed that we

should be making greater use of recycled water. The Honourable Damian Drum spoke about it in his contribution, which was made before the last speaker. He said there are great opportunities to use recycled water and harvest stormwater, but they are slipping by. Nobody is making the effort to do this. We in The Nationals believe there are greater possibilities to use particularly recycled water and to harvest stormwater.

One important initiative that is taking place in the Gippsland region is the establishment of what is being called the Gippsland water factory. 'Water factory' is just a fancy term to describe a treatment plant that is able to treat water to a such a high quality that it can be utilised by industry and agriculture. The first planning stages for the Gippsland water factory are well under way. Construction is about to begin on the treatment plant. It is a \$140 million project. The government claims that it will pay \$50 million — and yes, it will, but \$90 million, the vast majority of the funding, is being provided for that particular project by both the industrial and domestic customers of Gippsland Water.

The factory will treat 35 million litres of wastewater from the Gippsland region per day. Of those 35 million litres, 8 million litres will be treated and will be of such a quality level that it will be available for industry use. That is a positive initiative. I am advised by Gippsland Water that Australian Paper is prepared to take 8 million litres of water per day and reuse it.

At a recent briefing I asked: if we are only treating 8 million litres of the 35 million litres of water to a high-quality level, why do we not also treat the remaining 27 million litres per day? Is it not possible to treat the remaining litres and make its quality of an equally high level so it can be used by the power industry, agriculture and irrigation in the Gippsland region? The answer is yes, we can. We can treat and recycle the whole 35 million litres of water, the only issue is cost. If the government were serious and wanted to contribute more towards this treatment plant, it is possible that we could utilise all the water.

Instead the government has announced its long-term plan — separate to the Gippsland water factory, although it certainly was not separate in 2004 when the project was first mentioned — saying that it hopes to treat water to a high level at the Eastern Treatment Plant at Carrum Downs and pipe it up to the Latrobe Valley power stations. I ask simply this: if you are going to treat water at a high level at Carrum Downs which is suitable for use in industry and agriculture, why are you piping it 135 kilometres to the Latrobe Valley? Why not use it around Melbourne — in the

parks, in the suburbs, and in the irrigation areas on the outskirts of Melbourne?

Why would you spend \$135 million on building a pipeline to take the treated water to a country region when you could utilise it well in Melbourne? What about redirecting that treated water to the 200 major users of water in Melbourne Water's customer base? I notice that this is going to be revealed because of the impact of this legislation before the house. It seems to me that the water could easily and readily be utilised around Melbourne.

The key to all this — and the barb for the people of Gippsland — is the fact that the government proposes to take more water from Blue Rock Reservoir, Tarago Reservoir and perhaps Moondarra Reservoir back to Melbourne to supplement their potable water supplies. You would not need to call on that fresh, clean and pure Gippsland water — and we already supply 60 per cent of Melbourne's water out of the Gippsland region — you would not need anything extra, if Melbourne reutilised its recycled water. That is why we have a problem with the so-called draft central region sustainable water strategy.

In Gippsland we are happy to look after our own waste, to treat our own waste and to reuse our own waste, but that responsibility should be applied to Melbourne Water customers as well. Any water recycling that takes place at the Carrum Downs water treatment plant should be reused and recycled around Melbourne Water's own customer base.

A lot more will be said about this as time goes on. I look forward to the development of the new water treatment facility in Gippsland called the Gippsland water factory, but I do not look forward to more fresh, pure, clean Gippsland water being moved to Melbourne while recycled water is being used in the Gippsland region.

This bill before the house today canvasses a whole range of water issues but is narrow in its application. The government should have done a lot more in terms of exploring ways in which water can be better managed in this state. It is our most precious resource, we need to use it wisely and we still have a long way to go in terms of that. We are unhappy with some of the provisions in this bill that, as my colleagues have said, have led us to the position where we feel we need to oppose it.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 22

Argondizzo, Ms

Mikakos, Ms

Broad, Ms
Buckingham, Mrs (*Teller*)
Carbines, Ms
Darveniza, Ms
Eren, Mr
Hilton, Mr (*Teller*)
Jennings, Mr
Lenders, Mr
McQuilten, Mr
Madden, Mr

Mitchell, Mr
Nguyen, Mr
Pullen, Mr
Romanes, Ms
Scheffer, Mr
Smith, Mr
Somyurek, Mr
Theophanous, Mr
Thomson, Ms
Viney, Mr

Noes, 19

Atkinson, Mr
Baxter, Mr
Bishop, Mr (*Teller*)
Bowden, Mr
Brideson, Mr (*Teller*)
Coote, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr
Davis, Mr D. McL.
Davis, Mr P. R.
Drum, Mr

Forwood, Mr
Hadden, Ms
Hall, Mr
Koch, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Stoney, Mr
Strong, Mr
Vogels, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Ms BROAD (Minister for Local Government) —
By leave, I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

In doing so I thank members for their contributions to the debate.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

That the bill be now read a third time and that bill do pass.

House divided on question:

Ayes, 22

Argondizzo, Ms
Broad, Ms
Buckingham, Mrs
Carbines, Ms
Darveniza, Ms
Eren, Mr
Hilton, Mr
Jennings, Mr
Lenders, Mr
McQuilten, Mr (*Teller*)
Madden, Mr

Mikakos, Ms
Mitchell, Mr
Nguyen, Mr (*Teller*)
Pullen, Mr
Romanes, Ms
Scheffer, Mr
Smith, Mr
Somyurek, Mr
Theophanous, Mr
Thomson, Ms
Viney, Mr

Noes, 19

Atkinson, Mr
Baxter, Mr
Bishop, Mr
Bowden, Mr
Brideson, Mr
Coote, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr

Forwood, Mr (*Teller*)
Hadden, Ms
Hall, Mr
Koch, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Stoney, Mr

Davis, Mr D. McL. Strong, Mr (*Teller*)
 Davis, Mr P. R. Vogels, Mr
 Drum, Mr

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Ministers' exemption certificates under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 124, 125 and 128.

Question agreed to.

Treasury and Finance Department — Report, 2005–06.

Read third time.

Victorian Law Reform Commission — Report, 2005–06.

Remaining stages

Western Health — Report, 2005–06.

Passed remaining stages.

Western Regional Waste Management Group — Report, 2005–06.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Answers

Adjournment

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 5914, 7639, 7745, 7787, 7829, 7945, 8008, 8009, 8063, 8207, 8287, 8464, 8709, 8720.

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until a day and hour to be fixed by the President, which will be notified in writing to each member of the Council.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk

The house determined on Tuesday that this motion would be a vehicle for not just the Council determining the procedure for a recall but also allowing each retiring member the opportunity to make a valedictory speech. As the mover of the motion, I will be brief because this is more to the point of what the retiring members should say, but in doing so I would like to make a few observations.

- Austin Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Australian Centre for the Moving Image — Report, 2005–06.
- Bayside Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Eastern Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Health Services Act 1988 — Report of Community Visitors for 2005–06.
- Innovation, Industry and Regional Development Department — Report, 2005–06.
- Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice pursuant to section 32(4)(a)(iii) in relation to Waste Management Policy (Used Packaging Materials).
- Melbourne Health — Report, 2005–06.
- Mercy Public Hospitals Incorporated — Report, 2005–06 (four papers).
- Northern Health — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Peninsula Health — Report, 2005–06 (two papers).
- Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre — Report, 2005–06.
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority — Catchment Condition Report, 2005–06.
- Royal Children's Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Royal Women's Hospital — Report, 2005–06.
- Southern Health — Report, 2005–06.

Firstly, 21 of the 44 members of the Council will not be recontesting election to the Legislative Council when the Victorian people go to the vote on 25 November. As I said, it is not for me to speak for all of them. They and their leaders will do that, but I need to note that we will be losing three former leaders of parties in this Council at the election — you, President; Mr Forwood; and Mr Baxter. It is certainly worth noting that all members of the Council learnt from the parliamentary experience of the three leaders. We have all learnt from them a lot about what we should and, in some cases, should not do. But we have certainly learnt a lot from them, and I would like to express my appreciation to all three.

It is interesting to note that with the departure of Mr Baxter, the equal longest-serving fathers of the house will be Mr Hall and Mr Theophanous, voters willing, so I guess we will call Mr Hall the grandfather of the house; and Mr Theophanous will be Papu, which I believe is the Greek term, so we have an interesting dynamic coming up.

Of the 21 members who will be leaving the house, the average age of the members is 55½ years. On average, members serve 10 years, and the Council will be losing 210 years of experience by the departures.

If I may refer to my colleagues in the Labor Party: firstly, contesting Assembly seats will be the Honourables Marsha Thomson and Justin Madden; both will be seeking to be elected to the green benches. Mr Viney, Mr Vogels, Mr Baxter and I have all made the trip the other way to the red benches of the Council — and we know we made the correct decision. Nevertheless, we wish you well. No pun intended, the long and short of it is you came into the house as ministers and members at the same time. We will miss you. Our loss is the Assembly's gain, and we wish you well.

Mr Pullen will be contesting Sandringham in the Assembly. Noel is a man I have yet, on the Labor side, heard a bad word spoken about in our caucus over the time he has been here. Noel is a wise head. He is well liked. The record for all members will show their roles on committees and a range of other things that they have done, so I will not go into that, but I know that in my time as consumer affairs minister I greatly appreciated Noel's effort in reviewing the Motor Traders Act. He was a silent achiever.

I must admit I was not overly happy when the *Wangaratta Chronicle* said 'The Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr Noel Pullen, is to be in Wangaratta today'. Nevertheless he has a passion for the Labor Party, with 40 years membership. We wish him well. He knows his community, and he is a legend in the sense that I have never seen so many people turn up at the Brighton United Cricket Club — —

Mr Pullen — Brighton Union.

Mr LENDERS — Brighton Union Cricket Club. You know it better than I do, Noel!

Lidia Argondizzo is contesting Doncaster. I asked some people in my office how they would describe Lidia. For the benefit of members of the opposition, we noted that the New Zealand Greens call their whip a 'gatherer' because they think it is a gentler term than 'whip', but my staff said, 'Lidia is nothing but a whip. Don't mess with Lidia'. She sorts us out on this side. She also brings an extraordinary experience of three jurisdictions. She served with distinction for many years on Senator Barney Cooney's staff; she is a former mayor of Northcote; and of course she has also been a member of the Legislative Council. We wish you well, Lidia — and following that last division I can say to you as whip, it is a job well done. You have not let us down on our side.

Mr Eren is contesting Lara. Mr Eren is another one of those people who brings great depth to the Labor Party.

He truly has experience in a range of areas. He has experience as a manufacturing worker and experience in organising workers in that area. He certainly has a passion for Geelong — some would say overly much passion for Geelong. We hear a lot about Geelong from John, but as I said, he is one of those people who brings extraordinary experience to the chamber. He comes from a multicultural background and crosses both cultures extraordinarily well. John, we will miss you in the house, and it will be the Assembly's gain.

Mr Mitchell is contesting Benalla. Rob is an unreconstructed Broadie boy; he loves the bush, and he loves his cars — I think he is a bit too obsessed with cars. He is a former diesel mechanic and parts salesman from regional Victoria. He loves his job and he loves the bush. He is iconic, and we wish him well. We will miss him in this place.

We also have a number of government MPs who are retiring, not least of all yourself, President. You have hit the history books in many ways. I think one of the great legacies you will leave for us is your effort on the Fair Employment Bill; through your passion you set in place for us a way to make this a better society. You put in an enormous amount of effort. You have a distinguished ministerial career. You also had time as a shadow minister. You created history in a number of places. You were the first female leader of a political party in this house. You were the first female Leader of the Government in this house. And you were the first woman President of this house. So you have set a number of milestones in this place.

But despite all of those things, for me it would be your eye for personal detail, noting the individual, and following those things through, and understanding the dynamics of how people are going and where they fit in, that is above your other distinguished achievements. That is one of the attributes that we will miss, and it is something that we will all remember: you look out for others, you know what is going on, and you are an extraordinary member of a team. Your passion for the union movement, the Labor Party and this Council is something that we all admire. We wish you well in your retirement — although I suspect that you and other people who are retiring will not be very retiring for long. I imagine there will be an extraordinary contribution back to the community.

Sang Nguyen is retiring from the chamber. Sang also achieved a number of firsts. Sang is the first Vietnamese-born member of any Australian parliament. Sang and I go back a long way, and I recall Sang's days when he ran first for Melba ward in the City of Richmond and became the first Vietnamese councillor

to be elected in Australia. He then went on to be the first mayor of Vietnamese heritage in Australia. Sang is also one of those MPs who services his community with a passion. We need to understand that, although he has been the member for Melbourne West, because of his engagement in the community people of Vietnamese background from across the whole state have come to him for support over a number of years. One of the highlights I will remember from having seen Sang in this place for four years is the passion with which he spoke on the outworkers legislation. As we know, Sang is someone who quite often reads his speeches in this house, but his speech on outworkers was delivered with passion, it was from the heart and it was from dot points. I remember that clearly. Sang, we pay tribute to you and wish you well in your future endeavours.

Mr McQuilten is leaving us. Again he is someone who has had an extraordinarily long legacy with the Labor Party. John joined the party during the Vietnam War marches and has been around for a long, long time. Many of us know John from his days as a candidate for Ripon. I know him as the Maryborough Man, but some know him as the Marlboro Man as well, from his time out on the balcony here. He is certainly a man of few words, but he has an unbelievable passion for regional Victoria, for getting out and about and bringing jobs to regional Victoria, as well as a passion for Maryborough and his area. John, we wish you well in your future, and we acknowledge the work you have done not just in Maryborough but with so many of the regional initiatives where you have been out there, seeking jobs for regional Victoria, and you have never let us down on that.

Mr Hilton was, I guess, the last of the Fab 25 who got elected for the Labor Party back in 2002. In fact Geoff did not come to our first caucus meeting, and we were all very pleasantly surprised by his late arrival. Geoff has made a great contribution to this place. He has an unusual background as having been a chartered accountant before coming in here. We saw Geoff's suits when he came here; he looked a bit like a chartered accountant when he walked in wearing some of those Jim Kennan shirts!

What we have seen from Geoff in this place is an extraordinary thoughtfulness. He is someone who takes his job very seriously and reads the material. He is very conscientious and a great man of conscience. We have seen with interest where he has come from. He came from a school council to the Legislative Council in one jump when he was elected. We certainly look forward to seeing Geoff making a big contribution in the future. He has made a great contribution in this house and we

look forward with interest to where Geoff goes from here.

Helen Buckingham is another person who has I think a 40-year membership of the Labor Party by now, or if not officially, certainly by heart. Helen was born into the labour movement. The record will show what she did in an official parliamentary sense, but I put on the record her role during my ministerial time, and after that during the time of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, the Honourable Marsha Thomson, in shepherding through the bodies corporate review. That was a big piece of work undertaken by a member of this Parliament; it was a great contribution. She has an extraordinary sense of Labor history.

We all know that Helen has battled illness during the life of this Parliament, and we take our hats off to her for her stoicism in persevering and working her way through it and coming back and joining us. Helen has an extraordinary history. She has brought forward local government experience from her time on the Whitehorse council. Sadly, she did not bring federal experience; it came so close in Deakin in that election. We wish Helen well. We know she has a great contribution still to make, and we look forward to following her progress in the years ahead.

The final person I refer to is Carolyn Hirsh, who is not with us today. Carolyn will not be recontesting at the election. She has been a great contributor over time. I can still recall her inaugural speech in this place where she said, 'Before I was so rudely interrupted' from having lost her seat back in 1992 and coming back with gusto. We wish Carolyn well in the years ahead and a speedy recovery.

I want to refer to the contribution of the Labor team in this place. It is the first time there has been a Labor majority in this place, with the exception of a brief period in 1985. It has been a great team effort. We have succeeded in steering 370 pieces of legislation through this chamber during this Parliament. I need to mention the one piece of legislation which, in a sense, is one of our greatest tributes but is also one that has caused a degree of personal pain to individual members — that was obviously the Constitution (Parliamentary Reform) Act of 2003.

In 1985, 1988, 1992, 1996, 1999 and 2002 the Labor Party went to the Victorian people with a proposal to reform the Legislative Council. That proposal had various iterations. It is a very serious point that without exception every Labor member supported the party policy they went to the election on. By doing so and sticking to the principle, 17 people jeopardised four

years of a parliamentary career. I want to put on the record that that is something that people do not often see or expect from members of Parliament.

People see members as being venal and looking after their self-interest, yet in this case people stuck to the commitment they made, despite the personal anxiety it gave people in many cases. While it has been a difficult time for this Parliament, I think history — when it records how this Parliament has evolved, with the accountability, the checks and balances and a range of things that arise out of that — will thank particularly those 17 MPs but also the entire parliamentary Labor Party from this period.

I conclude my remarks with a tribute by saying it has been a privilege to be a member of this 55th Parliament, and it has particularly been a privilege to be a member of the parliamentary Labor Party. I have had the joy of working with my colleagues through four years. I wish them all well, particularly those who will not be recontesting at the election.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS (Gippsland) — I will be brief in my remarks, because I do not want to be presumptuous or patronising about my colleagues who are retiring at this election. Their legacy and contributions to the Parliament of Victoria are writ large — their own actions, their contributions to debates and their vigorous representations of their electorates. I make the point that all those on the opposition side who are seeking to retire at this election were elected with me in 1992 — 14 years of a challenging experience, I might say. They are all friends. There are six of them retiring at this election: five Liberals and Barry Bishop from The Nationals.

The only way we can put it is to say that the class of 1992 was forged in adversity. I will not repeat the lessons of history which have been debated here about financial management, but certainly the election of the Kennett government in 1992 saw 35 new members of Parliament on the coalition benches in both houses — 11 in the upper house.

Hon. B. N. Atkinson interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I advise Mr Atkinson that after this election only two of that class will remain. I think back to all of the challenges which confronted the previous government. Members had to make tough decisions in the party room to support what was tough legislation to reform the state.

I think of the characters of the individuals who I call my friends, my associates and my colleagues in parliamentary life. As members of the government have

experienced over the last four years, Ron Bowden is absolutely consistent and persistent. He never lets go, and I have to say it is a characteristic which has carried him well through 14 years of exemplary parliamentary career and commitment, and I thank him for his contribution to the team. I wish Ron and Lynn all the very best in their retirement, although I know it will not be a real retirement, because Ron has some other commitments to go to.

Andrew Brideson was one of those who came in with me. He shared an office with me and Chris Strong. For seven years in our basement office we took in everything that went on in Parliament and conferred on a daily basis about the mysteries of parliamentary life. I think we are still conferring about the mysteries of parliamentary life, but I can say it was a lot of fun. Andrew has been a great colleague to work with and, again, has been in a measured way very consistent. He was interested in industrial relations. He had been the leader of an education union — albeit a small one — but he has been very consistent about representation of employees. Having come from the teaching profession, he has been very engaged in the education debate. The thing that has always inspired me about Andrew is that he has spent a lot of time in Gippsland and has chosen to retire back to Gippsland. I wish Andrew and Marilyn well with their retirement project at Drouin. I hope the roses bloom and flourish.

It is important that all of us here have a plan for retirement, which brings me to Bill Forwood. Bill always has a plan. What that plan is may be a mystery to us, but Bill always knows where he is going. Bill has been described by, I think, the Leader of the Government as 'Jeff's prefect'. In fact he was a great contributor to the Kennett government. He is a great friend, but importantly someone I admire enormously. He is one of the class of 1992 who had limited opportunities for promotion after the 1996 election. There were two frontrunners: the late Ann Henderson, who became the Minister for Housing, and Louise Asher, who became the Minister for Tourism and Minister for Small Business as a member of this place. Bill Forwood became Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier.

Bill had a key role, and as chairman of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee did an exemplary job, not for the government, as is often asserted by the Leader of the Government in this place, but for the Parliament. Importantly, Bill took on the mantle of Leader of the Opposition in this place during the course of the last parliamentary term. It was a challenging experience for him, I am sure, as I have found that being Leader of the Opposition is like having a tiger by

the tail. I know that there were times when Bill would rather have had the tiger by the head, but often being Leader of the Opposition, as the President well knows and as the Honourable Theo Theophanous knows, is not an easy task.

I thank Bill for that measured, major contribution to the Liberal Party as leader. I regard Bill's contribution to the Parliament as outstanding. I know that Bill and Anne are relocating. We know about branch stacking affairs that go on in government circles; I think Bill's aspiration is to do some electorate stacking. He is moving to another electorate shortly, and I will be interested to know how that change of life suits him. I know that he will have a big career after Parliament.

Graeme Stoney, the whip in the upper house for the Liberal Party, has made a great contribution over many years and has never changed his message. From the time that he came to prominence — called before the bar of this place in the 1980s when he was leader of a mass protest movement, leading the mountain cattlemen in their defence of their heritage — he has not let go of that single motivating force, which is to preserve the traditions and heritage of country Victoria. Even today he is still regarded as a leader of men and a leader of that ethic which many of us who come from the country still aspire to support. I know that Graeme and Wendy are not going to let up the pace. They will have a great retirement, but I suspect that for most of us when we think of the word 'retirement' we do not think about the energy levels that I know they will be continuing to commit.

Chris Strong was my other colleague who joined me in that dungeon office, and we had many long discussions about what I would describe as the economic model under the Kennett government. Chris needs to be recognised for the major influence that he had on the reforms to the energy industry in this state. Certainly a lot of credit has been given to Alan Stockdale for driving the disaggregation and privatisation of the energy industries. In fact a lot of work was going on well before the change of government, and there was a lot of support behind Alan Stockdale for the model which eventually evolved. That model is still regarded today by those in the industry and indeed by the current government as a very successful model, which not only achieved efficiencies which have delivered major benefits in terms of consumers but also delivered immeasurable benefit to the taxpayers of Victoria through the privatisation process.

Chris needs to be given full recognition for his role in that and in the many other areas of economic policy he has been involved in. I am delighted to have learnt only

in the last 24 hours of the prospect that Chris and Kate will become my constituents after this election — in part at least — so I am looking forward to maintaining that close connection.

Hon. E. G. Stoney interjected.

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — As Mr Stoney said, I am going well; I have got prospectively two votes!

I come to Barry Bishop. It is presumptuous of me to talk about a member of The Nationals, but I could not not say something about another member of the class of 92 in coalition. Although at this forthcoming election there might be a little bit more tension between the Liberal Party and The Nationals than there was in 1992 because of the competitive process, the fact is that Barry has been a great friend. May I say, Barry, it was never a pleasure to chair those rural policy meetings we had on the third floor week after week trying to resolve weeds policy, as I recall!

Hon. B. W. Bishop — It never quite made it through cabinet, did it?

Hon. PHILIP DAVIS — I think we met for two years and nothing changed, but that is the nature of politics. Barry has made a great contribution in representing his constituency, and I know he will enjoy getting back to farming and enjoy many more hours driving tractors, I suspect. I hope retirement for Barry and Brenda is a little bit more leisurely than parliamentary life has been.

I do not want to dwell too much on The Nationals, but I need to acknowledge that I served with the Honourable Bill Baxter when he was a minister for roads in the first Kennett government. I have to say I have always admired Bill's professional approach to parliamentary life. Although from time to time we have had vigorous differences in our views about things, Bill has always been a keen advocate. While I wish him well for his life after the Legislative Council, I am not going to wish him too well, because I hope for a different political outcome to the one that he aspires to.

I do not want to be at all presumptuous by making any comment about my colleague in Gippsland Province, the Honourable Peter Hall, but I thought on a personal note I might just observe it is interesting that Peter and I — being the last elected members for Gippsland Province, as it will in effect be abolished on 31 October — will both be candidates contesting the Eastern Victoria Region. I point out as an historical footnote that before Gippsland Province was created in the 1880s, the electorate was called Eastern Victoria in

any event. How the wheel turns! The more things change, the more they stay the same.

I wish all the members of the Liberal Party, The Nationals and indeed the government who are retiring at this election, and those who may unfortunately not make it back because of the exigencies of the electoral process, well in their future endeavours and future lives. I also wish them health, wealth and happiness, which I think is the standard compliment. As I heard my former leader in the Legislative Assembly say yesterday, there is more to life than politics, and we all need to get a life. That is a pretty good perspective.

It is important for me to also say, as I have said in here before, that while I have experienced at various stages over time very major differences with the President, I sincerely wish her very well for her life after Parliament — although I note that her term does not conclude until we elect a new President, so she has a bit longer to run than the rest of us. I wish her all the very best.

I extend my congratulations to all members, who have served during fine parliamentary careers and have made a contribution to the community on behalf of their constituents. They should be proud of what they have achieved in their parliamentary lives; they should look back in fondness and try to quickly forget the rough and just think of the bold.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — I want to start by saying that the impact of legislative reform applying to the membership of this house has already been significant. What we have seen here with those reforms is a greater certainty than ever before that a good number of members are guaranteed a return back to this chamber. To those people — and there are at least 19 of them, from my calculations — I say, ‘Half your luck!’. In my mathematical way I have classified groupings of people. According to my calculations there are probably 13 members here who will be retiring, 4 of us who I put in the marginal category, and 8 people who will be contesting Assembly seats.

I want to make a couple of comments about those members who are either retiring or leaving the chamber by way of contesting seats in the Assembly. I want to make a quick comment about all of those who are leaving this chamber, and I will not stick just to my colleagues in The Nationals — namely, Mr Baxter and Mr Bishop. Firstly, I will mention those in the Labor Party in alphabetical order.

The first is the Honourable Helen Buckingham. I specifically want to make mention of Helen’s

performance in the short time she has been here. She has been a terrific addition to the Parliament. I had the pleasure of working with Helen on a parliamentary committee, and I can say that she made an enormous contribution to that committee. We understand Helen is retiring for health reasons, and we respect that. But I say it is a shame, because I am sure she is the sort of person who would have gone on and served with great distinction for a long period of time in the Parliament were it not for those health issues. I say well done for everything she has achieved in her short time and best wishes for her future.

In alphabetical order on the Labor side you, President, come next, and I want to make mention of and thank you for your performance. As the Leader of the Government said, you have been an opposition leader, a government leader, a minister and a President over the period of time you have had here. You have had more jobs of responsibility than most would ever expect to experience during their time as members of Parliament, and I want to compliment you on the way in which you have carried out each of those tasks. They have not always been easy tasks, particularly at one stage when you led an opposition of just 10 members in this chamber and when I know the pressure was on. Once again I compliment you on the way in which you undertook those responsibilities.

It is a genuine disappointment that the Honourable Geoff Hilton has also served only one term in this place, because I think Geoff has shown an outstanding aptitude for and diligence towards his job as a member of Parliament. He is probably one of the most astute observers of parliamentary process, and his time spent in the chamber observing what goes on is probably more than most. Geoff performed extremely well as an Acting President in the Chair. The reforms of this chamber have not served Geoff very well, but he has done well in the four years he has been here.

John McQuilten, Sang Nguyen and Carolyn Hirsh are also retiring. John McQuilten, as has been said, has been a Labor Party member with a focus on rural and regional matters, and we welcome that. We have not always had a lot of allies in the Labor Party on rural and regional matters, but John provided that. Sang Nguyen, who has brought an ethnic diversity into this chamber, Carolyn Hirsh in more recent times, and John McQuilten have all added something to the flavour of Parliament and made contributions, and I wish them well in their retirement.

I turn to those in the Liberal Party who are retiring — Ron Bowden, Andrew Brideson, Bill Forwood, Graeme Stoney and Chris Strong. All we need is for Graeme

Stoney and Bill Forwood to move to Gippsland, and all five will have come our way. I have developed a very warm friendship with each of those gentlemen, and I have welcomed that friendship and cooperation over the years. I really appreciate what Ron, Andrew, Chris, Bill, Graeme and I have been able to achieve and do together and the friendship we have experienced, which I hope will continue beyond politics.

I worked very closely with Bill Forwood when he was Leader of the Opposition, and I have enjoyed working with him in the cooperative arrangement we had together. We all know that Bill is a great debater and a great performer, but he is also a great bloke. Again I say thank you to Bill for all the contributions he has made, and I personally thank him for his assistance during the time he has had in this chamber. It has been a pleasure to work with him, as it has been with all my colleagues in the Liberal Party.

I turn to the retiree on my benches — that is, Barry Bishop. Barry was one of the class of 92, as has been said, and has spent 14 years in this chamber. Barry has been one of the most conscientious parliamentarians I have ever come across. He is very diligent in the way he prepares for work and he is very dogged, as is demonstrated by the fact that I gave Barry a task three years ago to make sure that bloke over there, the Minister for Major Projects, answered a question about toxic waste every week that Parliament sat. Barry has not let me down. Every week there has been a question on toxic waste.

It should be recalled that Barry also served with distinction in this Parliament as Deputy President for four years, and he did an excellent job in that role. Barry is the sort of bloke who wins the respect of all of us, no matter which side of politics we are on, because of his diligence and his very friendly nature. Those attributes have served him well in terms of developing relationships and getting things done. Barry has made an enormous contribution to The Nationals, and he is also the sort of bloke who, if you ask him to do something, will always say yes and will always give 100 per cent in that effort. Barry — 14 great years, mate! Barry deserves his retirement, and we wish him and his wife, Brenda, well in whatever lies ahead of them. I know he will continue to live a very fruitful and productive life beyond Parliament.

I believe Andrew Olexander is retiring, although I do not know for sure. We in The Nationals wish Andrew well with whatever he does.

To those hoping to move to the Assembly — Lydia Argonizzio, John Eren, Justin Madden, Rob Mitchell,

Noel Pullen, Marsha Thomson, Dianne Hadden and my colleague Bill Baxter — we wish them well with those endeavours.

Justin Madden is not here, but I remember that during his maiden speech he handballed a footy across the chamber to me — and I was not here! I thought about bringing it back in and passing it back to him, but it is a good memento. Justin has come along in leaps and bounds as a minister during the seven years he has spent in this Parliament, as has Marsha Thomson. I appreciate the assistance that our party has been able to gain from ministers. I wish Marsha and, in particular, Justin — and the other members — good luck with their moves down to the Assembly.

No-one has recognised the Independents to much extent, and Dianne is not here to accept this either, but I am going to say it any way. She has copped a bit from everybody over the years. When she sat there she copped it from this side —

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting continued on motion of Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance).

Hon. P. R. HALL (Gippsland) — As I was saying, when Dianne sat there she copped it from this side of the Parliament; when she sits here now she cops it from that side of the Parliament. But when you sit here you cop it full bore from both sides!

Despite all the criticisms Dianne cops from time to time she would still be one of the first I would pick in my team if I were still the coach, because she gives 100 per cent every time, and no-one can deny that. She always has a go — consistently has a go — and that is the sort of attribute you look for in someone to play a part of a game. I wish Dianne well in her endeavours to be elected into the other chamber. I also look forward to having my hearing fully restored!

I want to speak about my colleague the Honourable Bill Baxter, who is also attempting to shift across to the Assembly in the seat of Benambra. Where does one start when talking about Bill Baxter? I thought about that, but it then came easily to me. In life we adopt people as role models, and the first day that I walked into this chamber Bill Baxter was there and still, right to this very day, he remains a role model for me. He has proven to be a role model for many of us.

The professionalism with which he undertakes his role as a member of Parliament and the way in which he articulates debate is second to none. If we sit down, listen and analyse an argument that this bloke puts

forward, then we can all learn from his exceptional talent. The respect that he shows to others and the esteem in which he places the Parliament are all important attributes and qualities that we would do well to try to replicate. As I said, Bill has been a role model for me.

He has been described as the father of the house. He is the longest-serving member of this house, but he is certainly not the oldest member of this house by a long shot. He is a rather young father, if we are going to call him a father of the house. It has been suggested that Theo Theophanous and I — if I can get back to myself — would take over that mantle of father of the house. I would rather have Bill in that role. It would be more appropriate.

Bill was first elected in May 1973 as the MLA for the seat of Murray Valley and was defeated in February 1976 when a redistribution took place. He was elected as an MLC for North Eastern Province in June 1978 and resigned in October 1984 to contest the federal seat of Indi for The Nationals — again, a selfless task that he did for the party. He was re-elected as an MLC for North Eastern Province in April 1985. So he served as a member of the Victorian Parliament between 1973 and 2006 — a period of at least 33 years, less a couple of years in between, when he had sabbaticals. He has spent at least 27 years in this chamber.

Mr Lenders likes statistics. Yesterday I looked at the online 55th Parliament handbook and noted that Mr Baxter's length of service to date in this chamber has been 11 216 days — and I guess today makes 11 217. That is an extraordinary amount of time to devote to this house. Every minute of that time has been quality time, and that would not be disputed by anybody in this chamber. I suspect it is not all over for Bill, because I expect his next entry into the 56th Parliament handbook will read 'MLA for Benambra, November 2006'.

Bill has been Leader of The Nationals, he has been a minister, he has served on a whole range of parliamentary committees, he was chairman of the Parliamentary House Construction Authority, he has made an outstanding contribution to this Parliament, and particularly to this chamber. Bill, you deserve every success in your endeavours to be elected for Benambra. I have no doubt you will achieve that, and I am sure that everyone in this chamber will join me in wishing you all the best in those endeavours.

Finally, in the couple of minutes I have left, I would like to comment quickly on the marginals. According to my calculations I reckon there are four of us in that

group — Elaine Carbines, Glenyys Romanes, Bobby Smith and me. We may or may not be back in this chamber — —

Mr Smith — Speak for yourself, comrade!

Hon. P. R. HALL — With Glenyys at no. 3 in the Eastern Victoria Region on the Labor ticket, and me at no. 1 for The Nationals, one of us is not going to be here. But if we do get back, it will be well earned, and I want to wish you all well.

President, the 55th Parliament has been a challenging Parliament for you as our President and for all of us in this environment, but it will probably be nothing compared to the 56th Parliament, which will be new and quite interesting. To all those who will be back, good luck with that, and to all those going elsewhere, I wish you all the best.

Hon. J. G. HILTON (Western Port) — Thank you, President. I suppose this will be the last time I will say that, but I mean it. Thank you, President, for all your support over the last four years. It has been invaluable.

This has been an absolutely amazing four years for me. It has been more amazing because I never in my wildest dreams thought I would be here. The only person more surprised than I was at the outcome of the 2002 election was Cameron Boardman. Most people who stand for Parliament and find that they have been elected are excited, elated and exhilarated. My emotions were totally different. There was absolute fear and blind panic. When one is elected one's life changes overnight. The day after I was provisionally elected, subject to a recount, was a Saturday. I received a call from ABC radio asking for a radio interview, and later that day I received a call from ABC TV suggesting that they send an interviewer and a cameraman down to our property in Moorooduc. Just to demonstrate that I would never ever make a politician, I said it was not convenient. I was just not ready for that degree of change.

I recall the first public speech I had to make. It was at the declaration of the poll result. As usual I was prepared, but it made little difference. As the successful candidate I was the last person to speak, and I cut a rather embarrassing figure. My hands were shaking, my arms were shaking and my legs were shaking. In fact everything was shaking. When I described this instance to one of our friends — in fact the person who is now the ALP candidate for Mornington — he kindly said that I was obviously a mover and shaker. That is not what I thought at the time.

Within our party there is no induction program to teach MPs how to be MPs. The method of learning is definitely on the job and by the seat of your pants. I was, however, given a mentor, and my mentor was Bob Smith. I well remember my first meeting with Bob, which was not on the golf course. I went to his office in Chelsea, and he said, 'Well, congratulations. But you realise you will only get four years'. Of course Bob was proved to be absolutely right. However, those four years have been very rewarding and enriching — in fact they have been the most rewarding four years of my career thus far. To be a representative of the people and to look after their interests is a very onerous responsibility. I have enjoyed that responsibility and discharged it to the best of my ability.

I would like to highlight particularly my experience on parliamentary committees. A number of members have told me when we have been discussing committees that it is the most rewarding aspect of their parliamentary lives, and so it proved for me. I have been part of two committees — the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Law Reform Committee. Both were totally devoid of partisan politics, and we produced two reports — on sustainable communities and the review of the Coroners Act — which I believe will in future be seen to be highly significant and influential. I certainly hope they will be.

Yesterday I went downmarket and visited the other place to listen to the valedictory speeches there, and in their own way they were all quite moving and on occasion emotional. The theme seemed to be to talk about achievements in the electorate, people helped, groups met, personalities met and incidents that happened during parliamentary careers, as well as thanking the people who had made it all happen. I certainly intend to thank people, but I would like to take a slightly different tack, which I believe is quite important.

The state of democracy in Victoria is under some strain. These comments do not apply exclusively to Victoria; they apply to most English-speaking democracies. The participation rate in elections is falling around the world. In the last United Kingdom election only 62 per cent of people voted. The participation rate in the United States of America is consistently around 50 per cent, and that is presumably for the most powerful man in the world. Without compulsory voting in Victoria I suspect the trend would be the same.

When people think about politics and politicians they do not particularly like what they see. We could discuss why this is the case, and we could exclusively blame the media. I have been critical of the media's approach

to politics, its highlighting the negative and ignoring the positive, emphasising the conflicts and downplaying the harmony. This negativity is having a destructive impact on the willingness of people to commit to public life, and I mentioned this in relation to the resignation of the member for Malvern in the other place, Robert Doyle, who was previously in the chamber, to whom I devoted a 90-second statement. But as politicians we must take some responsibility for how people see us. In the *Economist* this week there was an article on the newish leader of the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom, Mr David Cameron, and I quote from the article, which states:

Unless people could be persuaded that the Tories were decent and well meaning, they would continue to regard the party with a deadly mixture of indifference and contempt.

It is my conjecture that in Australian politics we are getting close as politicians to being regarded with that deadly mixture of indifference and contempt. The electorate is increasingly disengaged with the political process, believing it is of no consequence to their lives, and it increasingly sees politicians as being motivated to pursue their own interests rather than the interests of the people who elected them.

On a related issue, the branch membership of political parties is ageing and declining. People quite rightly ask, 'What is the benefit of joining?'. When they see their influence as rank and file members being negligible and the real control resting with people commonly referred to as factional warlords, they have legitimate grounds for doubting the value of joining a political party. The influence of factions is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, there is a reference to it in the Bible, and I quote from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 17 and 18:

On the subject of instructions, I cannot say that you have done well in holding meetings that do you more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you all come together as a community, there are separate factions among you and I half believe it since there must no doubt be separate groups among you to distinguish those who are to be trusted.

Even 2000 years ago the factions did not get on and there was infighting. As I have said to a number of people, political parties may have to face the reality of thinking about how they can operate as political parties when they have no members. It is possible in a theoretical sense to have political parties with no members, but I am not sure that it is possible in a practical sense. My point is this: unless political parties develop some strategy to make membership of parties attractive and unless political parties develop strategies which convince the electorate that it is worth participating in elections and taking an interest in the

political process, in my view we run a very great risk of being governed by parties who have no connection in any sense with the general population, with all the potential consequences of undue influence by vested interests which such a situation would produce.

Plato said 2500 years ago that one of the consequences of not taking an interest in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors, and his comment is equally relevant today. For us to have a truly representative democracy, it is important we have representatives from varied backgrounds. It is now accepted that the backgrounds of our representatives have become more defined over the years. Without the backing of a particular group with influence, it is difficult to secure preselection, and as Bill Clinton could have said, 'It is the numbers, stupid'.

If I could again refer to my own situation, the only reason I am here is that in 2002 nobody from the ALP thought Western Port Province was winnable. We needed an 8.4 per cent swing. Consequently I was the only candidate who stood. If it had been considered winnable, a candidate with backing would have stood, and I would have had no chance. Again, a problem with that system is that backing does not come cost free.

There is a saying from the Bible in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 8, verse 36, which says:

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?

Or, on a more mundane level it could be argued, 'What does it profit a man to gain preselection and suffer the loss of his integrity?'.

The threat to our democracy is not obvious, but it is insidious. It is like termites getting into the foundations. There does not seem to be a problem until the building collapses. The health and ongoing development of our democracy in Victoria will, I believe, be significantly influenced by the behaviour of the 56th Parliament.

Members who make up that Parliament will have the health of our democratic processes in their hands, and to all members who are returning: I urge you to take that responsibility very seriously.

I now turn to some farewells and thankyou's. I thank you, President, for the opportunity of being one of the temporary chairs, and I also acted, on occasions, as Chairman of Committees. I always enjoyed those experiences. In relation to temporary chair responsibility, I would like to thank the clerks. Certainly they always gave me impartial advice, and

my only regret is that I never had the opportunity to throw somebody out!

I would also like to thank the young ladies in the Legislative Council papers office who have always been very supportive and helpful. I would also like to thank Hansard for coming to terms with my English accent and my appalling handwriting. I would also like to thank Russel, Michael and the rest of the team of attendants who do such a great job behind the scenes. I particularly thank Greg Mills at the back door; I always enjoyed our discussions on all things Rugby League.

I also thank two people without whose support and encouragement I would have found this a particularly difficult four years. As a person who decided soon after being elected that I would not join a faction, I found my total independent and non-aligned status particularly challenging. However, Noel Pullen and Helen Buckingham made me appreciate that even within a factionalised party there are still people of integrity. Being an independent, as Robert Frost, the American poet, would have said, is choosing the path least trodden and, indeed, as an independent, the path is barely discernible. So thank you, Helen and Noel, for being the people you are and helping me in more ways than you could possibly imagine.

I would also like to thank my electorate officer, Lee Schloffer, who has been with me for almost the entire four years. She has provided me with a level of truly professional support which I have found invaluable. She was always motivated to make me look as competent as possible to the electorate, and my success in that regard is due in no small measure to Lee. Thank you very much.

I also thank the population of Western Port Province. I am the first, present and only member of that province. It has been a pleasure and delight to serve such a wonderful community, and I would like to wish all the residents of Western Port Province well for the future.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife. Being the wife of a politician is not an easy job, but Ruth has, through the last four years, always been supportive, encouraging and has provided wise counsel, putting what, in many cases, have been petty issues in some perspective. It is not just the disrupted weekends, the evening functions or the arrangements that have been changed at short notice; it is the fact that for me the job has been 24/7 — if I am not actually doing it, I am thinking about it. When Ruth is trying to get to sleep I am frequently tossing and turning, thinking about what I am going to say at this function, on this bill or in this 90-second statement. I have even been

known to get out of bed at 3.00 a.m. to write down an idea which at 3.00 a.m. seems Martin Luther King-ish, but which in the light of day is pretty ordinary. The job is all encompassing, and I thank you, Ruth, for your forbearance and understanding. I could not have done it without you.

I now take my leave of this place. I believe I have done my best, and I believe that I can leave with my integrity and decency intact. It is said that politics brings out the best and worst in people. I have seen, as I am sure we all have, examples of both the best and the worst, but I am pleased that the best far outweighs the worst, and I trust that will be forever the case. To all members who are retiring, either voluntarily or involuntarily, I extend my very best wishes and I look forward to keeping in touch with a number of you. To all those who are continuing in this place or the other, you have a great responsibility which I know you will discharge to the best of your abilities.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD (Templestowe) — I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words this afternoon. At the outset I thank the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals for their kind words about me — they were greatly appreciated. I also want to commend Mr Hilton on another outstanding and well-thought-out contribution. He has made a significant contribution to this place in his time here, and I wish him well for the future.

I know it has been 14 years, but it seems like only yesterday that I rose as a nervous backbencher from the spot now occupied by Mr Smith with a dry mouth and sweaty hands and looked across the chamber to some giants of the Labor Party. Caroline Hogg, David White, Bill Landeryou and a smaller giant, Mr Theophanous, were opposite me in those days.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — I will take that as a compliment!

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — It was a compliment! Sitting in front of me of course were the ministers of the Kennett government — Mark Birrell, Rob Knowles, Roger Hallam, Bill Baxter and Haddon Storey. I remember that first speech quite well. I said at the time and I still believe that people of goodwill given the right information are more likely than not to do the right thing. One of the great opportunities we get as members of Parliament is the chance to make a difference — and I still subscribe to that. Roger Douglas, a former eminent New Zealand parliamentarian — —

Hon. D. McL. Davis — A Labor member of Parliament.

Hon. BILL FORWOOD — Yes, he was a Labor MP. He said that no party holds power forever and that when in power we may as well use the time we have to do something worthwhile. I feel very strongly that we did use the seven years we spent in government in a worthwhile manner. I think Victoria is a better place for those seven years of the Kennett government, despite the different views that have been echoed in this place from time to time, and I am confident that members of the government will look back on their time in Parliament and say, 'We also made a difference'. I am reminded that Joseph Schumpeter said that it is not the words or the theories that count, it is the actual ability to make a difference to people's lives, so I am content in many ways to leave it to others to judge my contribution in my 14 years in this place.

I do, however, want to make a few comments about some areas that are important to me. Not long after I joined the Parliament I got involved in community services, and a former minister, Michael John, gave me the opportunity with my good friend Louise Asher to be involved in an inquiry into disability services in 1994. As honourable members in this place know, I have continued to maintain an interest in that area. This area is not a sexy part of government, but it is an area where vulnerable people need help. More often than not that help comes from the volunteer community — non-paid voluntary people. There are nearly 700 000 in Victoria, and they deserve all the support and help we can give them. In particular I am very grateful for the assistance that has been provided to me by Margaret Ryan and Jean Topps and others in the sector who single-mindedly and single-handedly continue to advocate for better outcomes for people — not more money but better outcomes. That is part of the making a difference that is so important.

I was very pleased to work with the member for Brighton in the other place on that report. We said, 'Surely we can start lifetime planning for these people. We know they will be disabled all their lives. Surely we can put together a general service plan that says they are born, they are young and they go through their adolescence and grow up and become old. Can't we please plan their lives?'. It still has not happened but I hope that while I am alive we can make some progress with that.

I was proud also of the private member's bill we introduced some years ago in relation to the Krupjack case. I was pleased to read in the WorkCover annual report that the number of recoveries under section 138

has declined by \$5 million. I think that is because they are still going after the Labor hire firms but probably not going after the unpaid carers. It is a very good result and I thank the Leader of the Government for that.

I was very pleased to participate with the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislation Committee that looked at the Disability Bill. I am confident that committee process will add to the Parliament. I was pleased at the commitment shown by the deputy leader and others in trying to make a difficult and complex piece of legislation a bit better. I am very grateful for that. My greatest regret in this place is that we have not done more for the really vulnerable people in our society.

The second area I wish to briefly touch on is the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I was chair of the committee from 1996 onwards — and I do not want to go into too much detail — but on that committee when I started was the former member for Northcote in the other place, Tony Sheehan who was a former Treasurer; the member for Williamstown in the other place, and now the Premier, Steve Bracks; the member for Niddrie in the other place and now the Attorney-General, Rob Hulls; and the Minister for Energy Industries, Mr Theophanous, who when he was chair of the committee brought down a report that criticised his own government because it had done something wrong. He survived; he is still here and is still influential.

I say to honourable members that that committee is too important to be used for factional and partisan purposes. If the committee has something that it can contribute to good governance it should say so. I am proud of some of the work that we did when I was chair, but I am also proud of the work done by the committee under the chairmanship of the member for Pascoe Vale in the other place, Christine Campbell, when I was deputy chair. A lot of very good reports have come out of that committee.

I am very grateful to Mr Best, a former member for North Western Province; the member for Scoresby in the other place, Mr Wells; Mr Lucas, a former member for Eumemmerring; and the then member for Monbulk in the other place, Mr McArthur, who joined me on public accounts in the days when we were faced with the A team from the Labor Party in those days — Sheehan, Bracks, Hulls and Theophanous. There were not a lot of them around and I still have in my archives Mr Theophanous's Labor financial management principles from 1994, which makes good reading. I also should say thank you to Michele Cornwell, who made a

significant difference to that committee and to my contribution.

I should briefly touch on my time as Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. There are interesting jobs in life — you get the good gigs and you get the bad gigs. I have never been able to work out which this one was. It had its element of surprise. My office in 1 Treasury Place was, I think, too close, but I was grateful for the opportunities that Jeff gave me. I must say it was a character building experience, and I think in some ways it enabled me to take on some of the leadership responsibilities of this party, on which I have spent a significant part of my time and for which I have a great regard. There were eight of us in the leadership team while I was in it in the three years between 1999 and 2002. We had three leaders, Jeff Kennett, Denis Napthine and my friend Rob Doyle, two leaders in the upper house, me and Mark Birrell, and we had a few deputies, Louise Asher, Carlo Furletti and Phil Honeywood.

Being a leader of a political party is not easy, and you do put trust in your colleagues in the leadership group. While I have had differences with every person in the leadership group, and others as well, I have never doubted that their commitment and mine was the same and that we were doing the very best we could in the way that we knew best to make a difference for the people of Victoria and to advance the cause of our party. I am very grateful to all those people, particularly Rob and Louise, for their energy and effort and for the friendship they provided over the years.

While I am saying that I need to say how much I respect the role of the President. She was the Leader of the Government in a house where she did not have the numbers, and there cannot be too many jobs worse than that. President, while we had our differences of opinion from time to time, and I suspect you thought I was sometimes a bit blunt with the use of the numbers, I commend you not only on that part of your career but your whole career from the beginning. As I think the Leader of the Government said, you were the first woman Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Government and President. Congratulations, and good wishes for the future.

I should express my personal thanks to Carlo Furletti. Carlo and I came from the same branch, we were members for the same province and for a brief period of time we found ourselves as leader and deputy leader. He remains a very good friend and mentor of mine. He is doing very well. He has got himself a nice new Mercedes; he is doing okay. I was grateful for his great support when I was the leader. However, I am more

than anything honoured that my peers entrusted me with those responsibilities.

I want to say thank you to a few people. I should start by saying thank you to David Kemp and Michael Kroger. David was the state director when I was deputy director, and Michael Kroger was the president. They were the people who persuaded me I had a contribution to make in this forum. They both remain my friends.

I should say thank you to the various people who have been my electorate officers — Vi Hurley — for seven years — Nicole McDonald and Michelle Waghorne. They have been outstanding in their ability to keep me sort of aimed in the right direction. Julie Baird and Andrew Scannell also helped out.

I thank everyone in this place. I have formed many friendships, and I am grateful for all of them. In particular I thank the clerks — Alan Bray first, of course, but Wayne, Matthew and others lately. They have in some senses put up with a bit from me, but I am grateful for their unstinting advice and friendship over the years.

I should also thank the many public servants I dealt with when we were in government. We are well served by the people who work in those sorts of capacities.

Finally, I should say thanks to my family. Anne is my rock. Some people know that Anne's brother, Ted Quinlan, was the Labor Party's Treasurer in the Australian Capital Territory — she comes from a very traditional Labor background. He was a very good Treasurer, although he belongs to a different party. He and I were both chairs of public accounts committees at the same time. It is not often you have brothers-in-law from different parties. Anne has been my rock and friend the whole way through. My children, Danielle, Siobhan and Julian — and now Steve, my son-in-law — have all played really significant roles in supporting me.

I have greatly appreciated the opportunity given to me by the Liberal Party and the people of Templestowe Province to serve in the Victorian Parliament. I hope I have made a worthwhile contribution in some small way.

I wish all members, whether they are going on or not, every success and happiness for the future. Thank you very much for your friendship.

Hon. H. E. BUCKINGHAM (Koonung) — I thank the President and the Parliament for this opportunity to speak. When I made my inaugural speech, on 18 March 2003, I was hopeful of serving the voters of the east for

many parliaments. However, I am very aware that our service here is not our choice but the choice of the voters we represent and indeed our parties. I take every visitor I bring to this place to the vestibule to read the inscription from Proverbs on the tiles, which means so very much to me. I am often surprised that others are not as moved by the words as I am — where no counsel is the people fall but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

My decision not to recontest has been truly the most difficult decision of my life. As I said in my inaugural speech, I was raised in a family with an unspoken belief that you put back in and contribute to the community in which you live. For a long time I believed the best way for me to do this was in this role, but circumstances have made me rethink this. In the best of all circumstances I would have preferred not to make public the reasons for my decision. However, as I have been elected to public office, I believe the voters in Koonung Province and the branch members of my party who have supported me during my 10 years in public life deserve an explanation, particularly after I fought so hard for endorsement to stand for the new Eastern Metropolitan Region at the coming election.

In March 2004 I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, or cancer of the bone marrow. I received extensive chemotherapy, radiation and finally a stem cell transplant in October of that year. I was informed that it would be six months before I was functioning at about 50 per cent of my stamina — I returned to work after six weeks. All this treatment, along with 12 months of Thalidomide and steroids, has happily placed me in complete remission. Working in the job I love allowed me to cope with my prognosis and get on with my life. However, the cancer I have is incurable and will eventually return, and it becomes more and more resistant to treatment.

Initially I decided that I wanted to continue working. In fact, I truthfully believe that I needed to work for my own mental wellbeing, because in my mind I associated working with living and having a normal life and not giving in to the cancer. Because of this I fought very hard to gain endorsement in a winnable position at the coming election. I also felt that I knew the electorate, as I have represented it in some form for the past 10 years. I felt I understood the issues and that I still had something to contribute. Some in my faction did not understand this or my need to work and encouraged me not to stand, but I decided to stand. I am ashamed to say that I wanted to prove to some that I could win regardless of how I had been dealt with or where I was on the ticket.

Only in the last few months have I reassessed these beliefs. I have decided that there are other things in my life I wish to pursue. However, my belief in and my passion for the Labor Party remains a defining force in my life. It is with pride that I look forward to celebrating 40 years of membership next year — the light on the hill always shines brightly for me. I believe a lot of people think they are defined by their careers and probably to some degree I was one of them. I have learnt that being a member of Parliament, a local councillor, a careers counsellor or a teacher does not define who I am, but being a wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter and a friend does.

It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to serve in the 55th Parliament for 1457 days. I came here expecting to continue the community contact I had had as a local councillor on a larger scale and not expecting to particularly enjoy the actual processes of Parliament. I did continue the community contact and I have relished that. What I did not expect was how very much I would enjoy Parliament, the processes, the procedures and the debates. I have especially appreciated the opportunity to be a temporary Chair and to sit in the Chair and pass legislation that becomes law.

As a past educator I love the fact that I have been on a constant learning curve with the broad and wide-ranging issues that come before us. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge how much I have learnt about debating and public speaking from members on both sides of the house. I salute their passion and dedication to their beliefs even if I have not always agreed with them.

Good governments must govern for all. State governments in particular have a huge responsibility for the health and education portfolios. The Education and Training Reform Act that we passed earlier this year sets the stage for the coming decades in education. I feel honoured to be part of a government that produced this legislation.

Last Tuesday week after participating in the Youth Parliament, which was a huge success and a most enjoyable experience, I met a good friend at the Treasury cafe for lunch. Whilst there I witnessed the Premier arrive with his wife, Terry, and two of his children. He ordered lunch at the counter along with everyone else; he then sat in a booth and had lunch with his family. Everyone left him alone. No one gave him a hard time or wanted to badger him although many just politely noted recognition. The Premier was doing what a lot of dads do in school holidays; he was having lunch with his family. What a great state and country we live in that this can happen. I trust the psyche of Australian

politics never alters so that our leaders and indeed all in public life are respected regardless of their political persuasion.

I am grateful to John Lenders and Marsha Thomson for the opportunity to be involved in the review of the body corporate legislation. It enabled me to see the legislative process from the very beginning and to learn more about bodies corporate that I probably will ever need to know. It also allowed me to have valuable experience consulting with major stakeholders, the community and the public servants who write the legislation. On seeing the process through to its conclusion in September, I was able to commend the Owners Corporations Act to this house and see the work I participated in pass as law and better protect all those who live in owners corporations.

When I put up my hand to become a member of the Education and Training Committee four years ago, I did so because I have a deep and abiding interest in education. The committee work has been engrossing. I have enjoyed every minute of it, particularly the all-party nature of committees that allows you to work with members of other parties in a non-combative way. I thank the member for Eltham, Steve Herbert, the member for Ferntree Gully, Anne Eckstein, the member for Mordialloc, Janice Munt, the member for Bulleen, Nick Kotsiras, the member for Doncaster, Victor Perton, all in the other place, and the Honourable Peter Hall for this. I believe our inquiries and findings have been important and will contribute to and improve teacher training, the teaching of maths and science and the way multimedia is used in education.

Behind every member of Parliament is their office staff. They help organise our lives and have initial contact with our constituents. They do the hard yards at the coalface and in an upper house member's office, as we all know, this is often a solo act. I have been most fortunate to have exemplary and loyal staff — Kirsten Vernon for four years both full and part time, Janet Kaylock for nine months and more recently Fiona Ward for a little over a year. I thank you all for the laughter and hard work. You are the best and I am indebted to you.

Also behind every member of Parliament are the branch members of the party who supported them. I am extremely honoured to have been preselected twice by the ALP branch members in Koonung Province and the Deakin federal electorate assembly. I thank them for their personal support, participation, hard work and continued dedication to the party. I hope the ability to participate in preselection for this house will be rightfully reinstated to party members.

Like Edith Piaf I have no regrets. Being elected to Parliament has been the greatest privilege of my life. It is not, however, the greatest thing in my life. My family and friends are. I thank my husband, Ian, children, Lisa and Nick, my father, Frank Wilkes, and my sister, Susan, as well as all my wonderful friends for their support of me. For all families of a person in public life there are sacrifices. I tried to convince my family that my occasional neglect of them was character building and taught them to be self-sufficient. I have a friend who calls this organised neglect. I am not sure they always saw it that way, particularly when they had to get their own meals or ran out of clean clothes. I am proud of them, grateful to them and love them very much.

I would like to especially acknowledge some of my colleagues. To Lidia Argondizzo, Rob Mitchell and Noel Pullen, I know you will enjoy serving in the other place. To Sang Nguyen and John McQuilten, enjoy the next phase of your life, whatever that might be. Because I have a deep-seated belief in natural justice I wish Elaine Carbinés and Glenyys Romanes the very best of luck in the coming election. I wish my friend Carolyn Hirsh peace and happiness in her retirement and would like to acknowledge her two terms of service to this Parliament, the party and her electorate.

For my mates here in what we affectionately call bay 13, whom I could not talk into doing a Mexican wave: I thank them for their camaraderie and sometimes irreverent comments, which thankfully the rest of you could not hear. I thank you, Johan Scheffer, for the interesting and challenging moral, ethical, political and philosophical discussions we have had — often in question time.

Geoff Hilton awakened me to the possibilities and the power of making personal statements about topics on which you feel passionate. Geoff has represented his electorate with energy and enthusiasm, and as we who spend time in this chamber all know, he has been a major contributor in this Parliament, making contributions that are intelligent, often personal and heartfelt, and always very well researched. I acknowledge his immense sense of justice and fairness. I wish him well in whatever he pursues.

Noel has kept me entertained with his 90-second speeches on community sports. I will never know how he could read out every member of a team, as well as all the helpers, yet still be able to give us a history of that team and the results of the matches or games in 90 seconds.

I thank my roommate of four years, Kaye Darveniza, for her friendship and support, and I wish her well in the coming election. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, the first female President of this chamber, who has maintained the tradition of fairness and impartiality. I hope your time away from this place will be most fulfilling, President.

I thank the parliamentary clerks, particularly for their sound advice when I was in the chair, and the attendants for their assistance over my term. I would like to make mention of the library and in particular the research staff. They uncovered and researched information for me, often at short notice. They do a fantastic job and I thank them for all their assistance.

In my inaugural speech I acknowledged the support of Tony Robinson in the other house, and I would like to acknowledge him in my final speech. Thank you, Tony, for your friendship, mentoring and sound advice. I appreciate it greatly. The people of Mitcham are fortunate to have a member of such calibre and character.

I wish not only Tony Robinson but all the eastern suburban members that I have worked with over the last four years — Heather McTaggart, Dympna Beard, James Merlino, Steve Herbert, Bob Stensholt, Anne Eckstein, Peter Lockwood and Kirstie Marshall — every success in the coming election. Your efforts will be rewarded. I extend the same good wishes to all Labor candidates in the corresponding Assembly seats for the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

I wish all other members of the government well and every success in the coming election for those contesting here and in the other place. I most sincerely wish those on the other side who are not recontesting, happiness and health in whatever you do.

I know I run a risk of being accused of being partisan, but I feel very fortunate to have been a member of the Bracks government. My dad tells me being a member of a government is highly preferable to being a member of an opposition — and he did it for 23 years. Steve Bracks is a good boss and leader and, as history will attest, a great Premier. It has been an honour to be a member of this government and caucus.

Most of us go through life without ever confronting our own mortality. I do it every day. Contracting cancer has been a gift, albeit initially an unwelcome one, in that it has allowed me to reprioritise my life and basically work out what is really important to me. Whilst eventually I will have a fight in front of me, for the time being I look forward to travelling, family time and

continuing to interact with my community. John Button said if you want to get a friend in politics, get a dog. I do not need to, as I leave here with many friends and happy memories, and I look forward to the next phase in my life.

For those of you who return here, Abraham Lincoln said, 'Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power'. My personal test has been my prognosis. I continue to learn and grow from it and enjoy and appreciate life fully. For those who return, use your power wisely for the betterment of all Victorians.

Hon. E. G. STONEY (Central Highlands) — So, after 14 years, 2 days, many, many kilometres, many speeches and many constituents, it has all come to an end. That is how it should be, but it is important to reflect back for just a little while, although not for too long.

In my maiden speech — and it was called a maiden speech then, and I still think it should be —

Hon. W. R. Baxter — Hear, hear!

Hon. E. G. STONEY — Mr Baxter and I are traditionalists of the old school, and we have breakfast together. In my maiden speech I referred to many comments I had received from MPs and staff about where I was going to keep my horse when I came into Parliament and whether it would be out near the bowling green. At the time my response was to assure them that my horse would not be coming back to Parliament in anger as it did in 1994, when it came up to the steps of Parliament, went around the pillars and back down. I was wrong, because last year we came back in anger with 500 horses and we rode to the steps again because of the loss of the alpine grazing leases. Who knows, it might have to be done again.

I have to admit that I hate speaking about myself, but at a time like this it is probably allowable for me to reflect a little on my political highs and lows. One high for me, as it was for other members who have spoken in this debate, was being part of the government. I agree with Helen Buckingham that 1 day in government is better than 20 years in opposition. We had the opportunity to manage the state for seven years, and it was just wonderful. The 92ers used to go into the party room, sit down and hang on. It was just sensational.

I had the opportunity to conceive the idea of and manage the Victoria-wide rail trail program with colleagues such as Andrew Brideson, Kim Wells, from the other place, David Evans, David Treasure and Gary Spry, as well as the ever enthusiastic Alistair Brookes

and Di Rule, who gave us administrative support and sorted out farmers who used to meet us with pitchforks. Another high was working through the party room system to stop downhill skiing on Mount Stirling. That certainly caused a certain amount of interest among my colleagues at the time, but we were successful and that was a great result for that special mountain.

As I touched on earlier, the all-time low of my time here was when the Bracks government took the alpine leases from the mountain cattlemen. It took the leases, but it also took Victoria's living heritage and stole many families' connection with the land that in some cases goes back some 170 years. To my mind a part of that action by the Labor government was payback for issues concerning Nunawading in 1985. Let me tell the house that it is not just Labor members who have long memories. That is the last time I will get political this evening.

I would like to thank my parliamentary colleagues who are in the party. A lot of people from both sides have said during this valedictory debate that you do not make many friends in this job, but I actually disagree. I think I am leaving here with a lot of good friends on both sides of politics. They will be connections I will maintain all my life. To the members who are staying on from my side of politics I say this: I know who you are, I know where you live and I have your e-mail address!

I have really enjoyed my time as Opposition Whip. It is a great job. I have enjoyed being part of a leadership group with Andrea and Philip. It has been a good team. We have held our little team together, and we have encouraged each other. I think we have done very well. I have often reflected that to successfully carry out the job of the whip you firstly have to have run a shearing shed. They are analogous tasks, because when you run a shearing shed you are dealing with all sorts of temperaments and all sorts of problems — and everyone has problems at home. You also have to deal with a ringer, and in this case he is Phil. Not only does he ring our party but he also rings the house. But those of you who do not know what a ringer is, he is the one who shears the most sheep. But sometimes the ringer gets grumpy because he is the one with the sorest back. Philip does get grumpy, but he is also brilliant at what he does.

I want to mention the 1992 drop of Liberal colleagues in this place. It has been a long journey. It has been a fabulous journey with Bruce Atkinson, Chris Strong, Andrew Brideson, Ron Bowden and my friend and colleague Bill Forwood. It has been terrific. I must mention Barry Bishop. Barry and I were on the Road

Safety Committee together. He is tenacious. That has been very good.

I would like to mention the other 92ers in the other place. I would like to mention Louise Asher. We did some great work for tourism and some work generally on tracks and trails in the metropolitan area and right throughout Victoria. That was a special time in our careers. Tony Plowman and I worked together on many rural issues that came through Parliament. I would like to mention Robert Doyle and working with him as our leader. I do not think I have ever seen such a dignified exit as Robert's when he decided to go. I congratulate him for the way he conducted himself and the enormous effort he put in as leader at a most difficult time.

The 92ers did not always agree but a lot of good work was done — and even in opposition a lot of good work was done. We had a bond, and I suspect it was because we came into government and, as I think Mr Hilton said, no-one tells you what to do, you just come in and you have to work it out. You are thrown in at the deep end and although you can have opportunities, it is up to you to really pick them up. I think that is what a lot of the 92ers did.

I thank my family, especially my wife, Wendy, who has been an absolute tower of strength; my children, Chris, Pop, David and Kate; and my grandchildren, Harry, Angus, Conner and Tilly. I would like to thank my former wife, Helen, and I especially thank my sister, Beryl. Their strong support over the years has made it possible for me to do this job. Living a long way from home — it is 3¼ hours each way — sometimes you drive all day for a half-hour meeting in Melbourne, which will be arranged by someone who lives in the city, I might add.

I mention my office staff, who have made it possible. They have kept the doors open and made me look good with the constituents. Tonia and Georgina have been sensational, and I am really sorry they are out of a job. It is a very happy office, and they assure me it is even more happy when I am not there. Those two would certainly get a job anywhere, especially shredding documents, because we are shredding the late Marie Tehan's documents, Geoff Craige's documents and my documents that go back over 14 years. It is a huge job, and I am not sure we are going to make it before our time is up.

Hon. R. G. Mitchell — Mr Stoney should just give them to us, we will do them for him.

Hon. E. G. STONEY — We will stay on even after the end just to make sure Mr Mitchell does not get his hands on them.

I would like to thank the parliamentary staff, who have been mentioned already, for their assistance over the years. I thank the papers office and the red coats. I would especially like to mention Neil McCormack, who was first in the bar and then worked down in the area where my office was. Neil is very sick, and we wish him all the best at this difficult time. I thank the dining room staff, Hansard, who make us look good, Bill down at the gate and the library, who saves us from ourselves time and again.

I thank the constituents of Central Highlands Province and the people of the local Liberal Party branches, who have been my power base over the years and who have stood by me when things have been difficult at times. They have encouraged me to fight for the issues that concern them, and I have done that to the best of my ability.

In my maiden speech I referred to issues that I was concerned about then, and as someone here tonight said, it is a matter of the more things change the more they stay the same. When I read back through my maiden speech I saw that I talked about the damage done by locking up our land in parks, about feral animals and plants, about native forest logging and timber and about the difficulties of growing sawlog plantations and the need for the genetic engineering of trees so trees in plantations grow straight and true. Fourteen years later nothing has changed.

The other night we had a little dinner for the upper house and the Honourable Andrea Coote stole my thunder by reading a little bit from my maiden speech, but I am going to read it again:

When there is no more iron in the ground and no more oil in the ground there will still be trees, grass and crops if we are wise and learn to create a truly sustainable system.

The big question is: how wise are we?

I will now quote the next bit, which Mrs Coote did not quote, which is about my father and where I came from:

On my wall I keep a very large photo of a mountain peak. That mountain is called Mount Eadley Stoney after my late father who was a well-respected bushman, cattleman and Mansfield shire councillor. I just keep it there to remind me of where I came from and the issues I have been speaking about today.

As we go into the coming election I wish the Leader of the Liberal Party, Ted Baillieu, and the new team every

good wish for the election and for the next Parliament. I am going back to where I came from. I am going back to my family and the local community — and, quite frankly, I never really left. It has been a privilege to serve the community and this Parliament for the last 14 years, and I am going to miss it.

Hon. J. M. McQUILTEN (Ballarat) — I begin with my biggest regret, which is that my mother and father never knew that I was in this place. That will become important when I talk about where politics started for me. I start with the thank-yous. First I thank the people of Ballarat Province who voted for me when I became a member in 1999 and to whom I am eternally grateful. I have tried my best to do the right thing by all of the people of Ballarat Province.

I would like to thank Luke, Shirley and the staff in the kitchen — they are just sensational. They look after me, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. To all the parliamentary staff, thank you.

I also need to thank all the MPs in this chamber and a lot of MPs in the other chamber whom I consider as friends — not just on my side but the other side as well. It is a tough job. There is a chance to meet other people with different views, but we are still all human beings trying to do our best. I thank all the MPs in this place and elsewhere.

I have to thank my staff — they have been sensational. I am a pretty unconventional character, and it is not exactly easy looking after my diary.

I especially thank parliamentary attendants Greg and Russel. When I first came to this chamber — and there were a few people here who would remember — I used to go out after Parliament adjourned at 10 or 11 o'clock. I would go out with Ian Cover and a few of his mob. I can remember a particular instance of the red coats always looking after us. Russel and Greg would come down and we would have a few drinks after Parliament. I can remember the morning I came in with a pretty sizeable hangover— mind you, Ian Cover's was worse — and I said to Russel, 'Oh, God, I've lost my reading glasses and my car keys'. And he said, 'No you haven't, mate' and took them out of his top pocket and handed them to me. My special thanks to Greg and Russel.

I have to thank my wife, Rosa, and my two sons, Martin and Gordon, who are sitting up there in the gallery. My life has been turbulent, and anyone who has stayed with me for 30-something years has to be a saint. If I were Catholic, I would have nominated her as a saint. I will just give one example. In 1990, after being

the candidate in Ripon through the 1980s, I promised her that I would never run for office again. One night I came home and said, 'Bracksy wants me to run for Ballarat Province in the upper house. He said, "What do you have to lose?"'. She said, 'Well, what have you got to lose?'. I said, 'But I promised you I would not run again.' And here I am. She is a saint.

My start in politics — and there is a reason I am saying this — was in 1964 when I was in form 3 or form 4 at Essendon High School. My brother was involved at university with the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I became involved, and my mother and father became involved. I can remember marching behind Jim Cairns and Sam Goldbloom in 1964. Just as an interesting little part of this, in those marches there were 200 to 300 people from the Labor Party. When you ask ALP members nowadays they will say there had to be around 30 000, but there was not — there were only 200 or 300. I was against the Vietnam War. I was young, but I wrote articles in the Essendon High magazine from 1964 to 1967.

Then there was conscription. My brother was conscripted, and he was the third Australian to beat conscription in the courts. The greatest disappointment in my political life was that I was not conscripted, because I would have had to spend two years in jail. That is the price I would pay for my ideals. I was against conscription, and I am still against conscription. If you are not prepared to go and the laws of the land say thus, then that is the price you have to pay.

Then there was hanging. I can remember standing next to a Catholic priest outside Pentridge Prison at 8 o'clock on a Sunday morning when they hanged Ronald Ryan. These three things really formed my passion to try to change the world.

What about the next generation? We need young people to become engaged. I have had discussions with my sons and their friends, and they say, 'But you had these great big issues like conscription and Vietnam and hanging'. I have got news for the young people, and I think they are starting to understand. They have global warming. That is something incredibly important to be passionate about. It is a new fight that young people have to take up. It is not an easy issue, but it is not going to go away, and young people have to get active. I do not really care whether they get active in the Liberal Party or The Nationals or the Greens or the Independents, but they just have to get active. Please be passionate. It is incredibly important for our world.

I say to a lot of these young people, and there are three sitting near my wife in the gallery now, 'I am 56. I have

been politically active and fighting for a very long time. I need a replacement'. I need these young people to replace me with all of my dreams and aspirations of changing things. You do not actually have to be in Parliament to do this, but just be passionate and active and get involved in a political party, a movement — whatever — but have passion. That is incredibly important. So that is my plea to young people: please be involved. I do not care where you are involved, but just be involved. Take a stance. Have a go. It is so important to democracy and the globe.

I think one of the defining moments in my life was in 1969 when man landed on the moon. But it was not the landing on the moon; it was when we looked back from the spacecraft and we had the TV pictures of a blue globe, and all of a sudden everyone could see that that is our backyard. This blue thing is our backyard and we have to look after it. There are no boundaries, no borders; there is no New South Wales and Victoria; there is no United States of America or Russia. It is our backyard, and we all have to care about it. So young people, please, you have the biggest challenge of all. It is not Vietnam; it is not conscription; it is not hanging. It is global warming — saving our planet.

I have had six parliamentary interns in the last couple of years. They were all great, and it is a fantastic program. Let us keep that going. I am incredibly proud to be a member of the Bracks government. It is my government. I believe in it. I love the Labor Party. We are not always right, but I love the Labor Party. I have been a member since 1967.

My second plea to the Labor Party, but also to the Liberal Party, is let us be very careful of, as a friend of mine described, soulless apparatchiks. You have to be very careful in political movements about soulless apparatchiks. I want people in my party to have passion and ideals. It is not just a job. This is more important than just a job, a career. It is much bigger than that. So let us be very careful about soulless apparatchiks taking over in all parties.

I refer to my best work and three things I am proud of — there are lots, but I am just going to mention three. I was the first member of the Bracks government to go to China, with Barry Bishop and with Roger Hallam. I struck up a wonderful friendship with Roger. I was going around and my eyes were just blown open with what I was seeing in China. I came back home and lobbied the Premier and the Treasurer, and lobbied the Premier and the Treasurer, and lobbied the Premier and the Treasurer, until finally they went. They could then see what Roger and I were seeing. That is one of the proudest things I have done.

The other is harassing ministers. I am very good at that. Because I really did not have much to lose or gain, when things were going bad I would just tell the minister, 'Things are going bad'. I am proud of the fact that I have been able to tell the truth.

The Maryborough Education Centre was a bright idea in 1984, but it is now being built. It had a long gestation period, but now the whole thing is being built. I am very proud of that. That is going to be very important for country Victoria and country education, and it is a global first.

How do I feel now? I think Omar Khayyam from 2000 yeras ago probably said it best. For those who do not know, the 'Moving Finger' is life. He said:

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back ...
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

I will finish by saying that Peter Lalor was the first member for Ballarat Province; I am the last.

Hon. B. W. BISHOP (North Western) — Thank you, President, for your term as President. I wish you all the best in your retirement, even though your retirement will start a bit later than most of ours, as we heard earlier today. Thanks to John Lenders for his comments today. I can assure John that those questions got harder and harder as the year went on, but we always managed to find one just for you.

I thank Philip Davis, too, for his kind words. I can well remember those times in the agricultural committee when we dreamed up these wonderful ideas of what we should do. They did not always get through the cabinet, but by Jove we thought they were good ideas at the time. But it was something we could contribute during our time in government. I will leave my remarks on Peter Hall for just a moment.

Like Bill Forwood, I came into this place in 1992. I had been a farmer and had been in agropolitics, and I thought I knew a bit. I came in here and the first swipe I took was at one bloke called David White, and did I get it back! I said to him as we walked out, 'By gee, that was a good serve!'. He said, 'You're in the bear pit now, mate, and don't forget it', and I did not.

They were great times. I think they were great characters, and I do not really intend to reminisce too much about that. But there were certainly some great characters in the Parliament. Who can forget James Guest, with his armfuls of paper, and people like that! But I wander off the mark.

Thanks to the National Party, which gave me the chance to do a job that is very much different from most other jobs. I was lucky. I came into a party that is small — I am sure it will get bigger as time goes on. It is a bit small, but we have got like interests, even though we come from different backgrounds, and we get on particularly well with one another.

I say thanks to Peter Hall, our leader in the upper house, for his kind words. Peter came out of the secondary school teaching area, and he uses the same methods on us. We have a meeting every morning to organise our questions, but Hallie organises all of us absolutely perfectly, even Drummie. I thank Peter for that. Peter's work ethic is extremely high and he is very capable. I can imagine trying to play on him when he played for Carlton — I bet he adopted the same sorts of techniques of going for the ball and not the man. Peter has done a great job.

I say thanks to Damian. Drummie came along and has been in here for just this term. I share an office with Drummie, and it has been great fun. Those of us in The Nationals say that Anne-Maree is a bit unfortunate because she really has five kids — Drummie is one of them. Drummie and I have had great fun in our office with the repartee we have been able to produce, one to the other. Damian has brought to our party a thinking outside of the square and a sense of fun — like pinching Hallie's clothes when he had gone for a run and hanging them up high so that he could not get them, and all those sorts of things. Damian, it has been a pleasure to work with you; it has been great.

I say thanks to Bill Baxter. He is the grandfather and father of the house; he has been in the Parliament a long time. I can always talk to Bill about crops and machinery, and the rain — or the lack of it — and all those sorts of things. Bill knows just about everything. If you want a bit of history on the political scene, just ask Bill. He is like an encyclopaedia — it all comes pouring out. It has been great to work with Bill.

I think of other past members of this house — for example, David Evans. I can remember when Rob Knowles was the manager of government business here one night and we were waiting for a bill from the other house. He walked up and said, 'We've got to talk for an hour; who can do it?'. Evans said, 'I'll do it'. He talked for 57 minutes, and when Knowles came up and said, 'We've got the bill now', he just stopped dead. David Evans had a remarkable talent for remembering things and then speaking about them.

Jeanette Powell, one of my colleagues here, did her very best to get the blokes in The Nationals organised. I

think she saw herself as having a heap of brothers. We got on very well with Jeanette; as I said, she did her very best to keep us in order.

Ronnie Best was the best full forward never to play league football. It was a pleasure for me to share the North Western Province with Ron, as I now do with Damian. Bestie and I had some great times. In fact, Bestie, Jeanette and I shared the office that Matthew now has. The three of us were squashed in there, and as someone said today, we explored the mysteries of parliamentary life. It was a great time.

Last but certainly not least is Roger Hallam. Who will forget Roger Hallam's passion, capacity and arguments! You think you had arguments? What about us — we had a fair few as well, I can assure you. It was a great performance from Roger Hallam.

I turn to my colleagues in the other house. The leader, Peter Ryan, is a tough, resilient, very capable leader.

An honourable member — Careful, he is sitting behind you!

Hon. B. W. BISHOP — Yes, I can feel him behind me. He is a tough, resilient and very capable leader who has done a wonderful job in leading our party. You might think Peter Ryan is very well organised and methodical — and he probably is — but I reckon it is Jan Gales who does that for him. She has been very good, as far as I have been concerned, in her position as Peter's personal assistant.

To the rest of my colleagues in the other house, I wish them all the best. Only one — Noel Maughan — is retiring from there. I have exchanged notes with Noel, and no doubt we will exchange notes as we go on as we both go down the retirement track. I wish all those members in the other house all the best.

I have also been lucky with my colleagues in federal Parliament. I have been able to have a close friendship with John Forrest, the member for Mallee. He is a good friend and a good operator. The same goes for the past member for Swan Hill, Barry Steggall, whom we call Steggs. Steggies was a bit abrasive every now and then, but he was a good bloke to work with. If there was ever a row on and you were in the trenches, you never had to ask him to hold the phone — he was always there doing as much as he could for you. The present member for Swan Hill, the deputy leader of our party, Peter Walsh, is a good friend as well and great to work with.

I will miss all that sort of stuff, but The Nationals staff deserve a great mention as well — the head office staff headed by Luke O'Sullivan, and particularly the guys

here in the Parliament: Darren, Katherine, Helen and Clay, who do their best to keep us well organised, as they do.

I really enjoyed the time I had as Deputy President. I enjoyed the support given to me by the Honourable Bruce Chamberlain. I am sorry he is not able to be with us. As members will know, Bruce passed away about a year ago. He was a great support to me. He would let you have a free hand, but if you got into a bit of strife, which I did from time to time, he was always supportive. Being Deputy President was a bit of a game, as presidents and acting presidents know. I had some wonderful tussles with the Honourable Theo Theophanous on various things — in committees and during debates — but it is all part of the game. You do not take it personally. It was part of the game, and I enjoyed all that.

My great thanks go to the clerks, particularly for their assistance during my time as Deputy President. As anyone who has sat in that chair would know, when it gets tough and you do not quite know which way to go, you can always rely on the clerks to give you the right information. I thank Wayne and Matthew, particularly in that area, and Andrew for the work he did with the Standing Orders Committee, and I thank Stephen as well. I thank them all for the advice, assistance and help they were able to give me.

I thank all of the attendants — and there are a fair number. They have all been terrific. We have developed friendships, and I think that is important. In particular I thank Russel and Michael, who I saw the most of. They kept the water up for us and gave us everything we wanted. It has been a great friendship.

Greg at the back door is also a great knowledge person who knows everything and can certainly answer all the queries you could ever have. I also thank Jo, who cheerfully comes into the office every morning we are here and tidies up the stuff that Drummie and I throw all over the place. It was great to have that sort of support.

Staff in the papers office have been great. The library is a great resource; I do not know how we would survive without the library, when we bounce into speeches, as we all do, on subjects we do not know much about. The library has been a great support. Hansard staff deserve a special mention. I have made very ordinary speeches over the 14 years I have been here, and they make most of them sound pretty good, so I thank them very much. I also thank the people in the dining room who have looked after us.

I want to briefly talk about the parliamentary committees. I have really enjoyed those. We did such a good job on the Public Bodies Review Committee that it was disbanded after we completed our inquiries. Then I went to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, and that was good fun too. I then went to the Road Safety Committee, and I must say that that has been the most rewarding. I have served on that committee with Mr Eren and the deputy chair of that committee, Graeme Stoney, both members of this house. It has been quite rewarding. I thank them for their help, the other members of the committee who are in the other house and the committee staff. We made a difference on that committee, and that is important.

I thank the people of North-Western Province who have supported me. In particular I thank the people of Sunraysia, where my office is. They have been very generous, and we have some good friends up there. Sunraysia is going through a tough time, but I am sure the people there will work through it and come back. It is interesting for a bloke like me that during the time I have been here I have seen great changes in this place. This place has gone from being a place that used to roll along with great cooperation into a place with relatively rigid control. I do not particularly like that, but the changes have been made and we have all lived through them. It will be very interesting to see where things go into the future.

We could not do the job we do without our electorate officers. Kay Baker was my first electorate officer. She was going to retire when a former member of this Parliament, Ken Wright, handed the position over to me. Ken had served for 20 years, and I thought, 'I do not know what I am going to do. I do not have an electorate officer'. Kay rang up and said, 'Would you mind if I came back?', and I said, 'Please!'. She came back for a couple of years, and then Adele Mayes took over. Adele has been a terrific operator. She is tough and resilient and has a nose for the job — just do not get in her way! She has done a great job for me, and I certainly appreciate that very much.

There have been others, like Wendy Dickie in those early days. Our electorate officers are our shopfront. Quite often they deal with constituents and you might not even see what they do. Someone might stop you in the street and say, 'Thank you for what you have done for me'. You might not have even known about it; electorate office staff may have done it themselves. I thank them for the work they have done for me.

My family has been a great support. Brenda has been a tremendous support. Being the spouse of a politician is a rotten job, particularly when the politician has a big

electorate and has to travel all over the place and maintain three places where they partly live. You are never sure of where you live in such a big electorate. Brenda has been a tremendous support and will be delighted that we will be home in the one house together for a reasonable time. Mind you, that will take some adjustment, I suspect! For the 30 odd years I have been in public life I have rarely been home. Now, all of a sudden, I will be home for a fair while, so we will look forward to managing that adjustment process.

The children, our family — Rodney, Kathryn, Lynne and the kids — have been great. They have been very supportive, which reminds me of the story about the former member for Wimmera and Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Bill McGrath. As his kids said, ‘You don’t need anyone else to hand out how-to-vote cards; we will do it — we don’t want him back on the farm!’. I am not going to be back on the farm full time, but I will enjoy going back and giving them a bit of a hand.

The only minister I want to keep track of, if he keeps his job, is Gavin Jennings, the Minister for Aged Care. I am really interested in aged care now, Gavin! I will keep in close contact with you in the future. I have already given you warning of that, and I look forward to it.

As I said, I have made a lot of friends across all levels of politics and all parties. I really appreciate that and, like Graeme Stoney, I have your addresses, so watch out when we are travelling! We will probably be calling in on you, if we can.

This has been a great job. It has been an absolute privilege to have been a member of Parliament. The job is like no other, because you do not know what is going to come up around the next corner — you have no idea. I know I will miss all of it, but it is time to go. I wish you all the best in the future.

Hon. S. M. NGUYEN (Melbourne West) — Making my last speech in the 55th Parliament gives me the opportunity to recall and thank the many people I have worked with in my more than 10 years in this Parliament. In March 1996 I was elected to be a member of Parliament and to represent the western suburbs of Melbourne. Before that I was a councillor and mayor of Richmond for 6 years, so in total I have been in public life for around 18 years. I have been through good times and bad times, the ups and downs, right up until today. Today I have listened to many speeches made by my colleagues of all political parties about their experiences and memories of their time in Parliament.

It is not easy to recall everything in a short speech, but I would like to have a go at thanking many colleagues. I thank especially the western suburbs MPs whom I have been involved with and have worked with on local issues that often involved municipal councils, such as Brimbank, Wyndham, Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay. In particular I thank Bruce Mildenhall, the member for Footscray; Telmo Languiller, the member for Derrimut; George Seitz, the member for Keilor; Kaye Darveniza, my other half in the seat of Melbourne West; Premier Steve Bracks, the member for Williamstown; Mary Gillett, the member for Tarneit; Lynn Kosky, the member for Altona; and Don Nardella, the member for Melton. I thank also the federal MPs Nicola Roxon, the member for Gellibrand; Brendan O’Connor, the member for Gorton; and Stephen Conroy, a senator for Victoria.

I have a lot of old friends and organisations that know me well not only in my area but in other parts of Melbourne, such as Richmond. There is Richard Wynne, the member for Richmond, who was very keen to work with my supporters along Victoria Street in organising events like the Victoria Street Lunar Festival every year, which included organising safety through getting more police involved to make sure that the streets would be safe for shopkeepers and tourists. Recently we had the launch of the project telling people not to use new plastic bags but to use recycled bags. This is important for non-English speaking communities like the Vietnamese community.

I give thanks to people like Hong Lim, the member for Clayton in the other place, Tim Holding, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place, and Adem Somyurek, a member for Eumemmerring Province, for their work in the south-eastern suburbs. I introduced many people from the Vietnamese community to them when they were first elected to Parliament. They have done a good job in helping the Asian community. I thank Anthony Byrne, the federal member in the south-eastern suburbs, and my colleague Mr Somyurek, for working with the Asian community in that area.

As a member of Parliament people from the Vietnamese community from all over Melbourne, not only from the western suburbs, come to see me. They come a long way. Some of them come from Geelong, Thomastown and other suburbs, when they need support. I do whatever I can, but sometimes I refer them to other MPs, especially when it is to do with immigration. They may have a problem bringing over their parents to visit them or a problem marrying their girlfriends. I do my best to help them with their cases. I also help them fill out forms so they can receive

funding from the state government or local council. Sometimes I have to find out where a grant is coming from — for example, Canberra — and make sure the community is aware of it.

Helping the community is a great privilege. Sometimes it does not involve me because they do not live in my area, but it is my duty to serve the community. While I was here in Parliament it was great to meet the school communities, community organisations and visitors from overseas. People are delighted to come to Parliament House to see what we have here and what we are about, especially the people from Asian countries because democracy is a new subject to them.

Sometimes when you are at the front of Parliament House you see a group of Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese or Korean people visiting Parliament. They love it; they take photos. To them Parliament is very different to what they come from. They enjoy it. I talk to them, and I listen to them. I tell them what Parliament is about and how I got elected. It is good to tell them how the Parliament works. They ask me whether I have a problem in Parliament because I was born in Vietnam. I always say it is great to have different views in Parliament. The opposition and the government all fight and have good fun, and after we go together to the dining room for drinks and a meal. That is a way of behaving we should encourage.

Some of the members of the Vietnamese community, as we know, are very anticommunist. I meet delegations from Vietnam, and they call me a communist. I try to say to them that it is a free society; we have to be open, and we have to explain to people how we work here so they can go back to their countries and fight for freedom and democracy in their countries.

I think the community should learn more about the free and open discussion and debate that we have here and the different views and opinions that are held. That is part of the work we are here for.

It was not easy for me, as members have seen, over the last 12 months. There was some dirty material sent to MPs — documents and papers — that called me all sorts of things. It was very, very hurtful, and it was very upsetting. I thank all the MPs who came to talk to me and who passed me the documents and papers. I know where it came from. One of the Vietnamese newspapers tried to attack me and make a scandal so that the paper could be sold to the public. That is the way the editors want to market their newspaper. It is very wrong, and I was planning to take the matter to the court, but I talked

to a few community leaders who said, 'Ignore it, because no-one believes what the paper said'.

A lot of people disagreed with what was put in the paper without its being checked it to make sure it was correct. They were totally made-up stories. People tried to destroy my life, but it was only one or two people and their views are not the views of our community. That is why in the last two months I have organised many meetings and invited people to come here for my farewell dinners. Last Tuesday I invited about 50 people to a dinner, and on 19 September I had about 480 people turn up to my farewell dinner in Footscray. That was a great turn-up. I am having another dinner on 19 November, and there will be another 500 to 600 people coming to support me. Even though I may not be a member of Parliament any more and may not be preselected, I have received support from the community. The views of one newspaper do not reflect the views of the community. It was great to see the encouragement I received from members of the community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Labor colleagues with whom I have worked over the last 10 years. When I came to Parliament in 1996 there were only 10 of us. Then in 1999 there were 14, and now we have 24, as well as 2 who are now Independents. Together we reformed the upper house, and I am happy to have been part of that history. It was great to be part of that reform. It was also great to be part of the Bracks government when it gained control of both houses. That was a great experience for me.

I wish everyone in this chamber who is retiring all the best. I also wish all those who are standing for election this year all the best. I hope that those MPs who are going to the lower house enjoy their time in the other chamber.

I give special thanks to you, President. Of the Labor members elected to this house in 1996 there are only three left — Theo Theophanous, you, President, and me. Of the class of 1996 there are only two members still around — David Davis and me.

I would like to pay my respects to my old colleague Tayfun Eren. He went through a very hard time, but I respect what he has done for his community; time will tell. He was one of my great friends in this place.

I also say thank you to the staff who work in my office — Steven Newnham, Mehmet Tillen, Mark Kennedy, Henry Barlow, Cecilia Gomez and Yvonne Nguyen.

I thank the parliamentary staff, including the red jacket staff here and the green jacket staff in the other place. I thank the staff from IT, the library, Hansard and the dining rooms. Special thanks go to Sandy Cook and Pete Johnston from the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, of which I was a member for seven years, with Kim Wells and MPs from the other place.

I thank the Vietnamese community organisations who have helped me in the last few years. I especially thank the Labor Party members who have supported me through all the hardships. Always with me to the end they say, 'Do not give up; we support you'. But I do not think I will come back. I will resign and look for new work and hope to enjoy time with my family — my wife, my kid and parents.

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN (South Eastern) — I would like to commence by congratulating you, President, on the wonderful performance and successful expected completion of your responsibilities. I wish you all the very best in your future achievements, and I am sure they will be long and many.

It has been a great privilege to represent the South Eastern Province since 1992. I have tried to represent my constituents: to raise and present issues on a non-personal basis and try for a positive result. I believe what matters is achieving outcomes and not indulging in personal attacks, as we are here to represent the interests of our electorates. I sincerely believe that our constituents have faith in us. Membership of Parliament is a great privilege granted only to a few, and members of Parliament should reflect the views of the community. At the end of the day, if we can put our heads down and quietly believe that we have done a good job and we have done our best, that's good.

The South Eastern Province is a wonderful place. I am not going to give you a tour of it but there are some wonderful things there, a great number of beautiful areas and still much to be done — —

Mr Pullen — And many traffic lights!

Hon. R. H. BOWDEN — I will take up that constructive interjection by Mr Pullen. I cannot help myself, I have been provoked! I want the removal of those traffic lights from Moreton Bay Boulevard at Lyndhurst. I say to Mr Pullen, 'Thank you, that is a wonderful contribution to my valedictory speech'.

I believe government, through Parliament, must provide infrastructure, services and community resources with cost efficiencies — that is a core of why we are here.

On a slightly different note, the changes to the Legislative Council by the state government in 2003 may soon prove to be a difficulty for parliamentary operation in Victoria. The Legislative Council may soon see the handing over of effective control to a small number of future MPs. That will be very interesting to observe.

I very much enjoyed my parliamentary committee work. We worked extremely hard. I was the non-lawyer on the Law Reform Committee, and I really enjoyed my time on it. I had two terms on the Economic Development Committee and, again, appreciated the chance to provide help and assist in the preparation of their reports.

Thanks have to go to many organisations and individuals. I want to firstly thank my wife, Lynn, for her constant support, patience and often wise advice. Lynn made a valuable contribution over a long period of time. For several years she was the Victorian chair of the central council of the women's section of the Liberal Party, which served many people in the community across the state.

In my maiden speech in 1992 I thanked my parents, Llewellyn Henry Bowden and Dorothy Myra Bowden, and although they have passed on, I do so again today. Now at the completion of my service I believe I could not have carried out my responsibilities in the way I have but for the values that my parents gave me. I hope in the eventual evaluation of others it will be seen that those inner qualities my parents gave me enabled me to serve my constituents well.

I thank the Liberal Party and my parliamentary colleagues for many interesting and enjoyable times. I must also give thanks to the Honourable Alan Hunt and the Honourable Roy Ward. I also thank two retired parliamentary friends, the Honourable Bruce Skeggs, and the Honourable Ron Wells, who is here today. I very sincerely thank my staff, electorate officers, Meredith Salter, and Barry Fay, who is here today, for their dedication, loyalty and conscientious attention to the important constituency work. Thank you, Meredith, and thank you, Barry.

I also give thanks to the President and the Speaker for the help they have given me on several occasions when I worked on multicultural projects. It was of great assistance. I thank the parliamentary staff. Their prompt, professional and efficient help so readily given is greatly appreciated, especially from the clerks, Parliamentary Services, Hansard, the library, security, maintenance and other essential support staff. I have had some assistance in compiling the names here and

would like to acknowledge on the record the valuable and conscientious assistance that has been given. In the Legislative Council that work is extremely important. I thank the attendants and papers office staff, including Russel Bowman, Neil McCormack, Michael Stubbings, Greg Mills, Philip Stoits, Peter Anastasiou, Patrick Boribon, Quentin Cornelius, Joanna Hansen, Vivienne Bannan, Anna Hurley, Sarah Hyslop and Mary Martin.

In the office of the Clerk of the Legislative Council, I thank Wayne Tunnecliffe, Matthew Tricarico, Andrew Young, Stephen Redenbach, Andrea Agosta and Anthony Walsh. In the President's office, I thank Geoff Barnett and Rachel Gatewood. In the Speaker's office, I thank Jeremy Walsh. I also thank the parking and security officer, Bill Schober; and in the refreshment rooms, Luke Jordan, Robyn Rogers, Shirley McDonald, Jacqui Doolan, Chris Welstead, Jackie Mullins, Shirley Haynes and Linley Northcote.

I would like to mention several individuals who are representative of thousands of constituents of South Eastern Province who have served as volunteer supporters and friends and given notable service to the community. They are Lyn and Don Jewell, Ken and Shirley Archer, Margaret and Doug Johns, Travis and Nan Ellis, Dorothy Houghton, Bon and Jean Watson, Alan and Margaret Blackwell, Matt and Audrey Ferguson, Alex and Betty McMeekin, Len and Jean Thompson, Audrey and Ron Brereton, Norma and Vic Eustace, Val Chivell, Rod McAllister, 'Lofty' Hill, Grace and Cyril Gent, Glynn and Elizabeth Fankhauser, Phil and Grace Edwards, Richard Sanderson, John Thomas, Don and Dianne Harle, Audrey Conrow, Ruby Scott, Kath Allen, Jason and Sharon Beck, Denis and Pat Tyler, Charles and Annie Hawke, Ruth Heffer, Margaret Michelmores, Daryl Cox, Mrs Phil Dixon, Sandy Reith, Jack Greenhill, Steve Harper, Winston and Maria McPherson, Brenda Thornell, Bill and Ruth Rae, Pauline Rock, Maise Lewis, Ted Bull, Nick Donato, Frank Donato, John Nankervis, Wilson Golby, Lou Gazzola, Fred Baring, Peter and Sheila Stephens, Aidan Graham, Brigitte Bucknall, Jim and Helen Ball and Bev O'Meara.

I would like to thank especially the community contribution by Shirley Davies and Susan Rowe of Hastings-Western Port Historical Society, Leila Shaw and Pat Mair of Somerville, Tyabb and District Historical Society, Jenny Merlo of Somerville Community House and Bev Armstrong of the Country Fire Authority.

Importantly I would like to sincerely thank the many constituents of the electorate who have for more than 14 years provided me with challenges and an

opportunity to serve and given me many ways to learn about and appreciate the wonderful community I represented.

Since arriving in the Parliament in 1992 I have consistently tried to make a positive contribution and to present issues for the community and to represent them in an understanding, friendly, professional and supportive way. It has been an honour and a privilege to have served and now be the last member for South Eastern Province in the Parliament of Victoria. Persistence is something that has already been noted about me. Among the things that drove me to stand were aspects about justices of the peace, and as recently as yesterday I had a meeting on that very same issue.

After Parliament I will be retiring to responsibilities in corporate life in the international business community, but importantly I will have some more time to enjoy many different things. Best wishes especially to continuing colleagues. To everyone again, including my parliamentary colleagues, a sincere thank you.

Hon. M. R. THOMSON (Minister for Consumer Affairs) — As I am leaving this chamber but hopefully not leaving this Parliament I intend to be brief. I am not speaking to sum up my life in this chamber but rather to talk a little bit about yours, President, and to say a little bit about that first term in 1999 that saw 3 existing Labor members of Parliament joined by 11 new members, and having to deal with that at a time when there were 29 members opposite plus the President in the Chair, who at the time was the Honourable Bruce Chamberlain.

None know better than Candy, Justin and me — and the remaining class of 99 — just what that was like. You had to be a bit of a mother, a lot of a teacher and certainly we had to learn very quickly. With your leadership of the parliamentary Labor Party in the upper house, President, we certainly felt very supported. I think it is very important that we put that on the record, because it was a pretty hostile environment that we entered into, and the guys opposite were constantly reminding us of the numbers and the situation in this chamber. They were pretty serious times for us, but we all still managed to have a lot of fun.

The class of 99 was very close-knit and united, and I want to say little bit about that. There is no doubt that the members of this parliamentary Labor Party who make up the classes of 1999 and 2002 are certainly the best this state has ever seen, and probably that the nation has ever seen. The camaraderie and goodwill is extraordinary.

May I say to those across the chamber who are retiring, I wish you all a long life, good health and fulfilment in whatever you undertake in your future. To those who are contesting a seat in this chamber or in the other chamber, certainly from the Labor side, not only do I wish you every success, I expect you to win the seats for which you are standing so that you will either be back in this chamber or joining me — hopefully — in the other chamber.

I want to say something about the retiring members on our side. Helen Buckingham is dignity personified. She is a sensational woman, very caring and very committed to the Labor Party and her community. Sang Nguyen is a champion for the Vietnamese community who has taken up its cause. I have known John McQuilten for a very long time: we have shared friends. No-one knows the contacts that John McQuilten has or the things he does behind the scenes. For the few of us who do, we know he will continue to be a tireless worker for the people of country Victoria. I met Geoff Hilton for the first time after the first caucus meeting, and have got to know him. It has been an absolute privilege to know him, and I hope that continues.

I want to finish by saying thank you to the clerks but particularly to Wayne and Matt, who had to put up with some very green people entering the Parliament and sitting on this side as ministers from day one. As a matter of fact I think some of us were ministers before we were sworn into the Parliament. We could not have done it without their support, and I really mean that.

I say thank you to the attendants, to Russel, Peter, Phillip, Patrick, Joe and Greg, but particularly to Russel, who looked after me through the times when I was quite ill in the first term. He has always looked after me. Thanks to Michael and the others who have never had anything other than a helpful hand to give and who have never complained. Thanks to Geoff, who both when he was working for former President Bruce Chamberlain and then for you, President, was always helpful. I thank Geoff very much for always going out of his way for me and for meeting my needs.

President, and you will be President until the Parliament returns, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you. As an old mate I wish you all the very best.

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON (Waverley) — A long wait is over. I made a decision to retire some two years ago, and we are on the very eve of it. I therefore rise to make my final contribution in the Parliament of Victoria and express appreciation for being able to do

so. As the last Liberal member for Waverley Province it has been a privilege and honour to serve my constituents for 14 years — 7 in government and 7 in opposition. I am proud also to have been a member of the class of 1992, which got Victoria on the move.

I want to express my genuine appreciation to everyone who has assisted me in fulfilling my role as a member of the Legislative Council. That includes members of the Liberal Party, all of my electorate officers, each and every staff member at Parliament House, my parliamentary colleagues and leaders both past and present. Parliament has provided me with the opportunity to grow and mature as a person. It has broadened my horizons in a cultural, geographic and academic sense. It has given me intellectual stimulation and challenges, and I know that I have acquired new knowledge and skills. Parliament has also allowed me to establish relationships and friendships with parliamentarians overseas and interstate, with public servants and with colleagues and comrades on all sides of the Parliament.

I want to especially acknowledge the special role of my family: Megan and Rebecca, my daughters; Lauren, my now 10-year-old granddaughter, whom I am sure is destined for this place; my son-in-law, Martin, and my about to be son-in-law, Miles. They have given me significant love and support during the past 14 years. I particularly want to mention my Rock of Gibraltar, Marilyn — or Em as she is affectionately known to most people here. She has been my best adviser, my best critic and my best supporter. She is also my resident psychologist. Without her input I would not have fulfilled my role. It is now time for me to give her what she has given me, and that I promise to do.

I guess everyone is aware that I have been researching life after politics of former members of Parliament within the British commonwealth. My final report will be published prior to the election and submitted to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association headquarters in London for publication. I will also submit a copy to the President and the library. This research has provided me with great insight into what happens after parliamentary life. It has taught me that one must plan for the future — things just do not happen — and that it is okay to take time out for your friends and family and yourself during your parliamentary career. I also make a suggestion to the Parliament that members who retire involuntarily be offered counselling and support services to assist them in what could be a difficult and transitional time.

Today is not a sombre day for me but rather a memorable one. It may be the conclusion of one

chapter but it is the commencement of another. I am looking forward to a complete change of lifestyle as a primary producer in developing my wholesale rose propagation business.

Hon. W. R. Baxter — You can join The Nationals!

Hon. ANDREW BRIDESON — I have actually had three meals with you in a row, and I believe that almost qualifies me for life membership. I invite everybody to come down and smell the roses some time.

I say to my colleagues who are departing: it is important to remember that you cannot move forward in life if you are constantly looking at the rear vision mirror. I bid you all a fond farewell and good health for your future.

Hon. W. R. BAXTER (North Eastern) — I just want to briefly intervene in these valedictory speeches because I am not actually leaving this place, I am only intending to return to that from whence I came — electors willing. I, unlike some others, sought refuge in this place when the electoral boundaries commissioners dealt me a cruel blow in 1976. I was fortunate enough to be elected to the Legislative Council in 1978. The electors of North Eastern Province were gracious and generous enough to elect me again at the general election in 1979, at a by-election in 1985 — because I had resigned to contest the federal seat — at the general election precisely one month later in 1985 and again in 1992 and 1999.

I have to say that I have had a fabulous career in the Parliament of Victoria. I know that some people do not like using the word ‘career’ in terms of politics — a career politician has an unfortunate connotation. I do not consider myself a career politician but I do say that I have had a fabulous career as a member of Parliament. I hope it continues in the other place but that is in the lap of the electors in due course, and I am sure that they will make an appropriate judgment.

I have been fortunate in the time I have been here to be a party leader, to be a minister and to represent Australia and the Pacific Islands for three years on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association executive, which gave me extraordinary opportunities to go to places I would never probably visit otherwise such as Zambia and Bermuda, to name two, as well as the Arctic Circle and elsewhere. I suppose in that time I have had my successes and my failures.

I am quite proud of the fact that I was the minister who introduced toll roads to the city of Melbourne. I am quite proud of the fact that cattle underpasses were

introduced during my time as a minister. The Minister for Major Projects makes frequent references to them as major projects. As I said during question time today, I never thought of them as major projects, but if the minister wants to accord a cattle underpass that designation, I am happy to oblige.

I suppose the greatest failure I have had since I have been here has been the failure to finish this building. That is a tragedy, and I feel largely responsible for that failure. I am very sorry indeed that it did not come to pass and that members are still working here in conditions which are certainly not appropriate.

I have noted tremendous changes since I came here, and we are on the cusp of another great change. When I came here in 1978 there were 36 members, and they were all men. If we look around the chamber now at the 44 members we can see the complement of women members we now have — a great change there.

I have served under some grand presidents; six in my time here. They were people of outstanding and sterling qualities, and I feel privileged to have served with them. I have served with some tremendous personalities on all sides of the house. I will not enumerate any of them tonight, but there have been some great ministers who have made a tremendous contribution to the state of Victoria. There have also been rank-and-file members who, through their persistence — Mr Bowden talked about persistence — and the doggedness of people such as Mr Bishop have actually influenced policy in the state of Victoria and changed things for the better. I am very pleased indeed to have shared their company.

It is with some sadness that I say that standards in this place have declined to some extent in a number of ways. I think our behaviour as members of Parliament is not what it used to be and not what it should be. We should take note of some of the things Mr Hilton and Mr McQuilten said and lift our game in that respect, or we will suffer the consequences that Mr Hilton forecast would be the result.

I want to pay particular tribute to my colleagues in The Nationals. I have been very fortunate in being a member of The Nationals for 42 years, I think. I have handed out cards for the Country Party and the National Party since the federal election in 1961. I have worked with some extraordinary people in the National Party over those years, many of whom are now deceased. They were the absolute salt of the earth, the pioneers of this state and people who built some of the great wealth that we enjoy today. I consider myself privileged that I was associated with them. I refer to giants such as Sir John McEwen — I was his campaign secretary at

his last election — and others, including rank and file members of branches, who did just so much to make Victoria the great place that it is.

In this Parliament I have worked with colleagues in the party and I have valued their friendship and advice. I particularly pay a tribute to those I have served with in the 55th Parliament, Peter Hall, Barry Bishop, Damian Drum and our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly. I endorse Mr Bishop's remarks about the capacity of our leader, the Leader of The Nationals in the other place, Peter Ryan. Let me say thanks to everyone in this 55th Parliament and the earlier parliaments that I have served in. As I say, I do not believe I am leaving for good. I am just going back to the other side and I am looking forward to it.

Hon. C. A. STRONG (Higinbotham) — This is a time to reflect on why we are here and what we have done in that time. I have always had a keen interest in history and through that how people arrange their affairs, how they are governed, how major decisions are made and the development of our Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. It is through that interest that I came here. Firstly, I believe what we take from democracy will only work if it is balanced by a commitment to give something back. It is about putting back — something I very strongly believe in. Secondly, I wanted to understand how the system worked. As an engineer I believe real knowledge and experience is something you get doing the job — it is something that is more practical than theoretical. I became involved as a councillor of the then City of Brighton and the Liberal Party.

I think I need to explain why the Liberal Party. In my younger days there were basically two directions governments were taking — one identified with Labor and the other with the Liberals. The one identified with Labor was that governments should be responsible for and run everything, based on the premise, as it were, that all wisdom resides in the centre. The other was that government should set the guidelines, the context, and let others carry out the service delivery and the fine-tuning. Although these divisions are somewhat more blurred today, that is what drove me to the Liberal Party. History clearly tells us that wisdom does not come from the centre and that governments are not good at running things. I came here, firstly, with a commitment to contribute; and secondly, to get government out of delivering major services such as electricity, gas, public transport and other major services. In short, as a strong believer in privatisation, that government's role was to set the rules and then others will do the work.

I was deeply involved in developing Liberal Party policy on energy privatisation, both before and after the 1992 election, and then in helping to make it happen when we got into government. It was truly the most thrilling and fulfilling time of my life to strategise what should happen and then be part of making it happen. Without doubt the energy privatisation process has been a major success. It has proved all the doomsayers totally wrong and is something that I believe even those on the other side of the house would agree has been a major success. It is a model that has been copied by others, and it is a model that I think many other states in Australia would like to copy if they had the courage to do so.

As others have said, it was enormously satisfying to be part of the Kennett government — a government that in seven short but hectic years did so much to rebuild and change Victoria for the better. Although the current government spin does its best to denigrate those achievements, history will forever compare the failures of the Cain and Kirner administrations with the successes of the Kennett years.

I had the honour to be chair of the Economic Development Committee from 1996 to 1999. It did very good work, and perhaps the most important was its seminal report on medical research, which has formed the basis of ongoing policy in that critical area.

With past colleagues Tony Hyams and Bill Hartigan, I worked on a series of reforms in the Office of Housing with then Minister Knowles. We recommended that the activities of the old Public Works Department be decentralised and privatised, and they were. Likewise we recommended that the Office of Building be established — and I must say I would not mind revisiting that one day. We also worked on solutions to the disasters that were the various home equity and shared equity loans schemes set up by the previous government.

Throughout those years I have met and worked with many wonderful and committed people from both sides of the house. Although we have the cut and thrust of politics in the place, we have one critical thing in common — that is, for whatever reason we came here we did so in an attempt to do good for Victorians. Without doubt I can say from my 14 years here that there are many more good people in this chamber than bad. I believe this is one of the unique and priceless traditions of the parliamentary form of government.

Whatever side of the house we may be from, we have one thing in common, as I said — we came to this place with the unselfish desire to do good for all Victorians.

History tells us that this is a unique situation. In many countries even today people go into politics to help and enrich themselves, their families, their tribe or their business. They do not have our tradition, our beliefs or our understanding of governing for the public good. We need to work hard to preserve that special tradition, because although we are not perfect and very few of us are without fault, there are many more honest and well-intentioned men and women in this house than otherwise. But if we continually highlight our faults and denigrate our virtues, we subtly lower expectations — the expectations of the largely law-abiding public we represent — and, more importantly, the standards that we as individuals set ourselves to live by.

I have deliberately avoided naming individuals, because if one starts one never knows where to finish. However, I want to single out three people — Denis Napthine, Robert Doyle and Ted Baillieu. Being the Leader of the Opposition is a tough and thankless job. They are under-resourced and are under constant attack by the government, media and their own supporters. It sucks these people dry. It would come as no surprise to anybody here that I have had my differences with our leaders, but for their personal commitment and unflinching service to the Liberal cause they have my admiration and sincere thanks.

In conclusion, to the citizens of Higinbotham Province and my local branch members I say thank you all. I have done my best to represent you and build a better state for you and your children.

The staff of the Parliament is a truly wonderful group of individuals, dealing with the demands, the egos, the ignorance of we members of Parliament. They have always been pleasant and are always helpful, particularly the clerks. We as MPs are but transient in this place — the clerks have seen it all before. I do not know how I would have survived and understood this place if not for the sage advice and wisdom that has come from the clerks. To the staff of the Parliament, past and present, I thank you all.

To do this job properly we make sacrifices. It is fine for us to make sacrifices — after all nobody forced us to come here — but it is not quite the same for our families. It can be very tough on them, particularly our children. I know at times it has been hard on my family. I can only say, from the bottom of my heart, thank you to my family, particularly my wife, Kate, for her tolerance, understanding, love and support. I do not know under what lucky star I was born to have married such a wonderful person.

For those who will soon be facing the people, I wish you all well. History tells us that there is only one certainty in politics — and that is that the wheel will turn. Colleagues, as you face the next Parliament, do not lose an opportunity to do what you think is right, because if you hesitate or wait for a more auspicious time, it could be too late. May God bless you all and watch over your future deliberations.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Goodbye to you all.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

WorkCover: regulations

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON (Koonung) — I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for WorkCover and the TAC. I am aware of a consultation process that has been run recently with employers, the union movement and other stakeholders in regard to potential changes to regulations which would affect workplace health and safety.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask members for a little order in the chamber.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — As I understand it, employer groups are quite concerned that they have made submissions on some aspects of those regulations but they do not believe those representations have been fully debated and taken into account in the development of the guidelines. The major concern they have is in regard to mandatory involvement of health and safety officers in all communication between employers and employees.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house has not adjourned. I ask members to show a bit of respect to the member on his feet.

Hon. B. N. ATKINSON — The employer groups are concerned. They recognise, and I acknowledged this earlier today when talking about the Victorian WorkCover Authority annual report, that the union movement has played a key role in developing an improved attitude to and awareness of the importance of workplace safety. They are certainly not looking to

exclude the unions from the process of discussions in workplaces. However, they do not believe a position which has a health and safety officer, very often a union representative, involved on a mandatory basis in every discussion on workplace safety is really in the interests of anybody as part of this process.

As I understand it, they have some alternatives to put to the government and the minister. However, they feel the process has overtaken the representations they wish to make. The sorts of organisations I am talking about are the Master Builders Association of Victoria, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group, the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce and so forth.

I seek from the minister his assurance that he will review this process of regulation change and ensure that consultations continue with those industry associations to arrive at a position which will advance workplace safety but take into account everybody's legitimate concerns.

School buses: Blackburn student

Hon. RICHARD DALLA-RIVA (East Yarra) — I address a matter to the Minister for Education Services in the other place. It relates to an issue that has been directly raised with me by Peter and Wendy Kiefel, who are prepared to go on the record. They say they have two children who suffer from autism. They are Jimmy, who is seven years of age, and Hannah, who is nearly four years of age. They currently reside in Blackburn and are in the school transport zone of Bulleen Heights Special School, which is a specialist autism school. Like most parents they do the right thing and send their children to the school they believe will best suit the children. In 2005 Jimmy attended Bulleen Heights Special School and was able to be picked up because he was in that school transport service area.

Unfortunately, as parents sometimes find, a school may not meet the needs of the child. This was the case for Peter and Wendy, and they withdrew Jimmy from Bulleen Heights because he was not coping with the syllabus and the teachers. My understanding is that he was very stressed and aggressive at home and he regressed from the level he had reached under the guidance of early intervention services. I know governments place a lot of emphasis on these services. They moved him to Wantirna Heights School. I quote them:

Jimmy is a much different boy and progressing with the different syllabus, educational approach and smaller teacher:pupil ratio.

You can only commend parents when they achieve a beneficial outcome. The problem in their moving Jimmy to the Wantirna Heights School is that they live just outside the transport zone for that school. This means Wendy is now travelling 1 hour each day and they are worried about Hannah, who is about to move into the preschool system.

I have found it fascinating in my discussions that a lot of work has been undertaken to try to get this issue resolved. Obviously the Kiefels have been frustrated. The member for Mitcham in the other place has been involved, but unfortunately they have not heard much from him. I am not using that as a political whack, I am just saying that there needs to be some way of moving forward on this. I understand the Kiefels are prepared to move Jimmy into the transport zone to be picked up. They have told me that the buses that leave from that area have empty seats; it is not as though there are no seats available. The action I seek from the minister is that she be actively involved in taking action to deal effectively with the concerns I have raised regarding Jimmy and the Kiefel family.

Treasury and Finance: report

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Eumemmerring) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Treasurer. It is an issue on which the Minister for Finance may wish to comment on the way through. It goes to the transparency and accountability of this government with respect to the provision of annual reports and related documents. During question time this afternoon I sought from the Minister for Finance an explanation as to why the annual report of the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) had not been tabled in the Legislative Council as distinct from the other place. The premise of the minister's answer was the government had brought forward the tabling of a large number of annual reports and other documents and essentially that was a good thing. The ones that had not been tabled, although they were of significance to the state, were not important because a large number had been tabled ahead of the statutory deadline of the end of October.

In a subsequent follow-up response at the end of question time the minister correctly pointed out that the DTF annual report had been tabled in the Legislative Assembly, and the inference I drew from that comment of the Minister for Finance was that he was suggesting that because it was tabled in the Legislative Assembly it did not matter that it had not been presented to the Legislative Council. I point out to the minister, as I am sure he would be aware, that under his own act, the Financial Management Act, these annual reports are

required to be presented to both houses. I do not think it is unreasonable for members of this place to expect the same courtesies that are extended to members of the other place. Reports should be presented at the same time to both houses when both houses are sitting.

The reason I raised this matter for the attention of the Treasurer is that it relates specifically to the presentation of the public sector asset investment program, budget information paper no. 1 for 2006–07. As I understand it, this document has not been presented to either house of Parliament in this sitting week. It is a major part of the collection of budget papers that are prepared. This one was prepared after the budget, but it is a major part of the budget in terms of outlining details of the capital works program. Notwithstanding that a large number of papers may have been presented, this is a significant document that has not been presented to Parliament and the people of Victoria.

I seek from the Treasurer, or possibly the Minister for Finance, an explanation as to why this document has not been presented to the Parliament in this, the last sitting week of the 55th Parliament, and seek an undertaking that it be immediately released.

Schools: Kinglake

Hon. D. K. DRUM (North Western) — My adjournment question is to the Minister for Education and Training in the other place, the Honourable Lynne Kosky, and it has to do with the lack of a high school in the Kinglake Ranges. Recently I had the pleasure of spending a day in a rather unique community at Kinglake and walking through the Kinglake Ranges, which sit at the southernmost tip of hopefully my new electorate and are part of the Murrindindi shire.

In January this year we heard about Kinglake as the Burgan Track fire threatened to decimate large parts of the Kinglake National Park. As the first two buildings were being destroyed and the power grid was moments from being shut down, there was a freakish change of wind and the town had an ounce of luck and was able to bring the fire under control.

It is a fantastic community. I discovered an incredible network of emergency services, sporting clubs and community achievements. I saw resilience in the way they were bouncing back from the fire to be absolutely outstanding. What I did not see, however, were any doctors, pharmacies, Meals on Wheels, a swimming pool or a bank, although they are talking to the Bendigo Bank at the moment. I did not see any public transport or any decent football or netball facilities. I did not see

any secondary school kids, because even though we have three rapidly growing primary schools, infant welfare and preschools, every day some 300 — or more like 400 to 500 — high school children leave the Kinglake region and head off to a whole range of other communities for their secondary school education. Some of them go to Yea, 55 kilometres away; others go to Whittlesea, 35 kilometres away. All of them go off the mountain. Some of them go to Lilydale and some go even further away to places like Seymour and Kilmore.

The Kinglake community is not waiting for this change. Its residents are very capable and they are realists. I was impressed by the people there who are eager to challenge the current system and eager to push for change. They have taken responsibility and realise that the post-primary situation needs to be changed. Their process commenced a couple of years ago when they had a whole series of meetings. They have established relationships with a number of universities and they have had a formal memorandum of understanding with RMIT to host student placements there.

All of the relationships focus on community development and youth pathways. In March 2005, at public meetings of the education forum, 175 supportive locals were there to push for this change. The KANDO — Kinglake Action Network and Development Organisation — community really is a group in Kinglake pushing for change. We need Minister Kosky to organise some funding that will work across the Department for Victorian Communities, the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Sustainability and Environment to bring to bear a multi-agency task force and realise the plans for post-primary education in this region, because the fragmentation of the community at the moment has been exceptionally harmful to the Kinglake Ranges.

President: retirement

Mr VINEY (Chelsea) — The adjournment matter that I wish to raise tonight is for you, President, and I advised you of my intention to do this earlier in the day. Before coming to the specific action that I seek, I need to provide some background on this matter. The background on this matter is your record in this Parliament. President, you were elected to this Parliament on 18 September 1993 and you have served it with great distinction. In the Legislative Council you were the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition — the first woman to hold that office. You were also the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. As

Mr Forwood said earlier this evening, you were Leader of the Government at a time when the government did not hold a majority in this place — again, you were the first woman to hold this office.

You were then elected as President of the Legislative Council — again, you were the first woman to hold that position. You have held a range of shadow portfolios including aged care and housing, and you assisted with health. You have also held ministerial portfolios, including industrial relations, youth and education services, and you assisted with WorkCover. Prior to your parliamentary career you were the general vice-president of the union with which I was associated, the National Union of Workers. I raise this matter on behalf of those in that union, including your colleagues and former colleagues, who hold you in such high regard. You were a member of the executive of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Members are aware that you have had a long and passionate commitment to working people in this state.

During your time here, and particularly in the last four years, I know I have occasionally tried your skills as a Presiding Officer with various points of order I have raised. I have always respected your work and your rulings. What I would like to say is that during my time in the Parliament, both in the previous Parliament and this one, you have become a friend. Both my wife Madeleine, and I respect that friendship and hope it will continue.

The action I seek is that you have a very fruitful and successful retirement.

The PRESIDENT — Before I call the minister to respond, I think I will take your request for action under advisement, Mr Viney.

Responses

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Finance) — I will not respond to the last matter raised by Mr Viney because I think he has asked for action and I think you, President, have given him an appropriate response!

Mr Dalla-Riva raised a matter for the Minister for Education Services in the other place regarding homeless services and Hanover. I will pass that matter to her for her attention.

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips raised an issue for the Treasurer regarding the tabling of an annual report. I will certainly pass that matter to the Treasurer. For the record — as Mr Rich-Phillips knows — a report from the Department of Treasury and Finance which was tabled by the Treasurer in the other place was tabled in

both houses. Somewhere between the DTF and the Legislative Council an error occurred in the enabling letter from the Treasurer. That is why it was put in a second batch of reports today. It was lodged in the Legislative Assembly yesterday, and whilst I accept the member's point that it was not courteous to the Legislative Council for that to happen, there was a good reason for it. The Victorian community had access to the report from yesterday. That has been rectified today. I will forward to the Treasurer the other matter Mr Rich-Phillips raised regarding the other report.

Mr Drum raised an issue for the Minister for Education and Training in the other place regarding Kinglake high school. I will pass that on to the minister for her attention.

Mr Atkinson raised a matter for me, as Minister for WorkCover and the TAC, regarding the workplace regulatory review. It was about how the role of health and safety representatives is put into the regulatory review. I can assure Mr Atkinson that this government believes in tripartite responses — between regulators, employers and employees — to this matter. That is an approach we will continue to have. That dialogue is essentially, and particularly in the next few months, one that obviously is very much in the hands of the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA). It will report to whoever the minister of the day is.

We strongly believe in tripartite support, and we listen to all. We also see a valuable role for health and safety representatives, and it is one that must be cherished in what is a difficult time under WorkChoices. They are people who feel threatened and beleaguered. Having said that the support is tripartite, we have a view of where the issue needs to go. We will wait with interest to see what the VWA recommends.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 7.03 p.m.