

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

**11 May 2000
(extract from Book 7)**

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

His Excellency the Honourable Sir JAMES AUGUSTINE GOBBO, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

Professor ADRIENNE E. CLARKE, AO

The Ministry

Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. S. P. Bracks, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Health and Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. W. Thwaites, MP
Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister assisting the Minister for Workcover	The Hon. M. M. Gould, MLC
Minister for Transport	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for Ports and Minister assisting the Minister for State and Regional Development. . .	The Hon. C. C. Broad, MLC
Minister for State and Regional Development, Minister for Finance and Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. J. M. Brumby, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Workcover and Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Community Services	The Hon. C. M. Campbell, MP
Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. M. E. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. S. M. Garbutt, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. A. Haermeyer, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. K. G. Hamilton, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Manufacturing Industry and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment.	The Hon. L. J. Kosky, MP
Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Youth Affairs and Minister assisting the Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Major Projects and Tourism and Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. Pandazopoulos, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Aged Care and Minister assisting the Minister for Health	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Small Business and Minister for Consumer Affairs	The Hon. M. R. Thomson, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet	The Hon. G. W. Jennings

Legislative Assembly Committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Cooper, Mr Holding, Mr Hulls, Mr Loney, Mr Maclellan, Mr Maughan, Mr Nardella, Mr Plowman and Mr Thwaites.

Standing Orders Committee — Mr Speaker, Mr Jasper, Mr Langdon, Mr Lenders, Mr McArthur, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Perton.

Joint Committees

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables B. C. Boardman and S. M. Nguyen. (*Assembly*): Mr Jasper, Mr Lupton, Mr Mildenhall, Mr Wells and Mr Wynne.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables R. F. Smith and E. G. Stoney. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty, Ms Duncan, Mr Ingram, Ms Lindell, Mr Mulder and Mr Seitz.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables G. D. Romanes and E. J. Powell. (*Assembly*): Mr Hardman, Mr Lim, Mr Nardella, Mrs Peulich and Mr Wilson.

House Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President (*ex officio*), G. B. Ashman, R. A. Best, J. M. McQuilten, Jenny Mikakos and R. F. Smith. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Kilgour, Mr Leigh, Mr Leighton, Ms McCall and Mr Savage.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables D. McL. Davis, D. G. Hadden and P. A. Katsambanis. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr McIntosh, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Library Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, E. C. Carbines, M. T. Luckins, E. J. Powell and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Duncan, Mr Languiller, Mrs Peulich and Mr Seitz.

Printing Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables the President, Andrea Coote, Kaye Darveniza and E. J. Powell. (*Assembly*): Mr Speaker, Ms Gillett, Mr Nardella and Mr Richardson.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Bill Forwood, R. M. Hallam, G. K. Rich-Phillips and T. C. Theophanous. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Barker, Ms Davies, Mr Holding, Mr Loney and Mrs Maddigan.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables Andrew Brideson and E. C. Carbines. (*Assembly*): Mr Kilgour, Mr Langdon, Mr Plowman, Mr Spry and Mr Trezise.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): The Honourables M. A. Birrell, M. T. Luckins, Jenny Mikakos and C. A. Strong. (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Carli, Mr Dixon, Ms Gillett and Mr Robinson.

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

Hansard — Chief Reporter: Ms C. J. Williams

Library — Librarian: Mr B. J. Davidson

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Ms C. M. Haydon

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. ALEX ANDRIANOPOULOS

Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees: The Hon. J. M. MADDIGAN

Temporary Chairmen of Committees: Ms Barker, Ms Davies, Mr Jasper, Mr Kilgour, Mr Loney, Mr Lupton, Mr Nardella,
Mrs Peulich, Mr Phillips, Mr Plowman, Mr Richardson, Mr Savage, Mr Seitz

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. S. P. BRACKS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. W. THWAITES

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. V. NAPHTHINE

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of the Parliamentary National Party:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary National Party:

Mr B. E. H. STEGGALL

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lenders, Mr John Johannes Joseph	Dandenong North	ALP
Andrianopoulos, Mr Alex	Mill Park	ALP	Lim, Mr Hong Muy	Clayton	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
Ashley, Mr Gordon Wetzel	Bayswater	LP	Loney, Mr Peter James	Geelong North	ALP
Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman	Hawthorn	LP	Lupton, Mr Hurtle Reginald, OAM, JP	Knox	LP
Barker, Ms Ann Patricia	Oakleigh	ALP	McArthur, Mr Stephen James	Monbulk	LP
Batchelor, Mr Peter	Thomastown	ALP	McCall, Ms Andrea Lea	Frankston	LP
Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean	Tullamarine	ALP	McIntosh, Mr Andrew John	Kew	LP
Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip	Williamstown	ALP	MacIellan, Mr Robert Roy Cameron	Pakenham	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield	Broadmeadows	ALP	McNamara, Mr Patrick John	Benalla	NP
Burke, Ms Leonie Therese	Prahran	LP	Maddigan, Mrs Judith Marilyn	Essendon	ALP
Cameron, Mr Robert Graham	Bendigo West	ALP	Maughan, Mr Noel John	Rodney	NP
Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Maxfield, Mr Ian John	Narracan	ALP
Carli, Mr Carlo	Coburg	ALP	Mildenhall, Mr Bruce Allan	Footscray	ALP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Cooper, Mr Robert Fitzgerald	Mornington	LP	Naphtine, Dr Denis Vincent	Portland	LP
Davies, Ms Susan Margaret	Gippsland West	Ind	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Dean, Dr Robert Logan	Berwick	LP	Overington, Ms Karen Marie	Ballarat West	ALP
Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis	Wimmera	NP	Pandazopoulos, Mr John	Dandenong	ALP
Delahunty, Ms Mary Elizabeth	Northcote	ALP	Paterson, Mr Alister Irvine	South Barwon	LP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Dromana	LP	Perton, Mr Victor John	Doncaster	LP
Doyle, Robert Keith Bennett	Malvern	LP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	Bentleigh	LP
Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese	Gisborne	ALP	Phillips, Mr Wayne	Eltham	LP
Elliott, Mrs Lorraine Clare	Mooroolbark	LP	Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane	Melbourne	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann	Evelyn	LP	Plowman, Mr Antony Fulton	Benambra	LP
Garbutt, Ms Sherryl Maree	Bundoora	ALP	Richardson, Mr John Ingles	Forest Hill	LP
Gillett, Ms Mary Jane	Werribee	ALP	Robinson, Mr Anthony Gerard Peter	Mitcham	ALP
Haermeyer, Mr André	Yan Yean	ALP	Rowe, Mr Gary James	Cranbourne	LP
Hamilton, Mr Keith Graeme	Morwell	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian	Gippsland South	NP
Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Savage, Mr Russell Irwin	Mildura	Ind
Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Seitz, Mr George	Keilor	ALP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Springvale	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
Honeywood, Mr Phillip Neville	Warrandyte	LP	Smith, Mr Ernest Ross	Glen Waverley	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Ballarat East	ALP	Spry, Mr Garry Howard	Bellarine	LP
Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Steggall, Mr Barry Edward Hector	Swan Hill	NP
Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar	Burwood	ALP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	NP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton	Sandringham	LP
Kennett, Mr Jeffrey Gibb ¹	Burwood	LP	Thwaites, Mr Johnstone William	Albert Park	ALP
Kilgour, Mr Donald	Shepparton	NP	Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas	Geelong	ALP
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Frankston East	ALP
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Warmambool	LP
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Wantirna	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo	Sunshine	ALP	Wilson, Mr Ronald Charles	Bennettswood	LP
Leigh, Mr Geoffrey Graeme	Mordialloc	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Leighton, Mr Michael Andrew	Preston	ALP			

¹ Resigned 3 November 1999

² Elected 11 December 1999

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2000

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

<i>Webcast of proceedings</i>	1507
<i>Adjournment</i>	1507

PETITION

<i>Police: Croydon station</i>	1507
--------------------------------------	------

PAPERS	1507
--------------	------

TOBACCO (AMENDMENT) BILL

<i>Section 85 statement</i>	1507
-----------------------------------	------

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Industrial relations: disputes</i>	1508
<i>World Red Cross Day</i>	1508
<i>Frankston Primary School</i>	1508
<i>Italian community: Mafia allegations</i>	1508
<i>Fishing: recreational access</i>	1509
<i>Jacksons Hill playground, Sunbury</i>	1509
<i>Mount McKay: ski facilities</i>	1509
<i>Jack Burns</i>	1510
<i>Chronic fatigue syndrome</i>	1510
<i>National Volunteers Week</i>	1510

APPROPRIATION (2000/2001) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1511, 1546
-----------------------------	------------

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>Health care networks: ministerial review</i>	1539
<i>Business: investment</i>	1541
<i>Namarra Nursing Home</i>	1541, 1544, 1545
<i>Calder Highway: federal funding</i>	1542
<i>Nursing homes: regulation</i>	1543
<i>City Link: Bolte Bridge</i>	1543
<i>Manufacturing: rural Victoria</i>	1545
<i>Telephone counselling services</i>	1546

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1556
<i>Circulated amendments</i>	1556
<i>Remaining stages</i>	1557

FEDERAL COURTS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1557
<i>Third reading</i>	1557
<i>Remaining stages</i>	1557

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (COMMON LAW AND BENEFITS) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1557
<i>Circulated amendments</i>	1557
<i>Third reading</i>	1559
<i>Remaining stages</i>	1559

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.....	1559
---------------------------	------

AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (CONTROL OF USE) (AMENDMENT) BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	1559
-----------------------------	------

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Timbarra secondary college</i>	1560
<i>Police: western suburbs</i>	1561
<i>Minister for Transport: comments</i>	1561

<i>V/Line: pocket timetables</i>	1562
<i>Fisheries Victoria: funding</i>	1562
<i>Calder Highway: federal funding</i>	1563
<i>Road safety: black spot program</i>	1563
<i>Victorian Court Information and Welfare Network</i>	1563
<i>Schools: asbestos</i>	1564
<i>Housing: Ashburton estate</i>	1564
<i>Planning: Nillumbik scheme</i>	1564
<i>Responses</i>	1565

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2000

<i>Environment and Conservation: Yarra Valley Water</i>	1571
<i>Environment and Conservation: Wilsons Promontory National Park</i>	1573
<i>Planning: designated union contacts</i>	1574
<i>Transport: designated union contacts</i>	1574
<i>Finance: designated union contacts</i>	1575
<i>Transport: designated union contacts</i>	1576
<i>Workcover: designated union contacts</i>	1576
<i>Local Government: designated union contacts</i>	1577
<i>Education: designated union contacts</i>	1578
<i>Women's Affairs: designated union contacts</i>	1578
<i>Police and Emergency Services: designated union contacts</i>	1579
<i>Corrections: designated union contacts</i>	1581
<i>Small Business and Consumer Affairs: designated union contacts</i>	1584
<i>Attorney-General: designated union contacts</i>	1585
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: designated union contacts</i>	1587
<i>Youth Affairs: designated union contacts</i>	1588
<i>Gaming: designated union contacts</i>	1588
<i>Premier: ministerial appointments</i>	1589
<i>Multicultural Affairs: ministerial appointments</i>	1589
<i>Planning: ministerial appointments</i>	1590
<i>Finance: ministerial appointments</i>	1590
<i>Transport: ministerial appointments</i>	1591
<i>Workcover: ministerial appointments</i>	1591
<i>Local Government: ministerial appointments</i>	1592
<i>Education: ministerial appointments</i>	1592
<i>Environment and Conservation: ministerial appointments</i>	1593
<i>Energy and Resources: ministerial appointments</i>	1593
<i>Police and Emergency Services: ministerial appointments</i>	1594
<i>Corrections: ministerial appointments</i>	1594
<i>Small Business and Consumer Affairs: ministerial appointments</i>	1594
<i>Agriculture: ministerial appointments</i>	1595
<i>Attorney-General: ministerial appointments</i>	1595
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: ministerial appointments</i>	1596

CONTENTS

<i>Youth Affairs: ministerial appointments</i>	1596
<i>Gaming: ministerial appointments</i>	1597
<i>Premier: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays</i>	1597
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays</i>	1598
<i>Attorney-General: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays</i>	1598

WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2000

<i>Environment and Conservation: weed management</i>	1599
<i>Environment and Conservation: weed management</i>	1600
<i>Environment and Conservation: weed management</i>	1601
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: CBE program</i>	1602
<i>Premier: designated union contacts</i>	1603
<i>Treasurer: designated union contacts</i>	1603
<i>Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts</i>	1604
<i>Treasurer: ministerial appointments</i>	1604
<i>Treasurer: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays</i>	1605
<i>Environment and Conservation: regional forest agreements</i>	1605
<i>Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: ICT skills task force</i>	1606

Thursday, 11 May 2000

The SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos) took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Webcast of proceedings**

The SPEAKER — I desire to make a statement in relation to the numerous points of order raised about the live webcast of the state budget to Parliament last week, and I wish to advise the house that I have received a response from the Premier to my letter of 27 April 2000.

The Premier has informed me that the Department of Treasury and Finance is willing to organise access to the webcast equipment to enable non-government members to have access to a live web broadcast for the budget response. However, the cost of the broadcast would have to be met from within the existing budget provided to non-government members.

I am disappointed in the government's response to my request to have regard to the provisions of the current television broadcasting guidelines. However, this was not made a condition of my original approval for the live broadcast.

The Chair has erred in not making this a condition of approval and apologises to the house for this error.

I wish to advise the house that, should the Department of Treasury and Finance or any other organisation seek my approval for any future broadcast, my approval will be conditional on their agreement and adherence to the current Legislative Assembly televising and broadcasting of proceedings rules.

Mr Smith — Mean-spirited hypocrites!

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Glen Waverley!

PETITION

The Clerk — I have received the following petition for presentation to Parliament:

Police: Croydon station

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Croydon sheweth Croydon police station is only open from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. seven days a week. If any police call in sick the

station has to close, 3.00 p.m. one day and 4.00 p.m. two other days.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the state government fulfil their election promise to the citizens of Croydon to man Croydon police station 24 hours also with visible police presence in our streets.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mrs ELLIOTT (Mooroolbark) (4175 signatures)

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Financial Management Act 1994 — Report from the Minister for Health that he had received the report for the year 1998–99 of the Tweddle Child and Family Health Service

Mt Buller Alpine Resort Management Board — Report for the year ending 31 October 1999.

TOBACCO (AMENDMENT) BILL*Section 85 statement*

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) (By leave) — I wish to make a statement pursuant to section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons for altering or varying that section by clause 19 of the Tobacco (Amendment) Bill.

Section 42 of the Tobacco Act provides that an action does not lie against a person for the failure or refusal to do anything that would constitute an offence under the act. This was included in the act when it was first passed in 1987.

The bill creates a number of new offences. It is necessary that section 42 apply to those offences in the same way that it applies to existing offences. It would frustrate the purpose of the act if people felt compelled to undertake activities that are prohibited by the bill, such as erecting a tobacco advertisement at the point of sale at a retail outlet out of fear of some legal action which may be brought against them if they failed or refused to do so.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Adjournment**

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 23 May.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Industrial relations: disputes

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — My statement today concerns genuine fears in the community that the Bracks government is not governing for all Victorians by following a do-nothing strategy in relation to rogue unions.

Victorians need to know what the Premier will do to assist building industry employers who are now being subjected to union thuggery because they resisted the demands for the 36-hour week and 24 per cent pay increase by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and Electrical Trades Union. These employers are now being pressured to meet the unreasonable and illegal demands for lock-out pay and strike pay for time lost by the CFMEU and ETU members during the recent industrial dispute.

The standover tactics being applied currently to persuade employers to make these illegal payments should not be tolerated by the Bracks Labor government. When will the Premier use his influence to stop the thuggery with the very unions that assisted him to become the Victorian leader of the Australian Labor Party and now Premier?

The Bracks government stated upon its election that it would govern for all Victorians. Many building industry employers believe their rights have been totally forgotten. The government's empty promises obviously stop at the steps of the Victorian Trades Hall Council.

World Red Cross Day

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — On 8 May World Red Cross Day was celebrated in Victoria with a special tribute and thank you to our Red Cross delegates. I was privileged to attend as Minister for Community Services, representing the state government.

The international Red Cross movement is a worldwide volunteer organisation pledged to alleviate human suffering whenever and wherever it may occur through the promotion and implementation of the Geneva convention's vital laws that defend human dignity in times of conflict.

I congratulate the 60 Australian Red Cross delegates on overseas projects, and particularly pay tribute to the 20 Victorians who are working overseas. They are: Jennifer Cunningham, Bernard Gardiner, Maureen Bennett, Clare Collins, Thanh Le, Leonie Lorenz,

Margaret Ahern, Sarah Wilson, Bernadette Gleeson, Mary Hoare, Warwick Stranward, Martin de Vries, Lisa Natoli, Andrea Neale, Harry Beyer, Barbara Watson, Andree Girardau, Lyn McLennan, Claire Davies, and Chris Stewart.

The important work that the Red Cross undertakes in more than 150 countries would not be possible without the generosity of spirit extended by this unique group of people in the areas of health and medicine, water and sanitation projects, tracing and refugee services, community education, convoy driving, relief and logistics, and program coordination.

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

Frankston Primary School

Ms McCALL (Frankston) — It gives me no pleasure for the second time this morning to cite this government's spitefulness. Firstly, it was spiteful on the issue of the transmission of the opposition's budget speech, and secondly, the Department of Education, Employment and Training has been extremely spiteful in a statement it made about Frankston Primary School.

That school is 125 years old. It is a remarkable primary school. It has 308 pupils, a first-class school principal and a very active parent-teacher association. It holds fundraisers of all shapes, sizes and descriptions — school fetes, reunions and so on. During those fetes it raises money through the conduct of spinning wheel competitions, cake stalls and so on. One such fundraiser was a scratchie tree — a tree comprised of scratchie tickets provided by parents who may not wish to attend the fete or purchase something from the other stalls. Those at the fete can then purchase a \$1 scratchie from the tree to aid the school's fundraising.

It gives me no pleasure to say that the education department, based on the complaint of one parent only, chose to say that it considered this fundraiser to be an insidious and unnecessary form of gambling within the school. I consider it petty, childish and yet another example of a spiteful government attitude.

Italian community: Mafia allegations

Mr CARLI (Coburg) — I recognise the contribution of the Italian community of Victoria in all spheres of life — the economy, agriculture, public life, architecture, design, scientific research, our coffee culture, and other areas of daily activities.

It is particularly important to remember that contribution, given the continuing racist allegations and

slurs about the activities of the Mafia and in particular the Nadrangheta by certain newspapers even though numerous police and National Crime Authority investigations have found no evidence of Mafia activity in the Italian community.

The Mafia is far more than a few linked crimes by people of Italian surnames. In Italy and the United States of America the Mafia has been associated with the widespread corruption of institutions including the political and legal systems. Brave and selfless members of the Italian police such as police chief Alberto Della Chiesa, and anti-Mafia judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino and hundreds of journalists, trade unionists, politicians and ordinary citizens have been murdered in their fight against the Sicilian Mafia. Where real organised crimes are involved journalists should not simply rely on press releases but should actually investigate.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Fishing: recreational access

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I raise the concerns of recreational anglers in my electorate whose particular passion is shore-based surf fishing. The fishermen in south-west Victoria are concerned with the ongoing decisions by Parks Victoria and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) which continue to limit their access to key fishing spots. The anglers pay their angling licence fees and ask that they be given consideration by government land managers to preserve their access to their favourite and often remote fishing spots.

Discovery Bay Coastal Park in south-west Victoria includes about 60 kilometres of seafront with several key fishing spots. The recreational anglers want the managers of this park, and particularly Parks Victoria and DNRE, to ensure that tracks already existing to these fishing spots remain open and in use for these recreational anglers as part of the ongoing multi-use strategy for the park area.

In particular they refer to Nagorcka Road, which has been a key road used to access a fairly remote fishing spot, and which has now been closed and is under lock and key. The road closure denies access of these surf fishermen to their fishing spot. The road is several kilometres in length so it is not as if one can walk to the fishing spot. I ask that the minister and the government consider, through their land management, the needs of

recreational surf fishermen who want access to their fishing spots.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Jacksons Hill playground, Sunbury

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — Last Sunday I had the privilege of participating in the opening of the new playground at the Jacksons Hill estate in Sunbury. What a fantastic asset the playground is to children and families. The Urban Land Corporation has provided the Sunbury community with one of the largest adventure playgrounds in Australia with rides, swings, flying foxes, and barbecues. Galaxy Land, which is the name of playground, is expected to attract 10 000 children a year to experience the adventure.

I offer my congratulations to Marek Petrovs, the corporation chairman, Tony Hewson, the project manager, and Ros Kalbrunner, the sales consultant, for providing local families and visitors with a fantastic facility which demonstrates once again the tremendous value of family within the Sunbury township. The children of Sunbury will have years of enjoyment from the park, and no doubt the young at heart will enjoy the opportunity to rekindle their childhoods.

My! How things have changed since I was a child, when a playground had a swing, a slide, a seesaw and a monkey bar. The playground is absolutely fantastic. However, I add that the sight of 1000 children rushing at you in an attempt to get to it can be quite daunting, especially when they had drunk large quantities of raspberry cordial.

Mount McKay: ski facilities

Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra) — I direct to the attention of the house the enormous benefit the three major ski resorts bring to the tourism industry of the state. Each ski resort attracts more visitors in 16 weeks than Ayres Rock attracts during an entire year.

A proposal has been put forward to develop an additional ski area at Mount McKay, near Falls Creek, which will increase the skiing area by an additional 140 per cent. The government appears to be frustrating the highly important development by introducing legislation to return to the national park the 285 hectares that was excised specifically for the development to occur, and to allow water sports to develop along Rocky Valley Dam.

A further frustration has resulted from the requirement by the Minister for Planning for an environment effects

statement, paying no heed to the fact that a technical advisory group was established and has prepared a report that is in favour of the development.

The additional investment will involve up to 1000 new jobs in the initial stage of the development and lead to 150 permanent positions. The multiplier effects throughout the district and surrounding towns will be significant. The government seems hell-bent on frustrating the largest tourist development that is envisaged in country Victoria.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Jack Burns

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) — I wish to pay tribute to Mr Jack Burns, a Richmond identity and member of the Australian Labor Party for 45 years. John Kevin Joseph Burns has been described as knowing most people who are worth knowing and some people who are not worth knowing.

Jack, as he is known, was a part of a Richmond political scene that was more colourful than it is today. He recalls a time before the Second World War when the Richmond mayor discovered that two tenders were accepted for a steamroller and that in error two steamrollers were purchased instead of one. To resolve the problem he assembled all the councillors on the banks of the Yarra and in full ceremonial fashion rolled one of the steamrollers into the river, never to be seen again. The same Richmond mayor, when he thought he was losing a ballot, set fire to the ballot box, and on another occasion fused the lights and switched ballot boxes during the confusion. Richmond was a colourful suburb in those days.

Jack has continued his dedicated community services right to 2000. He is an active member of a number of community groups in the area. He has voluntarily assisted his local members of Parliament — Clyde Holding, Theo Sidiropoulos and Demetri Dollis — and now volunteers to work half a day a week in my office.

The ALP and the Richmond community have benefited greatly from Jack's generosity and expertise over the past 45 years. We should wish him well and recognise his magnificent contribution to date and in the years to come.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Chronic fatigue syndrome

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — Tomorrow, 12 May, is International Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Day. CFS, which is also called myalgic encephalomyelitis, is a serious debilitating condition. Suffering from it is much like having a flu, with all its symptoms, from which one does not recover or get any better. Victoria has about 12 000 sufferers of CFS. His Excellency the Governor was gracious enough to offer a morning reception at Government House on 10 May to bring to the attention of the public that tomorrow is CFS awareness day.

I hope I can say on behalf of all honourable members that we offer our support for the awareness day and encourage a greater understanding of the debilitating condition. Our colleague in another place the Honourable Neil Lucas has been most assiduous in bringing the matter of the serious condition before Parliament since 1997, and I commend him on his efforts and concern.

There is an active volunteer CFS society, the president of which is Simon Molesworth, QC. The society has a number of objects, including the establishment of a national database. It hopes that possibility will be brought to the attention of all honourable members and asks them to focus their attention on it. It has a number of exciting projects afoot in the community, not the least of which are a project to assist sufferers with legal and insurance issues, a support line and a telelink.

The society deserves the consideration and recognition of honourable members. I think members of Parliament should while attending to their public duties offer all support possible to help draw attention to chronic fatigue syndrome.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for Ballarat West has 45 seconds.

National Volunteers Week

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — I direct to the attention of the house that next week is National Volunteers Week. I wish to pay tribute to the dedication and hard work of volunteers.

Ballarat has many thousands of volunteers. They provide the basis for work that is done in many areas, including in play groups, hospitals, non-government agencies, sporting clubs, numerous auxiliaries that raise much-needed funds, Meals on Wheels, and Ballarat's important tourism industry. Sovereign Hill and the brilliant begonia festival would not be able to operate

without the enormous amount of work put in by volunteers.

Unfortunately volunteers are sometimes taken for granted and the amount of work they contribute to our communities is underestimated. I thank all volunteers — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The time set down for members' statements has also expired.

APPROPRIATION (2000/2001) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 2 May; motion of Mr BRACKS (Treasurer).

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — Never has an incoming government had it so good financially, and never has a government failed to such an extent to capitalise on the opportunities available to it.

The budget is pervaded by three themes. The first is the theme of the inheritance — the legacy — from the previous administration. The second is the theme of lost opportunities. The third is the importance of reading the fine print of the budget to see what it does and does not deliver.

The current Labor government is unique in the annals of Australian history. Most governments when elected to power claim that the previous government left a black hole — almost every government coming to office complains about a black hole — but this government has been left a windfall gain, which it acknowledged in its own budget. The government has so much money that it has been able to fund promises beyond its election commitments and pick up other priorities in both recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure.

The government has been left with a AAA rating by the previous government. One of the great ironies of the Labor Party's attitude is that although it is excited about the AAA rating and is dependent on the attitude of the ratings agencies, one of the fundamental reasons for the regaining of the AAA rating by the Kennett government following its being lost by the Kirner and Cain governments involved the issue of debt reduction. The primary reason for the debt reduction was the privatisation of electricity. The current government derives great joy from and applauds the AAA rating, but has always criticised the means by which the AAA rating has been regained.

At this point it is instructive to reflect on the legacy the Kennett government inherited when it was elected in 1992. It inherited a \$32 billion debt, a \$2 billion deficit, the AAA rating gone, and a recurrent budget depending on borrowings, with very large slabs of that budget spent on interest to fund standard recurrent expenditure. There is an enormous contrast between that and the legacy that the Bracks government inherited when it came to office last year.

I turn to a number of economic parameters that the government identified in the budget. Some of those parameters indicate some cause for concern, certainly within the business community and the broader community. We have grown accustomed to Victoria being ahead of the pack. Under the previous administration we have grown quite used to Victorian economic figures being better than the Australian average and better than the commonwealth figures. We have had significantly increased rates of growth over the commonwealth. We have had retail sales growing at a greater level. We have had an increase in business confidence in the state in recent times under the previous administration and we saw significant gains in employment growth.

The first feature of the budget to which I direct the attention of the house is growth. The budget accepts low growth below the national average. In the 1998–99 financial year gross state product (GSP) growth was 6.2 per cent, which was above national growth of 4.6 per cent. On the government's own figures in this budget the projection for growth in 1999–2000 is 4.25 per cent with growth to drop to 3.5 per cent in 2000–01, then down to 3.25 per cent for the following three years of the forward estimates. The key point is that the government is accepting low growth. Not only that, but previously we were experiencing growth levels above the national average. We now have growth rates below the national growth rate.

The second key issue in the budget is population. It is particularly important because it is linked to growth, construction industry jobs, employment and the housing industry. Population figures are important also in consumer spending, and in a whole range of economic indicators. In 1993–94 there was a net loss to Victoria of 30 000 people. That was the last of losses over 25 years because after that, under the previous administration, there was a turnaround of population. In the past two years there has been a positive net migration to Victoria with all of the concomitant impact on the other economic indicators to which I just referred.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey referred to on page 36 of budget paper no. 2 identifies that over half the people who came to Victoria from interstate moved for employment-related reasons. Unfortunately, the second feature of the economic parameters of the budget to which I direct the attention of the house is that ABS figures show that population losses are now expected for Victoria.

The third indicator in the budget papers relates to employment. The government has accepted that employment growth in Victoria will ease. In 1999–2000 it will ease by 2.5 per cent and in 2000–01 it will ease by 1.75 per cent, going down to 1.5 per cent over the next three years.

The government also made an election commitment or promise that Victoria would see an unemployment rate of 5 per cent in the first term of the Bracks government. However, the government's budget figures indicate that it will not achieve that target. According to the government's papers, in 1999–2000 the unemployment rate will be 6.75 per cent; in 2000–01, 6.5 per cent; and in 2001–02, 6.25 per cent. Although the Premier reaffirmed the election commitment and said he would meet the target of 5 per cent, he has backed away from that target in his official figures. According to its figures, the government will not reach the election promise of 5 per cent unemployment in this term of government.

The next economic parameter identified in the budget papers that I want to turn to is the important issue of business investment because of its relation to jobs and employment in Victoria. I direct the attention of honourable members to chart 3.4 on page 31 of budget paper no. 2, which shows that there is great uncertainty about business investment in the financial years 1999–2000 and 2000–01. I direct the attention of honourable members particularly to the text on page 31 that leaves Victorians in no doubt that the government has accepted that business investment will decline:

Forward indicators suggest that non-residential construction is likely to decline during the next few years, with the length of the construction pipeline falling with the completion of major projects ... and private non-residential building approvals declining.

There is no doubt that in its budget papers the government is indicating some very alarming trends in the economic parameters presented in the budget. It is indicating that growth will decline and that population will decline. It is accepting lower employment growth. It has abandoned its target of 5 per cent unemployment and, most disgracefully, it has accepted without any

restorative action that business investment in Victoria will decline.

Further, the government has identified, as it should, a range of risks to the Victorian community. The first risk identified is the change in net migration patterns. The government acknowledges that population growth, which Victoria experienced under the past two years of Kennett administration — which was such a significant boost to consumer spending, construction and employment — will now be reversed.

The government also acknowledges that the budget is highly sensitive to changes in economic activity and wages. The government clearly indicates in its budget papers that it acknowledges how highly sensitive that surplus is to wages. The government has estimated wage growth of 3.5 per cent over the forward estimates period.

I wonder if honourable members, as they analyse economic trends and consider what is happening in Victoria at the moment, really believe that wage growth will be 3.5 per cent over the forward estimates period during the term of the government, particularly given the reliance of this government for political support from, dare I suggest, the public sector unions, nurses and teachers. Will their wage rises be confined to 3.5 per cent? The opposition seriously doubts whether wage growth in the state will be confined to 3.5 per cent.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms ASHER — I hear the comment, 'Payback time'. We will watch with great interest the impact on this budget of wage explosions, because opposition members are sure demands will come in from the government's union mates for additional wage growth.

On the impact on the surplus, I again direct the attention of honourable members not to what the opposition is saying but to what is in the government's budget papers — that is, if wages increase by 1 per cent more than the forward estimates the surplus in 2000–01 will be reduced by \$71 million.

The government is well aware of the sensitivity of wages in its budget surplus forecast, which is one reason it has forecast to sustain so-called healthy surpluses. However, again also on the government's own admission, the budget papers acknowledge that the operating position is likely to display even greater sensitivity to movements in share prices than to economic parameters. I call on all honourable members to think of the direction share prices may go over the coming years. The government has already

acknowledged that its budget and surplus is highly sensitive to share price movements. That sensitivity is outlined at page 178 of budget paper no. 2. I urge all honourable members to examine that sensitivity analysis because a case is put forward where a variation of 1 percentage point in economic indicators listed in the tables — wages, shares and property prices — will impact profoundly on the budget surplus.

However, the government's most interesting tables relate to those of its scenario analysis where small downturns in the economy are examined. I refer to a chart — an illustrative economic slowdown scenario — at page 183 of budget paper no. 2 that indicates some illustrative slowdowns of the economy. As an example, if a 1 per cent decline in gross state product were to occur in 2000–01 the surplus would be reduced by almost \$400 million. Similarly, in 2001–02, factoring through that 1 per cent change, the surplus on the government's own scenario projections would be reduced by \$247 million, leaving a surplus of \$154 million, which is nothing like the surplus forecast by the government.

My objective in drawing those figures to the attention of the house is that the government is acutely aware of the sensitivity of its budget projections, and if the surplus is jeopardised business will not get its tax cuts. The government has indicated that tax cuts to business are predicated on a surplus of \$100 million. Yet already, even in its budget papers, a 1 per cent decline in GSP as forecast will see the government only just achieving its \$100 million surplus in 2001–02.

However, a far greater risk than all those factors already identified as a risk in the government's budget papers is the risk of a blow-out of departmental expenditures, particularly in the key departments of human services, education, employment and training, and justice. The government has identified a blow-out in departmental expenditures as a risk to its budget bottom line, and in my opinion it has every reason to do so. I will return to that point later.

I am sure the honourable member for Gippsland East would be interested in the government's identification of the Snowy River as a risk to its budgetary situation. At page 188 of budget paper no. 2 the government points to the fact that, while \$12 million was allocated in recurrent terms in 2000–01 to the Snowy River, it is a seven-year program with the possibility of a further allocation in the 2000–01 financial year. However, at this juncture the government is already identifying in the budget papers commitments to the honourable member for Gippsland East as a risk to the government's budgetary strategy.

In the context of the risk to the economic parameters I have outlined — both of which are identified by the government in its budget papers and are not matters identified by the opposition — the government has inherited two legacies. The first is the 1999–2000 surplus of \$1.3 billion, primarily derived because revenue is up 10 per cent on the budget estimate and obviously because of the work of the former government.

The government's own documents indicate that the strong economic conditions it inherited are based on the impact of property markets, share markets, growth in state taxation revenues and increases in public authority income. The government also describes the \$1.3 billion surplus for 1999–2000 as unexpected. That surplus of \$1.3 billion will be used by the government to fund the \$1 billion infrastructure fund Growing Victoria. In addition, a minor reduction in state borrowings will occur. Also from that surplus the government will allocate \$250 million to fully fund the previously unfunded superannuation liabilities of the emergency services superannuation scheme.

That 1999–2000 surplus is one of the greatest legacies any government could have received. If the Bracks Labor government were genuinely open, accountable and transparent it would badge every one of the projects in the infrastructure fund with a thanks to Jeff Kennett and Alan Stockdale.

The second legacy is the general circumstance of Victoria's economic conditions. As everyone knows, Victoria's economic performance has been particularly strong over recent years as has the commonwealth government's economic performance. This was a budget of surprises for the Bracks Labor government. The surplus was unexpected and additional annual commonwealth grants ranging from \$110 million to \$160 million were also unexpected.

The surplus is well and truly a surprise legacy. Honourable members need not take just the opposition's view of this — they should take the view of Standard and Poor's. I know the Premier wants to cultivate a strong relationship with ratings agencies, but that does not always sit well with the left-wing elements of his party and the trade union movement. Mr Rick Shepherd, a director of the Standard and Poor's rating agency, is quoted in an article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 3 May. It states:

Basically they're sitting pretty ... They've inherited such a strong budgetary position that it's set them up for the rest of their term.

There are economic parameters outlined in the budget: growth is down, population is down, employment growth is down and business investment is down. A number of risks identified by the government include the risks of population decline, increased wages and increased departmental expenditure. In all, there are some portents of bad news and a windfall gain.

What has the government done in response to the situation? What has it done in the budget, and more importantly, what has it not done? It is a typical Australian Labor Party budget because it is a budget focused on expenditure. The government received an inheritance, which it has spent. The government has identified \$426 million of election promises of recurrent expenditure in 2000–01, and an extra \$211 million in 2000–01 alone of additional expenditure, that it is able to fund — that is, a total of \$637 million of additional recurrent expenditure in 2000–01.

The key beneficiary departments are education and training, although I note that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment has fared much better than the Minister for Education in her capacity to influence the expenditure review committee process. Other beneficiary departments are health, justice, and to a lesser extent natural resources and environment, and state and regional development.

However, that expenditure will go up. I direct the attention of honourable members to page 18 of budget paper no. 2, which indicates that the slab of expenditure on the election promises and the additional items identified will grow to \$670 million in 2001–02 and will peak at \$718 million in 2002–03. In short, what the Labor government has done with its inheritance from the previous government is spend an additional \$2.5 billion in four years, which is in the strong tradition of Labor budgets. It is a big spending budget by Labor, but by contrast to when it was in office previously, this time it has the money to spend because it inherited that money from the previous regime.

There is dispute about the additional expenditure. Some people, including some of Labor's support base, argue that it is not enough. Some argue that some of the estimates in the budget are fundamentally flawed and others argue that the funding has been wrongly allocated. I will leave it to my shadow ministerial colleagues to highlight individual issues within departmental budgets.

I raise a couple of questions for the house. There is a prediction of a 2.2 per cent growth in health in the area of acute services. Do honourable members think that

acute health services will grow at that rate, or will the rate of growth be higher given the level of demand in that area, with which we are all familiar? When nurses' claims are negotiated in the second half of the year, will nurses receive a 3.5 per cent increase or will they receive more? Will teachers' wages be confined to a 3.5 per cent wage increase — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ASHER — I hear the word 'No'. A payback increase in teachers' salaries could wipe out the additional expenditure allocated to the education budget or impinge on the surplus that has been set aside.

Other questions include: has sufficient funding been set aside for computers in schools? Why did the south-eastern corridor miss out on transport expenditure? Will the rail projects that have been mooted get off the ground?

It is a budget of lost opportunities. It is a budget in which Labor could have achieved a great deal given the inheritance it received, but it has not done so. The first lost opportunity is on the revenue side of the equation. The government focused solely on expenditure and has not looked at revenue.

In terms of the impact on the business environment the government has delivered a Clayton's tax cut — that is, it is not real, it is not definite and it is not now. The government should have introduced tax cuts in the budget. Key organisations such as the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Property Council and the Australian Industry Group all argued for payroll tax cuts.

VECCI and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria also argued for stamp duty tax cuts. In an interesting analysis prepared for REIV by Access Economics, with whom the Premier has a close relationship, it was argued that reductions in stamp duties or taxes associated with property would yield more significant economic benefits than changes to payroll tax.

All of that data went to the government for its pre-budget deliberation. The government decided to not deliver a tax cut for the financial year 2000–01.

The budget promises two tax cuts in the future — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ASHER — Maybe! One of the great deceptions in the budget is the \$400 million figure, which represents double counting. In the budget papers the possibility of two tax cuts of \$100 million each is

mooted. In its last three budgets the previous government had three successive payroll tax cuts of approximately \$100 million each — and we never sought to double count them. I urge people to read the fine print.

The tax cut is not available until July 2001 — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ASHER — Maybe! If the tax cut eventuates it will be only 1.4 per cent of revenue, which is a small element of the budget and predicated on a surplus. On the government's figures the budget is sensitive to reductions in surplus through a range of factors. That is an interesting reflection of the government's ideology: business can only have a tax cut if there is a surplus. In other words, the government has indicated that if there is a downturn and business needs some stimulus such as tax cuts, it will not give them. That is the rationale of the government.

Employment is a key driver of the economy. The government likes to say it is pro-business but it is not. It is increasing Workcover premiums; it has endorsed a range of excessive industrial relations claims; and over the next year it will be subject to a range of public

sector wages claims by its mates. All that is happening when business confidence is declining. It is not the opposition saying business confidence is declining but every reputable independent economic survey. It is brought out in John Marsden's Yellow Pages Small Business Index survey.

Mr Brumby interjected.

Ms ASHER — John Marsden is one of the most eminent economists and if the Minister for Finance is not aware of him he should meet him. He will provide the minister with some good advice for his budget — if the Premier promotes him.

That decline is also borne out in business confidence surveys put forward by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, the National Australia Bank survey, and by the survey of business trends and prospects issued by VECCI.

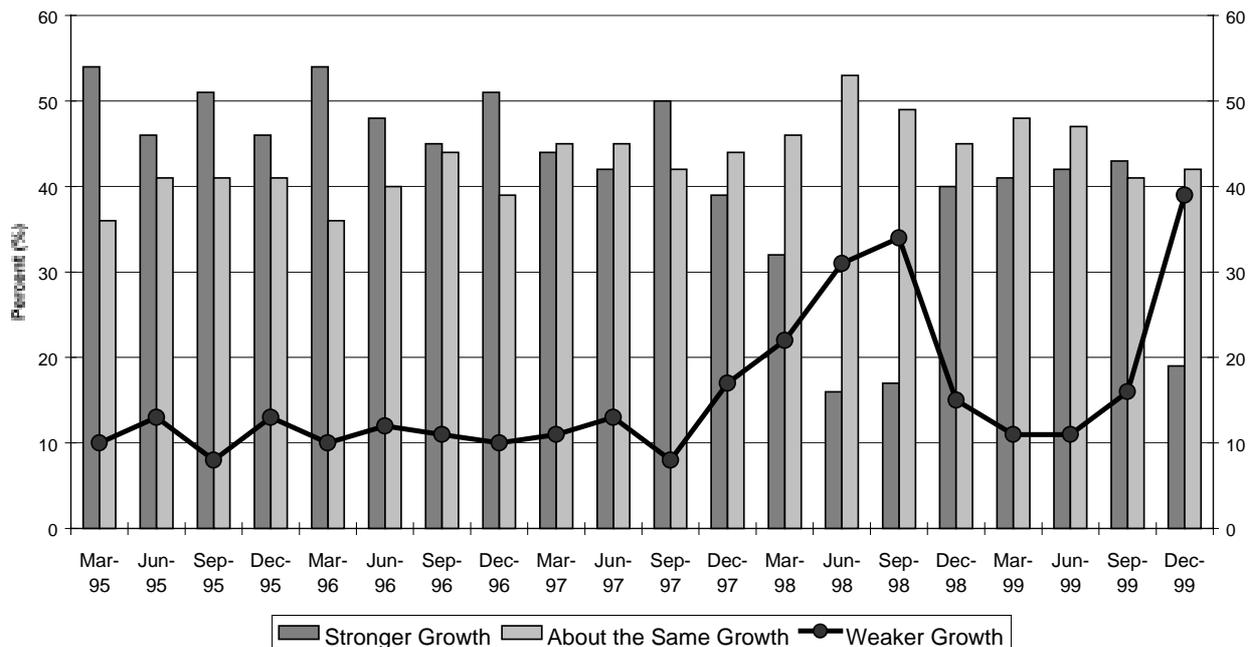
I seek leave to incorporate into *Hansard* three charts to illustrate my point.

The SPEAKER — Order! The charts have been cleared with the Speaker and Hansard. Is leave granted?

Leave granted; charts 1–3 as follows:

VICTORIAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK
Business Growth Forecasts

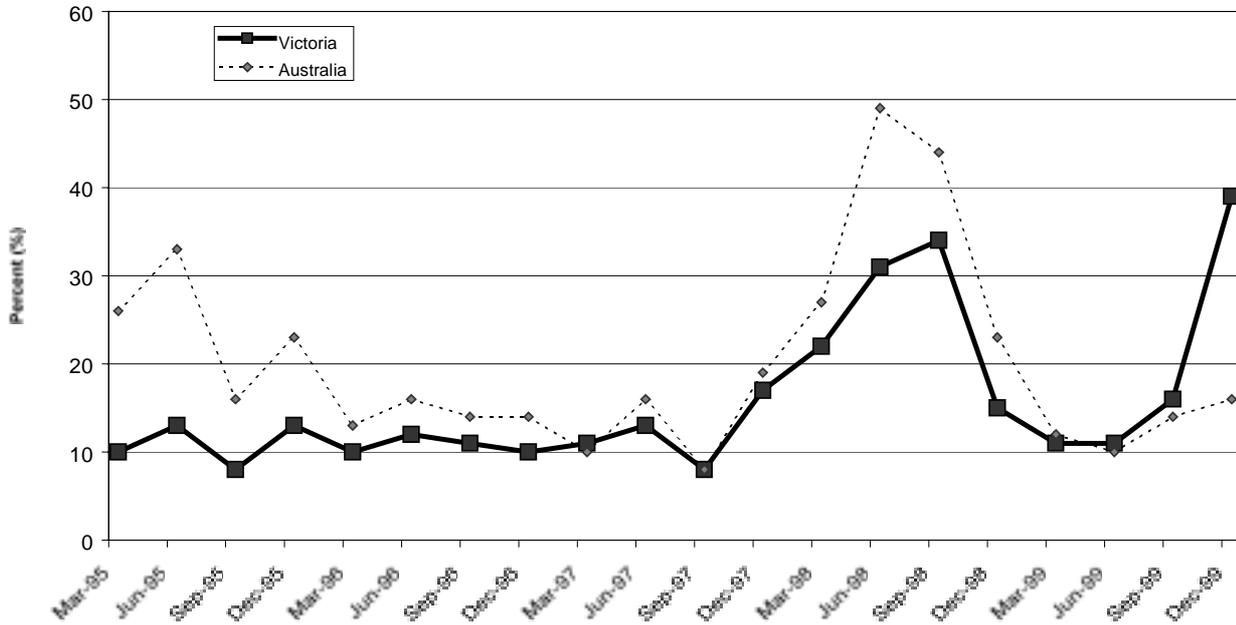
Chart 1



SOURCE: VECCI Survey of Business Trends and Prospects March 1995–December 1999

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK
Share of Businesses Forecasting Weaker Growth

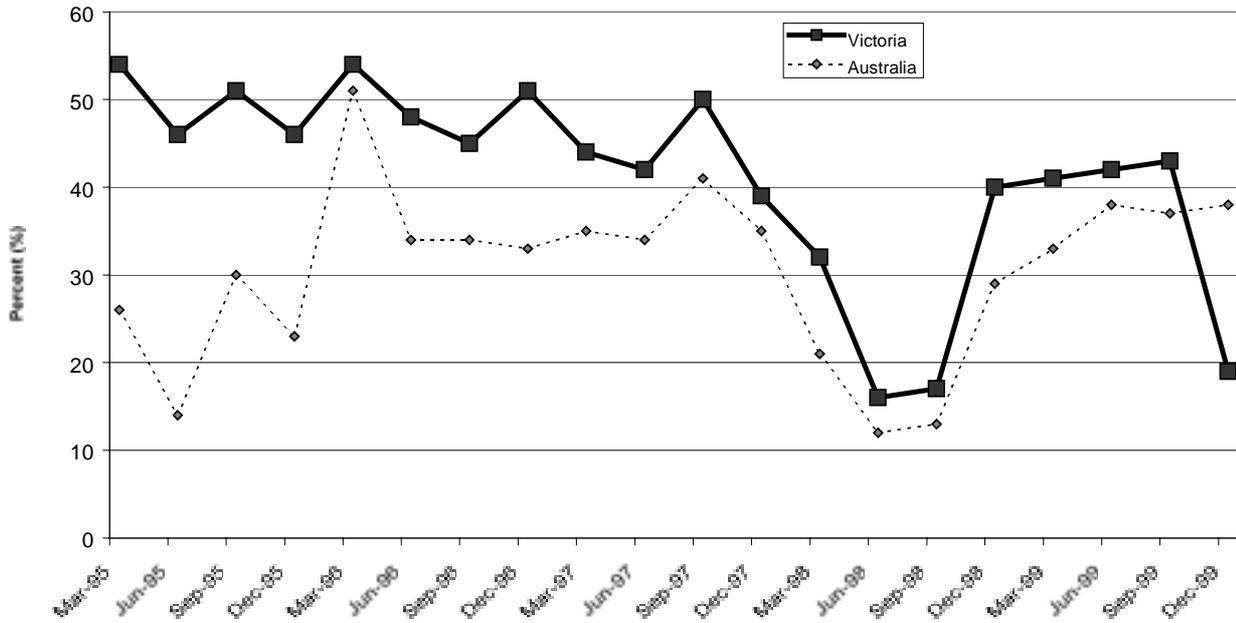
Chart 2



SOURCE: VECCI Survey of Business Trends and Prospects March 1995–December 1999

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK
Share of Businesses Forecasting Stronger Growth

Chart 3



SOURCE: VECCI Survey of Business Trends and Prospects March 1995–December 1999

Ms ASHER — The source of the three charts is a series of surveys of business trends and prospects. They are a comparison of results from March 1995, when VECCI first started doing the surveys, with the most recent survey, undertaken in December 1999. The charts are consistent with other charts on business confidence and I encourage all honourable members to study them. They show that business confidence in the state of Victoria is at a turning point.

Chart 1 illustrates what VECCI always surveys — that is, how many businesses are expecting stronger growth, about the same growth, and weaker growth. I urge members to look at the weaker growth line. The chart shows two peaks in the percentage of businesses expecting weaker growth in the state of Victoria. The first peak was reached during the Asian economic crisis while the Liberal Party was in government. The second peak in the number of businesses expecting weaker growth in the state of Victoria was approached from September 1999, following the election of the Bracks Labor government. The survey indicates that the election of the Bracks Labor government has shattered Victorian business confidence and has had more effect than the Asian economic crisis.

Victorians had become accustomed to having a sense of pride in being ahead of the rest of Australia. Chart 2 compares the numbers of businesses forecasting weaker growth in Australia and in Victoria. The chart covers the period March 1995 — when the surveys began — to the last survey, dated December 1999. It shows Victoria consistently outperforming the other states in business confidence, except for the period during the election campaign and following the election of the Bracks Labor government.

Chart 3 is probably the most damning of all. I reiterate that they are not the opposition's figures but those of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and they show the same syndrome. The chart analyses the share of businesses forecasting stronger growth in Victoria. Victoria has consistently outstripped Australia overall in its share of businesses forecasting stronger growth. Victoria had a very healthy record of business confidence until September 1990 when that confidence plummeted to levels akin to those seen during the Asian economic crisis.

The election of the Bracks government is indicated by the crossover points in charts 2 and 3, where Victoria performs badly. What has the government's response been to this worrying decline in business confidence, coupled with its observation in the budget that previous levels of attracting investment in Victoria will not continue? I direct the attention of honourable members

to the government's policy on creating a competitive business environment at pages 48 and 49 of budget paper no. 2.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Ms ASHER — As the Leader of the Opposition comments, it is a very short policy. The government's response to declining business confidence and an acknowledged lowering of business investment in Victoria has been to develop a four-point strategy. Point 1 shows the Clayton's tax cuts, which are not in this year's budget and may never appear depending on the level of the surplus.

Honourable members should also look at points 2, 3 and 4, which are extraordinary. In an environment of declining business confidence it is a policy which the government says will explicitly create a competitive business environment. What else does the policy state? The government will undertake a strategic audit of Victorian industry. It will form a manufacturing industry consultative council and establish a Victorian economic and social advisory council. Unbelievably, page 49 of budget paper no. 2 states:

These initiatives —

that is, the Clayton's tax cuts —

are designed to provide a broad policy environment conducive to investment and employment growth across the state.

It is beyond my comprehension how a Victorian economic and social advisory council and a consultative council will be a fillip to investment and employment, especially at a time when the government has acknowledged that business confidence is declining. The budget does nothing to address business confidence or employment in Victoria.

I will make a comparison to the last two Kennett–Stockdale budgets. The opposition is not suggesting the government do anything that it did not do. The opposition is simply saying the government should take a leaf out of the book of the previous government. In 1999–2000 tax cuts as a proportion of money available for additional spending or tax relief were 18.9 per cent — in other words, in the Kennett government's last budget it was prepared to set aside 18.9 per cent of available money as tax cuts. In the 1998–99 coalition budget, \$365 million was available for distribution, and as a proportion of that tax cuts represented 36.1 per cent.

If the same standard were applied to this government's budget, Labor's new spending in 2000–01 totals

\$637 million, therefore tax cuts of \$168 million should be delivered. The opposition is not asking the government to do something it did not do; it is asking the government to deliver the same proportion of tax cuts as was delivered in the past two budgets.

The business community is very disappointed with this budget notwithstanding the Premier's comments in the house. I will quote Nicole Feely, the chief executive officer of VECCI, who has not always been supportive of the opposition's side of politics and has gone out of her way to cultivate a good relationship with the ALP. In an article in the *Age* of 3 May entitled 'Business gets mixed message on tax cuts' Ms Feely indicated that she regretted the lack of tax cuts and says:

Given the substantial size of the government's surplus, it is very disappointing, though, that the tax cuts were not more generous and immediate, especially as the government is fully aware that the business community was looking for a specific commitment on payroll tax and stamp duty relief.

She goes on to say:

The government shouldn't be surprised if some cynicism exists amongst the business community over deferred promises — VECCI will be watching to ensure the government delivers.

Other industry groups have been critical of the budget. Paul Fennelly from the Australian Industry Group said he was disappointed that critical business tax cuts had been delayed. The director of CPA Australia, Ian Mayer, made the following comment about the budget:

Talk is cheap. Small business needs assistance now ... A delay in the implementation of tax breaks will only serve to further frustrate and impede this important sector.

The budget has left small business out in the cold.

Many commentators, including, I should add, Ed Shand of Access Economics, have been critical of the budget. There is no doubt that the lack of attention on that front will impact on employment.

The second lost opportunity in the Bracks budget is the failure to effect expenditure savings within the departments. The expenditure savings the government wanted to achieve were fully itemised in its Access Economics document. The budget contains an implementation report card that is probably less than frank in its report on the government's performance in cutting departmental costs.

I refer honourable members to the chart on page 173. The government said that departmental savings in 1999–2000 would achieve, in round figures, \$82 million, but the yield is only \$50 million. The government said departmental savings in 2000–01

would yield \$119 million, but they will yield only \$92 million. It also said that in 2001–02 departmental savings would yield \$131 million, but according to its own budget documents the result will be only \$93 million. The government also said that departmental savings in 2002–03 would be \$135 million, but the yield will be only \$94 million.

The way in which the information in the document has been presented is misleading. The government said only one election policy initiative had not been implemented — that is, the establishment of the Essential Services Commission — but on the output side it has massively failed to deliver on its so-called savings initiative decisions. However, not only has the government not delivered on the departmental savings projections in its Access Economics document, but it has reclassified the headings in that document to hide the instances where it has failed to achieve departmental savings.

The Access Economics document includes sections on cuts to public relations staff and the 1 per cent efficiency dividend on supplies and consumables — and didn't we hear about those in the run-up to the election! But in the budget those items have been combined. In the so-called transparent budget no-one can tell where the government has failed on its savings program.

In short, the Access Economics document said that over the four years in question savings of \$240 million would be achieved through proposed departmental savings on public relations and the 1 per cent efficiency dividend. But over the same four years the budget will deliver \$135 million — that is, it is more than \$100 million short. The government is short everywhere — including on the abolition of the Schools of the Future funding and, most interestingly, on the health networks. Does any honourable member believe \$18 million a year will be saved through the abolition of the health networks? The opposition will examine next year's budget with much interest!

The Labor government has said its priorities are focused on expenditure. It is not interested in tax cuts or on imposing any rigour on its departments — not even the rigour it promised in the Access Economics document. Conversely, the government has already identified the blow-outs in departmental expenditures as a substantial risk to its budget — yet it cannot even deliver on its promises.

Honourable members will be interested to learn that the budget contains some news: the only expenditure cuts in the budget resulted from the restructure of the

Department of Treasury and Finance. The only department cut in line with the government's election promise is the one department that is in charge of restraint. It delivered savings only in that area.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Ms ASHER — The honourable member says by interjection that that is the privatisation unit, but it is not, because the unit was abolished prior to the election. I am talking about a restructure of the Department of Treasury and Finance. The honourable member for Dandenong North was not a member of this place when the promise was made, so he would do well not to comment on it. The government has delivered on its promise only through slashing the Department of Treasury and Finance — the department that controls expenditure!

The third lost opportunity in the budget is the government's failure to offer any stimulus to the building industry. The budget mentions no major projects, and the major projects initiated by the former government are in the process of being wound down. City Link, Federation Square, Melbourne Museum, the multipurpose venue and the refurbishment of the National Gallery of Victoria and the State Library were all started under the former government and are now in the process of being completed.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ASHER — Government members are getting excited! They need not take my word for that. They should listen to the words of the chief executive of the Master Builders Association, Brian Welch, who is reported in the *Herald Sun* of 5 May as saying:

The fact is that the budget provided little comfort ... with projects from government traditionally major clients of the building industry.

The projects where the money is going are soft infrastructure and roads. It seems traditional building projects are a low priority.

The consequences to industry are unfortunate and severe.

Government members may not like to take the word of the MBA, but they may take the word of Dean Mighell, the state secretary of the Electrical Trades Union and the man responsible for putting the Premier in his job. He is so concerned that large building projects have been ignored in the budget that he is seeking an urgent meeting with the major projects minister to discuss the deficiency. He has said it is crucial to cater for big building projects in the metropolitan area.

One should always read the fine print in a budget. I refer to the mooted \$1 billion infrastructure fund. The government has allocated, as the previous government did, 1 per cent of gross state product to capital works. In addition, the government has funded from the 1999–2000 surplus the infrastructure fund I referred to, which is showing all the hallmarks of being a slush fund. Expenditure from the fund will be spread over four years with — surprise, surprise! — the majority of it being banked up for allocation prior to the next election.

The allocation for next year is small, but more than \$300 million will be allocated in each of the following three years. However, the fund will be subject to little if any parliamentary scrutiny. The moneys are being appropriated now, but the allocations will be made in coming years. Honourable members may envisage how the funding could be allocated: we could have a Ros Kelly whiteboard and a Malcolm Mackerras pendulum — but with almost no parliamentary scrutiny!

Mr Nardella interjected.

Ms ASHER — I hear the honourable member for Melton say by interjection, 'That's a good idea'. The government has said it will be honest, open and transparent. The opposition will be watching how money from the fund is allocated. If honourable members think the Australian Labor Party does not pork-barrel, they should look at the infrastructure budget to see the number of road projects designated for Mitcham.

I move now to the issue of regional funding. The government's spin has been that this is a budget for country Victoria. However, the capital works budget paper has not been tabled — I expect it to be tabled at some time in the future. It is therefore impossible to make a judgment about the percentages of funding allocated to city and regional areas; so the opposition reserves judgment on that.

The one outstanding feature of the budget as it affects regional Victoria is its treatment of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), which the minister himself acknowledges needs more funding and which, in this budget of largesse, legacy and inheritance received how much? Nil!

I move now to the issue of the hypocrisy of the ALP.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms ASHER — Yes, it could take a long time! I will, however, just point out a couple of matters in the

government's official budget papers that contrast markedly with its stated position on a range of issues. The first is taxes. On page 113 of *2000–01 Budget Estimates*, which is budget paper no. 3, it is confirmed that for the year 1998–99 — in other words, under the Kennett regime — Victoria's taxes were \$12 million below the national average. Despite that, on many occasions I have heard the ALP claim that the previous administration was a high-taxing administration. That is not so, as the Bracks government's own budget papers acknowledge.

We heard much from the ALP in the run-up to the last election about the increase in Victoria's crime rate. For the record, the government's official documents contradict that rhetoric.

An Opposition Member — Always the case.

Ms ASHER — That is, indeed, always the case. I refer to page 92 of *2000–01 Budget Statement*:

Victoria remains a relatively safe community. The *Report on Government Services 2000* indicates Victoria had the lowest proportion of all states of victims of recorded crime in 1998–99 against both property ... and ... the person ...

All the rhetoric about Victoria's crime situation is contradicted by the government's own budget papers.

I offer two outstanding examples of hypocrisy in the budget. The first is about the involvement of the private sector in public sector projects. In the run-up to the election and afterwards we heard time and again from the ALP about the role of the private sector, and principally that they opposed its involvement in public sector projects. On page 142 of *2000–01 Budget Statement*, however, we see what the government really intends to do — that is, make considerable use of the private sector in its capital works and other programs.

The government is promoting infrastructure spending through a responsible use of the resources of both the public and private sectors. Hence, a policy on the use of the public-private partnerships to provide public infrastructure and related services is being developed.

I urge the Independent members of Parliament as well as the trade union movement and members of the socialist left to analyse that section of the budget.

The same budget document offers something that could well have been written by my predecessor in the seat of Brighton, Alan Stockdale:

This policy will give consideration to a wide range of partnership forms with the appropriate partnership form for a particular project tailored accordingly. Common to all partnership forms will be an emphasis on appropriate risk transfer to the private sector and an assessment of the

economics of the project based on a whole-of-life cost of the infrastructure.

As I said, that could have been written by the former government. It absolutely gives the lie to all the rhetoric about the government being opposed to private sector involvement in infrastructure or in broader issues.

I remind honourable members of how much we heard in the run-up to the election about public relations. Did the government deliver on its promise to cut public relations expenditure? I decided to investigate that question by taking the Premier, who is also the Treasurer, after all, as an example. I refer to page 254 of *2000–01 Budget Estimates* and advise honourable colleagues that evidence appears there to show that the ALP seems to have delivered on its public relations promise. According to the line item 'Government information and communications' in the table headed 'Table 2.6.1: Output group summary', the government has promised to cut public relations expenditure from \$7.3 million to \$7.2 million!

Opposition members interjecting.

Ms ASHER — Yes, very substantial! Note the hypocrisy on that one!

Under the Financial Management Act, a piece of legislation was trumpeted in this house prior to the election, the government has an obligation to prepare financial policy objectives and a strategy statement. I assume — no, I know — that chapter 2 of *2000–01 Budget Statement* is that statement.

A government member interjected.

Ms ASHER — I have read chapter 2. In fact, I have read the whole budget paper. The government is required by law to spell out its objectives and specify key financial measures. It made much of that in public debate and in this chamber. The act requires the statement to set out key financial measures identified by the government as being important and against which financial policy will be set and assessed. The act requires key financial measures — that's 'measures', plural — to be delineated in that statement.

I went with great interest to the statement and found to my surprise that there was only one financial measure — namely, a commitment to a surplus. It is extraordinary that after all the hoo-ha we heard about the Financial Management Act and the discipline the government decided to impose on itself the government had the opportunity to delineate some financial measures but it could come up with only one.

The far more significant issue in relation to the Financial Management Act is the role of the Auditor-General. Prior to the last election the government promised that the Auditor-General would audit a surplus and report to Parliament on budget day. It was the no. 1 promise on that little card that was distributed in letterboxes. The no. 1 promise of the government when in opposition was that it would have a budget surplus that was overseen and audited by the Auditor-General and reported to Parliament on budget day. However, when the legislation came to Parliament that promise was considerably watered down. Presumably the departmental office had advised of the insanity of that proposal. The government changed the legislation to require the Auditor-General to give a report on financial statements.

I wish to draw the attention of the house to the comments of the Auditor-General in the pages of the budget papers marked with blue and the words 'Estimated financial statements'. In the entire budget papers the only thing the Auditor-General is required to comment on is what is contained in those pages. He is not required to comment on the whole budget; he is required to comment only on that section.

There are further qualifications. Firstly, he has not performed an audit as was promised to the Victorian population during the election campaign. I quote from the Auditor-General's letter to members of the Parliament of Victoria on page 228 of budget paper no. 2. The Auditor-General, Mr Cameron, says:

Accordingly, an audit has not been performed and an audit opinion is not expressed.

While bearing in mind that the government said the Auditor-General would independently oversee the surplus, I will now refer to Mr Cameron's comments. He says in the letter:

Prospective financial information relates to events and actions that have not yet occurred and may not occur. While evidence may be available to support the assumptions and underlying data upon which prospective financial information is based, such evidence is generally future oriented and therefore less certain in nature. As a result, I am not in a position to obtain the level of assurance necessary to express a positive opinion on those assumptions and the accompanying forecast information included in the estimated financial statements. Accordingly, an opinion is not expressed on whether the forecast will be achieved.

It is an absolute farce. Even more damning is the section of the letter headed 'Review statement'. It is so damning I feel the need to read it so it appears in *Hansard*. Mr Cameron says:

Based on my review, which is not an audit, nothing has come to my attention that causes me to not believe that:

the estimated financial statements have been prepared on a basis consistent with the accounting policies on which they are stated to be based;

the estimated financial statements are consistent with the target established for the key financial measure —

financial management measure no. 1 —

specified in the accompanying notes to the statements;

the estimated financial statements have been properly prepared on the basis of the economic assumptions stated in the accompanying notes to the statements; and

the methodologies used to determine those assumptions were reasonable.

The next thing he says is damning. The government is damned with faint praise. He says:

Actual results achieved by the Victorian budget sector are likely to be different from those forecast in the estimated financial statements since anticipated results frequently do not occur as expected and the variation may be material. Accordingly, I express no opinion as to whether the forecasts will be achieved.

That is a far cry from the no. 1 promise of the government when in opposition — that there would be a budget surplus overseen by the Auditor-General and reported to the Parliament on budget day.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Ms ASHER — Yes, it is ticking off in a different sense of the term. It is a fundamental breach of faith on what was said prior to the election.

I will now refer to the issue of democracy, because the budget states it will restore democracy. I wish to comment on the issue of the web broadcast that was mooted. It was then provided to the government, but denied to the opposition. In the past under standing and sessional orders this Parliament always operated in a neutral manner. What went for one side of politics went for the other side of politics.

During the budget debate we saw something I believe is disgraceful — that is, the Premier was prepared to use the resources of government to advantage the government in Parliament while deliberately denying the same rights to the opposition. It is an absolute disgrace. Further, the comments of the Speaker in the chamber this morning — I commend him on his integrity — clearly show that he had granted the webcast to the government in good faith. The government absolutely rejected that good faith and has manipulated the proceedings of Parliament by the use

of taxpayers' money to advantage its side and disadvantage the opposition.

This Parliament is supposed to be the neutral forum of debate. It is shameful that that action was taken by a Premier, of all people, who said he would introduce new standards in the Parliament. He has done that; he has introduced lower standards in the Parliament. He has used taxpayers' money to deliberately disadvantage the opposition.

There is some real cause for concern in the budget. I have already outlined the economic parameters. The government has said there will be a reduction in population, business investment and employment growth.

It has identified a series of risks in its budget: a migration risk, that the budget is highly sensitive to wage increases, that the budget is highly sensitive to the share market, that the budget is highly sensitive to departmental expenditures, and that its record in curbing departmental expenditures is not good.

In short, the budget is a high expenditure budget. The government inherited some money and it has spent it. It is also a budget of lost opportunities. The government has lost the opportunity to introduce tax cuts and to restore business confidence. It has failed on its promise to deliver rigour into departmental expenditure and has failed to stimulate the construction industry. The government could have done so much with the inheritance it received, but it has done little. It has simply expended \$2.5 billion over four years.

In conclusion, I point out that the Victorian ALP has a strong tradition of fiscal delinquency. A tendency to fiscal delinquency is not eroded simply because of an inheritance. The fiscally delinquent son does not become responsible simply because he has inherited a legacy.

Opposition members applauding.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! I remind honourable members that it is disorderly to applaud in the chamber.

Mr LENDERS (Dandenong North) — I also applaud the budget. It is a socially progressive and fiscally responsible budget. I welcome it as a member of the incoming Bracks government. It is a great thrill and privilege to speak in support of the budget today.

The budget is the last of the rights of passage of the new government, which was elected at the September 1999 state election and won the Frankston East

supplementary election. The ministry was sworn in last October, following which the government went through its first 100 days in office during summer and has now introduced its first budget. The excitement surrounding the budget is that the Bracks government is now setting its own fiscally responsible but socially progressive objectives for the governance of this great state.

I will go through why the budget is socially progressive and fiscally responsible. I will also reply to some of the comments of the shadow Treasurer in a historical context as to where we are and where it all fits into place.

Firstly, I will paint the scene as to why the budget was necessary. There are two sides to politics in Victoria, each of which has a different view of the role of the state government. The view of those on this side of the chamber is that the government has a responsibility for the social infrastructure of the state and for making the state work, and for us a budget can set such things into place. The key issues in Victoria —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The honourable members for Kew and Bennettswood are a little loud in their interjections. I ask them to restrain themselves until their turns come.

Mr LENDERS — Thank you for your protection, Madam Acting Speaker. The government understands that budget envy is a curse on the other side.

I will paint a picture of where Victoria was and why the budget was necessary. A state government is responsible for providing essential services to the community, and those core services are essentially what people expect of and judge the government on. Over the past seven long years a number of key services were slashed.

Of the three that I will talk about in particular, the first is the police force, the cuts to which resulted in personal safety becoming an issue. That is certainly an issue in my electorate of Dandenong North, as I am sure it is in your electorate of Bentleigh, Madam Acting Speaker. The second is the health service, the slashing of which created fear and uncertainty in electorates such as mine. It was feared that services would not be there for people going into the public health system because of the cuts made by the previous government. The third is critical educational services, the cuts to which resulted in the number of schools being slashed, including in my electorate of Dandenong North, and teacher numbers being cut. The whole education system was marginalised and belittled because it was considered

not to be an important area in which to invest for the future.

Honourable members on this side fought to restore those services as key aspects of the government's responsibilities. This socially progressive budget restores a number of the key services that my electors — and I suggest the electors of every honourable member in this chamber — seek, expect and demand of a state government.

I raise another matter to help paint the picture of why the budget is in place. Many people opposite are fans of Sir Rupert Hamer. However, Victoria under Lindsay Thompson was a different Victoria from the Victoria under Jeff Kennett. It was a Victoria in which people were not punished if they spoke out.

Mr Mildenhall interjected.

Mr LENDERS — It was a blossoming democracy. As the honourable member for Footscray said by interjection, it was a garden state. Until 1992 Victoria was a liberal, progressive democracy, but that changed for a number of reasons. From 1992 on Parliament stopped functioning because it seldom met and because unfettered power was in the hands of one man, who occasionally put up with the odd whimper in his party room but was essentially a one-man band who ran the junta that was the Kennett government. In that Victoria the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, the Equal Opportunity Commissioner, local government councils and the Supreme Court — all of them, without exception — were gagged.

Ms Beattie — And his own members.

Mr LENDERS — The honourable member for Tullamarine says by interjection, 'And his own members'. They were also gagged, as was clear from the state election campaign.

To demonstrate why the state needed a fiscally responsible and socially progressive budget I will paint the picture of the state Victoria was in and the remedial action that was required to fix the mess. The final point I will make about where Victoria was at — and I use the word 'Victoria' selectively — is that Victoria requires a government that will govern for the whole state. Unfortunately by the end of the rule of the Kennett junta Victoria had a government for inner Melbourne and not much more. All major events were run in and most major project funding was for inner Melbourne. People in rural and regional Victoria, which the government has a particular affection for, were not the only ones to be neglected because people in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, such as my electorate of

Dandenong North, were also ignored as a result of the absolute focus being on the centre of Melbourne.

To complete the picture of where Victoria was at and why the budget was required I point out that under the previous government essential services were slashed. Firstly, police numbers were cut. My constituents felt it was unsafe to go onto the streets at night because of the cuts in police numbers.

Secondly, the health system was cut. My constituents could exchange horror tales of people waiting on trolleys because of waiting lists and deteriorating services, not through any fault of professional and hardworking staff but because of the cuts in numbers and funding.

Thirdly, there was an absolute assault on the education system, which moved from a situation in which schools in my electorate would cooperate with each other by sharing information to help students to a situation in which they were too afraid to talk to each other. They were afraid because, firstly, talking was seen as dissent and staff could lose their jobs, and secondly, to share advice with neighbouring schools would be to share it with competitors who might take students away, and that might also result in staff members losing their jobs. That was the situation Victoria was in.

The final issue to which I refer is that the councils were gagged — they were nobbled. I will turn to the issue of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) shortly. Remedial action needed to be taken.

As a consequence of the former government's policies the electorates of Geelong, Gisborne, Ripon, Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Seymour, Bendigo East, Narracan, Carrum, Tullamarine, Frankston East, Oakleigh, Gippsland East and Warrnambool elected new candidates. All of those electorates, bar one, turfed out government members. If anyone thought the voters had got it all wrong and made a mistake, the result of a by-election in Burwood a month later reinforced the view that the people of the state had decided a change was necessary.

The voters wanted change. It is easy to say that people wanted change to get rid of someone, but the alternative must also be considered. I am attempting to paint a picture of why we needed a socially progressive and fiscally responsible government.

I cannot refrain from responding to the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and many other honourable members opposite. The deputy leader referred constantly to Jeff Kennett's surplus. The one important point that I hope members on this side of the

chamber will never forget and honourable members opposite will one day remember is that the money belongs to the citizens of Victoria. The surplus the government is dealing with in its socially progressive and fiscally responsible budget came from the blood, sweat and tears of ordinary Victorians who lived through seven years of mad adventure. Ordinary Victorians were never told in the lead-up to the 1992 state election that electricity utilities would be sold, but they were; that their gas company would be sold, but it was; or that fundamental infrastructure such as roads would be privatised and sold into private ownership for 34 years.

The surplus came from government cuts and increased taxes that the parties of members opposite would not pass in the Legislative Council from 1990 to 1992, but then put through themselves. That is where the surplus came from and it is the surplus of the Victorian people. It is not Jeff Kennett's surplus. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite should not forget the essential element of a democracy: if a government treats the people's assets and resources as its own the people will consider the government arrogant and throw it out, as happened on 18 September last year. It is a critical point to recall when talking about the budget.

I turn to the restoration of funding to the health system. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition scoffed at the little plastic cards that were distributed during the lead-up to the election and at the then Leader of the Opposition saying, 'These are the pledges and I ask you to hold me to them'. His general statement to the electorate was, 'If you elect us, this is what we promise to do as key pledges'. I will not go through the pledges word for word but will refer to them by theme.

The first pledge was to restore money to the health system by abolishing the health networks and providing money for infection control in hospitals. The budget puts that promise in place. I rest my case.

Another pledge was to reduce the class sizes in the first three years of primary school. The government wanted to put a lot of money into education but its priority was those key early learning areas. The government did not wait until this budget; that funding was announced last year when Parliament resumed.

The government pledged also to restore police numbers. Already that four-year program is in place, with 800 police coming from new recruitments and people being transferred from the academy.

Ms Beattie interjected.

Mr LENDERS — As the honourable member for Tullamarine reminds me, the parade grounds are full.

The government pledged to restore democracy, and that pledge has been fulfilled. The dreaded compulsory competitive tendering has gone, FOI legislation is back, the Auditor-General's powers have been restored — Victoria has been restored.

I turn to the fiscally responsible aspect of the budget, because that seems to be the part that generates enormous excitement among members opposite. It is interesting because right through the 1980s and 1990s members of the Labor Party were told that we were fiscally irresponsible and that we had to do something about it. Now that the Treasurer is demonstrating fiscal responsibility by delivering a budget with a sustainable surplus, reducing debt, and doing a whole range of other things, we are being mocked and told that we are not sincere. The people of Victoria want a fiscally responsible and socially progressive government. Balance is critical.

There is a surplus in the budget. Unlike the federal government the fiscally responsible state Labor government has put in place a two-level surplus — one for a likely projection and the other for a worst-case scenario. The fiscally irresponsible federal government has not dared to do that because if it did it would be operating with a huge deficit, given its smoke-and-mirrors budget.

Despite the protestations of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the budget projects a surplus on Treasury projections — which are mid-field across all the economic commentators — and also has a separate surplus that deals with the substantive economic downturn that the deputy leader referred to when she was trying to talk down the state yet again. The budget is fiscally responsible and has a sustained surplus. It has provision for the downturn, and as the deputy leader correctly identified, that was the no. 1 pledge of the incoming Labor government.

Any discussion about a fiscally responsible government is also about the payment of debt. Debt is an obsession with honourable members opposite. Nobody likes debt, but during times of economic downturn people accrue debt. I do not know many people in my electorate who saved the amount of money necessary to buy a house before buying it. Ordinary prudent members of my electorate make an assessment of the amount of debt they can sustain, then purchase the house and pay off the debt over time. In the right perspective, debt is not a bad thing.

The obsession — not the admirable attempt to reduce debt — of the former Treasurer and the former Premier to get rid of debt completely and quickly resulted in the previous government leaving an enormous surplus of state taxpayers' money in the budget. The former government was so obsessed with debt reduction that it would not put enough money into schools, the police force or health. Now honourable members opposite live in anguish. I am sure that everywhere there are voodoo dolls of Jeff Kennett with pins in them, because if the former Premier had listened to the community and put some of the taxpayers' money into services, government members would be on that side and the opposition on this side of the house. Honourable members opposite know that is true, and it must hurt.

From the good that was achieved through the blood, sweat and tears of Victorians the government is putting money aside to reduce superannuation and state government debt. The government has brought forward the date when the state superannuation funds will be fully funded. The government is a leader in that field. It will continue to reduce debt and have the funds all fully funded so that the state is in good hands in the future. Honourable members must not forget that if the state ever slips again into the debt of the Bolte years — which was higher than during any of the Cain–Kirner years — there is no buffer or cushion left in the state because the family silver — that is, the state's assets — has been sold. The legacy of the previous government is no funding safety net for Victorians.

The Bracks government is being fiscally responsible in reducing debt and accelerating the time in which it is being paid off, but it is doing so in a socially progressive way. We must not forget that key point of the budget.

I am extremely disappointed that all opposition members are not present in the chamber, because one thing about this government that probably annoys them more is the 'C' word — consultation. It is a word opposition members do not like — they get really angry when they hear it. Consultation is an important part of the budget and it relates to the business tax deductions.

The government believes that if it is to govern for the state, occasionally it must talk to the stakeholders. It must acknowledge occasionally that not all wisdom resides in the Premier's office or in a Crown Casino boardroom. It must realise occasionally that it can go beyond the 500 Club and the Melbourne Club when it is making decisions. The government believes that during the occasional venture into the suburbs, including Bentleigh and Forest Hill, and places such as Sale, Rutherglen, Swan Hill or any other wonderful

place in Victoria, one might discover people with ideas — and some of them might have good ideas.

When consulting with people and conducting meetings such as the Growing Victorian Together summit, one can talk to people and so perhaps get the right mix of what the community wants. The government has promised business tax deductions, and this year it has budgeted \$100 million for next year, with \$200 million in future years. That money has been committed and the government will be held accountable for its promise. Such matters will be addressed after consultation on what will help business create jobs and grow the whole state.

It may well be payroll tax. However, it may also be sales tax, land tax, grants to business or many other items. Issues can be addressed by talking to people.

In the house on 5 April I referred to an example of what happened as a result of the former government's three years of so-called payroll tax cuts. Before the cuts, a small business with a payroll of \$600 000 paid payroll tax of 1.34 per cent; after the cuts its payroll tax rate was 2.54 per cent. The former government widened the net, so it picked up superannuation. Employers who were prudent enough to cater for the long-term income benefits of their employees were penalised by the former government's so-called payroll tax. I repeat: after three years of alleged cuts the rate increased from 1.34 per cent to 2.54 per cent.

A summit is one means of consulting with business on tax deductions. Taking time before making decisions is a remedy for good government, not bad government.

I have no time to speak on other issues, which I will save for another occasion. It was predictable that opposition members would describe the surplus as their inheritance and talk about lost opportunities and the fine print. You would expect that from the shadow Treasurer — that's her job — because she is in the first of four years or more in opposition.

The government's budget is needed. It is fiscally responsible, fiscally responsible and fiscally responsible — and I repeat those words because being fiscally responsible is the first aim of the Bracks government. The second is to be socially progressive — and the two run together. If the balance is right, as it is, the Bracks government will be a good government for the whole of the state. As a member of the Labor Party I warmly embrace the budget and am delighted to support it.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I know the proper custom in this place is to refer to members

by their electorates. However, I am pleased that the name of the honourable member for Dandenong North is Lenders. I hope there are many more Lenders in the family because by the time the Labor government is finished with Victoria it will need many more lenders than he has on offer! I freely admit I plagiarised that from the Leader of the Opposition, but it's a good line — and it is a fact.

If one looks at the opening page of the budget speech one sees the Premier saying his team 'promised to deliver on four key pillars'. During my contribution I will examine those pillars.

The first is responsible financial management. A number of articles that appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* of 3 May aptly summed up the budget. An article headed 'Bracks budget uses smoke and mirrors' appears on page 4, and on page 5 a further article is headed '\$200 million variation on old theme'. I will return to the core of those articles later.

The setting is important. The honourable member for Dandenong North also spoke about responsible financial management. Back in 1992 Victoria was \$34 billion in the red — that is, \$34 000 000 000. Recurrent losses were running at some \$2.5 billion annually. In other words, another \$2500 000 000 would have had to be found had the former Labor government not been tossed out of office. The current government inherited a state debt of around \$5 billion and a budget surplus of \$1.3 billion.

Don't give me all that nonsense about it being the people's money! When it took over the management of Victoria the Kennett government had the will to turn the state around and deal with the disasters it faced. The Bracks Labor government has been gifted a surplus of some \$1.3 billion. Those are the facts, and it is important to get them straight.

I now refer to the way the government says it will deal with the situation it inherited. I believe the most pivotal chart appears at page 154 of budget paper no. 2. In her contribution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to many aspects, including that one, but I will again highlight it because I believe it is critical to the Bracks government's first pillar of responsible financial management.

The issue should be put into context. To the extent that it is critical, much of the comment about the federal budget has centred on what will happen with the surplus over time. In that light it is instructive to examine table 7.5 on page 154 of budget paper no. 2 to see what the future holds for Victoria.

In 1999–2000 the budget surplus is estimated to be \$1.3 billion. Although the year is not yet over, for the purpose of the budget papers it is \$1.3 billion. In the following year the estimate decreases to \$628 million; in the third year it falls to \$47 million, and in 2002–03 — here we go again — we will be back in the red. The budget will have a deficit — a cash loss — of \$55 million in that financial year. In the following year the cash loss will be \$135 million. It is as plain as a pikestaff: this lot is back in the chair so Victorians will see the same thing happen. Here we go again!

The government has boasted about its \$1 billion Growing Victoria reserve, which the shadow Treasurer described as a slush fund. How can the government conceivably park \$1 billion and say it has no use for it now? Where is the vision in a government saying that it will park \$1 billion of the surplus available to it without describing to Victorians how it will be used? That is an extraordinary state of affairs.

Compare it with the \$1.2 billion of projects the previous government carried out in the water and waste water areas, or the \$1 billion program it ran over four years in school facilities. One would have expected some sort of practical demonstration from the government as to what it was going to do with the \$1 billion. The budget papers indicate that \$190 million has gone already, so we are down to around \$810 million. I find it extraordinary that the government has that amount of money but has not ascribed a use to it.

The budget papers show that after four years the money will be gone. If the state then has a cash deficit, what will the government do? That leads me to the next point, which is the famous tax cuts. I will deal with them in a moment, but from where is the funding for those to come on a cash-operational basis given the figures in the pages of the government's own papers?

I return to the theme of the \$1 billion. Where are the projects? Where is the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism? He is taking money under false pretences. He is trying to patch up the business over Federation Square — the circus over the famous glass shard — but that apart, nothing has been heard from him about major projects. There is \$1 billion tagged somewhere and yet apparently nothing is to be done with it. There is complete silence from the minister. That situation is a remarkable state of affairs in a financial management sense.

I turn to the tax cuts. I attended the summit at the Premier's invitation. The dominant theme over those couple of days was tax cuts. The business sector and the union movement were saying there was a need for tax

cuts. What has happened? It is just as the newspaper articles say. The thrust of those articles was in keeping with an article headed 'Bracks budget uses smoke and mirrors' that appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* of 3 May. It states:

And after the fiscal legacy of the Kennett government has been exhausted, net budget sector debt will actually grow from \$2.8 billion at the end of 2000–01 to \$3.1 billion in 2003–04.

It further states:

The \$628 million cash surplus left in 2000–01 becomes a deficit of \$135 million by 2003–04.

A separate article in the same paper states:

Even with the fiscal discipline implicit in the forward estimates, the Bracks government is heading for a cash deficit in its last two years.

They are good articles because they reflect the reality of the situation.

Where are the tax cuts? Talk about Rome burning while Nero fiddles! The shadow Treasurer amply demonstrated today that confidence levels in the state are presently at such a point that tax cut initiatives are needed now. It is no good talking about them in the smoke-and-mirrors sense of \$400 million over the next three financial years. The summit urged the government to make tax cuts, but it has turned its back on the issue. The government does not understand the notion of job generation as opposed to job creation. It thinks it can create positions of employment simply by establishing programs and putting people into them. That is far from the notion of job creation in which business is given the incentive to employ people and grow wealth, to the benefit of everybody.

As country Victorians, National Party members are facing the difficulty of dealing with unspecified programs. We still do not know what programs are running and how country Victoria will benefit from the \$1 billion, let alone the \$170 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, to which I will refer a little later. Applications lodged with government have stalled. I have been told repeatedly by municipalities that they cannot get answers from government departments. The notion of financial responsibility is a fiction.

The question of the union movement and the government's management of issues — or mismanagement, as has been evident recently — relating to it have gone off the boil for the moment, although country Victorians are dreadfully worried about the issue.

The government's financial management amounts to a bungle. It has squandered its inherited \$1.3 billion surplus. Above all else, I find it most disappointing and heartbreaking that there is no vision in the budget. Where is the government taking Victoria? What are the government's plans for the future? What is going to happen with Victoria? The money could have been used to give people a clear way forward, yet the budget papers and the government's rhetoric contain no vision. How can it be that a Minister for Major Projects and Tourism has absolutely nothing to offer on what his ministry is supposed to deliver? Honourable members heard all the business about the 22 major projects in the city, but none of it is happening in country Victoria. The government has let Victorians down badly by failing to provide a vision for the future.

The second of the four pillars is the promotion of growth. Is that not a fiction also? The supposed \$170 million allocated to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund is obviously not enough. The government realises that, because having taken its policy to the last election after only eight months in office it decided to call on the federal government to put up \$170 million. Its rhetoric is about trying to run the state and have some sort of fiscal responsibility, yet it cannot run even that program as was intended.

There is confusion over the famous guidelines for applications to the fund. People still do not know how they are supposed to operate. I am told that when people ring up and try and get applications they find some half-baked arrangement is in place that requires applicants to answer a series of questions before application forms are sent out. What is to be the involvement of the municipalities? Where do they sit in all of this? Confusion reigns about how the Community Support Fund will function alongside the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. None of the questions about those matters have been answered. The stupid position of the supposed \$170 million fund remains. An amount of \$100 million is already spoken for, yet programs within that \$100 million cannot be delivered, leaving only \$70 million available over the next three financial years. The situation has become high farce for country Victorians.

Even better was yesterday's delivery of the apparently country-friendly government's response to the matter of public importance I raised — that is, keeping Essendon Airport open for the good of country Victorians. Some 4000 air ambulance movements pass through the airport each year, 35 per cent of which are emergencies devoted particularly to the needs of country Victoria. But sitting opposite me as I speak is none other than the honourable member for Bendigo West, who has

published in the public arena the fact that he wants to close Essendon Airport.

The supposedly country-friendly government's response to the needs of country Victoria was delivered clearly yesterday, when the house debated a matter of public importance urging the government to keep open Essendon Airport, particularly for the benefit of country Victorians. The air ambulance has 4000 movements through Essendon Airport each year and 35 per cent of them are emergencies to meet the needs of country Victoria.

The matter is a yawn for the Minister for Local Government who is at the table and who is publishing his intention to close Essendon Airport. In the so-called country-friendly government, both he and the Minister for Agriculture, the only two members of cabinet who live beyond the fringes of Melbourne, want to close Essendon Airport. Regional Victoria was very interested to hear that yesterday and this morning! Essendon Airport is a disaster for the government!

What about the Mount McKay project in north-east Victoria?

Mr Cameron interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The Minister for Local Government has been persistently interjecting across the table. I ask him to restrain himself.

Mr RYAN — The Mount McKay project offers a major benefit to part of Victoria, but what is the government doing about it? That bunch do not know how to govern properly. They send appalling messages to business and enterprise around the state — that is, to those generating jobs. The Minister for Planning has delivered the coup de grâce by saying that an environmental effects statement — which will take two years to prepare — is needed. A \$50 million proposal will be held up for another few years because of government interference and the reversal of the previous minister's decisions.

The Minister for Environment and Conservation has refused to allow for the provision of backup power facilities at Mount Hotham. That is a dreadful outcome for the ski industry and other industries dependant on tourism in north-east Victoria. The government is behaving like a bull in a china shop; it is in the process of destroying a marvellous initiative for that part of Victoria. It is a tragedy for country Victorians, particularly those in the north-east.

The approach is indicative of a broader attitude. The government does not understand how country Victoria relates to and uses natural assets. The mountain cattlemen want to take the cattle back up into the high country and graze them as they have for more than 100 years. The government is not urging them or supporting them to do so but rather, I suspect, will use the events of the Caledonia fire in 1998 to keep people and their stock out of the high country for time ever after.

Some weeks ago the important issue of subsidence in Gippsland was raised for the attention of the responsible minister, the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Some \$7 million is needed to conduct appropriate investigations to ensure that there is a proper handle on the issue. The minister was called on weeks ago to do something about it. I have written to her and issued press releases, but there has been absolute silence on her part! The issue has been ignored. It is indicative of how the government conducts itself in dealings with country Victorians.

The third pillar is delivering improved services. We will wait to see how that develops. I am pleased to see the continuance in many instances of the health and education programs put in place by the previous government. It is a good thing that the priority listing of school projects in country regions has not been interfered with — I know of no change in my area.

Yesterday the Minister for State and Regional Development referred to the loss of Australia Post services in country Victoria. At the same time the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the responsible federal minister, issued a press release stating:

The federal coalition will not privatise Australia Post and has never proposed such an idea, the Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Leader of the National Party, John Anderson, said today.

That is further evidence of how the government conducts business: do not worry about the facts if it looks like a good story.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr RYAN — The fourth pillar is restoring democracy. What a ripper! Today was a great example of democracy when the Speaker said the government should have funded the Internet webcast of the shadow Treasurer's response, as happened with the Treasurer's budget speech. The government misled people on the matter, saying it would require more funding. Government members knew that when the budgets

were framed the webcast was not contemplated and no-one could have taken the cost into account. The government has been urged by the Speaker to give the opposition parties the same treatment. He wrote to the Premier and today received the answer that the Premier has knocked us back. In terms of open honest and transparent government it is an unmitigated disgrace!

Further, despite the friendships I have formed with government personnel in country Victoria over the years I can no longer talk to those people or go to their offices because they have written instructions from ministers not to talk to me.

Mr Brumby interjected.

Mr RYAN — That is precisely right, Minister. I cannot talk to the people I should be able to talk to.

On all four pillars the government fails. If not on all four pillars, I emphasise that any structure that is held up by four pillars is at risk because if one is pulled out the whole structure falls — and that is what will happen with the government.

Mr Cameron interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The Minister for Local Government is persistently interjecting. The appropriation debate is important, and I ask the minister to extend the same courtesy that he will be extended when he stands to speak.

Mr BRUMBY (Minister for State and Regional Development) — It is my pleasure as the Minister for State and Regional Development to support the first Bracks government budget. The first Bracks budget does more for regional Victoria after seven months than the former government did in seven years.

The former Premier and his colleagues and supporters in the National Party saw Melbourne as the pulse and heart of the state. What were the regions? They were the toenails! That was the philosophy which drove the Kennett government, supported by their colleagues in the National Party through seven long, dark, bleak years for country Victoria.

It is true that parts of country Victoria did well during that time — there will always be parts of Victoria that do well. But an examination of the employment statistics compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the analyses prepared at the time by people including Tim Colebatch of the *Age* shows that country Victoria's share of total job growth in Victoria

in the last three years of the Kennett was just 2 per cent. Everyone remembers those statistics!

All honourable members will remember the Office of Major Projects. It had a big web page and an empire built up by Premier Kennett with the National Party. It had \$2 billion worth of projects, but only \$17 million of that was spent in country Victoria.

The National Party whinges and whines and today we have heard the death rattle from the Leader of the National Party. It has whinged about Labor spending \$170 million on regional infrastructure projects — —

An Honourable Member — They hate the country!

Mr BRUMBY — Everyone would like to see more than \$170 million being spent, but it must be put into perspective. That \$170 million is ten times the amount spent by the former government in seven years. It spent just \$17 million in rural and regional Victoria, but the Bracks government will spend \$170 million — and it would like that amount to be matched by the federal government. It was bitterly disappointed by Tuesday's night federal budget as it had hoped there would be some federal support for national infrastructure development.

In good faith, I represented Victoria at the Deputy Prime Minister's summit in Canberra last year. Setting politics aside, I praised the summit on radio and said both at the time and after that every delegate from each state delivered a single message to the federal government when asked what regional Australia needed most — infrastructure support. The federal Leader of the National Party, John Anderson, set up a working party, chaired by Professor Chudleigh. His report went to the federal government, and what was the one thing it said the federal government had to do more about?

Honourable Members — Infrastructure!

Mr BRUMBY — Infrastructure. The Bracks government is providing the leadership with that through its Regional Infrastructure Development Fund.

In its first budget the Bracks government is committed to spending more on infrastructure than the federal government has committed for the whole of Australia. That is the comparison and the reason this government is so bitterly disappointed in the federal budget.

I have been a member of federal Parliament in both government and opposition and I can give the federal government some advice — get into the infrastructure

business. The honourable member for Murray Valley knows the importance of infrastructure.

The leaders of the state National and Liberal parties are not prepared to proffer a view or take on their federal colleagues. They are not prepared to back Victoria!

If one looks at another project, the Bracks government committed — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! While I am sure the Minister for State and Regional Development is enjoying the support from his own side, there is an appropriate noise level which allows the speaker to be heard, which is currently not the case.

Mr BRUMBY — Madam Deputy Speaker, that departure has totally ruined my day and it will take me some time to get over it!

To take another example, the Bracks government has committed \$40 million to the conversion of the standard rail gauge in Victoria if the federal government will match the amount. The project has a long history. The former Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party, Tim Fischer, and the then Minister for Agriculture, Mark Vaille, were both strong supporters of the project. It is a project which promotes nation building and efficient, export opportunities. It is a positive cost-benefit ratio.

Mr Steggall interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — There's an intelligent question. We could just put one rail down, but we'd like to build two!

Here is a true story. On Saturday I was in the Benalla electorate, where all Labor members have been spending some time because of the forthcoming by-election. I had already spent a good deal of time in Benalla before that focus was placed on the town. A prominent member of the National Party in the north-east — not a member of Parliament, but honourable members can probably work out who the person is — approached me to talk about the standard gauge rail line issue. He said, 'John, we want you to know from my point of view what a great job you and the Bracks government are doing in trying to rebuild infrastructure in country Victoria. We back you 100 per cent on what you are trying to do with rail infrastructure. In fact, we put a motion through the state National Party conference recently to back you 100 per cent on this and to call on the federal government to

provide funds. All strength to your arm'. He said more about the current Leader of the National Party, but it would be quite inappropriate for me to divulge details of the conversation here.

The government and well-meaning people of all political persuasions from across the state are prepared to back the project. The only people who have their heads in the sand — they want to build half the rail line but not the double track! — are the Leader of the National Party and his deputy who will not take on their federal colleagues to put Victoria's interest first. They will not say, 'Back the project in the interest of Victoria because it is a nation-building exercise'.

I listened to the earlier contributions to the debate of the shadow Treasurer and Leader of the National Party. The two of them spent about 2 hours saying a seven-letter word: nothing! They did not have one new idea for the state. On not one occasion did they put aside party politics and say, 'It's a good initiative or budget'. Seven months after going back into opposition they have not learnt that the fundamental issue behind the budget is to put the state's interests first. I say to both, 'When you get a good budget, acknowledge it's good — don't put politics first'.

What have people said throughout country Victoria about the first Bracks budget? The *Weekly Times* of 3 May carries the headline 'A fair share' and in its editorial, under the heading 'Rural initiative a good start for Bracks government', states:

But, for country voters who have been forced to listen to previous governments long on rhetoric and short on promises, it was a welcome change.

Indeed it was! The *Age* of 3 May carried the headline 'Bracks repays bush'. The editorial in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* of 8 May is headed 'A promising state budget' and states, in part:

Last week's state budget is an attempt to restore the imbalance between city and country, and should have positive psychological effects even in the likelihood that promised initiatives do not meet our expectations.

Page 1 of the *Ballarat Courier* carried the headline 'Fair share for country areas'. Page 2 listed all the details. The *Geelong Advertiser* of 3 May states:

Geelong schools have emerged as big winners from the Bracks government's first budget, with millions of dollars promised for upgrades and new facilities.

Other big winners in Geelong were hospitals, roads and emergency services.

The headline in the *Border Mail* of 3 May reads 'Copter for north east', which refers to the new

helicopter. The subheading reads 'Election pledge finally fulfilled'.

Yet, yesterday the opposition whinged, moaned, carped and groaned about Essendon Airport. I have read the newspapers this morning. I thought there may have been a small mention in a hidden column about the airport. I thought opposition members would have been talking about infrastructure in north-east Victoria — about the new helicopter, new roads, new schools or new hospitals — but, no, they were talking about a piece of infrastructure in Melbourne. It got them nowhere!

The *Shepparton News* of 3 May carried the headline 'Bracks spends big'. The article states, in part:

The needs of country Victoria were well recognised in yesterday's state budget announcement with a \$170 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund to be launched.

An article in the 3 May edition of the *Courier* is headlined 'VFF happy with budget' and states:

The VFF is pleased with the state budget delivered last week.

The *Warrnambool Standard* of 3 May headline reads 'Relief on the way for rural Victoria'. The article states:

... yesterday's state budget seemed to go a long way in helping, with millions of dollars set aside for projects and plans focusing on regional infrastructure, development and projects and economic opportunities.

Another article in the same newspaper is headed 'New package benefits Colac'. The country edition of the *Age* of 3 May has the headline 'Faith repaid with boosts to health, roads, education'.

An article in the *Geelong Advertiser* of the same date is headed 'Good for business' and states:

Geelong Chamber of Commerce executive director Lawrie Miller said yesterday the state budget was good for business, and it would restore confidence in the Bracks government ...

I could spend hours reading the state's newspapers. Why are all the country newspapers, the Victorian Farmers Federation and country councils saying the budget is fantastic? The only people whingeing, whining and talking it down are those in the National and Liberal parties — and today, the shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the National Party.

The budget has what I call a new start for country Victoria. But it is more than that, it is as though the state has had a breath of fresh air! But it will take some years; you cannot reverse seven years of decline and neglect overnight. The whole rebuilding process — rebuilding infrastructure, confidence, and regaining lost

investment necessary for the state to grow — will not happen overnight. The foundation or platform put in place by the Bracks government through the budget will mean a new start and new opportunities for country Victoria.

I remind the house about the former government. Government is about attitude and vision. I remember that about a week before last year's state election horsemen and horsewomen rode into Melbourne as part of a ride for the future. They had ridden from the country, through Gippsland and were coming to Melbourne to pass on the grievances of country Victoria. They carried with them many letters and petitions for the government about what needed to happen so country Victoria would get a fair go and a fair share.

As the then shadow minister I met them on the steps of Parliament House and accepted some of their material. They handed over their grievances to the Serjeant-at-Arms and representatives of the then government. I repeat that that occurred only a few days before the election, when the former government lost 9 seats — 8 to the Australian Labor Party and 1 to an Independent.

The Kennett government was given more than 200 letters — but it ignored them! It has come to my attention that the letters have been found in the last couple of days; they were dumped in the office of the then Premier's chief of staff or personal assistant. They were flung aside where they could not be seen and, it was hoped, probably never found. They stayed there until they were found in an office clean-up yesterday by a member of the Premier's office staff. The people from Gippsland came to talk to the elected government and handed over more than 200 letters. But the Premier gave them to a junior assistant, who shoved them down the back of a desk and hoped they would never be found or answered.

They were never referred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the agriculture ministry or the Department of State and Regional Development. Those people — the Lone Rider, Linette Treasure and all the others, including the people from the Wonnangatta Valley, meant nothing to the former government and the former Treasurer. They were bits of paper, a minor inconvenience to be stuffed down the side of the desk two days before the election. They were the toenails. The former government could not care less.

I conclude by saying that the budget is financially responsible and gets the balance right. It has a strong surplus of \$592 million; it pays down debt; and it pays

out unfunded superannuation liabilities. The state's liabilities, which used to run through to 2050, have now been brought back to 2035. There is new spending, including an increase of 5.2 per cent targeted to the real needs in our community — health, education, the building of skills and the growing of the whole state. It includes \$400 million of tax relief for business over the next three years. All the features are there.

Paying down debt, reducing unfunded superannuation liabilities, growing the whole of the state and targeting key service areas — the budget delivers them all. It is a credit to the Premier and Treasurer, the economic review committee and the whole of caucus, which got behind the process. It shows what you can do if you have a vision of growing the whole of the state and wanting opportunities for all Victorians, not just a few.

The government has delivered and is getting on with the job. There is a breath of fresh air across the state. Now we will see some real optimism and confidence throughout country Victoria.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) — I thank the Minister for Finance for his 20-minute presentation and am amazed that a person in his position can spend 10 minutes addressing the house by reading from newspapers. Not so long ago a former Labor member in this place, Tom Roper — some of the older government members might still remember him — made strong comments about honourable members who read from newspapers to fill out major speeches.

I am disappointed by the offering of the Minister for Finance as well as by the earlier presentation by the Premier and Treasurer. Honourable members have still heard nothing about real direction or philosophy or where the government is going, apart from a little today from the honourable member for Dandenong North. I appreciated his comments and the philosophy behind them.

The Labor Party perpetuates a myth about life in country Victoria. That is annoying to honourable members on this side of the house, particularly as it was a factor in the recent election loss. The perpetuation of the myth continues today because there has been no mention of the \$440 million program for infrastructure for 270 small towns that was stopped when the new government came in, thus robbing some of those small towns of investment opportunities. I suggest to the Minister for Finance that he might like to talk to the Minister for Environment and Conservation and get her to shake a leg. She needs to get some of those projects completed so that investment and development can again take place.

I take issue with the Minister for Finance also on standard gauge rail lines — an important issue, especially for north-western Victoria. Government contributors to the debate talk about planning, growth and development, but they should stop and think a little about what they mean. The Minister for Finance, for example, claims the government will spend \$40 million at some time in the future on a standard gauge rail upgrade, but only if the federal government contributes as well — so there is a risk factor in it. In north-western Victoria over recent years there has been much debate and discussion about getting a standard gauge link between Mildura and the port cities of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne.

Substantial planning has been done, and it is clear that the most needed section of such a link is the stretch between Lascelles and Hopetoun. The standard gauge upgrades achieved by Victorian governments amount to the addition of one line — the duplication of the line between Sydney and Melbourne. A lot of good work has been done and a lot of goodwill exists out there in the hope that the rail upgrades will happen. The debate goes on, but in northern Victoria the standard gauge is vital.

I note that the honourable member for Mildura is in the house. In the north-west one of the things that has got lost in politics in the past few years is a passenger service to Mildura. A train to carry passengers is not the point; the problem is getting a decent railway line through to Mildura so that passenger trains can run on it.

Proper infrastructure is vital to growth in the food and wine industries, as well as sandmining, the new industry coming into north-western Victoria. I support the government in its efforts to provide that. However, I am not happy to hear the Minister for Finance say that the \$40 million for the standard gauge upgrade will be spent only if the federal government comes to the party. That is a cop-out. The former government spent some \$20 million in its early years on standard gauge upgrades to link Melbourne and Adelaide. It is high time that work continued in the north.

In the few minutes that remain to me I wish to concentrate on what the budget will achieve in agriculture. As honourable members know, an additional \$637 million of recurrent expenditure has been allocated in the budget. The government feels so deeply for country Victoria and believes so much in its development and growth that it has put a whole \$7 million into agriculture! Some \$5.5 million of that funding will go towards scientific research, which is applauded. The previous government did much

planning in Mildura, Sunraysia and Horsham, so that funding is welcome.

The budget also allocates some \$2 million for the Naturally Victorian marketing initiative, which follows on from the agribusiness policies of the previous government. The additional \$2 million is going into an initiative of the former government that has been rebadged as Naturally Victorian. I have no problems with that. What the government is doing is good. It picks up and follows on from the work of the previous government in trying to grow and develop agriculture.

The previous government took the export production of the Victorian food industries from \$2 billion a year in 1992 to a target figure next year of \$6 billion, which I trust will be achieved, and a subsequent target figure for 2010 of \$12 billion. The Labor Party has made a great song and dance about how it kept those targets. I applaud it for that, because the increase in export production is one of the great successes of the previous government. However, the Labor Party has fudged it. When it said it would seek to achieve the targets set by the previous government it forgot to tell everyone that it had decided to add fibre exports. We now have a \$12 billion target figure for food and fibre exports in 2010. That in itself is a real let-down, because the previous government achieved a significant growth figure for country Victoria.

The government talks about the need for socially responsible initiatives and the advantages in promoting development, but the real way governments can help country Victoria is by making proper use of its natural resources and growing and developing Victoria's market share throughout Australia and the rest of the world.

The Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment would be aware of the great need in country Victoria for education and training programs and the hard work of the previous government in setting up such programs. I hope she will continue putting those programs in place so that country people can acquire the skills necessary to drive and develop the food and fibre industries. With the exception of her support for private providers, she has shown she is taking the right direction. In many ways she has picked up on the work done by the previous government in trying to bring the tertiary education sector into country areas.

The other issue I wish to mention concerns the Snowy River. I notice the honourable member for Gippsland East is missing from the chamber. The restoration of environmental flows in the Snowy River is welcome,

but to ensure that honourable members on the government benches are able to understand the issue I will outline the significant amount of work done by the previous government over the past two to three years. That work started with the previous government establishing the bulk entitlement process in the Murray–Darling Basin. Part of that process was to restore flows in the Snowy River.

It became a political issue only during the last election campaign, and it is interesting that the government has picked up the Woorinen irrigation project and is providing funding for it. For the past two and a half years I have chaired the public working group for that project. The opposition thanks the government for that funding. The proposal for the funding was put forward for the first time in spring last year so that it could be allocated in this budget. I repeat that I am delighted the government has picked up that project.

The people in the Snowy River region may find it rather strange that the majority of funding allocated for the Snowy River initiative will be spent in Swan Hill. That is because the government obviously intends to take advantage of the saving of 2000 megalitres of water that will be achieved by the infrastructure upgrade in the Woorinen irrigation district to direct more flows into the Snowy River. The Snowy River restoration program will begin from the funding in this budget.

The budget also allocates \$2 million to assist with the work being done in northern Victoria to explore ways to increase water savings so as to direct more flows into the Snowy. The funding includes the \$1.3 million the government announced recently for instream works in the Snowy River region. That is how the initiative will work. The initiative has been in the pipeline for the past two and a half years and is now being delivered. It will result in a benefit and a win for all Victorians.

The previous government allocated an initial \$12.5 million for a program called Growing Horizons, which was to be boosted in this year's budget to \$25 million. It is of great concern to me and others that unfortunately the Labor government has decided not to increase the funding to assist with agricultural research and development. I have listened to the rhetoric of the government, but it needs to be understood that the story about country Victoria that is being spread around Melbourne by metropolitan media, journalists and politicians is a myth.

I keep hearing people talk about how great the budget is and what it is doing for major areas of economic activity in country Victoria. Research and development,

agriculture and food production are such major areas because Victoria produces food and fibre for export. That is why the Growing Horizons program was so important. It is disappointing to see cuts in that area. Budget funding of that area of activity has been halved at a time when Australians are facing biotechnological and genetic modification of foods, plants and animals. The government is virtually cutting out projected projects in those areas of activity. I express my great disappointment in the Minister for Agriculture.

I have heard people say, 'You should have stood up and done that'. I wonder what has happened with the Labor government's budget and where the Minister for Agriculture sits in the pecking order. It is a great loss that the budget does not provide for growth in research and development. It is true that the media both in Melbourne and country areas have talked about what a great show the budget is. I have looked at the budget and from the point of view of my electorate it has delivered nearly everything that the government planned for — school upgrades in Wedderburn, Robinvale and Swan Hill were all funded, and planning work for the hospital was funded. I thank the government for that.

However, the message I convey on behalf of my country community is that the only other thing the Swan Hill electorate received apart from funding for the Woorinen irrigation district was a police station at Birchip. A long planning process was involved in that because it got caught up in and had to be freed from native title issues, which was achieved last year.

Planning for major projects and major directional thrusts is vital for country Victorians. I do not believe governments of any persuasion will ever deliver projects into country areas without planning. I would hope that will happen through the work of local government and economic development units.

I turn to the issue of lost opportunities. The government is skiting about a budget that has been funded by a budget surplus of \$1.3 billion. In many ways it is a budget of shadows because it is difficult to track the direction of some of the funding. I turn to look at areas to which I would have liked to see funding allocated given the extra funds that are available at this time in the state's history.

I would have liked to have seen funding for research and development. The budget contains nothing to provide for the development of alternative automotive fuels through the ethanol program and other similar programs. The high cost of diesel and liquefied petroleum gas in rural Victoria is a signal — the price

of diesel will be coming down soon — that alternative fuels should be developed in rural areas. The production of ethanol on a regional basis provides rural employment, cuts fuel costs for country businesses and reduces greenhouse emissions.

At the very least the budget should fund research into suitable feed stocks for Victorian conditions, the blending of ethanol with conventional fuels and flexible-fuelled vehicles. Nothing is being done about those issues, even though there is much capacity in country areas, particularly in Victoria, to produce such products. That was the direction in which developments were heading, and there was a hope that the budget would provide for such industries. It is not easy to find people in Melbourne who would support such development, because it would occur a long way from Collins Street and Spring Street.

Another missed opportunity concerns finding alternative sources of energy and biomass. Interestingly \$5 million has been granted for the repayable solar grants scheme. That is a good initiative, but it is unfortunate the Labor government did not extend the concept further to the development of biomass technology for low-polluting transportation fuels, electricity and commercial products. It is interesting that the United States of America has assessed that its developing biomass industries will greatly increase income for rural communities and reduce greenhouse gases. That is something Victoria should work towards.

The budget contains nothing in regard to water desalination. Other countries are considering water desalination programs and looking at the management and science issues that go with it.

I refer to infrastructure upgrading. I have already mentioned Woorinen, but other areas such as Robinvale, Red Cliffs, Merbein, and Mildura have old First Mildura Irrigation Trust infrastructure that was built in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and has reached its use-by date. I am disappointed that the budget contributes nothing towards the replacement of that infrastructure. When I heard that the government was looking at joint ventures with the private sector to develop fast rail links I had hoped it would also look at the irrigation areas of northern Victoria — it can happen in other areas as well — that have an income stream that would allow that type of operation to work. For country Victoria one hell of an opportunity has been lost in that regard.

In closing, I refer to a worry I have over an issue mentioned by the Leader of the National Party — that is, the sustainable financial direction of the budget. It

seems that in four years the state will have a cash deficit. It causes me great concern that the budget of shadows was not funded in a sustainable manner to give people confidence that their investments will not be eroded as they were under the previous Labor government in the 1980s.

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — It is tough in opposition, and my heart goes out opposition members, particularly the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the shadow Treasurer, for having had to find holes in and criticisms of the budget.

I can remember making budget speeches when in opposition during the long, dark years of the Kennett government. I would go down my check list. I would look at the reception of the budget and whether the figures added up, at the balance between surplus and expenditure, at debt levels and at long-term versus short-term objectives. I would always have something to talk about. I would always be able to find holes in the Stockdale budgets, whether they related to continual overestimations of expenditure, continual underestimations of revenues, hidden surpluses or dodgy, rubbery figures. But what has the opposition found in this budget? Where are they?

I will go to the top of the list. The opposition struggled hard to find a media outlet that gave the budget a poor reception. Compare that to the reception accorded the federal Costello budget, which was released the other day. The instant response to the federal budget has been that the figures are rubbery and that the surplus is based on an inadequate treatment of the sale of the mobile phone network. There was instant scepticism and concern about how the federal government went about calculating its budget.

The state budget received universal applause. The only partly negative article appeared in the *Australian Financial Review*. There was universal applause throughout the state — across the metropolitan area and around the bush.

The government got it right on the short-term objectives versus the long-term objectives. It got the surplus-versus-expenditure initiatives right. It got the combination of reflating services and tax cuts right. What plaudits! It is gratifying to hear people such as the honourable member for Swan Hill giving plaudits where they are due.

The honourable member for Dandenong North likened the situation to the secret meeting of the Judean Liberation Front in the movie *Life of Brian*, when its members were plotting against the government and

saying, 'What have the Romans ever done for us? They have given us a surplus, infrastructure, roads — they are doing really well'.

It really is a struggle for opposition members. The two National Party speakers on the budget had to say, 'Well, they gave us the schools we wanted. They gave us what we wanted in our electorates; the things we expected and hoped for were delivered'. So they asked themselves, 'What can we say about it?' and decided, 'Well, we can talk about Essendon Airport and Mount McKay' — and other such devastatingly huge issues that they desperately trawled through the budget to find.

There is palpable pain and frustration among opposition members today. One could see the first signs of it when the Treasurer delivered the budget speech. In the back row of the opposition benches one could almost hear opposition members saying, 'But it's our money. We want it. What are they doing?'. Don't they wish they had brought in a budget like this? Don't they wish they had stood up to Alan Stockdale and Jeff Kennett and said, 'Hang on — the obsession with the past has to stop, as does the obsession and moral rectitude that caused the cutbacks, the slashing, the driving of the public sector into the ground'. Honourable members wish they had stood up and said, 'Hang on, Jeff — enough is enough! If we keep going with this, the community will rebel and we could be in big trouble'.

However, honourable members opposite did not stand or speak up and they lost the election, and that is why they are sitting over there and we are over here.

Don't they wish they could have got their hands on that surplus and done something useful with it! Where was the surplus? As Terry McCrann said, Alan Stockdale had it anally retained! What a dreadful prospect — trying to get your hands on that surplus and doing something with it. What an awful task it would have been! The continuous overestimation of expenditure and underestimation of receipts left the significant surplus that gave a decent, caring, perceptive, consultative and strategic government the opportunity to reflate Victoria and end the cold, dark and bleak years for the Victorian community. It allowed the government to put some money back into services such as police, teachers and hospital beds for a depleted, saddened, disenchanted and demoralised Victorian community.

And hasn't the community embraced the new government! One can see those essential characteristics manifested in the budget: the fiscal responsibility, the careful balance between the long and short-term objectives, the setting aside of significant funds for

infrastructure for the long term, the setting of the strategic balance of growth right across the state, the end to the Melbourne-centric cultural icons that so disenchant and demoralise country Victorians, and a range of investments in the state across all portfolios.

The Bracks government will reflate the critical services that Victorians rely on in their daily lives and provide an adequate level of resourcing for schools to end the downward spiral that saw Victoria fall from being the best-funded, highest-expenditure state per capita on education to the lowest-expenditure state in the country under the former Kennett government. The Kennett government considered education expenditure a liability and not an investment or asset. That extraordinarily short-sighted policy caused retention rates to plummet. Another result is that the marginalisation of young people grows more acute, as I have seen only too clearly in my electorate. The Bracks government will restore accountable, democratic and transparent processes across government.

It is refreshing to see the Auditor-General's comments at the front of the budget, endorsing the methodology and agreeing that the assumptions behind the budget are reasonable. It is a great pleasure to see the budget presented as it has been.

The test of a budget for any honourable member adequately representing his or her electorate is how it impacts on that electorate. I have been gratified to see that in my electorate of Footscray significant expenditure has been allocated for key services, including an additional 14 beds at the Western Hospital; significant capital investment in the Victoria University of Technology's Nicholson Street campus, the Footscray City Secondary College and the Dinjerra Primary School; and a significant upgrade of the Footscray railway station, one of the key hubs of the public transport network in the western suburbs.

I particularly note how the budget will address the key social issue of heroin in my electorate — the scourge taking a toll on the lives of young people in my electorate and across the western suburbs. In the 12 months to the end of last year, 29 people in my electorate lost their lives.

I look at the budget and think, 'What will happen to address that serious issue and make inroads into tackling the problem?'. There are a number of key issues. Some \$75 million has been allocated for specific drug strategies. I expect and am assured that a significant proportion of that sum will be spent in Footscray to assist with local strategies. Some \$22.5 million of that will be spent on prevention

programs in schools and the community. The key aspect of the drug strategy will be prevention programs.

A number of strategies in the budget will provide hope to young people and reduce the dreadful correlation of poverty, unemployment, hopelessness, homelessness, demoralisation and marginalisation of young people that in many cases inexorably leads down the path of drug addiction.

Other key expenditures include \$55 million for student welfare assistance in secondary schools; \$20 million for school nurses in secondary schools; and \$158 million for job creation and additional apprenticeships and traineeships. That funding is a light at the end of the tunnel for young people. It gives them hope and encourages them to say that staying at school is worth while because there is a clear pathway ahead. It means they can get on with their lives and resist the marginalisation they could so easily fall into.

Some \$34 million has been allocated for diversion programs for young offenders. People in my electorate and others complain about injecting rooms. Injecting rooms provide a clear pathway into treatment, detoxification and rehabilitation services. However, the diversion programs I am referring to will be more significant than that. An example is the recent police announcement that first offenders and young people found with non-trafficable amounts of heroin will be diverted straight into programs. The program was trialled in Broadmeadows and proved to be an outstanding success. I look forward to it taking full effect.

The community is screaming out for a greater police presence. The allocation of \$64 million to recruit 800 new police will create a renewed sense of confidence and security as people go about their daily lives.

The many millions of dollars invested by the government in prevention and treatment programs includes \$7.5 million for the controversial supervised injecting rooms. I appeal to honourable members opposite to give the proposal a fair go, treat it objectively and be driven by the data, the evidence, and by compassion. They should look at the proposal and ask, 'Will it save lives? Will people use the rooms?'.

An additional \$45 million will be spent on treatment, detoxification and rehabilitation programs to assist people to get off drugs and get their lives back on track. That is the essential objective of the strategy and the key area of expenditure.

Anyone who listens to Steve Price and Neil Mitchell on 3AW could be forgiven for thinking that there is a huge community reaction against injecting rooms, that the tide of opinion has changed and that credible, intelligent and respected authorities are turning away from that strategy. I appeal to honourable members opposite to listen to the sources of authority and examine the research.

The Law Institute of Victoria has recently endorsed the supervised injecting facility strategy. At its recent council meeting a series of recommendations endorsing those facilities were passed. The Institution of Engineers Australia conducted a survey of 600 business leaders and announced that it supported the government's decision to proceed with a trial of safe injecting facilities. The institution also encouraged bipartisan political support for the facilities. Some 78 per cent of respondents to that survey regarded supervised injecting facilities favourably.

The Victorian branch of the Australian Medical Association supported measures such as the decriminalisation of possession of small amounts of cannabis and the establishment of and research into supervised injecting facilities and prescribed heroin trials. Interested people were invited to call Dr Michael Sedgley, the AMA Victoria president, to receive his endorsement of that strategy.

The Youth Substance Abuse Service, a highly respected group led by Paul McDonald, an outstanding young Victorian, conducted a survey replicated in my local area by the needle exchange workers. The results showed that around 80 per cent of heroin users would use injecting rooms. Neil Mitchell thinks the rooms will not work because addicts will not use them. However, users were asked and the result was positive.

The Australian Drug Foundation pleads with the opposition to give safe injecting facilities a fair trial. The director, Mr Geoff Munro, says that if the opposition votes the proposal down it denies those communities the opportunity to have a say in responding to problems in their own local areas.

Members of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) — not a traditional supporter of Labor governments, more aligned with the opposition — have overwhelmingly endorsed the first report of the government's Drug Expert Advisory Committee and support the government's integrated strategy.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians has endorsed the strategy and asks that it receive a fair go.

My plea on behalf of my electorate and the families, friends and neighbours of the 29 young people who lost their lives last year is to give it a fair trial. We should start repairing the damage to our communities and stop people losing their lives. We should all be involved in an integrated strategy that will make progress in that area.

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2000/2001) Bill.

I am gravely disappointed about Labor's failure to adhere to one of its six key pledges it made prior to the last election. Labor promised to provide a budget surplus every year that was overseen by an independent Auditor-General with new constitutional powers. Labor's election document entitled *Financial Responsibility — Getting the Budget Basics Right* states:

A budget surplus guarantee

Labor's commitment to a budget surplus is a firm guarantee to all Victorians.

Mr Nardella — Tick! Done!

Mr WELLS — The document continues:

It will be secured by giving an independent Auditor-General strong new powers of scrutiny over the budget outcomes and adherence to Labor's financial management commitments.

Mr Nardella — We've got that one right.

Mr WELLS — Continuing:

In particular, the Auditor-General will be empowered to:

Report to Parliament on state budget day as to whether Labor has met its commitment to maintain an operating surplus ...

I am waiting on the honourable member for Melton to give that one a tick, because if he gave this one a tick in relation to the pledge regarding maintaining an operating surplus, the honourable member obviously has not read the Auditor-General's report.

The Auditor-General's report is a slap in the face for the Labor government because nowhere does it mention the words 'operating surplus'.

Ms Kosky — Be very, very careful!

Mr WELLS — I am being very, very careful, because nowhere does it mention the words 'operating surplus'. To add insult to injury to the Victorian community, Steve Bracks's business card was

letter-boxed to all areas where Labor thought it would get in. It states:

Labor's pledges for Victorians. As a first step for making Victoria a better place I offer six pledges. They are responsible, affordable and long overdue.

The statement is signed by Steve Bracks. I remind honourable members that Labor's first pledge was:

Provide a budget surplus every year, overseen by an independent Auditor-General with new constitutional powers.

The Treasurer's message in the overview of the budget states:

This budget also marks a further step forward towards restoring openness and greater accountability in government. In a world first, the Auditor-General has independently reviewed the budget — setting new standards in financial transparency and accountability.

One of the main concerns about the Financial Management (Financial Responsibility) Act, which was introduced by the Labor government in April — I know that the honourable member for Dandenong North and I spoke on this, although we were speaking on different terms — was that it did not incorporate the election promise. All of a sudden it had been watered down and omitted. The promise was:

... the Auditor-General will be empowered to:

Report to Parliament on state budget day as to whether Labor has met its commitment to maintain operating surplus ...

The honourable member for Dandenong North knows the act made no mention of an operating surplus as part of the stated principles of sound financial management as outlined in section 23D(1) and (2).

Labor's election promise that the Auditor-General would report on the maintenance of the operating surplus has now been changed to read:

... the Auditor-General's principal role will be to review the integrity of the economic assumptions and estimated financial statements incorporated in the budget ... and he will do that on budget day.

Prior to the election Labor pledged it would ensure that the independent Auditor-General would report to Parliament about guaranteeing the budget surplus. However, the pledge has been watered down as above. What an absolute disgrace! Nowhere in the Auditor-General's report does he mention the term 'guaranteed operating surplus'. He does not even talk about maintaining the operating surplus.

During debate on the Audit (Amendment) Bill members of the Liberal Party warned the government

that the role of the Auditor-General was to audit historical figures against accounting standards. We were not sure how the government expected the Auditor-General to audit a budget. A budget is a plan, it forecasts and estimates, and at that stage no-one knows how that money will be spent. The Auditor-General cannot be placed in the awkward position of having to try and audit that. The government did not and does not understand the role of an auditor.

During the debate on the Financial Management (Financial Responsibility) Bill I made a tongue-in-cheek comment and asked, 'What is the Labor government expecting the Auditor-General to audit against?'. I went on to say, 'Maybe someone will ring New Zealand and find out how they do it over there and get them to fax over some of the accounting principles so he can relate his figures to something'. The compliance framework relating to the estimated financial statements contained in budget paper no. 2 states at page 201:

In accordance with Australian GAAP, all applicable Australian accounting standards (AASs) have been applied in the preparation and presentation of estimated financial statements. However, as there is no specific AAS or other Australian authoritative pronouncement on the preparation and presentation of prospective financial statements, AAS 6 *Accounting Policies* permits the application of pronouncements of other national accounting standard setting bodies. Because Australian and New Zealand accounting standards are closely harmonised, the major requirements of New Zealand financial reporting standard (FRS 29) *Prospective Financial Information* have been applied in presenting the estimated financial statements.

Something I joked about in regard to the Financial Management (Financial Responsibility) Act — that is, that the government would ring someone in New Zealand and have a copy sent over — is what the government has done. I cannot understand why the Treasurer allowed the New Zealand precedent to be used here.

Accounting standards are not used here for budget statements because that alters the Auditor-General's role of auditing historical figures. Currently he does not audit future figures.

The Auditor-General's Report — which the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment is keen on — states:

The review has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards applicable to review engagements, and has been limited primarily to inquiries of relevant personnel and assessments of the reasonableness of the key methodologies and processes followed to determine the assumptions and data upon which the estimated financial statements are based, and appropriate analytical procedures.

These procedures do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, thus the level of assurance provided is less than that which would be given in an audit. Accordingly, an audit has not been performed and an audit opinion is not expressed.

Finally, the report states:

Accordingly, an opinion is not expressed on whether the forecasts will be achieved.

The promise that the Auditor-General would report to Parliament on guaranteeing and maintaining an operating surplus has been completely forgotten. Perhaps the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment can point out where the Auditor-General honours the election promise of the Labor Party in the report that makes up part of the budget. He does not! His reporting has been limited. He talks about not having enough information and being unable to offer an opinion.

The opposition warned the government in two previous debates — on the Audit (Amendment) Bill and the Financial Management (Financial Responsibility) Act — that the Auditor-General could not achieve what he was being asked to do. He says in the government documents that he has not been able to deliver what was required. That is the first election pledge to the people of Victoria broken.

A report in the *Age* of 5 May states:

Auditor-General Wayne Cameron yesterday gave a heavily qualified assessment of the Bracks government's first budget.

If an auditor gave a heavily qualified assessment of any financial reports in the private sector the shareholders would be up in arms. The report states also:

Mr Cameron reported the statements appeared to be properly prepared and consistent with the budget assumptions and targets. But he said his report was a review, 'not an audit'.

It is incredibly disappointing. The Auditor-General can only review a budget. He can only review the financial statements, but they are estimates of what will take place in the future. By its nature, auditing is analytical, dealing with actual accounting results that can be related to accounting standards. Hopefully the message will get through to the government so that when it presents the budget next year it will not embarrass the position of the Auditor-General.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Health care networks: ministerial review

Mr DOYLE (Malvern) — Will the Minister for Health advise the house how much it will cost to implement the *Ministerial Review of Health Care Networks — Final Report*.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — Although I thank the honourable member for Malvern for his question, I am amused that the opposition would seek to raise the Duckett report into hospital networks. The *Ministerial Review of Health Care Networks — Final Report* is a damning indictment of the Kennett government in the health area. It clearly indicates that Victoria's hospitals were bankrupted by the policies of the former government. This is extremely serious, and I quote from the review:

There has been a significant reduction in the sector's net current assets, from \$76 million in 1992–93 to negative \$12.5 million at the end of December 1999.

The report goes on:

The previous government was warned by the Attorney-General of the grave situation in relation to liquidity.

The previous government dismissed this report as irrelevant and biased.

The previous government dismissed the Auditor-General's report, but the report to which the honourable member refers — the Duckett report — went on to say that the Auditor-General's observation had been proved to be prescient. In other words, instead of nobbling the Auditor-General and destroying our hospital sector, the previous government should have listened to him.

In relation to finances, I quote directly from the report:

The current financial stresses are a result of the last seven years of funding policy and the substantial program of cost savings introduced ...

Mr Doyle — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I am perfectly happy for the minister to read the entire report into the record, but I would like him to tell the house where in its 170 pages it says how much it will cost to implement the report — which was my question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The minister was being relevant in his answer. Although he has only been speaking for 2½ minutes I remind the minister of the requirement to be succinct.

Mr THWAITES — I am pleased to advise the honourable member that at page 7 of the report Professor Duckett identifies savings of \$18 million as a result of the changes. As the honourable member for Malvern has asked about the issue I will list the savings identified: the elimination of network overheads in the Inner and Eastern Health Care Network and the North Western Health Care Network; the revised internal management model for new metropolitan health services; and the reduction in health care network consultancies.

The previous government poured millions of dollars down the drain on consultancies, but this government will spend money on patients. Further savings identified in the report include reduced compliance costs; savings in the regional offices; savings in the head office; and major savings in joint supply. This government wants hospitals to adopt a collaborative approach instead of the competitive dog-eat-dog model. The previous government wanted to sell hospitals. This report indicates that hospitals can make savings by collaborating and making joint purchases of products. It recommends that, as a conservative estimate, some \$5 to \$6 million can be saved, although there may be even greater savings.

Mr Doyle — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I appreciate your earlier ruling, but the minister has now been speaking for 5 minutes. The question was quite clear; it was not about what the purported or imagined savings might or might not be but what — —

Mr THWAITES — It's what the report said.

Mr Doyle — What did the question say? I want the question answered.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the honourable member for Malvern that he is taking a point of order. He should not be questioning the minister across the table.

The point of order is clearly about the question of relevance. The honourable member for Malvern's question related to a particular health report, and in answering the question the minister is canvassing some of the issues in that report. However, I will not allow the minister to quote extensively from the report and I remind him that he must be succinct.

Mr THWAITES — The honourable member for Malvern is looking for a different report. He wants a report that says that the previous government managed the system well. This report is clearly a damning indictment of the Kennett government's management of the health system.

The report identifies the cost savings to be made. It also says we will save money as a result of the disaggregation of the health networks. I might also say — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not permit the minister to take this length of time. If he wishes to make a ministerial statement, he is welcome to do so. I ask him to be succinct and to conclude his answer.

Mr THWAITES — I conclude — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster! I remind the house that the minister has been interrupted on numerous occasions by at least two points of order and persistent interjections, particularly from the honourable member for Doncaster, who will cease interjecting.

Mr THWAITES — I conclude by commenting on the question relating to the financial issues. The report says that two networks are technically insolvent by any normal commercial criteria despite having sold their available investment assets and spending research funds that ought to be available to support research commitments.

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the question was simple and succinct: how much will it cost to implement the report? The minister has spent 7 or 8 minutes talking on the report in general but has said nothing about how much it will cost to implement the report. That is the answer to be given, but it has not been given.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. As I seem to have to keep reminding the house daily, the obligation on the Speaker is to ensure the minister is being relevant. The minister has been relevant and I will continue to hear him.

Mr THWAITES — The report indicates that savings are to be made. The opposition does not like the facts. The report also says that as a result of the previous government's policies, certain hospitals have had to transfer money from trust funds, which are meant to be used for research or for cancer patients and the like, to pay for the deficit these people opposite have caused.

I conclude with the words of the report, which states — —

Dr Napthine — You're not quoting from the report?

Mr THWAITES — I am quoting from the report:

... the review panel believes that the current health care networks have become too large and that there has been an undue emphasis on commercial viability at the expense of considerations such as quality of patient care.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has been lenient in allowing the minister to quote from the report. I have previously asked him not to extensively quote from it. If he continues to quote from it in that fashion, I will cease to hear him. The minister, concluding his answer.

Mr THWAITES — I will conclude by saying that this is an expert report that is a damning indictment on the previous government. The Bracks government, by contrast, is putting resources where they are needed — into the health system.

Business: investment

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I refer the Premier to comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, who talked down investment in Victoria by claiming that Mirvac had pulled out of its Docklands development and Alitalia had rejected Melbourne as a flight destination. Will the Premier inform the house whether those claims are accurate?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I am delighted to inform the house that this morning Mirvac announced it was proceeding with its \$1 billion Yarra Edge investment in Docklands.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Carrum.

Mr BRACKS — That is tremendous news for Victoria. It will be a great residential development and demonstrates a continuing commitment to invest in the community and the government. Already 75 buyers have purchased apartments in the development, which will, according to the press release by Mirvac this morning, create 1000 jobs over the next 10 years. That is good news for Victoria, by contrast with what the opposition claimed in Parliament last February, when the Leader of the Opposition said Mirvac had pulled out of Docklands.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order.

Mr BRACKS — At that time I informed the Leader of the Opposition that his statement was news to Mirvac — and, indeed, it was! It is as though the Leader of the Opposition has not learnt his lesson about poor research, because last Tuesday he told the house that Alitalia had chosen to fly to Sydney rather than to Melbourne. That was his claim. He suggested it was a new occurrence, with the clear implication that Melbourne had missed out. But as with the Mirvac situation, the Leader of the Opposition was again wrong.

I refer the house to an article in today's *Herald Sun* that quotes a press release from Alitalia:

Alitalia is mystified at state opposition claims it has chosen Sydney over Melbourne for its preferred Australian destination.

It further states:

But an Alitalia spokesman said it stopped Melbourne flights 18 months ago.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order, particularly the Minister for Finance.

Mr BRACKS — I urge the opposition to talk up the Victorian economy and investment. There is real growth in the Victorian economy. I am buoyed, as most Victorians are buoyed, by the decision by Mirvac. It will lead to further investment in Docklands, which is a positive outcome for Victoria.

Namarra Nursing Home

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I ask the Minister for Aged Care whether the Minister for Health passed on to her the complaints about the Namarra Nursing Home given to his office on or about 1 May?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Aged Care) — It is encouraging to note that those on the other side have a concern about residents in our nursing homes. As the house knows, in 1995 they were happy to abrogate their responsibility for monitoring standards of care and hand it to the commonwealth. They also went on an extensive program of selling them off to the private sector. It is also worth noting that the particular nursing home the house is concerned about is in the electorate of the shadow minister.

Mr Thwaites interjected.

Ms PIKE — Yes, she wanted to sell it off. Some of the allegations pre-date this term of government.

Mrs Shardey — On a point of order on the question of relevance, Mr Speaker, the minister's answer bears no relationship to the question I asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms PIKE — On the matter of investigations into allegations about the difficult and unfortunate circumstances in the nursing home in Caulfield, I note that several witnesses observed the shadow minister late last night after Parliament rose, tape recorder in hand, visiting the nurse who had made the allegations. She turned up on the nurse's doorstep!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting and to allow the minister to answer the question.

Ms PIKE — My department has commenced inquiries into the allegations made by a nurse at the Namarra Nursing Home. It has contacted the nurse and spoken to her at length. Management of the nursing home has also been formally requested to provide a detailed response — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington shall cease interjecting.

Ms PIKE — The agency responsible for monitoring standards of care is the Aged Care Standards Agency. The allegations were passed on to that agency. I am happy to table a letter from the standards agency stating in part that:

The team did not substantiate the allegations as reported.

Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, as I have indicated to the house, I take the allegations very seriously. The situation is of concern. There are a number of conflicting accounts and, even in light of the report produced by Bronwyn Bishop's own commonwealth care standards agency and continuing investigations, my office and my department have taken immediate actions to ensure that the allegations made by the former staff member are investigated.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk!

Calder Highway: federal funding

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — I refer the Minister for Transport to the federal Liberal–National party government's decision to slash Victoria's share of road funding and ask what the implications of that decision are for the planned duplication of the Calder Highway to Bendigo.

Mr Plowman interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Benambra!

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — Put simply, the federal government is proposing that work on the Calder Highway, that important piece of regional infrastructure, come to a grinding halt. The federal government proposes that no new work will commence on the duplication of the Calder Highway to Bendigo until at least the second half of 2005. All it will do in this year's budgetary period is complete the section to Woodend, which is almost finished already and is due for completion early next year.

The state government believes works along the Calder Highway should have been continued and works should commence on the Karlsruhe section when the Woodend section is completed. The necessary planning work has already been done, and the Bracks government has already made its commitment and put its money in.

Mr Leigh — You have not.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member for Mordialloc to cease interjecting.

Mr BATCHELOR — Why does the Leader of the Opposition continue to put up with such — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Transport should ignore interjections.

Mr BATCHELOR — I do ignore him. The Karlsruhe section is a narrow, winding length of highway sandwiched between two sections that have already been upgraded to allow speeds of 110 kilometres an hour. Construction of the highway should have continued to include the middle section. The federal government, however, does not want to participate with the state government in that project until the second half of 2005. The state government wanted the entire duplication completed by 2006, but it

cannot do that on its own. It can do it only if the federal government participates.

The Calder Highway is a road of national importance, so it needs both state and federal governments to contribute towards its cost. In its budget the state government provided funds for the upgrade of the Karlsruhe section — \$7 million for the forthcoming financial year and \$12 million for the following year — but it cannot do it alone. The Bracks government calls on the federal government to contribute its share.

New South Wales is receiving double Victoria's allocation, and Queensland will get 75 per cent more than us. The federal government has walked away from its responsibility to roads in Victoria, including highways of national significance and local roads and bridges. That is a disgrace!

Victoria needs to know why the federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services, who is a member of the National Party, has once again let the state down. The National Party does not care about rural Victoria.

Nursing homes: regulation

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I ask the Minister for Aged Care whether she is satisfied about the welfare of elderly residents in state nursing homes and that there are no outstanding complaints about any other nursing homes in Victoria.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Aged Care) — Again, I am genuinely astounded that a representative of the opposition is asking a question about standards of care in Victoria's nursing homes given that the opposition's primary objective when in government was to abrogate responsibility for people living in state nursing homes. It sold off those homes to the highest bidder, often in the private sector.

I am also surprised because honourable members on the other side said in Parliament that they would be horrified, they would be enormously surprised, if shifting responsibility for monitoring nursing homes to the commonwealth affected standards of care in nursing homes in Victoria.

As Minister for Aged Care I have enormous concern for residents in nursing homes in Victoria. Some serious allegations have been made about the standard of care at a nursing home in Caulfield. Yesterday I told the house that I took those matters very seriously and that I had arranged for immediate investigations. As I said before, the commonwealth's aged care accreditation and monitoring organisation has been to the home at the Victorian government's request and has

said that there are no matters that require further consideration.

But that is not good enough for me, so we are continuing with further investigations. We have written to the chief executive officer of the nursing home asking for a full, written response. We have already met with the person who made the allegations — —

Mrs Shardey — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I raise the question of relevance. My question related to nursing homes across the state and any outstanding complaints. The minister is not answering the question in a way that is relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair recalls that the question referred to the satisfaction of the minister concerning the welfare of elderly citizen residents. The minister was responding to that part of the question. She was being relevant. There is no point of order.

Ms PIKE — We are constantly monitoring standards of care across Victoria. We receive regular updates and information from the commonwealth government's accreditation agency, and we will act immediately on any allegations or concerns about standards of care in state government agencies and other places where older people are looked after — whether in the community, in hostels or in nursing homes.

City Link: Bolte Bridge

Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) — My question is to the Minister for Transport — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order. The Chair cannot understand the mirth, because the honourable member for Ballarat East has not asked a question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! One more offence by the honourable member for Benambra and I will ask him to leave the chamber.

Mr HOWARD — I refer the Minister for Transport to the former Premier's announcement last year of the naming of the major bridge in the City Link network, the Bolte Bridge, and I ask him to inform the house whether the snap decision of the former Premier was ever formalised.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — The joke may well end up on the other side after this answer!

Honourable members would be aware that the City Link project comprises a number of different sections, including the widened Tullamarine Freeway and the elevated roadway that make up the first section of the western link and the bridge over the Yarra, which comprises the second section of the western link.

Honourable members would also be aware that in April 1999 the former Premier announced that the new bridge over the Yarra River would be officially named the Bolte Bridge. I am sure they remember that.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — You say it is a good name.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — By the cabinet subcommittee, was it? Right. It has since come to my attention that the former Premier never delivered on that promise to name it the Bolte Bridge.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BATCHELOR — He never delivered on it; you know what I mean. Clearly the former Premier could not deliver on what he had promised to do. There is a procedural requirement under the City Link Act for the official naming of sections of the City Link project. It provides that the Minister for Environment and Conservation be requested to register the names under the Geographic Place Names Act. The former Premier would have been well aware of the requirement because he was intimately involved in drawing up the City Link legislation, but he never bothered to do it. Because of the sloppy administration of the previous government, the Bracks government — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATCHELOR — You want us to change the name, do you?

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister.

Mr BATCHELOR — The Bracks government must now address the issue. There is a major piece of infrastructure in the heart of Melbourne — it is a bridge with no name! Sir Henry Bolte was a controversial figure, and large sections of the community did not support the decision of the previous government to name the bridge after him. After all, he had serious problems with alcohol and drink driving.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I take personal offence at — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Will the house come to order, particularly the honourable member for Doncaster and the honourable member for Murray Valley. The honourable member for Mordialloc should wait until he is called by the Chair. The honourable member for Mordialloc, on a point of order.

Mr Leigh — Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the Minister for Transport in my opinion has just attacked one of Victoria's greatest Premiers. I ask him to withdraw — —

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Mordialloc continues to be a persistent offender in taking points of orders that are clearly not points of orders but are attempts to make a point in debate. I will cease hearing him immediately he starts a point of order if he begins debating an issue rather than raising a point of order. On this occasion he has offended again. There is no point of order.

Mr BATCHELOR — The government has decided to reject that argument, Mr Speaker, and to rightfully honour the contribution of Victoria's longest-serving Premier. To avoid confusion among motorists and other people it will ensure that the new bridge will be named the Bolte Bridge. Accordingly, today I have written to the Minister for Environment and Conservation asking that she place the name on the geographic place names register.

That is not the only section of the City Link project the former government neglected to name. I have also asked the Minister for Conservation and Environment to officially name the Domain Tunnel, the Burnley Tunnel and the Batman Avenue Bridge. Unlike the previous Kennett government, this government will do its job properly.

Namarra Nursing Home

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Aged Care. Given that the event in which an elderly resident was swarming with ants in a state-run nursing home, for which the minister is directly responsible, occurred in February this year and was followed by, firstly, a management meeting of staff about the issue, secondly, a report in the *Herald Sun*, thirdly, a complaint to the Office of the Public Advocate, and fourthly, a complaint almost two weeks ago to David in the office of the Minister for

Health, how does the minister explain that she is the last to know, and only acts after a whistleblower has the courage to expose the matter?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Aged Care) — I have already outlined to the house that the allegations — and they are allegations; they are allegations that have not been comprehensively investigated — regarding mistreatment of patients at the Namarra Nursing Home are of grave concern to me. That is why I have instituted a comprehensive investigation. I am awaiting the outcome of that investigation, as I have detailed to the house.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington will cease interjecting.

Manufacturing: rural Victoria

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — I refer the Minister for Manufacturing to the government's commitment to support manufacturing throughout Victoria. Will the minister inform the house of details of forums to be established to give Victorians in regional and rural Victoria an input into the government's plans to develop this critical industry, particularly in the textile, clothing, footwear and leather sectors?

Mr HULLS (Minister for Manufacturing Industry) — I thank the honourable member for her question and note her interest in manufacturing generally, and particularly in the TCF and L industries. She is aware — —

An Honourable Member — What is the 'L'?

Mr HULLS — Leather — textile, clothing, footwear and leather; you would know all about that.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Will the house come to order! Will the Deputy Leader of the Opposition cease interjecting! Will the minister cease inviting interjections across the table. The minister, answering the question.

Mr HULLS — The textile, clothing, footwear and leather industries are important to the Victorian economy and particularly crucial to the state's regional economy. Although about 7 per cent of Victoria's TCF and L firms are located in regional centres those firms account for 18 per cent of the state's TCF and L work force and about 20 per cent of the industry's turnover.

Victoria is also the home of the major education and research institutions for the industry, such as RMIT Textiles, Texskill, RMIT Fashion and the CSIRO.

As part of its commitment to growing the whole of the state together the Bracks government has embarked on a series of industry audits. The audits will lead to the development of industry plans designed to provide the foundation for the future development and growth of industry.

The first audit focuses on the TCF and L industries and it is well under way. The TCF industry was chosen because we believe it is an important industry, not only for Victoria but also for Australia, and the tariff pause and the \$700 million assistance package announced by the federal government provides an unprecedented opportunity for the industry to improve its international competitiveness. The government wants to ensure that Victorian companies can maximise the benefits of this federal government program.

An extensive informal consultation process is being undertaken. An issues paper will be released early next week and a number of forums have been arranged: in Melbourne on Thursday, 18 May; in Bendigo on 26 May; in Wangaratta — which is near Benalla — on 29 May; and in Ballarat on 2 June. Ballarat is a fair way from Benalla.

I am pleased to announce that as Minister for Manufacturing Industry I have already visited a wide range of TCF and L firms in Wangaratta, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Bendigo and Moe. The industries have undergone and will continue to undergo significant changes as they adjust to the challenges of international trade and the opportunities provided by new technology and e-commerce. I look forward to continuing to work with the industries in metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I am sure we all wish Denise Allen all the best on Saturday.

Namarra Nursing Home

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — I refer the Minister for Aged Care to an article in the *Herald Sun* of 5 May that referred to breaches of infection control at the state-run Namarra Nursing Home and to the minister's answer in the house yesterday when she said she was advised only yesterday of allegations made by a former staff person. How does the minister explain that she knew nothing and did nothing about those allegations in the press for five days?

Ms PIKE (Minister for Aged Care) — Yesterday I listened very carefully to the question asked of me by the shadow minister. The question concerned an allegation of ants being found on a nursing home resident at the Namarra Nursing Home. I gave a clear indication to the house that staff from the Department of Human Services had notified me of the allegation. I took the allegation very seriously, and I have instituted an investigation into the matter.

On the issue of infection control, I note that an inquiry was made to the Department of Human Services, as happens on a daily basis, about appropriate actions to be taken for a case of Vancomycin-resistant enterococcus (VRE), which is a matter of concern across nursing homes and hospitals in Victoria. It is an issue that is dealt with very seriously. Protocols are in place, and the advice that was given to the Namarra Nursing Home is the same advice that is given to people who run nursing homes and hospitals across Victoria. The advice refers to how to manage infection control. It is standard advice that is available in printed form or on the Internet for people who inquire. That advice was given as it is always given.

Telephone counselling services

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — Will the Minister for Community Services inform the house of the latest initiative to improve phone counselling services?

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — I thank the honourable member for Narracan for his question and for his interest particularly in Lifeline in Gippsland. Telephone-based counselling services provide an integral part of the community services of the state. They provide critical support to individuals and families, particularly during times of crisis or uncertainty. Funding for telephone counselling services has been inconsistent over the past couple of years. I am saddened to inform the house that in many regions there is inadequate funding for Lifeline, which very often is allocated on the basis of historic funding.

The previous minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, undertook a number of reviews of telephone counselling services, and it was a shame that the reviews did not result in any investment in the training of staff, both paid and volunteers, on a serious basis. The key to telephone counselling services is the volunteers and staff who provide advice to people who phone in. Critical to that advice is the recruitment and training of quality staff, job satisfaction, and ongoing training that results in people staying on as telephone counsellors.

Lifeline Gippsland has been operating since 1968 on a 24-hour basis. Across Gippsland and the Shire of Cardinia 4000 callers are helped per annum. The volunteers at Lifeline Gippsland understand local regional issues, the culture, and employment challenges of the region, and provide invaluable advice to callers.

I am pleased to advise the house that I have approved an additional \$250 000 for telephone counselling and ongoing training of staff to give Lifeline and other associated telephone counselling services the chance to improve their telecommunications systems. Care Ring, which operates Crisis Line, and the Uniting Church Lifeline will each receive \$25 000 to assist in the training of counsellors.

Lifeline in Gippsland, Central Victoria, Geelong, Warrnambool in the south west, Ballarat and Albury–Wodonga will each receive additional dollars, as will the Men’s Referral Service, G-Line and the sexual assault service. Staff, be they paid or unpaid in telephone counselling services, are an asset and deserve quality training and telecommunications systems. The Bracks government is pleased to deliver.

APPROPRIATION (2000/2001) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — Before the luncheon adjournment I was making the point that the Labor government had misled the voters at the last election by breaking its very first pledge. The pledge was that the government would get the Auditor-General to report to Parliament on state budget day on whether Labor has met its commitment to maintain an operating surplus.

Honourable members have now discovered that the Auditor-General’s report in the Treasury document makes no mention of the operating surplus. That is because the election promise was significantly watered down to make sure that the Auditor-General could not report on the election promise by making it a report on the operating surplus.

I remind the house that the Premier letterboxed many houses pledging to provide a budget surplus every year overseen by an independent Auditor-General with new constitutional powers. The pledge was both misleading and a con.

Some honourable members on this side of the house remember the devastation left by the Cain–Kirner governments when the Liberal and National parties

formed government in 1992. In contrast, the Labor Party was left with a huge surplus.

In 1992 the Kennett government faced state debt approaching \$32 billion. The Bracks Labor government is faced with a debt of only \$6.2 billion. When the former Kennett government came to power in 1992 Victoria was technically bankrupt. I say technically bankrupt because the Labor government could not pay its operating expenses and needed to borrow money to pay the wages of nurses and teachers. A company doing that would be deemed to be technically bankrupt.

The former Labor government ran Victoria into the ground. It is ironic that almost eight years later when the present Labor government brings down its first budget it is awash with funds. The opposition will watch with interest to see how long it takes for the government to run down the operating surplus.

I turn now to issues the opposition thought would be addressed in the budget. At a recent summit the Premier referred to the government as being pro-business, pro-jobs and pro-growth. On hearing that the unions and backbench government members started getting into the Premier and telling him he could not say those things. He could not cut payroll tax despite the fact that cutting business tax was supposedly on the government's agenda.

The commitment to cut payroll tax was only talk. The budget is the first budget in four years in which payroll tax has not been cut. The last three state budgets brought down by the former Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, included consecutive cuts in payroll tax, which provided significant tax relief to the business community. Trades hall has ensured that the Premier is not allowed to cut payroll tax.

The government should ensure that Victoria attracts business by providing incentives and growth opportunities. It cannot do that if Victoria has a higher payroll tax rate than other states. It is disappointing.

An Honourable Member — Three years in a row!

Mr WELLS — It is worth pointing out that in 1997–98 payroll tax was cut from 7 per cent to 6.25 per cent; in 1998–99 it was reduced from 6.25 per cent to 6 per cent; and currently it is 5.75 per cent.

I now refer to a local issue in the electorate of Wantirna. A newspaper article found on my desk is headed 'Light rail to city in four years', which I thought sounded terrific. The front page features a photograph of three Labor members of Parliament standing in front

of a tram that supposedly has Wantirna as its destination.

Mrs Peulich — Who are they?

Mr WELLS — They are Carolyn Hirsh, Jim Kennan and Judith Dixon, a former member for Boronia Province in another place.

Mr Nardella — What year?

Mr WELLS — 'Light rail to city in four years'! The date was September 1988. In 1988 the Labor Party was promising a tram to Knox in four years. In 2000 it has rehashed the same promise.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WELLS — The government has just changed the dates. 'Light rail to city in four years'! That is why the people in the outer eastern suburbs do not believe the government. It is a disgrace and has no credibility. It is rehashing old promises.

The current budget provides for a feasibility study for a tram to Knox. How much will that cost? When will it take place? The open and transparent Labor government bundled it in among a heap of other issues and feasibility studies. It was a simple promise made by the Labor Party in 1988, but not one centimetre of track was built. It was just another con. I will keep the article on my desk to remind me of the Labor Party's lack of credibility in the outer east.

Mr Robinson interjected.

Mr WELLS — When it comes to the eastern suburbs the opposition remembers the promise of the honourable member for Mitcham about the tunnel. At the time of the next election the opposition will letterbox the residents of Mitcham and tell them the truth about what is happening in Mitcham. The government has no credibility and cannot make a decision without setting up a committee and another committee and another committee, and when it has finished setting up committees it sets up a review.

How much do those committees cost? The number of Labor Party hacks that stack those committees will ensure that the government gains no credibility because they will tell the government what they think it wants to hear rather than offering genuine advice.

The Knox tram has received enormous coverage in the area. The opposition is not sure who wants it, but it will see in the coming years.

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — It is a pleasure to join the broad-ranging debate on the Appropriation (2000/2001) Bill.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition claimed that the budget was a budget of opportunity. As one who was brought up with a very strong work ethic, let me tell honourable members: the harder you work, the luckier you get! The Bracks government has worked hard, not only in government but also when it was in opposition. That is highlighted by the fact that all opposition members have one of the Bracks six-pledge cards, which were so popular. My congratulations to the former secretary of the Australian Labor Party for delivering those little cards.

When in opposition the now Premier put in place not only the policies for but also the building blocks of a financially responsible budget. On gaining office he did something that the opposition could not understand and still does not understand — he had Access Economics check the affordability of the policies he had worked on and had in place an open, honest, accountable, transparent process.

Last Monday night I gave a brief overview of the budget to the Hume City Council. Hume covers most of the electorate of Tullamarine and parts of the electorates of Broadmeadows and Yan Yean. Many of the infrastructure projects in the City of Hume will affect those three electorates, so I will talk about all of them. This is a great budget for Hume and it is therefore a great budget for Tullamarine. I will go through some of the big projects that have been beneficial to the municipality because it is important that they be laid out before the house.

The following allocations have been made to education: Greenvale Primary School, \$1.15 million — and Mr Lloyd Mitchell, the principal, is a very happy man; Gladstone Park Secondary College, \$3.5 million to complete additional accommodation — and again, Ken Thompson, the principal, is a happy man; Sunbury Secondary College, \$1.61 million to complete arts, commerce and science facilities — and Eric Keenan is another happy principal under the Labor government; and Kismet Park Primary School, \$0.5 million to complete the upgrade of library, music and physical facilities — and Rob Rilen is another happy principal. All the principals in Tullamarine have smiles on their faces. It is wonderful that after seven years of not being able to do anything, look at anybody or to see anybody they are now seen to be smiling and talking to their school communities about how great things are.

A brand new primary school is planned for Roxburgh Park, which is a growing suburb, and it is well deserved. Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE will receive \$2.9 million for the relocation of the polymer engineering training centre. Craigieburn Primary School will receive \$3 million for the relocation of the school. Upfield Secondary College has been allocated \$1 million for the first stage of its redevelopment. These are all great education projects. I see the Minister for Education is in the house listening to my contribution. I thank the minister on behalf of the schools in Hume, which are most appreciative.

Government Members — Hear, hear!

Ms BEATTIE — The following allocations have been made in the transport area: \$3 million for the extension of the suburban rail network to Craigieburn; \$20 million for an airport transit link; over \$3 million for construction of a Roxburgh Park V/Line station; \$5.3 million for the duplication of Mickleham Road; and \$14.3 million for the duplication of Pascoe Vale Road from Broadmeadows railway station to Somerton Road.

I turn to say a bit about Pascoe Vale Road and the previous government. For many years the road has needed an upgrade, but before the last election the funds destined for that upgrade were mysteriously transferred and Mickleham Road got an upgrade instead. Mickleham Road is in the seat of Tullamarine and I am most grateful for the funding of the upgrade, but if one had a suspicious nature one might think there had been a diversion of funds to a marginal seat. However, I would not be so cynical.

Spencer Street railway station is to be redeveloped. For honourable members who may not be familiar with the geography of the north-western side of town, the Sunbury rail line goes right to Spencer Street station; it is the main drop-off and pick-up point for travellers going to Sunbury. The redevelopment will make life easier for Sunbury residents travelling to Spencer Street.

I will touch on health because it has been a big issue in the budget. I will go into some detail about the Sunbury Integrated Health Care Centre, Mr Acting Speaker, because I can see you are interested. Funding for the centre was promised in 1992 and 1996 by the previous incumbent in Tullamarine, but it never eventuated. This year some \$6.7 million has been allocated. Beattie and Bracks deliver!

Government Members — Hear, hear!

Ms BEATTIE — A mobile intensive care ambulance unit will be established progressively at Coolaroo and a new peak ambulance unit is planned for Craigieburn. Hospital beds are reopening all around the area, which will be a great boon for the residents of Tullamarine, Broadmeadows and Yan Yean.

I turn to the environment because all honourable members are aware of its importance. There is a budget allocation of \$300 000 for the protection of northern Victoria's box-ironbark forests and woodlands in line with the recommendations that are to come from the report of the Environment Conservation Council.

The budget allocates \$4 million to enable the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to enhance monitoring and adopt tougher enforcement of illegal dumping and waste discharges. Labor is giving the EPA watchdog some teeth, as will be seen shortly when the Environment Protection (Enforcement and Penalties) Bill is debated.

A sharp contrast is evident between what Labor delivers in local government and what happened under the previous government. It is well known that under the previous government the important tier of local government and its policies was strangled. The Bracks government is committed to conducting an annual summit with local government to work together to identify economic priorities, build on infrastructure in a coordinated way, and generally improve cohesion between the two tiers of government. Local government will get the recognition it deserves under a Bracks Labor government.

This year \$2.3 million will be spent to increase public Internet access in town halls. The honourable member for Doncaster is critical of the concept of computer access in town halls but I favour it. Town halls are places people can visit. We do not want to be cyber snobs.

The budget provides \$2 million this year for Freeza, a drug-and-alcohol-free entertainment program for young people, who love the program.

This year an additional \$1.8 million has been put into neighbourhood safe houses so that they can stay open longer, employ more staff and improve services.

I have many inquiries in my electorate office about the critical area of public housing. The budget allocates \$94.5 million over three years to increase the housing stock for low-income earners, which is low due to the neglect of previous governments.

The state government has also allocated \$2 million for the recurrent funding of the State Emergency Service over the next four years and \$4 million to the Country Fire Authority.

I support the budget allocations. Results have already been seen in the Sunbury area, where additional police have been located. As the honourable member for Dandenong North said earlier, the parade grounds are full. Many people in various districts have smiles on their faces.

The only dark cloud in the sky is the insidious goods and services tax (GST) promoted by the Costello and Howard regime and forced on us.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms BEATTIE — Yes. The National Party is totally supportive of the GST.

Some of the projects I have mentioned, such as the Spencer Street railway development, will benefit all Victorians, including those in the City of Hume and the electorate of Tullamarine. A feature of the budget is that it is for all Victorians.

Debating the budget has been painful for the opposition. I understand why its members cannot spend much time in the house. I have observed that they behave like a myopic bull in a china shop. As well as that, on one hand they crow that this is their budget — the budget they wanted to deliver — and on the other hand they say it is not good enough. What sticks in the craw of the opposition is that the Bracks government is being praised by the business community. Members of the opposition hate that and cannot cope with it.

I refer to the hypocrisy of the opposition. Over the past seven years, Victorians were told of the big black hole, to tighten belts — easier for some than others — to trust Jeff, and to let him sell the utilities. Now gas is gone, as is electricity; public transport is carved up beyond recognition; and local government workers have been made redundant as amalgamation and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) were forced on the important area of local government. The only people the then government did not seek to punish were themselves. Members of the former government never sought to bring their superannuation arrangements into line with those of members of other state Parliaments and other high-income earners. In more than seven years they did not impose the 15 per cent superannuation tax on themselves. The Bracks government will do so by introducing another bill, which members on this side of the house will support enthusiastically and unanimously.

The Bracks government is a fair government for all Victorians. After Victorians gave of themselves for seven years and got only a kick in return they saw the light and in 1999 said 'No more!'. The light they saw was Labor and the people voted with their feet. They threw out the self-serving members, who had not imposed the 15 per cent superannuation tax on themselves, in Geelong, Gisborne, Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Ripon, Bendigo East, Seymour, Narracan, Gippsland East, Oakleigh, Carrum and my seat of Tullamarine.

Ms Delahunty — Read it again. We love to hear it!

Ms BEATTIE — I will read it again. It will be read over and over.

The electors continued to vote with their feet in the Frankston East supplementary election and then started a stampede in Burwood — and I think I can hear the clatter of feet starting for Saturday in Benalla.

I noted with interest the claim of the Deputy Leader of the National Party that everything budgeted for by the previous government came through.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms BEATTIE — In his electorate. By implication that means that if it did not happen it was not budgeted for. Before the election promises were thrown around like confetti in my electorate of Tullamarine, but the promises had not been budgeted for!

Ms Allan — Funny, that happened to me too!

Ms BEATTIE — It happened with a couple of schools in my electorate, and after the election I had to give the principals the unfortunate news that there was no budget to cover the verbal promises they had received. There will be more smiling principals in Tullamarine when the Bracks government hands down its next budget.

I commend the budget to the house, and I say to the good electors of Tullamarine that the previous government made promises it did not deliver but Bracks and Beattie have delivered for Tullamarine in the year 2000!

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I am pleased to join the debate on the appropriation bill, although I am concerned about some of the exaggerated statements made in such debates. Some of the best and worst of what this Parliament has to offer is seen in budget debates, although there are usually excellent, well thought-out speeches from both sides of the house. I

enjoyed the contribution from the honourable member for Dandenong North this morning, and I will refer to it later. Honourable members tend to engage in a lot of exaggerated talk; we talk things up and we talk things down, but I would rather have a sensible discussion on the alternatives for Victoria. My contribution will contain criticism as I highlight some of the deficiencies as I see them from the point of view of a member genuinely trying to represent the constituents of Rodney.

The budget deals with a huge amount of money — \$22 billion — and this debate is about the priorities for spending that money. It is a responsible budget because it contains a surplus, pays off some debt and provides more funding for health, education and police. I acknowledge and welcome that.

The government is fortunate to have inherited a state in good shape, which is quite different to the situation inherited by the coalition in 1992. While I do not want to dwell on the subject, I remind the house that in 1992 the outgoing Labor government had budgeted to spend \$2.5 billion more than its income. It had budgeted for a deficit and Victoria had public sector debts of \$32 billion. That situation should be contrasted with today's landscape where \$25 billion in debt has been paid off and the hard work of getting Victoria back on its feet has been done. The Labor government has inherited a state in a good financial position.

I sometimes think about what could have been done with the \$25 billion paid off by the coalition during its seven years in office. The money would have fixed all the roads in country Victoria, and honourable members hear a lot about local roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects. The \$25 billion would have gone a long way to redressing many infrastructure problems. Nonetheless, the debt situation had to be addressed to get Victoria to a position which now enables this government to deliver many of the promises of which it is justifiably proud but which would have been delivered by the previous government anyway. I am not detracting from the government's delivery on health, education and police; I commend it.

Priorities change, and other honourable members will speak about how the parties differ on their allocation of priorities. The government is enjoying good economic conditions, many of which are within its control, although we all depend on what happens in New York and other financial markets around the world. But Victoria is in good shape because of the actions of the previous government. There are a few indicators of the state's good health. Victoria's gross state product stands at 4.5 per cent and there are historically low interest

rates — some credit should be given to the commonwealth government for having brought down the interest rates in Australia. The consumer price index (CPI) stands at 2.5 per cent — which is something that governments can do something about. Low interest rates and a low CPI lead to low unemployment, which is 7 per cent and falling. All honourable members would acknowledge that unemployment rates in Australia have been and still are unacceptably high, and governments must work hard to lower them. High unemployment leads to the serious social problems being faced by this country and this state. I refer particularly to the heroin scourge. The honourable member for Footscray spoke about that issue and I share many of his thoughts.

Many of the social problems that now cost Australia an enormous amount of money result from high unemployment and people not having adequate housing. People know where I stand on those issues. Although I share a lot of the philosophies of the government in that respect, we differ on how to resolve the problems. Governments need to act in a financially responsible manner to ensure the environment is right for business to invest and create jobs and generate wealth. Then everything the government wants to do can be achieved.

More importantly, if the economic environment is right because the economic policies are right and jobs are created, the evidence is that people's self-esteem increases. People with jobs have something worth while to do with their lives and are less likely to engage in some of the antisocial behaviour with which society now has to grapple such as crime, drug addiction and prostitution. The country is spending thousands of millions of dollars to redress those problems.

The state is in a better position because of revenue from the commonwealth. Yesterday the Minister for Finance quite rightly said that the government deserves a better deal. Victoria does deserve a better deal from the commonwealth. Nonetheless, revenues from the commonwealth to the state have increased. About 46 per cent of all state revenue comes from general purpose or specific purpose grants from the commonwealth. So much for the good news and congratulations of the government.

I am disappointed with a number of matters. The budget is not conducive to encouraging the investment needed to create the jobs and generating the wealth I spoke of earlier. That is basic to any budget. It should set a framework that encourages investment, growth, jobs and wealth generation. Wealth is not a dirty word.

We need to encourage wealth generation so we can pay for all the necessary human services.

I am disappointed because the promised cuts in business taxes that were pleaded for at the summit organised by the government were not delivered.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — If you read the press reports of the summit — I have spoken to people who attended — business pleaded with the government for payroll tax cuts. In the past three years the former government delivered \$100 million in payroll tax cuts, thereby creating about 18 000 jobs. However, this budget did not have 1 cent worth of payroll tax deductions. It is a smoke-and-mirrors trick. The government's cuts will not take effect for another 18 months. I believe the cuts will amount to \$100 million next year. The government promised cuts of \$400 million over four years — but where are they? How can business plan for the future when the cuts are not identified? The government says, 'We will tell you later what they are'. I am disappointed that the government has not been open or accountable and has failed to declare up front what taxes will be cut, when and by how much.

I am also disappointed that the budget has not been ticked off by the Auditor-General. The government made much of its promise to deliver a budget surplus each year for the next four years — and I hope that will be achieved. It also said its figures would be approved by the Auditor-General. I note that on page 228 of budget paper 2 the Auditor-General states:

... I express no opinion as to whether the forecasts will be achieved.

A press report in, I think, the *Age* said the Auditor-General's assessment was heavily qualified. I am disappointed that the promised ticking off by the Auditor-General has not been kept; he has given only qualified approval.

I am disappointed that the government's commitment to open, honest and accountable government has not been delivered. I have read the budget papers carefully, but they contain no detail.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — The honourable member for Bendigo East queries my statement. I will give her one example. I was looking in the budget papers for funding for Echuca regional health. The former government allocated \$20 million and, to its credit, this government said it would deliver. The first stage of that project is

about to start. I was looking for \$6 million in this budget for aged care at Echuca. I know \$47.5 million has been allocated to aged care, but where is the detail about what will be available in Echuca?

Despite speaking to both the responsible ministers, I have nothing in writing to say the \$6 million will be delivered, although the chief executive officer of the hospital has met with the capital management branch and has been given the go-ahead to spend the money. But there is nothing by way of a public document, press release, letter from the minister or anything in the budget that says \$6 million has been allocated for Echuca regional health. I could give the house many other examples where that detail is still lacking days after the budget has been delivered.

I am disappointed because the commitment to honest, accountable and transparent government is not evident in the budget papers. I am disappointed that the budget has not kept Victoria at the cutting edge in the use of multimedia and information technology. The former government certainly positioned Victoria well in multimedia and information technology. It created a multimedia portfolio, and every aspect of its administration reinforced the former Victorian government's emphasis on IT and multimedia.

What do we get from this government? Definitely not that emphasis! Unfortunately, Victoria will lose some of its momentum and it will pay for that for years to come. The new government does not have a minister who is primarily concerned with information technology and multimedia.

I am disappointed that the momentum for agriculture has not been maintained.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Conversations across the chamber are disorderly and unfair to the honourable member.

Mr MAUGHAN — The objective was to double food exports from \$3 billion to \$6 billion by 2000. That target has been achieved. The new target is \$12 billion by 2010. The present minister, to his credit, has picked up that target, although now it has been significantly modified by including fibre. Nevertheless, the government's objective is to pick up the previous government's 2010 target for food and fibre exports.

The money has not been provided for a continuance of the agricultural research initiative to enable that to happen. That would need the raw material — milk, tomatoes, fruit and so on — to go through the food

processing factories to create employment and opportunities for the shipping and transport industries. The development of food processing and transport services that depend on the agricultural industry is a vital ingredient in lowering unemployment. That is socially important.

I am also disappointed that the much-lauded Regional Infrastructure Development Fund is nothing more than a smoke-and-mirrors trick. It talks about \$170 million over four years, but we find there is nothing there right now. Yes, there will be \$50 million, \$50 million and \$70 million available over the three-year period, of which \$100 million has already been committed.

The guidelines are incomplete at this stage.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — Well, some are but I have not yet been able to find some guidelines. I would be pleased if the honourable member for Bendigo East would send me a copy of, for example, the guidelines on cattle underpasses to be paid for out of that fund. I have not been able to get the details. I happen to represent 30 000 people in this place, but as yet I am unable to get the guidelines.

That is one of a number of small things that deserve better attention to assist all honourable members irrespective of political affiliation. All honourable members should have appropriate information provided to them.

I am disappointed that the Minister for Environment and Conservation has refused so far to do anything about small-town sewerage schemes.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr MAUGHAN — Yes, it is hardly surprising. I have elsewhere accused the Minister for Environment and Conservation of sitting on her hands, and I am not the only one. In my electorate alone there are at least four schemes that have stalled because the minister will not make a decision. In Gunbower and Leitchville, for example, the schemes have not been started. They have been on hold for six months. If the minister is serious about conservation issues such as stopping nutrients and grey water getting into rivers and streams — particularly into the Murray River — where they can cause blue-green algae, she must do something about small-town sewerage.

The minister has put forward the populist view that the up-front fee should be abolished. I have no problem with that. If the government says it will pay, let it pay;

but it has not said it will. I rather suspect it will increase the annual charges instead. I just wish the minister would come out with it. She should tell people what she is going to do. Our philosophy should be to create an environment that encourages business to invest, creates jobs, generates wealth and thereby provides the conditions necessary for provision of appropriate human services.

I welcome some of the initiatives in the budget, such as those in child development. I am still hoping to get a share of that money for Echuca where, under this government, I have been unable to secure the services of a child psychologist or a speech therapist, both of which are needed.

I hope we can get funding for the bridge over the Murray at Echuca. That is a \$35-million to \$45-million project for which the minister has made a verbal commitment, and I expect him to honour it. There is some funding in the budget for the floodway on the Lower Goulburn, but we need a greater commitment than that.

Doctors, and psychiatrists in particular, are important to country Victoria, and it is a great pity that funding for the Rochester and Elmore District Health Service has not yet come through. Echuca Regional Health will get \$20 million to complete its hospital.

Road funding, bridges, agricultural research and the general provision that has been made for small-town sewerage are some of the good things in the budget, building on the tremendous work done by the previous government to create a sound basis on which the new government can build.

I welcome some of the initiatives in the budget. It is just a pity that we have lost momentum and drive and that we are no longer creating an environment that is good for business. Victoria will be the poorer for that.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — Like many of my colleagues on this side of the house I am pleased and proud to contribute to debate on the Appropriation (2000/2001) Bill. I note that in his earlier comments the honourable member for Dandenong North said members on the other side were suffering from budget envy. We are getting bucket-loads of budget envy from them this afternoon!

It is appropriate that I follow the National Party's elected representative for the seat of Rodney, because he offers commendation of the Bracks government's budget in the key areas of health, education and police for country Victoria; and doubly so because the Labor Party has now achieved a record level of representation

in this Parliament from country Victoria with a sweep through Victoria. Numbers of seats have been picked up by the Labor Party and the Independents, and the National Party vote has dropped to about 4.9 per cent. That might go down even further at the weekend.

I am proud to be a Labor representative of a country community and to contribute to debate on the wonderful first budget of the Bracks Labor government. The budget redresses the imbalance of the past seven years, during which Bendigo and Central Victoria, among other areas, suffered greatly. The 1999 state budget delivered by the former government allocated only \$1.5 million for new works in the seat of Bendigo East and \$10 million in the seat of Bendigo West — all up, \$11.5 million on new capital works in two seats in Central Victoria. That is a paltry amount.

And what did the former member for Bendigo East have to say in the house about that budget? Nothing. He could not bring himself to stand up in Parliament and defend that paltry allocation to his electorate. That failure reflects the arrogance of the former government in thinking it could cruise back into power, taking the people of Bendigo for granted and failing to provide the much-needed funds country people were crying out for.

The arrogance of the former Premier was well expressed in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 8 May last year — around election time. He was reported as putting the former honourable member for Bendigo West on notice by saying:

I have a sneaking suspicion the people of Bendigo West will recognise that this government has improved their lot —

and declaring that he wanted to get that one seat back.

Again, on 16 September, two days before the election, the former Premier was quoted in the *Bendigo Advertiser* as saying he would 'not even concede' as a possibility that both Bendigo seats could be lost to Labor.

History shows that both seats were lost by the former government. Bendigo people were sick and tired of the arrogance of the former government. They were sick and tired of being sold out year after year at budget time during the seven years of the former government, and they overwhelmingly endorsed the Labor candidates and Labor's policies and commitments.

The former coalition government had a pub-with-no-beer policy for running Victoria. It built monuments it could not even staff. In Bendigo East we could not even get the pub, let alone the staff to go in it. Compare that with the first budget of the Bracks

government. Millions of dollars will be injected into education, health and transport projects that will directly benefit Bendigo East. As the honourable member for Rodney has said, it will benefit the population across country Victoria.

The first budget of the Bracks Labor government confirms and funds every single pre-election commitment given by the government to Bendigo. The budget is underpinned by responsible financial management. It restores democracy and provides economic growth and infrastructure for the whole of the state, not just metropolitan Melbourne.

The first budget of the Bracks Labor government starts the rebuilding process for country Victoria. That is important. I remind the house of the legacy of the former government in country Victoria: the closure of 176 country schools, 12 country hospitals and 5 country train lines, the privatisation of our essential services and job losses. In this budget the Bracks Labor government takes up the challenge of restoring jobs and services to country Victoria.

The former government's legacy was 2 per cent jobs growth in country Victoria for the 1998–99 financial year. At the time of the last state election unemployment in my electorate was 11.9 per cent. Youth unemployment in the Loddon–Mallee region is around 30 per cent — a completely unacceptable level. This budget addresses the unemployment problems in country Victoria. I will provide details of one way in which the budget addresses those problems.

The government has allocated \$800 000 to the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE as part of a record funding boost for technical and further education across Victoria. It is part of the \$127 million boost to TAFE institute funding in the government's first term. On top of that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment has announced 32 000 new job opportunities in traineeships and apprenticeships over the next four years. The minister understands the importance of jobs growth and has provided for a \$158 million targeted jobs package. Sadly, the former government did not understand the importance of creating opportunities for young people in country areas. That is the sad legacy of the former government.

Mr Lenders — They did not care.

Ms ALLAN — They did not. I will refer to infrastructure. We all know the former government spent almost \$2.1 billion on major projects in metropolitan Melbourne. Only \$17 million of that amount was spent in country Victoria. That is a measly,

paltry sum. We received nothing in country areas while monuments were being built on a grand scale in metropolitan areas. Those monuments could not be staffed, but as I said earlier people in country areas could not even get the buildings and infrastructure.

I am sure that salutary lesson has been reinforced for the people of Benalla over the past few weeks. The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund was welcomed warmly by people in country areas. Some \$170 million was targeted directly to rebuild infrastructure in country Victoria, and the people in Bendigo will benefit from that. The budget also allocates funding for statewide initiatives, such as \$80 million for the fast rail links between Melbourne and Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley. They are welcome initiatives. It is interesting to note the support the people of Bendigo have given to the project. They understand the importance of a fast rail link between our city and the capital city of Victoria, Melbourne. It will encourage economic growth and improve travel to and from metropolitan areas. It will be good to see people coming up the line to country areas, whether they are tourists or are going to work. It is a welcome project.

Some \$9 million has been allocated through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund to the Bendigo campus of La Trobe University and the redevelopment of the old psychiatric centre site as a high-tech business park. When the former psychiatric centre was closed the former government let the buildings just sit there and rot. The former government owned them, but what did it do with them? Nothing, it left them to sit there. Over a couple of years the buildings started to get a bit drab and dreary —

Mr Lenders interjected.

Ms ALLAN — They were like the Kennett government; that is an appropriate analogy. The buildings were left to go to rack and ruin, and I am pleased that the Minister for Finance, the honourable member for Bendigo West and I went to the site to make a media announcement of what the government will do to redevelop the site. The redevelopment will make the site a hub for people to come to. It will be a hub that creates jobs and opportunities in Bendigo.

Another important allocation made through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund is \$500 000 to establish an agribusiness estate next to the saleyards at Huntly.

A government member interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am pleased to hear the support from honourable members opposite, because it is good news.

Other major projects will be delivered to Bendigo through the budget. I remind honourable members opposite that every one of the commitments given during the last election is being delivered.

Some \$2 million in capital funds has been allocated to upgrade the West Bendigo basketball stadium, also known as the Schweppes Centre. That fantastic venue has great potential. It has five basketball courts that can also be used for netball, volleyball, indoor bowls or whatever.

Other community facilities can also be used at the centre. An amount of \$2 million is being delivered for the addition of a couple of extra courts, which will not only improve the opportunities for sporting groups in Bendigo but will also make the centre the entertainment and function hub of central Victoria. It will provide great potential to the tourism industry and the small and medium-sized businesses that want to attract events to and showcase their work in Bendigo. The investment of \$2 million in the Schweppes Centre is welcome. Funding has also been allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Oval, the aquatic centre and the Chinese museum precinct.

The Bendigo Regional Arts Centre has been a vexed issue for Bendigo people. The honourable member for Ripon knows the story well. I am proud to say that the Bracks Labor government is delivering \$3 million to the arts centre. The honourable member for Ripon will be interested in this, because no-one can find the promised allocation of \$2 million in the recent federal budget. The saga has gone on since 1996 and is continuing in 2000. The \$2 million that was promised in 1996 by the federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, still cannot be found in the federal budget.

The Bracks Labor government recognises the importance of the arts centre to the cultural and artistic community in Bendigo. The View Street precinct is a great area. I recommend that all honourable members who visit Bendigo take the time to travel up View Street, relax and enjoy the arts centre. It should be noted that despite a promise by the federal Liberal Party in 1996 the \$2 million has still not been delivered.

The honourable member for Ripon will also be interested to know that the former government forgot to tell the people of Bendigo that it would fund the arts centre. The funding was announced during the election campaign — you will excuse me, Mr Speaker, for not

remembering the exact date — on whatever Sunday the Liberal Party campaign launch was held in Melbourne. The former government forgot to tell the people of Bendigo that it was promising funding to an important building. It treated the people of Bendigo with contempt. The honourable member for Bendigo West, the Minister for Finance and I were proud to stand in the streets of Bendigo and say, 'We are delivering \$3 million to this important facility'. Unfortunately for the people of Bendigo and fortunately for me the Liberal Party forgot to tell the people of Bendigo what it was doing. That may have been indicative of what was happening at that time.

On top of all the infrastructure I have spoken about is the \$1 billion Growing Victoria fund. That will result in a 20 per cent increase in capital works programs across the state. I emphasise the words 'across the state'. People across the whole of Victoria, not just those in metropolitan Melbourne, will have a share of the fund. That initiative in the budget is welcome.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Ms ALLAN — As the honourable member for Dandenong North says, it is about time. Another important announcement in last week's budget was the \$10 million that was allocated for a radiotherapy unit to be established in Bendigo and run through the Bendigo Health Care Group. The Bracks Labor government has committed \$10 million to the vitally needed infrastructure program. This is also a story the honourable member for Ripon will be interested in. Funding for radiotherapy was promised by the former Premier during the 1998 federal election campaign.

On 26 September 1998 the former Premier came to Bendigo and announced that he would fund radiotherapy units for Bendigo, Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley. People in Bendigo thought, 'Okay, that is great', and sat back. Twelve months later the same announcement was trotted out during the state election campaign. It took the Bracks Labor government to deliver \$10 million for a radiotherapy unit in Bendigo. It is a sad reflection on the former government that it took over 12 months for the project to be confirmed. People in north-western Victoria who need to use radiotherapy units have to travel to Melbourne, a trip which many of them find difficult because they are in different stages of their illnesses. They welcomed the announcement 1998 and were greatly disappointed that the promise was not immediately followed through. In 2000 the first Bracks Labor government is delivering on radiotherapy to Bendigo, Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley.

I turn briefly to an issue that was raised during question time today — that is, that the Carlsruhe bypass did not receive funding from the federal government. Honourable members should compare the federal government's allocation of \$8.8 million to Victoria for black spot funding with the Bracks government's allocation of \$240 million for the same purpose, half of which has been targeted to country Victoria. As many honourable members on this side have said, Labor cares — it cares about proper road funding for country Victoria. I know the honourable member for Rodney has been speaking on the issue for some time. I am sure he also welcomes the budget allocation of funding for roads in country Victoria.

However, the budget brought down two days ago by the federal government does not contain funding for the Carlsruhe bypass, which is an important section of the Calder Freeway. Each year far too many accidents and tragic deaths occur on the Calder Highway and the need for funding for the bypass is great. The Woodend bypass is finished and the bypass to Kyneton has already been completed, so works are needed on the Carlsruhe bypass so that it can be up and running to complete the link between Woodend and Kyneton.

My colleague the honourable member for Gisborne is vitally interested in the issue because it affects the heart of her electorate. She knows of the deaths that have occurred in her electorate. Many accidents happen on that treacherous part of the road, particularly during winter when black ice is present. I know the honourable member will speak out on the issue. It is a shame that the federal Minister for Transport, who is the Leader of the National Party in Canberra, has not delivered on funding for the bypass.

Finally, I turn to talk about the catchment management tax. I know the government abolished it late last year, but it is important to note that the budget provides for proper funding of catchment management works in the amount of \$12.9 million to replace the revenue that would have been derived from the former tax. That allocation is welcomed by those in country Victoria. Country people hated the anti-country catchment management tax that was imposed on them by the former government.

Mr Leigh interjected.

Ms Beattie — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Mordialloc is out of his place and is interjecting. I cannot hear the contribution of the honourable member for Bendigo East to this important debate.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. However, I ask the house to remain silent for the honourable member for Bendigo East.

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will conclude by talking about the catchment management tax. The Bracks Labor government's first budget repays the faith country Victorians had in the Labor Party, its policies and the commitments of its candidates at the last election. The budget delivers on key commitment areas by allocating funds for big ticket items, such as \$176 million for public hospitals, \$165 million for education and \$64 million for police. A number of small items are also funded in the budget, and I know that is welcomed by many country Victorians.

The budget is a new beginning for Victoria, particularly country Victoria. I congratulate the Premier, who is also the Treasurer, and the Minister for Finance for delivering a fantastic budget for my electorate and for all Victorians.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton).

Debate adjourned until next day.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time appointed under sessional orders for the completion of the business program has arrived.

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 10 May; motion of Mr THWAITES (Minister for Planning).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 15, lines 6 to 25, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert —
 - “(1) If an application is made to the relevant building surveyor under this Act for a building permit for the demolition of a building on land and —
 - (a) the demolition and all other demolitions completed or permitted in respect of the building within the period of 3 years

immediately preceding the date of the application would together amount to the demolition of more than one half of the volume of the building as it existed at the date of the first building permit to be issued within that period for the demolition of any part of the building; or

- (b) the demolition is of any part of the facade of a building —

then the report and consent of the responsible authority under the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** for the planning scheme relating to that land must be obtained to that application.”.

2. Clause 15, after line 32 insert —

‘() In this section —

“**facade**” means —

- (a) an external wall, including any verandah, balcony or balustrade or architectural feature attached to or forming part of an external wall; or
- (b) a part of a roof; or
- (c) a chimney —

that faces a street and at least part of which is visible from the street it faces;

“**street**” includes road, highway, carriageway, square and court.’.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

FEDERAL COURTS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 10 May; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

The SPEAKER — Order! As the required statement of intention has been made pursuant to section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act I am of the opinion that the second and third readings of the bill require to be passed by an absolute majority. As there are not 45 members present in the house, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION (COMMON LAW AND BENEFITS) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 May; motion of Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover).

The SPEAKER — Order! As the required statement of intention has been made pursuant to section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act I am of the opinion that the second and third readings of the bill require to be passed by an absolute majority.

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 2, page 2, line 22, after “22” insert “, 23(2)”.
2. Clause 2, page 2, line 25, omit “23” and insert “23(1)”.
3. Clause 2, page 2, after line 32 insert —
 ‘() Sections 26 and 29 are deemed to have come into operation on 13 April 2000.’.
4. Clause 2, page 3, line 2, omit “(8)” and insert “(9)”.
5. Clause 2, page 3, line 3, omit “26, 29”.
6. Clause 2, page 3, line 5, omit “(7)” and insert “(8)”.
7. Clause 4, page 4, line 8, after “pattern” insert “if not for the incapacity resulting from or materially contributed to by the relevant injury”.
8. Clause 5, page 5, line 9, omit “, so as to enable”.
9. Clause 5, page 5, line 10, after “(a)” insert “so as to enable in accordance with sub-section (1)(a)”.
10. Clause 5, page 5, line 15, after “(b)” insert “so as to require in accordance with sub-section (1)(b)”.
11. Clause 17, page 16, lines 9 to 12, omit proposed sub-section (3) and insert —

‘(3) For section 104B(8) of the **Accident Compensation Act 1985** substitute —

- “(8) If the worker has advised the Authority or self-insurer under sub-section (7) that the worker accepts both of the assessments and the entitlement to compensation, subject to section 134AB(36), the Authority or self-insurer must within 14 days of being advised by the worker, either under sub-section (7) or at a later date, that he or she wishes to receive the compensation to which he or she is entitled —
- (a) if the entitlement is under section 98C, make payments in accordance with section 98D; or
- (b) if the entitlement is under section 98E, pay the amount specified for the total loss under section 98E.”.
12. Clause 17, page 16, omit lines 31 to 33 and insert —
- “(10B) Subject to section 134AB(36), the Authority or self-insurer must, within 14 days of being advised by the worker either under sub-section (10A) or at a later date that he or”.
13. Clause 17, page 17, line 13, omit “98D” and insert “98C”.
14. Clause 18, page 26, line 17, after “finding” insert “(other than a finding that the injury is a serious injury)”.
15. Clause 18, page 33, line 25, omit “98D” and insert “98C”.
16. Clause 18, page 36, line 30, after “as” insert “being”.
17. Clause 18, page 37, line 2, after “(16)(b)” insert “on the basis that the worker has established the loss of earning capacity required by paragraph (b)”.
18. Clause 18, page 37, line 16, after “(f);” insert “and”.
19. Clause 18, page 37, line 22, after “continue” insert “permanently”.
20. Clause 18, page 37, line 31, omit “capable of earning” and insert “is capable of earning in suitable employment”.
21. Clause 18, page 37, omit lines 35 and 36, and insert “earning from personal exertion or would have earned or would have been capable of earning from”.
22. Clause 20, page 42, after line 9 insert —
- “(1) in section 39(1A) of the **Accident Compensation Act 1985**, after “135A(6A)” insert “or 134AB(20)”.
23. Clause 22, page 43, lines 1 to 14, omit proposed paragraph (a) and insert —
- “(a) subject to the **Limitation of Actions Act 1958**, unless paragraph (b) applies, unless an application for a determination from the worker under section 135A(2B) has been made to the Authority or a self-insurer before 1 September 2000;”.
24. Clause 23, after line 30 insert —
- “(2) After section 135B(1AA) of the **Accident Compensation Act 1985** insert —
- “(1AB) For the purposes of calculating the period of time within which a proceeding referred to in sub-section (1AA) must be commenced under the **Limitations of Actions Act 1958**, the period commencing on 4 December 1998 and ending on the day on which section 23(2) of the **Accident Compensation (Common Law and Benefits) Act 2000** comes into operation is to be disregarded.
- (1AC) It is hereby declared that sub-sections (1AA) and (1AB) affect the rights of the parties in the proceedings known as *Rizza v Fluor Daniel GTI (Australia) Pty Ltd* and *Inline Courier Systems Pty Ltd v Walker* (1998 VSCA 131).”.
25. Clause 25, page 45, line 18, omit “3(1)” and insert “3”.
26. Clause 25, page 46, line 1, after “Act” insert “and any amount paid or payable under an award of damages or in a settlement of a claim or action for damages”.
27. Clause 25, page 46, line 12, omit “3(1)” and insert “3”.
28. Clause 26, omit lines 14 and 15 and insert “that the person has an entitlement to any compensation under this”.
29. Clause 26, line 18, after “offence” insert “only”.
30. Clause 26, omit lines 27 to 29 and insert “offence referred to in sub-section (1) committed on or after the”.
31. Clause 26, at the end of line 32 insert —
- “(3) For the purposes of sub-section (1)(a), a person is not to be regarded as having an entitlement to any compensation under this Act if the entitlement would only arise under any or all of sections 99(1)(aa), 99(1)(b) and 92A (only by virtue of sub-section (10)).”.
32. Clause 29, omit lines 14 and 15 and insert “that the person has an entitlement to any compensation under this”.
33. Clause 29, line 18, after “offence” insert “only”.
34. Clause 29, omit lines 24 and 26 and insert “offence referred to in sub-section (1) committed on or after the”.
35. Clause 29, at the end of line 29 insert —
- “(3) For the purposes of sub-section (1)(a), a person is not to be regarded as having an entitlement to any compensation under this Act if the entitlement would only arise under either or both of sections 60(1)(ca) and 60(1)(d).”.

36. Clause 30, page 52, omit lines 8 and 9 and insert “matter relating to the manufacture, supply sale, transfer, transport, storage, handling, use or disposal of explosives with respect to activities”.

Third reading

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Remaining stages

Passed remaining stages.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — I desire to make a personal explanation because I was misrepresented by the honourable member for Warrandyte during the adjournment debate on Wednesday, 10 May, when the honourable member said:

Indeed, I cannot think of a single time that he —

referring to me —

has stood up on the adjournment debate on behalf of his community in this sessional period.

During this sessional period I have contributed on three occasions to the adjournment debate. That is as many contributions as the current allocation I receive permits me to make.

On 2 March I raised the health of the Gippsland Lakes. On 6 April I asked the Minister for State and Regional Development to consider moving government departments into regional areas. On 9 May I raised the financial crisis facing the Shire of East Gippsland.

Each of those issues is directly relevant to my community. The statement made in the house by the honourable member for Warrandyte was factually inaccurate.

Ms Asher — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I refer to your guidance to the house on Tuesday, 9 May, when you called for higher standards in this place, along with the expectations of the greater community.

I have reflected on today’s question time and it is with some regret — because I consider myself the equal of any man in the chamber — that I raise this issue. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to please raise with the Premier and the Attorney-General standards of appropriate behaviour or — to use your terminology — standards that the broader community would expect.

I ask that you raise with the Premier the need to show leadership on the matter in the chamber and bring the Attorney-General into line. I do not think the overt sexual reference to me made during question time today is in line with the broader community standards that you referred to in your guidance to honourable members on Tuesday. I have already indicated I have reflected on the matter and it is with significant regret that I raise the issue. I ask you to raise with the Premier and the Attorney-General appropriate standards of conduct in the chamber.

Mr Hulls — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I have listened to the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. My comment during question time was certainly flippant; it was said in jest. If I have caused any harm or any hurt to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I unreservedly apologise.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has raised a point of order asking the Chair to discuss the behaviour of the house with the Premier. In my ruling earlier this week the Chair indicated that it believed the standard of behaviour in the chamber was not acceptable.

The Chair will take the opportunity to discuss the standard of behaviour with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and the Independent members. Despite the Chair’s earlier warning, it has taken only two days for the house to revert to its previous bad behaviour.

The Chair believes that parliamentary standards should not fall and that all honourable members should examine and improve their behaviour.

AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS (CONTROL OF USE) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) (Amendment) Bill 2000 provides for the labelling of certain feeds and meals of animal origin by amendment of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992.

The bill is required to give full effect to the decision of the Agricultural and Resource Management Council of

Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) that a ban be placed on the feeding of mammalian material to ruminants in line with national and international requirements.

In April 1996, the association between bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease in cattle and a neurological condition in humans significantly depressed world markets for beef. In September 1996, ARMCANZ placed a ban on the feeding of mammalian material to ruminants following the BSE crisis, in line with recommendations of the World Health Organisation. Since then an order under the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 has been in place prohibiting the feeding of stockfood containing mammalian material, prohibiting or regulating the sale and use of certain stock foods and specifying the labelling requirements which are to apply in line with the ARMCANZ decision.

The order was intended to be a short-term measure until effective regulations could be put in place under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Act (Control of Use) Act 1992 to deal fully with the relevant issues contained in the National Agreement on Mammalian Material.

The act empowers regulations banning the feeding of stock foods containing mammalian materials to ruminants and regulations prohibiting the sale of stockfoods containing mammalian material unless they are appropriately labelled. The amendment in this bill is to comply with a provision included in the National Agreement on Mammalian Material that is not already empowered under the act. It regulates the labelling of mammalian material in the production process where it is an ingredient that could potentially enter the food chain and become stock food.

The proposed amendment provides for labelling requirements for mammalian material at the point it leaves a rendering plant when it could be mixed with other ingredients and used for stock food but could also be mixed with other ingredients and used for fertilisers or pet food. This additional provision to label the mammalian material from the point it leaves the rendering plant is considered necessary so that stock food manufacturers have adequate information to comply with the labelling requirements that are already empowered by the act. There is sufficient flexibility in the provisions to allow adjustment to the changing requirements of the national ban following demands from the European Union and other markets, such as the changing status of blood meals. The initiatives have the support of industry and honour the state's commitment to support the 1996 ARMCANZ ban on

feeding of mammalian material to ruminants. They will reinforce Australia's favourable animal health reputation and ensure that the regulations are in line with Australia's major international trading partners and the national agreement on the feeding of mammalian materials.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 25 May.

Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HAMILTON (Minister for Agriculture) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Timbarra secondary college

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — I ask the Minister for Education to see a delegation from the Timbarra Residents Association with a view to reconsidering the decision made by her department to sell the land that was set aside in the Timbarra community for a secondary college.

If the minister were to look at the second page of the Pakenham *Gazette*, which is a local paper distributed through my electorate, she would find a large picture of 250 residents standing on that land, expressing their will through signs and asking her to reconsider the decision to sell the land. Their point is that when they bought their homes and moved into the Timbarra estate it was always on the basis that they expected a secondary college to be built.

One of the problems is that there are two reports on whether or not a secondary college should be built. The first is a report of a committee I chaired that had representatives from both sides of politics — and as I recall Bob Ives, a former Labor member of the other place, was present as well. After long discussions and some six months or more of work on that particular project the committee decided that the Timbarra secondary college should be built. There is another report that was commissioned by the department, which the minister would be aware of, which states that the college should not be built. Quite clearly, there is a dispute.

It has been argued by the minister that the department had it in mind that it should sell the property during the time in office of the previous government. That may be the case, although I was never advised of it. Whether the department had that in mind or not, the question remains: will the minister now reconsider the matter and listen to the residents? That is all they want. They want to be able to meet her, to have the right to discuss these matters and to see whether they can change her mind. It is irrelevant whether the report and the intention of the department to sell the land were issues during or after the period in office of the Kennett government, because the minister is now responsible and she must make up her mind.

Police: western suburbs

Mr LANGUILLER (Sunshine) — I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to intervene in an issue about the policing presence in my electorate of Sunshine.

I ask the minister to raise with the Chief Commissioner of Police the issue of police numbers in the City of Brimbank and to seek an assurance that Sunshine police station will be allocated a sufficient number of police officers to respond appropriately to the needs of the Sunshine community. In doing so, I ask the minister to also outline what the government is doing to ensure Victoria Police has sufficient numbers to reallocate officers when shortages arise, as they have in Sunshine.

I place on record that a number of deputations and representations have been made to me about problems in the western suburbs, particularly confined to the municipality of Brimbank. A number of shop owners and businesses in the central business district around Hampshire Road have approached me about activities in the car park at the Sunshine plaza and the Village cinema complex. A group of residents from Hampshire Road going south down to Ballarat Road have also approached my office about the same matters, indicating there is the presence of criminal activities in the late evenings.

Part of the suburb of Deer Park falls within the boundaries of my electorate and part is in the electorate of the honourable member for Melton.

A government member interjected.

Mr LANGUILLER — Indeed, he is a good member who represents the interests of the community. Residents from Deer Park have also approached me about their concerns on this issue. Residents from Main Road East and Main Road West in St Albans have also raised concerns with me.

I commend the municipality of Brimbank for its efforts in community safety. I remind the house that the measures undertaken by the Bracks government in getting on with the job of providing community safety are in total contrast to the measures undertaken by the previous Kennett government, which allowed the police station in the Maidstone area to run down, did not allocate sufficient resources for the purposes of community safety in the region and did nothing in the western suburbs to address the causes of the problems — namely, jobs, education and health. I commend the Bracks government for delivering to the community — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Minister for Transport: comments

Dr NAPTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I call on the Premier to express regret to the family and many friends of the late Sir Henry Bolte for the outrageous, uncalled for and absolutely appalling attack on him by the Minister for Transport that the house witnessed earlier today.

Sir Henry Bolte was a great Victorian. He was a great Premier and a great leader for this great state. The vicious personal attack on him by the minister was probably the lowest and most cowardly act I have witnessed in my time in Parliament — —

Mr Maxfield — You haven't been here long!

Dr NAPTHINE — For the honourable member for Narracan to interject in that way shows what a low person he is. It shows his unwillingness to defend somebody like Sir Henry Bolte, who made a lifetime contribution to Victoria and Australia. It was an absolute and utter disgrace that Sir Henry Bolte was attacked here today in a cowardly way by the Minister for Transport — and the minister should know that it was a disgrace!

Sir Henry is not here to defend himself, as he passed away some years ago. It is probably fortunate for the Minister for Transport that Sir Henry is not alive today because the minister would be eaten alive by him after that sort of attack.

Sir Henry has family resident in Victoria in and around the Ballarat area and many friends across the state, particularly in country communities. Those many friends and family members of Sir Henry will be shocked and appalled as I was at the behaviour of the Minister for Transport, the Labor minister who cannot get above the gutter. I call upon the Premier, the Leader

of the Labor Party in the state, to take the opportunity to express his sincere regret on behalf of the Labor Party and his government for the uncalled-for, cowardly and vicious personal attack on the late Sir Henry Bolte.

Sir Henry Bolte was a member of this place for almost 25 years from 1947 to 1972 and Premier and Treasurer of the state for 17 years from 1955 to 1972. He presided over a period of strong growth in the state in the economy, education, and cultural, social and family life. It is an absolute disgrace for his memory to be besmirched as it has been in this house by a minister of the Crown. I call upon the Premier to apologise to the family and many friends of Sir Henry across Victoria.

V/Line: pocket timetables

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) — On behalf of an elderly constituent in my electorate of Bendigo East I raise for the attention of the Minister for Transport the new V/Line pocket timetables released during April and I ask for his action on the matter.

The new timetables were eagerly awaited by constituents in Bendigo and residents of places between Melbourne and Bendigo because they detail the extra train services introduced from 9 April by the Bracks government through the Minister for Transport.

The additional services provide people travelling between Bendigo and Melbourne with a service every hour during off-peak times, which is a significant improvement on rail services to Bendigo. That is great news for the people in my electorate who regularly travel to Melbourne by train and for the people in metropolitan Melbourne who regularly travel to Bendigo.

My constituent, Mrs Molly Smith, collected her timetable in eager anticipation of the new train services. She was disappointed when attempting to read the timetable, which I have in my hand. I challenge any member of the house to quickly and easily decipher the arrival and departure times listed. The honourable member for Richmond has taken up the challenge, and I urge all members to do so because it is difficult to read.

The timetable is difficult to read because the writing is so small and the times are written in 24-hour clock format. I am not sure whether the honourable member for Richmond or any other member of the house is well versed in reading the 24-hour clock — it is difficult and I confess I am one of those who cannot do so.

To give due credit, V/Line has provided a conversion chart in the timetable but Mrs Smith finds it confusing

and difficult to convert the time to the standard a.m. and p.m. times that she understands. After looking at the timetable, I agree with her complaints. The previous timetables were easy to understand and were also available in a pocket version.

The Bracks Labor government has introduced many great initiatives to improve rail services for Victoria: fast trains; standardisation of the rail gauge; extra services; and the redevelopment of Spencer Street station. All of those are welcomed by people in country Victoria.

I ask the Minister for Transport to consider the view of Mrs Smith on the readability of the V/Line timetable and to raise her concerns directly with V/Line, not just for some of the elderly constituents of my electorate but for everyone.

Fisheries Victoria: funding

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I raise with the Minister for Gaming a matter for the consideration of the Minister for Energy and Resources in another place in her role as minister responsible for fisheries.

The matter I raise relates to a cut in the Labor government's recent budget of \$1.5 million in the all-important aquaculture initiative introduced by the previous government. The cut will remove a total of 12 positions from the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute at Snobs Creek, Queenscliff and Fisheries Victoria. I understand some staff have already been informed of their pending retrenchment although there has been no formal notification.

The funding cut will have a significant impact on Snobs Creek. The Benalla electorate has part of the state's \$10 million trout industry and is the third biggest fishery in the state. Euroa has a developing eel industry.

The biggest effect of the cut will be on the ability to fulfil the requirements of the new recreational fishing licence which requires restocking. The programs and staff needed to carry out the aquaculture initiative and the restocking program are the same and the loss will have a significant impact on the industry at Snobs Creek, Queenscliff and Fisheries Victoria as well as the recreational fishers of the state. It will mean a loss of experienced staff and Victoria's freshwater fish research and restocking will be drastically reduced. The newly developing marine stock enhancement program will come to a halt. The timing is unfortunate as the first marine fish for restocking are due for release this month.

The government is well aware that money will be available from the recreational fishing licence, and one cannot help but think it is expecting the money to repay the staff who have been part of the process and have supported it for many years and to replace the fish restocking fund.

I ask the minister to investigate the severe blow to the Snobs Creek hatchery which will mean a direct loss of employment to those currently engaged in work in that location and will severely impact on recreational fishing in Victoria.

Calder Highway: federal funding

Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne) — I ask the Minister for Transport to pursue funding for the Calder Highway duplication project. As honourable members would have heard during question time and again during the contribution to the budget debate of the honourable member for Bendigo East, the federal government has failed to contribute any money to the project. It is supposedly a road of national importance, funded jointly by the federal and state governments. The second Woodend section is due to open early next year when Woodend and Kyneton will be bypassed. The Karlsruhe section is a dangerous single-lane highway wedged between the dual highway sections to its north and south.

Before the federal budget was handed down I had a number of queries from constituents, people working on the project and contractors, asking what is to happen to the Karlsruhe section of road once the second part of the Woodend bypass is completed. Over a number of years a big publicity campaign has been run targeting safety issues on the Calder Highway, and honourable members may recall seeing bumper stickers saying, 'Use caution on the Calder'. The stickers recognise the potential dangers of the highway. There are not only concerns about the future of the project, but also about the dangers of the highway.

The Bracks government has committed \$7 million to the Calder Highway project, with a further \$12 million to follow. It has certainly contributed its part to this federal–state project. This is a serious safety issue and I ask the Minister for Transport to pursue the federal government with vigour to secure the funding as a matter of urgency.

Road safety: black spot program

Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh) — I refer the Minister for Transport to roadworks and improvements to the intersection of Tucker and Centre roads in East

Bentleigh. I would ordinarily access such information through Vicroads, however, the minister has issued instructions preventing officers of the department from speaking with members of Parliament, and I am forced to use valuable time now, which I am sure other honourable members would wish to use, to raise the matter.

The intersection is considered to be a black spot intersection, and it has seen more than 12 accidents over a period of five years or longer ranging from fatalities to less serious injuries. In response to the lobbying of both by myself and one of my constituents, Mrs Norma Burns of Lawson Street, Bentleigh — Mrs Burns campaigned for the improvement of the intersection for many years following her husband's accident and fortunate full recovery — the City of Glen Eira has worked with Vicroads to make the improvements. Unfortunately, the works have stalled because the relocation of the Telstra cables found during the works was not accounted for at the planning and design stage and therefore no funding is available. The federal government had provided funding of \$130 000 under its black spot program towards improving pedestrian safety, but the works are unable to be completed.

I ask the Minister for Transport to inform me what action he can take to ensure that the works, which are important to pedestrian safety, are concluded as promptly as possible.

Victorian Court Information and Welfare Network

Ms OVERINGTON (Ballarat West) — I raise with the Attorney-General the urgent matter of ongoing funding for the Victorian Court Information and Welfare Network, a great service which has been operating in the courts for many years. The network has been advised that its federal government funding will cease after 30 June, and I ask the minister what action he can take to ensure that the federal government continues its funding after that date.

The staff are mainly volunteers who undertake training to assist people attending court. As a former welfare worker I have first-hand knowledge of the valuable work they do. I had clients who had never attended court and were frightened by the unfortunate prospect of having to do so. When I attended court with a client I introduced him or her to a court network worker who would answer any questions and wait with him or her.

The network provides a unique service. The federal government is bleating about its budget this week and it

has a moral obligation to the network. It should be ashamed at not continuing the funding after 30 June. This valuable court network requires funding of \$65 000 and the federal government will not continue — —

An Honourable Member — It's a drop in the bucket.

Ms OVERINGTON — It is a drop in the ocean, particularly when the federal government says it has delivered a great budget. Tell that to the court network people and their clients! They are wonderful people who help citizens who appear in the courts. Their budget will be short by \$65 000 — not a lot for some, but a lot for them.

I urge the minister to make strong representations to the federal government to ask it to fulfil its moral obligations.

Schools: asbestos

Mr ROWE (Cranbourne) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for Education the presence of asbestos in portable classrooms. I call on the minister to take immediate action to ensure the safety of students at Cranbourne's primary schools and its secondary college.

I refer the minister to the finding of asbestos in the Somerville Rise Primary School portable classrooms by an independent review organised by parents at the school. Because my electorate is a fast-growing one, a number of local schools require portable buildings. Cardinia Primary School needs one, which possibly could have white asbestos in its lining.

Parents of children at the Courtney Gardens Primary School, which is in the electorate of the honourable member for Dandenong, have contacted me because of what they consider to be the presence of asbestos in the two portable classrooms that have been delivered to the school.

Carrum Downs Primary School has received portable classrooms that could have asbestos in their lining. Cranbourne Primary School has also received a portable classroom that is of an age such that its lining could contain asbestos cement. Langwarrin Park Primary School may be the worst example. The two portables delivered to that school came from the storage depot. Instead of being dismantled and disposed of, they were brought from Port Melbourne and dumped at the school. Despite the assurance that the buildings had been checked and found to be safe, an independent

review has shown they are not safe because they contain white asbestos.

I ask that Cranbourne Secondary College be immediately given the funds to remove the asbestos that was identified in an audit conducted by the former government. The current government has failed to fund that removal and has given the college less money than it was due under the program.

Housing: Ashburton estate

Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood) — I direct to attention of the Minister for Housing a matter concerning the public housing estate at Victory Boulevard, Ashburton, in my electorate. Honourable members will remember that I have previously spoken about the flats on the estate, which were part of my campaign focus during last year's Burwood by-election. It started when I joined the Premier at the flats to launch our election campaigns, during which the need for work on the flats was highlighted.

The Victory Boulevard estate comprises a block of 54 walk-up units that date back to the 1950s. They are in an extremely poor state of repair. So far as I know, nothing much was done in the seven years of the Kennett government to attend to the problems there, and possibly little work was done on the estate during the former member's 23-year stewardship of the seat of Burwood. The residents of the flats come to my office weekly to ask me to bring the redevelopment forward. Conditions on the estate have deteriorated in the past six months. A number of families find it stressful to live there.

Mr Mulder — Are you doing something about it?

Mr STENSHOLT — We are doing something about it. In a debate earlier this year the Minister for Housing said something would be done. I want to know what information I can take back to the important group of people living in the Victory Boulevard flats. What will be done this year to clean up and redevelop the area? Public housing is an important priority of the Bracks Labor government. I am sure the minister is taking and will continue to take positive action, because public housing in the south-east of Melbourne was totally neglected during the seven years of the previous government. People looking for housing have consistently found the waiting list to be too long.

Planning: Nillumbik scheme

Mr PHILLIPS (Eltham) — The matter I ask the Attorney-General to direct to the attention of the Minister for Planning concerns the Nillumbik planning

scheme, which I have previously raised during an adjournment debate. I thank the minister for replying to me after the matter was first raised. I now ask him to take urgent action to approve that scheme.

I know of one person who wants to subdivide land at 250 Christian Road, Hurstbridge, into two allotments. As I said, I now request the minister to approve the entire scheme, consideration of which has been continuing for a number of years. The Shire of Nillumbik has considered it on a number of occasions and the scheme is now with the minister for his signing off. The process started in December 1998. In March 1999 an independent panel examined about 640 submissions on the scheme, after which it recommended 36 changes. Many people are waiting on the minister to approve the scheme, which contains all sorts of changes.

I ask the minister to urgently examine the matter. I know other schemes need to be approved, but I ask the minister to make every endeavour to approve the scheme to give the people of Eltham and surrounds the certainty they need about the changes that will take place following the adoption of the Nillumbik planning scheme.

Responses

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — The honourable member for Ballarat West raised an important issue about court networks. I express my grave concern that my federal colleague Daryl Williams has recently announced that his department will cease funding court networks from 30 June next. For the past five years the federal Attorney-General's Department has funded the network's activity at the Melbourne and Dandenong Family Court registries at a cost of about \$60 000 a year. The funding for 1999–2000 was \$65 732.

The court network is a non-profit organisation that is staffed primarily by volunteers. It provides information and support for Victorians who use the courts. Its services include telephone help lines, referrals, liaising with court officers, assisting litigants in person, and so forth. The network makes 5000 direct contacts a year in the Melbourne and Dandenong Family Court registries, 3500 of which are court-based contacts — and of those, 56 per cent are unrepresented litigants.

The figure is particularly disturbing in light of the findings of a recent study of unrepresented litigants in the family court conducted by Griffith University. The study found not only that the majority of unrepresented litigants were at a disadvantage in Family Court proceedings but that those litigants in particular needed

assistance with court documents, procedures and etiquette — exactly the assistance the court network provides.

The study recommended increased spending on legal aid to address those issues. It was very disappointing, therefore, that the federal budget delivered on Tuesday night allowed for no increased funding for legal aid and certainly no increase for Legal Aid Victoria. I have written to the federal Attorney-General expressing my concern at his decision and highlighting for him the fact that the federal government not only refuses to provide adequate legal aid funding to Victoria but is now attacking a service which gives valuable assistance to those most affected by legal aid cuts.

In contrast to the federal government, the Bracks government has continued to recognise the important role of the court network in our justice system, particularly for litigants who are at a financial disadvantage. The annual grant received by the network from my department is currently \$215 640. I can assure the house that that level of funding, at the very least, will continue beyond 30 June and into the future.

I take this opportunity to commend the work of the court network and to recognise the support and service it provides to thousands of Victorians, and I condemn the decision of the federal Attorney-General to deprive Family Court users in Victoria of that valuable service. I urge him and his government to reconsider its approach. I also ask the shadow Attorney-General in this Parliament to support my call for the federal government to put more money into legal aid.

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr HULLS — Indeed, there ought to be bipartisan support on this matter. I hope the shadow Attorney-General joins with me in urging the federal Attorney-General to reinstate funding for the court network and for legal aid generally in Victoria.

Ms PIKE (Minister for Housing) — The honourable member for Burwood raised the matter of the redevelopment of the Victory Boulevard public housing estate in Ashburton. I thank him for raising that issue and commend him for his continuing advocacy for public housing tenants in his area.

The Bracks government is committed to continuing levels of public housing throughout the metropolitan area, the inner city and rural and regional Victoria. It believes in a strong public housing sector and in good housing policy to provide essential accommodation and support for low-income people. That is part of the

government's platform for social participation: people must have affordable and accessible housing.

The Victory Boulevard estate was constructed in the early 1950s and consists of 56 two-bedroom flats in eight blocks of two-storey concrete walk-ups. I had the opportunity to visit the estate recently and found it to be past its use-by date. Many of the apartments are small and are simply not appropriate as public housing in that area.

I am pleased to confirm for the honourable member for Burwood that the Victory Boulevard redevelopment will commence in the 2000–01 financial year. The project will be part of the recently announced allocation of \$21 million for major redevelopments.

When public housing is redeveloped it is important to work to an appropriate model. The model the government is developing is not the one where the government simply goes in and bulldozes buildings, saying, 'We know best. We will put up what we think is best'. The government is setting up a local consultative mechanism involving local government and people from the community who live in the estates. It will invite them to talk about the kind of community they want to create and be part of. Through that interactive process, and supported by expert planners and developers, the government believes it will be able to get a good outcome for public housing tenants in the electorate of Burwood and, indeed, right across the community.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) —

Before responding to matters raised by the honourable members for Bendigo East, Gisborne and Bentleigh I would like to comment on an answer I gave in question time earlier today. I had not intended my comment to create offence, and if offence has been taken by anybody I unreservedly apologise.

On reflection, Sir Henry Bolte, being a down-to-earth person, might have had a bit of a laugh at my comment. However, if anyone has taken offence at it, I apologise. It is this government's intention then as now, as I indicated, to make sure that the bridge in question continues to carry the name of Victoria's longest serving Premier.

The government is pleased to continue the official process involved in having the bridge carry the Bolte name and pays tribute to Sir Henry Bolte for his long service to Victoria. The government has no hesitation in doing that and has rejected any suggestion of giving the bridge another name. I make that acknowledgment

unequivocally for the people in the house and for those reading *Hansard*.

The honourable member for Bendigo East raised a matter concerning train timetables. A constituent of hers, Mrs Molly Smith, said the new train timetable was not user friendly because it is small and difficult to read. It is a complicated issue because V/Line has to provide detailed information on a number of additional services in a format that is small enough to fit in wallets and purses. That creates a problem.

An attempt has been made to provide the additional timetabling information in a new format. If that information cannot successfully be printed in a smaller format, the government will take up the issue with V/Line to see whether improvements can be made for people who have trouble reading small print. Many people of my age and older have that trouble. As one gets older one's eyes have trouble focusing on small print. Perhaps in addition to the format that is now used, a more user-friendly format that uses larger print could be made available.

The honourable member for Bentleigh raised a matter concerning roadworks at the intersection of Tucker and Centre roads in East Bentleigh. That project is being carried out by Vicroads on behalf of the federal government. The works have been stalled because of an issue concerning telecommunication services. I will take up the matter with Vicroads or the utility provider to find out what the problem is and see whether we can get things moving quickly.

I point out that the relocation of telecommunication services or utilities often creates problems, and the process is often a bit more complicated than first meets the eye. Nevertheless, it needs to be done. From memory, I believe the honourable member for Bentleigh has raised this issue previously — —

Mrs Peulich — A separate issue.

Mr BATCHELOR — A separate one. The honourable member for Bentleigh raises a number of issues concerning roads in her area, and I will follow this matter through as I have done with the other issues she has raised.

The honourable member for Gisborne raised with me the impact of the Calder Highway duplication, the reduction in federal funding provided to the state and the federal government's failure to provide a commitment to fund the project in the forthcoming years. The state government wants to see the completion of the upgrade of the Calder Highway by 2006. The government is committed to that, but it will

be achieved only if the federal government comes on board. The federal budget announced this week made it clear that federal funding for the project will be seriously delayed, which puts the completion of the project in jeopardy.

The allocation of federal funding is projected so far forward in the future that it is beyond the capacity of the state government to provide the necessary funding in the interim. As I understand the federal government's position, it is not as though it is saying, 'You carry your part of it this year, and we will pick it up the following year'; rather, it has not even given a commitment for funding in forthcoming years. That is of concern to me and, I am sure, the honourable member for Gisborne.

It is particularly hurtful given that the relevant section of the Calder Highway is in effect sandwiched between two sections of the road that will be of freeway standard. That will create confusion and disrupt the driving experience of the people using the highway. It is an important route for people travelling into Central Victoria and beyond into north-western Victoria. It services all the towns and regions from Mildura through to Bendigo and further into Melbourne.

The government wants to get on with the job. The federal government has let down both the government and the people who use the highway. The government will continue to pursue the matter with the federal government and will be asking for the support of the people who live along that corridor and the commercial users — the transport companies, the producers and the manufacturers — who use the road as a lifeline to transport freight. The government will ensure that the federal government understands the importance of this project for the community and will request that it reconsider its decision in future budgets.

The state government will try to keep it going but unless the federal government comes to the party it will not be able to meet that commitment. It is a road of national importance and it requires fifty-fifty funding from the state and federal governments. The project will grind to a halt without that funding. Nobody wants to see that — except, apparently, the federal government. The government will take up the matter with the Deputy Prime Minister to see if the federal government will change its mind.

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — The honourable member for Sunshine raised the issue of the police presence in his electorate, particularly at Sunshine police station. After the new Sunshine police station was opened additional staff were attached to it and its present complement is

2 senior sergeants, 10 sergeants and 60 other ranks. However, all honourable members are aware that the previous government cut police numbers by something like 800 over four years in an act of deliberate attrition within the Victoria Police and therefore the strength of the force was severely curtailed.

By mid-2003 the government will increase the number of Victoria Police officers to about 10 300, but in the meantime the government must deal with the consequences of the act of vandalism perpetrated by the previous government. Sunshine police station has 8 unfilled vacancies, 2 long-term Workcover positions, 2 officers on maternity leave and 1 officer on sick leave, which means Sunshine is short 13 police officers. Unfortunately the Victoria Police does not have the resources to cover that substantial number when such shortages occur in police stations.

The situation is exacerbated by the increasing number of major events in the state for which police officers are called in from suburban and country police stations to patrol. That is usually done on the basis of leave in lieu and places an obligation on the stations from which the officers come to provide that leave in lieu. That is why so many positions of officers on leave cannot be filled.

The government will provide an additional 800 police officers to give the Chief Commissioner of Police the numbers he needs to provide adequate staffing at police stations across the state. As the member for Sunshine recognised, it is not a role of the government to determine where police officers should be deployed; the deployment of police to various posts is entirely at the discretion of the chief commissioner. However, the 800 extra police will give the chief commissioner the flexibility to cover vacancies as they occur and to deploy police to the areas where they are most needed. I have every confidence that the chief commissioner will deploy those officers properly. If extra police are required in Sunshine, I am sure the chief commissioner will look after that.

Another thing the government has done this year is provide the Victoria Police for the first time with additional funding to cover the additional leave and costs associated with attending major events. This year the World Economic Forum will be hosted in Melbourne, there will be Olympic events and a number of more regular major events. That will place an enormous strain on our policing strength. The government has given the police an additional funding allocation to ensure that the police presence at those events does not lead to shortages at local police stations.

I congratulate the Sunshine neighbourhood watch team on bringing the matter to the attention of the honourable member for Sunshine. It has liaised closely with him. I also thank the honourable member for his diligence in the matter.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The honourable member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Planning. I will refer the matter to the minister.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a matter for the Premier. I think the matter has been dealt with by the Minister for Transport.

The Leader of the National Party raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources in another place concerning what he claims to be a cut of \$1.5 million in the rural agriculture initiative. It is interesting when one is in government to see what programs were initiated just before the last election. I wonder about the commitment of the previous government to all sorts of programs given that they were designed so that their money would run out at the time of the election campaign.

It was interesting to hear the important issues of fishing stocks and recreational fishing raised. I do not recall seeing the previous government's recreational fishing policy, but this government had one when it was in opposition. The policy I prepared as the shadow minister for sport, recreation and tourism was fully endorsed by the Victorian recreational fishing peak body, VRFish, when it said it would strengthen fishing tourism in the state.

I had great pleasure recently in attending the launch at Lakes Entrance of the fishing tourism action plan. An additional launch was held at Ballarat because fishing tourism is so popular. The government has developed the action plan involving the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Fisheries Victoria. There has been a whole-of-government review of recreational fishing, fishing stock and infrastructure issues, as well as the marketing and support of fishing tourism. Although it is basically a regional product the government is doing a lot more than did the previous government. I will refer the matter to the Minister for Energy and Resources.

The honourable member for Berwick raised an issue about the need for a secondary school at Timbarra and sought an opportunity for a deputation to the Minister for Education. I will pass the matter on to the minister. It is beneficial to be a member of Parliament who represents a neighbouring electorate and therefore

understands the history of the area. The Timbarra Residents Association met with the Minister for Education at a community meeting conducted at the City of Casey.

The honourable member for Berwick referred to a report he compiled prior to the 1996 election, which we on this side call the Dean report on education services in the south-eastern suburbs and which has been kept secret from the public. I have tried to get it under FOI to find out what was said. The honourable member tried to highlight what the report says, but otherwise he has kept it secret. I had to go to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to try to get a copy of the report, which he said states that the proposed Timbarra secondary college should be built. The report was prepared prior to the 1996 election, so the previous government had four years to provide funding for the school the honourable member says was recommended. He also admitted that there was an additional report which, despite his report on education, said that the school is no longer needed at Timbarra.

The fact is that the honourable member for Berwick and the previous government let down the Timbarra community. The minister has met with the community. However, I will pass the comments on to her, and she will consider whether to receive a deputation.

I remind the honourable member for Berwick that the budget delivers the biggest single investment in new schools ever in the City of Casey — more than the region has ever seen in any one year.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — They are not all in my electorate. There is the Berwick Primary School in the electorate of the honourable member for Berwick; a new special school at Cranbourne East, in the electorate of the honourable member for Cranbourne; a new primary school and a new secondary school in Narre Warren South; and a new secondary school in Berwick South. That is five schools in one year. The government is totally committed to catching up on new infrastructure for schools in the City of Casey, which was ignored by the previous government for many years.

There is more work to do. The honourable member for Berwick is now crying crocodile tears over what the government is doing about Timbarra. I assume the honourable member would also consider the views of the Berwick Secondary College and Eumemmerring Secondary College, Timbarra's two neighbouring secondary schools. That is an important consideration.

I thank the honourable member for raising the provision of education resources in the City of Casey. In seven months the government has done more than has ever been done in any one year. I will pass the issue on to the Minister for Education.

The honourable member for Cranbourne raised a serious issue about asbestos in schools. As a neighbouring member of Parliament I understand the history of the issue. Opposition members have tried to run a campaign of scaremongering about asbestos in schools. Isn't it good that I read my local newspapers? In an article in the *Berwick Leader* of 26 April the asbestos issue at the Cranbourne Secondary College was raised:

The asbestos audit report, completed by ESP Laboratories for the state government in March last year, stated that asbestos was found in most areas of the 23-year-old school.

That was in March last year and the former government brought down a budget not long after. Did it allocate money in its budget to fix this urgent problem? No, it did not. Now opposition members want to carry on a scaremongering campaign. The article continues:

Amongst the worst-affected areas are the senior students' locker bays, common rooms and toilets.

Although the asbestos is not harmful unless it is disturbed, at least two blocks were categorised as high priority, requiring 'immediate' action because of crumbly material found in insulation in boiler, fan or plant rooms.

The report of March 1999 stated that immediate action was required — and fourteen months have passed since then. However, the former government was about to bring down a budget that did not allocate funds to fix the problem. Now they are in opposition, former government members want to make an issue of it. When in government they had the opportunity to do something but they did not. The Bracks government takes the issue seriously. I remind the honourable member for Cranbourne and the opposition that — —

Mr Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member for Cranbourne.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — The honourable member for Cranbourne and his opposition colleagues should be aware that the article also states that an audit was conducted seven years ago and that a second audit indicated some areas had deteriorated to a higher degree.

The honourable member for Cranbourne also raised issues relating to some other schools. He is aware of

comments of the Minister for Education on this matter. The government treats the issue seriously. Workcover is examining the matter. A spokesman for the education department is reported in the same article from the *Berwick Leader* as having said:

The asbestos which needs to be removed will automatically be included in a program of removal.

It is important not to carry on a scaremongering campaign. Many schools have asbestos in them and it is a matter of how it is dealt with. I have spoken to the principal at Cranbourne Secondary College and she is reported in the same article as having said:

Principal Susan Seaton said ... the asbestos posed no risk to students and staff.

'It's not a terribly urgent project. All asbestos we have is of a nature that is not dangerous until it is disturbed', she said.

The honourable member for Cranbourne also said the government cut back the money under the physical resource management system (PRMS) program. The government is still working under the previous government's budget. The PRMS program has not been changed. PRMS has been calculated on the same basis.

Mr Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member for Cranbourne is making it difficult for the Chair and for Hansard to hear what the minister is saying. I ask the honourable member to cease interjecting.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — I thank the honourable member for Cranbourne for raising the matter. I assure him, as the Minister for Education has assured the house, that the government is treating it very seriously. I remind honourable members that many schools have asbestos in them; the former government's audit report of seven years ago identified that fact. The government will do what it can to address the issue.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 5.22 p.m. until Tuesday, 23 May.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown. Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly. Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers. The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Tuesday, 9 May 2000

Environment and Conservation: Yarra Valley Water

- 89. MR WILSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation in relation to Yarra Valley Water —
1. How many rebates were paid to customers under the Customer Charter in each month from July 1998 to November 1999 and what was the total amount paid in each month.
 2. How many sewer spill incidents were reported in each month from July 1998 to November 1999 inclusive and, of those, how many were located in the electorate of Bennettswood.
 3. How many sewer blockages per 10 kilometres of sewer main are anticipated in 1999–2000.
 4. How many emergency calls were received between — (a) 1 October and 30 November 1998; and (b) 1 October and 30 November 1999.
 5. How many kilometres of water mains and reticulation sewers respectively were replaced or relined during the period 1 July to 30 September 1999 and how many kilometres are scheduled to be replaced or relined in each of the three remaining quarters of 1999–2000.
 6. How many additional kilometres of water and sewerage mains respectively are expected to be brought into service in 1999–2000.
 7. How many water quality samples are expected to be tested in 1999–2000.
 8. What proportion of coliform and faecal coliform samples are expected to exceed minimum guide standards in 1999–2000 and what are the major locations, if any, affected.
 9. What level of cryptosporidium and giardia organisms, if any, would be the maximum allowable meeting current water test parameters in any sample taken.
 10. Have any instances been found during the period 1 July to 30 November 1999 where cryptosporidium or giardia levels exceeded test guidelines; if so, what were — (a) the dates; (b) the locations from which the samples was drawn; (c) the levels of the relevant organism; and (d) what steps were taken to inform the public of these findings.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. Rebates paid from July 1998 – November 1999 were:

Month	Number of Rebates	Amount
July 1998	1,214	\$24,840
August 1998	1,329	\$26,900
September 1998	2,996	\$60,080
October 1998	179	\$ 4,380
November 1998	1,234	\$24,840

Month	Number of Rebates	Amount
December 1998	664	\$14,640
January 1999	1,261	\$25,780
February 1999	1,237	\$25,780
March 1999	1,136	\$23,440
April 1999	1,429	\$29,460
May 1999	1,436	\$29,680
June 1999	1,011	\$20,540
July 1999	2,371	\$47,740
August 1999	409	\$ 8,740
September 1999	728	\$15,200
October 1999	338	\$ 6,760
November 1999	802	\$16,040

2. Total sewer spill incidents reported from July 1998 to November 1999, and those located in the electorate of Bennettswood. For the purposes of these calculations, incident means any unplanned discharge to the environment. These statistics are an estimate only as these figures are not usually provided by electorate.

Month	Total Sewer Spills	Sewer Spills Bennettswood
July 1998	195	10
August 1998	207	13
September 1998	186	13
October 1998	160	10
November 1998	125	8
December 1998	114	6
January 1999	108	4
February 1999	97	4
March 1999	143	11
April 1999	134	6
May 1999	152	8
June 1999	148	4
July 1999	113	2
August 1999	222	14
September 1999	205	13
October 1999	141	6
November 1999	118	5

3. Sewer blockages per 10 kilometres of sewer main anticipated in 1999-2000 are 3.27.
4. Emergency calls received were:
- (a) 1 October – 30 November 1998 21,471
- (b) 1 October – 30 November 1999 21,533
5. Kilometres of water mains and reticulation sewers replaced or relined during the period 1 July to 30 September 1999 and kilometres scheduled to be replaced or relined in each of the three remaining quarters of 1999-2000 are.

	Sept Qtr (actual)	Dec Qtr (actual)	March Qtr (scheduled)	June Qtr (scheduled)
Water mains replaced or relined (kms)	21.0	17.0	9.0	8.0
Sewers replaced or relined (kms)	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.3

6. 86 kilometres of water mains and 80 kilometres of sewer mains are expected to be brought into service in 1999-2000.
7. 5,900 water quality samples are expected to be tested in 1999-2000.
8. A compliance of 99% of <20 coliforms/100mL for total coliform samples is expected in 1999-2000

A compliance of 99.8% of samples <1 faecal coliforms/100mL for faecal coliform samples is expected.

In Healesville, Emerald and Yarra Glen a standard of 95% <1 coliforms/100mL has been set by the Department of Human Services. These systems are expected to comply with this reporting standard in 1999/2000.

9. At present no guideline is set for cryptosporidium or giardia in the 1996 Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. This reflects the uncertainty which applies in respect of the analysis and interpretation of giardia and cryptosporidium tests.

In accordance with regulations under health legislation, any detections of these pathogens must be reported immediately to the Department of Human Services which has powers to take action, in consultation with the water authority concerned, to protect public health. The Department of Human Services is finalising protocols to guide authorities when they detect giardia or cryptosporidium in drinking water.

10. No cryptosporidium or giardia were detected in Yarra Valley Water's water supply system during the period 1 July to November 1999.

Environment and Conservation: Wilsons Promontory National Park

97. **MR PERTON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation in reference to Wilsons Promontory National Park —

1. Has the Department prepared a draft case for Wilson's Promontory to be listed under the world heritage conventions; if so, will there be public consultation on this issue and what form will the process take.
2. Has the Minister received advice on the suitability of Wilsons Promontory for world heritage listing; if so, what difference would it make to the National Park to be so listed.
3. What action does the Minister intend to take in respect to Tidal River and its status.
4. When will a new integrated management plan be developed and will the government's policy incorporate the lighthouse into the National Park; if so what are the Minister's plans for the lighthouse.
5. What are the Minister's plans for government and commercial accommodation inside and outside the National Park.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The Department has not yet prepared a draft case for Wilson's Promontory to be listed under the world heritage convention. However, a draft report on the international values of Wilson's Promontory will be prepared to provide the basis for pursuing a nomination for world heritage listing. This report will be available for public consultation.
2. I have been advised that, to date, there has been no detailed assessment of Wilson's Promontory in a world heritage context. World heritage listing would increase local and national pride in the park and encourage protection of the area from inappropriate commercial development.
3. The Government's policy is that Tidal River will be managed as an integral part of Wilson's Promontory National Park, and that the focus is on nature conservation. A new integrated management plan being

developed for the park will address the future management of Tidal River in the light of Government policy and stakeholders' concerns.

4. It is intended that the new integrated management plan will be completed by November 2000. The Government's policy is to incorporate the lighthouse into the national park. The new management plan will address the future use of the lighthouse.
5. The new management plan will address the issues associated with accommodation inside the national park. The Government's policy is that commercial developments such as new hostels, roofed accommodation and other major tourist facilities should be located outside the park.

Planning: designated union contacts

110. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Planning —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

1. The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point.
2. An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
3. The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Transport: designated union contacts

111. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Transport —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.

3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

1. The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point.
2. An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
3. The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Finance: designated union contacts

113. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Finance —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position.
2. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position.
3. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
4. At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance with no staff with the specific duties detailed being employed in the statutory authorities or Government Business Enterprises responsible to the Treasurer's Department.

5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Transport: designated union contacts

115. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

1. The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point.
2. An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
3. The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Workcover: designated union contacts

116. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Workcover —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position.
2. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position.
3. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
4. At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance with no staff with the specific duties detailed being employed in the statutory authorities or Government Business Enterprises responsible to the Treasurer's Department.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Local Government: designated union contacts

117. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Local Government —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

1. The Department employs an Industrial Liaison Officer to act as a designated contact point.
2. An Officer has been appointed as Industrial Liaison Officer at the VPS 5 level.
3. The duties of the Industrial Liaison Officer position include liaising and negotiating with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department, (including portfolio areas), employs one Industrial Liaison Officer.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Education: designated union contacts

120. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

1. Since the change of Government, the Department of Education Employment and Training has established formal and informal consultation mechanisms with the education sector unions covering both professional and industrial issues. Given the size of the Department's workforce and the number of unions which cover the workforce the Department has always had a unit with responsibility for managing industrial relations matters, including formal negotiations and consultation with unions.
2. Within the Employee Relations Branch of the Department, the Manager, Industrial Relations, has been appointed as the Department's interim Industrial Liaison Officer. The occupant of this position is paid within the salary range of Executive Officer Level 3.
3. The duties of the position of Manager, Industrial Relations include liaison and negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.
4. The Department has not employed a person to specifically undertake the duties set out in the Member for Bennettswood's question. As indicated earlier those duties form part of the role of the Manager, Industrial Relations.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an equal employment opportunity employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Women's Affairs: designated union contacts

123. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Women's Affairs —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.

4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

No staff with the above duties are employed by the Office of Women's Policy or its Statutory Authority.

Police and Emergency Services: designated union contacts

125. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

In relation to statutory authorities, it would be necessary to circulate to each agency to obtain a response to the information requested, as it is not held centrally. Given the time and resources necessary to do this for all agencies, I would suggest the member indicate the particular agencies he is interested in and I will contact them to obtain a response to the member's query.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O'Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of coordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Corrections: designated union contacts

126. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Corrections —

1. Does the Minister’s Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister’s Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister’s Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level, which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

Corrections also employ a person in the capacity of Industrial Relations Manager whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level, which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

In relation to statutory authorities, it would be necessary to circulate to each agency to obtain a response to the information requested, as it is not held centrally. Given the time and resources necessary to do this for all agencies, I would suggest the member indicate the particular agencies he is interested in and I will contact them to obtain a response to the member’s query.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O’Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of coordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

CORE - the Public Correctional Enterprise

JOB SPECIFICATION

Title and Classification	VPS-5, Industrial Relations Manager
Reference No and Location.	71/16/0088/2
Reports To	Director, Prison Services
Contact for Further Information	Paul Delphine
Salary Range	\$55,167 - \$83,171
Date Completed	November 1999

1. **DUTIES:** List main duties. Begin each duty with an action verb that clearly shows roles of the position in the duty. Occupant will be required to carry out other duties as directed)
 - 1.1 Manage CORE's Industrial Relations function, including management of CORE's Enterprise Bargaining processes and pro-actively and openly communicate, consult and liaise with managers, staff and the CPSU
 - 1.2 Create an environment where CORE employees and their representatives work together to identify mutually-beneficial solutions to industrial relations issues or change proposals
 - 1.3 Provide authoritative, strategic and innovative advice to the Chief Executive, the Executive and Prisons and CCS senior management on industrial relations issues and develop contemporary strategies to resolve complex industrial relations issues, particularly those with significant organisational impact.
 - 1.4 Analyse, negotiate and manage complex industrial relations issues, service improvement initiatives, enterprise bargaining and change management processes, including high-level consultation with and negotiations with staff and the CPSU
 - 1.5 Represent CORE at industrial forums, including advocacy as appropriate, and manage and co-ordinate legal representation for Court litigation
 - 1.6 Develop industrial relations policies, prepare complex strategy and position papers and briefing papers for the Chief Executive, senior management and the Minister.
 - 1.6 Contribute to CORE achieving its Mission to provide safe, secure, humane and cost-effective correctional services to prisoners and offenders, and to provide opportunities for their rehabilitation on behalf of our customers.
 - 1.7 Assist CORE to pursue its Vision to become the market leader in the supply of quality correctional services in Victoria.
2. **KEY SELECTION CRITERIA:** These should include any mandatory qualifications/experience and may expand advertised qualifications. Each criterion should be a succinct statement of one key quality.
 - 1.1 Demonstrated behaviours aligned to CORE's Values of Customer commitment, Professionalism, Dedication, Personal integrity and Teamwork.
 - 1.2 Substantial successful experience in the management of complex industrial relations issues, change management and industrial advocacy.
 - 1.3 Highly developed consultation, negotiation and advocacy skills, and experience in analysing complex industrial relations issues, consulting effectively, making strategic decisions and managing and monitoring outcomes
 - 1.4 Sound knowledge of relevant legislation, industrial processes and emerging and innovative industrial relations trends and processes
 - 1.5 Ability to work effectively in a Correctional environment and demonstrated absence of a relevant offence history
3. **OTHER RELEVANT SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE** which may assist the appointee in the successful performance of this position.
 - 3.1 CORE values people who show initiative, are positive and enthusiastic, are creative and flexible, are co-operative and tolerant, are friendly, caring and respecting of others, relate well to people and enjoy their work.
 - 3.2 Commitment to Business Excellence and customer focussed quality service delivery in a competitive environment.

4. **OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION** (e.g major challenges, constraints, requirements for travel, shift work, overtime, physical demands, work location).

4.1 You need to disclose any pre-existing illness or injury you know about which could be reasonably foreseen to be affected by the described work duties. Pursuant to section 82(7) of the Accident Compensation Act, failure to disclose such a condition will mean that, if employed, you will not be paid compensation for that condition.

Small Business and Consumer Affairs: designated union contacts

127. **MR WILSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs —

1. Does the Minister’s Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister’s Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister’s Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

The Consumer Affairs portfolio has a number of statutory bodies which are serviced by staff of the Department of Justice. The bodies do not have separate administrative units.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O’Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services

- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of coordinated emergency services;
- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Attorney-General: designated union contacts

130. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable Attorney-General —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on

policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

The Department of Justice employs a person in the capacity of Industrial Liaison Officer whose responsibilities include liaison with employee groups and co-ordination of industrial matters. The person also performs human resource management functions for the Department

The Industrial Liaison Officer role is classified as a non-executive VPS-5 level which has a salary range of \$55,167 to \$83,171. A position description is attached for information.

In accordance with equal opportunity practices, membership of a union or professional association is not information the Department would seek from any individual employee.

In relation to statutory authorities, it would be necessary to circulate to each agency to obtain a response to the information requested, as it is not held centrally. Given the time and resources necessary to do this for all agencies, I would suggest the member indicate the particular agencies he is interested in and I will contact them to obtain a response to the member's query.

ROLE SPECIFICATION

TITLE AND CLASSIFICATION:	Industrial Liaison Officer, VPS-5
REMUNERATION RANGE:	\$55,167 TO \$83,171 p.a.
WORK LOCATION:	55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne
REPORTS TO:	The Secretary Department of Justice
INFORMATION CONTACT:	Pat O'Grady, Tel. 9627 7302
DATE OF COMPLETION:	December 1999

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Justice Portfolio comprises four separate portfolio responsibilities;

- Attorney-General
- Police and Emergency Services
- Corrections
- Consumer Affairs

The Portfolio comprises the Department of Justice and a large number of statutory authorities, statutory offices and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The objectives of the portfolio are to:

- Provide protection for the rights and freedoms of all people through a fair and just system of criminal justice, an accessible, equitable and responsive system of civil procedures, and a legislative and educative framework to protect and advance the equality of all Victorians;
- Ensure civil order is preserved through the prevention and detection of crime, and ensure the protection of individuals and property through the prevention and suppression of fires and the provision of coordinated emergency services;

- Provide a safe, secure, just and humane adult correctional system that incorporates the elements of protection, rehabilitation and reparation to the community;
- Provide an effective framework for fair trading and business affairs.

The responsibilities of this role cover the broad Justice Portfolio.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate effective liaison in relation to industrial relations across all areas of the Portfolio.
- Monitor industrial relations issues and provide advice to the Secretary, Ministers and other key personnel on emerging and/or significant industrial relations issues.
- Promote a co-operative and consultative approach to industrial relations throughout the Portfolio.
- Meet with the Secretary, Agency Heads, Ministers, union representatives and others on a regular basis to promote harmonious industrial relations.
- Develop and present a Portfolio perspective in discussions, hearings and meetings related to broad industrial relations matters.
- Provide high level policy and strategic advice and prepare complex submissions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A thorough understanding of the industrial relations framework within the Victorian Public Sector and an appreciation of the complexities of the Justice Portfolio.
- An ability to maintain and foster relationships with a wide range of persons within the Portfolio and with unions and other key stakeholders.
- Ability to assist managers, employees and their representatives to clearly define disputed issues and develop solutions.
- Highly developed analytical and conceptual skills.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: designated union contacts

133. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response to Legislative Assembly Question No. 120, a copy of which is attached.

Youth Affairs: designated union contacts

134. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister representing the Minister for Youth Affairs —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

Please refer to the response provided to the Legislative Assembly Question No. 120, a copy of which is attached.

Gaming: designated union contacts

135. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Gaming —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position.
2. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position.
3. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues
4. At 31 December 1999, one staff member undertook the role in the Department of Treasury and Finance with no staff with the specific duties detailed being employed in the statutory authorities or Government Business Enterprises responsible to the Treasurer's Department.
5. The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Premier: ministerial appointments

140. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Premier —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Multicultural Affairs: ministerial appointments

142. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.

4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Planning: ministerial appointments

145. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Planning —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Finance: ministerial appointments

148. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Finance —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Transport: ministerial appointments

150. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport regarding Roads —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Workcover: ministerial appointments

151. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Workcover —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Local Government: ministerial appointments

152. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Local Government —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to these questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Education: ministerial appointments

155. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Education —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

To provide the information requested would require an inordinate amount of time and resources which are not available. Mr Wilson may wish to submit a more focused and specific question on the matter.

Environment and Conservation: ministerial appointments

157. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this questions would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Energy and Resources: ministerial appointments

159. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister representing the Minister for Energy and Resources —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Police and Emergency Services: ministerial appointments

160. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Corrections: ministerial appointments

161. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Corrections —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Small Business and Consumer Affairs: ministerial appointments

162. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.

2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Agriculture: ministerial appointments

163. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Agriculture —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Attorney-General: ministerial appointments

165. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable Attorney-General —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.

5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response would unreasonably divert the resources of the department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: ministerial appointments

168. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

To provide the information requested would require an inordinate amount of time and resources which are not available. Mr Wilson may wish to submit a more focussed and specific question on these matters.

Youth Affairs: ministerial appointments

169. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister representing the Minister for Youth Affairs —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

To provide the information requested would require an inordinate amount of time and resources which are not available. Mr Wilson may wish to submit a more focused and specific question on the matter.

Gaming: ministerial appointments

170. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Gaming —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.
4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Premier: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays

175. MS ASHER — To ask the Honourable the Premier — What was the total cost to the Victorian Government and to its agencies of the three additional public holidays gazetted for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day in December 1999 and January 2000.

ANSWER:

The Government gazetted two, not three, additional public holidays to allow Victorian families to celebrate the new millennium: Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December 1999 and New Years Day, Saturday 1 January 2000. No additional public holiday was gazetted for Christmas Day by this Government. The previous Government gazetted Tuesday 28 December 1999 as a substitute holiday for the Christmas Day Saturday.

The Government decided to declare the two public holidays in a special, one-off arrangement in recognition of the unique nature of the new millennium. This decision was consistent with the approach taken by every other state in Australia and allowed Victorian families to enjoy the new millennium celebrations in the same way as families in every other part of Australia.

Negotiations were commenced under the previous Government on special payments for employees required to work during the millennium celebrations prior to the declaration of the additional two public holidays.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays

182. MR BAILLIEU — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment — what was the total cost to the Minister’s departmental budget of the three additional public holidays gazetted during the Christmas Day, Boxing Day and the New Year’s Day period in December 1999 and January 2000.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

The Government gazetted two, not three, additional public holidays to allow Victorian families to celebrate the new millennium: Boxing Day, Sunday, 26 December 1999 and New Year’s Day, Saturday, 1 January 2000. No additional public holiday was gazetted for Christmas Day by this Government. The previous Government gazetted Tuesday, 28 December 1999 as a substitute holiday for the Christmas Day Saturday.

The Government decided to declare the two public holidays in a special, one-off arrangement in recognition of the unique nature of the new millennium. This decision was consistent with the approach taken by every other state in Australia and allowed Victorian families to enjoy the new millennium celebrations in the same way as families in every other part of Australia.

Negotiations were commenced under the previous Government on special payments for employees required to work during the millennium New Year’s celebrations prior to the declaration of the additional two public holidays.

Attorney-General: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays

196. DR DEAN — To ask the Honourable the Attorney-General — what was the total cost to the Attorney-General’s departmental budget of the three additional public holidays gazetted during the Christmas Day, Boxing Day and the New Year’s Day period in December 1999 and January 2000.

ANSWER:

The Government gazetted two, not three, additional public holidays to allow Victorian families to celebrate the new millennium: Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December 1999 and New Years Day, Saturday 1 January 2000. No additional public holiday was gazetted for Christmas Day by this Government. The previous Government gazetted Tuesday 28 December 1999 as a substitute holiday for the Christmas Day Saturday.

The Government decided to declare the two public holidays in a special, one-off arrangement in recognition of the unique nature of the new millennium. This decision was consistent with the approach taken by every other state in Australia and allowed Victorian families to enjoy the new millennium celebrations in the same way as families in every other part of Australia.

Negotiations were commenced under the previous Government on special payments for employees required to work during the millennium New Year’s celebrations prior to the declaration of the additional two public holidays.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly.
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

Wednesday, 10 May 2000

Environment and Conservation: weed management

- 93. MR PERTON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation with reference to the Minister's answer to Question on Notice No. 4 asked by the Member for Bennettswood in which she indicates that '\$7.2 million has been allocated in 1999–2000 for the weed eradication program. Funding for future years will be determined through the normal budget process' and referring to the Victorian Weeds Strategy —
1. Does the Minister intend to implement the Victorian Weeds Strategy; if so, what changes, if any, does she propose to make.
 2. What will be the role of the Victorian Catchment Management Council and the regional Authorities/Boards.
 3. What are her targets for the compliance program of the Pest, Plants and Animals Branch of the Department.
 4. What are the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 targets for property inspections for priority weeds.
 5. Given that there were 344 land management notices and 1,119 directions to landowners in 1998–1999, what are the targets for the issue of notices and directions in 1999–2000 and 2000–2001.
 6. Given that there was an overall 87% compliance rate for weed control in 1998–99, what are the targets for 1999–2000 and 2000–2001.
 7. Given that under the strategy the Department was to have assessed by December 1999, 'the potential economic and environmental impact of weeds that are not currently established in Victoria', has the Department completed this assessment and what are the results.
 8. Given that under the strategy the Department was to have established by December 1999, 'priorities for action based on an understanding of the relative risk posed by established weeds and potentially invasive plants', has the Department established such priorities; if so, what are they.
 9. What has the Department done to 'increase the use of the provisions of the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 to prevent the sale of plant species that have the potential to become serious weeds in Victoria'.
 10. What has the Department done to 'cooperate with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and quarantine agencies in other States to strengthen the response to new weed species to prevent introductions into Victoria'.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The Victorian Weeds Strategy was developed under the former Minister for Conservation and Land Management. The current Government is considering the Victorian Weeds Strategy in relation to the cost of implementing appropriate actions that will minimise the economic, social and environmental impacts of weeds.

The Government wishes to assess whether the Strategy provides a suitable framework for delivering its policies on weed management.

2. In relation to weed management, the role of the Victorian Catchment Management Council, regional authorities and boards is to advise me as Minister about the important partnerships between the community and the Government in relation to catchment management.
- 3., 4., 5., & 6.

The compliance target for priority weed management in 1999-2000 is for 90% of landowners to be complying with the requirements of the **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994**. The Catchment Management Authorities in consultation with local communities, are currently setting priorities for weed action including targeted areas to limit the spread and impact of weeds. These priorities will help determine compliance targets for future years. Departmental Officers will continue to utilise a range of measures including advice, extension, group activities, property inspection, directions, Land Management Notices, property entry and prosecution to achieve the targeted compliance level. The mix of these measures will vary according to the level of client response, the seasons and weed growth.

The compliance target for 2000-2001 will be dependent on the assessment of the Victorian Weeds Strategy endorsed by the previous government.

7. The Department is currently conducting an impact assessment of a range of new and emerging weeds. Action resulting from this assessment will depend on the Government's consideration of the ability of the Victorian Weeds Strategy to deliver on government policies on weed control.
8. Information on the current and potential impact of established and emerging weeds is being used to develop priorities in Regional Weed Action Plans by Catchment Management Authorities. These plans are being released for public consultation prior to final endorsement.
9. The Department is currently seeking a co-operative solution rather than using an enforcement approach in dealing with the sale of weeds. In partnership with the Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) for Weed Management Systems the Department, with the cooperation with the Nursery Industry Association of Australia, is developing a list of plants to be considered as "Garden Thugs" which threaten natural ecosystems. As a result of this partnership, in early 1999 officers from NRE and research staff at Keith Turnbull Research Institute promptly detected the early introduction of the weed *Nassella tenuissima* (Mexican Feather Grass). This resulted in plants being voluntarily handed into relevant NRE staff for research investigation and safe disposal. A potential agricultural and environmental disaster was averted.
10. In cooperation with AQIS and interstate agencies, new weed risk assessment procedures have been implemented so that new plants proposed for introduction to Australia can be assessed for their potential impact on agriculture and the environment. High risk species can thus be excluded from legal importation. AQIS has also increased its commitment to surveillance that can detect weeds and weed seed that may be brought in illegally. In cooperation with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories, rapid response procedures have been introduced to eradicate serious new weeds before they become established.

Environment and Conservation: weed management

94. **MR PERTON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation with reference to the Victorian Weeds Strategy —
 1. Has the Department established criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of Victorian weeds management, including policies, program implementation, research, education, training and community awareness; if so, what are the criteria.
 2. Has the Department surveyed land and water managers, Landcare and industry groups, and the wider community to gauge the level of understanding of weed management and to identify ways of improving weed management in Victoria; if so, what are the results.

3. Has the Department determined the economic, environmental and social costs of major weeds to Victoria; if so, what are the results.
4. Has the Department developed assessment criteria to incorporate biological, environmental and economic information; if so, what are the criteria.
5. Has the Department reviewed the noxious weeds lists; if so, what are the results of the review.
6. Has the Department developed a system to assess the risk posed by weeds to natural systems in Victoria; if so, what is the system.
7. What priorities have been set by the respective regional weed action plans for catchment management authority weed management programs.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

All the above questions relate to the strategic actions from the Victorian Weeds Strategy released by the former Government in August 1999. The current Government is assessing whether the Strategy provides a suitable framework for delivering Government policy on weed control and management.

Regional weed action plans are currently being developed. Copies of these plans will be available from the relevant authorities as they are released for consultation.

Environment and Conservation: weed management

- 95. MR PERTON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation with reference to weed control —
1. What is her Department doing to address the problem of Chilean Needle grass and other weeds in the Port Phillip region.
 2. What resources will the Minister make available for natural resource management in Port Phillip Region from 1999 to 2003.
 3. How severe is the problem of weed invasion in the Bulla area and how many prosecutions and notices have been issued in that area.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

1. The extent of Chilean Needlegrass infestations in the Port Phillip Region is currently subject to a mapping project. This data will enable a strategy and action plan to be implemented. The plans are detailed in the Draft Regional Weed Action Plan being developed by the Port Phillip Catchment and Land Protection Board. This plan also details the direction for weed control of other species in the Region
2. The Catchment Management and Sustainable Agriculture budget in the Department's Port Phillip region for 1999/2000 is approximately \$2.6 Million. In addition, approximately \$1.2 million of Natural Heritage Trust funds and approximately \$320,000 of State grants have been made available to community groups in the region. This figure does not include the substantial funding for Natural Resource Management by Land Victoria, Fire and Forests, Parks Victoria, Parks Flora and Fauna, and Melbourne Water. Resources for future financial years will be subject to decisions by the Government in upcoming Budgets.
3. The predominant weed infestations in the Bulla area are Serrated Tussock, Artichoke Thistle and Paterson's Curse. A high proportion of properties have varying degrees of Serrated Tussock infestation.

During 1998, 14 Land Management Notices were served on landowners in the Bulla area. Three of these notices were for Artichoke Thistle, one was for Paterson's Curse and the remaining ten were for Serrated Tussock control. Two successful prosecutions were undertaken for failure to prevent the growth and spread of Serrated Tussock. In 1999, eleven Land Management Notices were served in the area for control of Serrated Tussock. One successful prosecution was undertaken and a second prosecution was recommended for action. These prosecutions were publicised in the local press and have helped raise landowner awareness of their obligations with respect to weed control.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: CBE program

103. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment in respect of the Community Business Employment (CBE) program for 2000 —

1. What minimum number of site visits will be made by Departmental officers to each successful tenderer or provider to ensure compliance with the program.
2. In addition to the monitoring meetings flagged in the minimum performance standards booklet published by the Office of Employment, will any unscheduled visits be undertaken by Departmental staff with immediate inspection of records to minimise the occurrence of fraud.
3. What is the maximum amount that will be provided for training subsidies for longer term unemployed job seekers under the Skills Fund in 1999–2000 and 2000–2001.
4. Why were the program guidelines issued in January 2000 when the administration of the Skills Fund had yet to be decided.
5. What is the maximum payment available under the Skills Fund to a CBE provider for a training subsidy for each longer term unemployed job seeker in 2000.
6. What safeguards exist to ensure that longer term job seekers are not placed on training merry-go-rounds that fail to lead to positive employment outcomes for the people concerned.
7. How many persons unemployed for less than or greater than 12 months are expected to be assisted in 2000 in each of the areas represented by the postcodes 3125, 3128, 3130, 3149 and 3151.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

1. Over the course of the new CBE program contract period, four site visits will be made to each provider to ensure compliance with the program guidelines.
2. Unscheduled visits will be undertaken by Department staff as necessary.
3. Guidelines for the Skills Fund are presently being finalised.
4. The Government chose to undertake a consultative process with current CBE providers, prior to finalising the administration of the Skills Fund.
5. Under the CBE 2000 Program, providers will be entitled to payment of \$150 for referral of the longer term unemployed job seeker into an accredited training program which leads to employment.
6. Placement into training for the longer term unemployed job seekers will be one of a range of employment strategies implemented within the enhanced CBE Program. The fee structure provides adequate incentives for the provider to support the job seeker into employment.
7. The postcodes listed fall into the Inner Eastern and South Eastern regions of Melbourne. For the year 2000, these regions have a total target of 1491 CBE eligible unemployed people to receive job placement assistance.

It is anticipated that the number of people actually receiving assistance however, will be three times this amount (in order to achieve targets, CBE providers usually service unemployed people on a ratio of 3 to 1).

Premier: designated union contacts

105. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Premier —

1. Does the Premier's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Premier's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities and Government business enterprises responsible to the Premier's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet currently does not have staff employed specifically to act as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions. However staff are required in the normal course of their duties to liaise and negotiate with a range of organisations, including unions, on routine employer/employee matters and in the development of policy. Furthermore the Department is in the process of recruiting an Industrial Liaison Officer.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Treasurer: designated union contacts

106. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Treasurer —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Treasury and Finance employs a full time staff member whose duties include being the Industrial Liaison Officer who is the designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions pending an appointment being made to this position. The officer is paid within the salary range for the position. The duties of this role require the occupant to liaise and undertake negotiations with unions, other employer/employee representatives, staff and line managers on industrial relations issues.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Multicultural Affairs: designated union contacts

107. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Multicultural Affairs —

1. Does the Minister's Department employ either staff (whether casual, full or part time) or consultants whose duties or contracts have included, or currently include, acting as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions.
2. If so, provide the name of each such employee or consultant and at what annual salary or annual contracted rate each is employed.
3. Which union(s) does each such employee or contractor have responsibility for.
4. As at 31 December 1999, how many staff were employed in the above capacity by — (a) the Minister's Department; and (b) all statutory authorities or Government business enterprises responsible to the Minister's Department.
5. Of those employees, how many were members of each specified union.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet currently does not have staff employed specifically to act as a designated contact point on policy matters with individual unions, the Victorian Trades Hall Council or the Australian Council of Trade Unions. However staff are required in the normal course of their duties to liaise and negotiate with a range of organisations, including unions, on routine employer/employee matters and in the development of policy. Furthermore the Department is in the process of recruiting an Industrial Liaison Officer.

The Victorian Public Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not seek information about union membership from its employees.

Treasurer: ministerial appointments

141. MR WILSON — To ask the Honourable the Treasurer —

1. What was the name of each Ministerial appointment made to Boards, Commissions, Committees of Government Business Enterprises, Statutory Authorities or the Department between 18 September 1999 and 29 February 2000.
2. What expressions of interest and selection processes were used in each such case.
3. What date was each such person appointed and on what date does his or her office expire.

4. What daily or half day sitting fees and other remuneration is expected to be paid in 1999–2000 to each such appointee.
5. Have any changes been made to remuneration arrangements for any such appointees since their appointment; if so what are the details.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The time and resources required to provide you with a response to this question would unreasonably divert the resources of the Department.

Should you wish to ask a more specific question on this matter, I will endeavour to provide you with a response.

Treasurer: Christmas 1999–New Year 2000 holidays

- 176. MS ASHER** — To ask the Honourable the Treasurer — What was the total cost to the Victorian Government and to its agencies of the three additional public holidays gazetted for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day in December 1999 and January 2000.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Government gazetted two, not three, additional public holidays to allow Victorian families to celebrate the new millennium: Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December 1999 and New Years Day, Saturday 1 January 2000. No additional public holiday was gazetted for Christmas Day by this Government. The previous Government gazetted Tuesday 28 December 1999 as a substitute holiday for the Christmas Day Saturday.

The Government decided to declare the two public holidays in a special, one-off arrangement in recognition of the unique nature of the new millennium. This decision was consistent with the approach taken by every other state in Australia and allowed Victorian families to enjoy the new millennium celebrations in the same way as families in every other part of Australia.

Negotiations were commenced under the previous Government on special payments for employees required to work during the millennium New Year’s celebrations prior to the declaration of the additional two public holidays.

Environment and Conservation: regional forest agreements

- 192. MR PERTON** — To ask the Minister for the Environment and Conservation with reference to the *Age* article on Thursday, 2 March 2000, entitled ‘No, minister — not good enough’ by Claire Miller and to issues raised by the Victorian Associated Forest Industries (VAFI) —

1. What steps have been taken to address the significant social and economic dislocation which will result from current Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) proposals for Gippsland and the West.
2. Will the Minister guarantee that there will be no further reductions in sustainable yield in these or other RFA areas once these final two RFAs are signed.

ANSWER:

1. To ensure that community views about the Gippsland and West Victoria Regional Forest Agreements were properly addressed, I established independent panels for each RFA region to receive submissions and conduct public hearings. More than 1,400 submissions were received by the two RFA regional panels and more than 100 individuals and organisations made presentations at the public hearings. Social and economic issues raised in the panel reports were then considered in finalising the RFA agreements.

In addition a major package of support was announced to increase structural adjustment and industry development funding together with substantially increased redundancy provisions for affected workers. A further \$20 million was provided to generate employment opportunities in regional Victoria to ensure that there is a no net job loss outcome arising from the RFAs. The Government believes that the Gippsland and West Victoria RFAs signed by the Premier and Prime Minister on 31 March 2000 provide an appropriate balance between the environmental, social and economic values of the forests in these regions.

2. The RFA agreements provide a high level of assurance to the industry of a continuing reliable supply of timber resources. Sustainable yields are subject to periodic review in accordance with the *Forests Act 1958*.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment: ICT skills task force

199. MR PERTON — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment with reference to the Minister's announcement of the Information Communication Technology Skills Taskforce —

1. How much is the Minister's Department spending on information technology training.
2. What amount is spent on — (a) job support; and (b) trainee subsidies.
3. How many employers will be included in the 'Go for IT' on-the-job training program.
4. Will the Minister increase funding for information technology training given that she has been quoted in the *Age* newspaper on 31 March 2000 as saying the Bracks Government is 'not keeping pace with either the skills shortage or being at the cutting edge'.

ANSWER:

I am informed as follows:

1. The Victorian Government currently spends approximately \$25 million in the provision of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training for the ICT industry and users of ICT products and services. This does not include training money for IT fluency across all industries which are also part of TAFE programs.
2. (a) The Government's Community Business Employment Program provides job placement and support services to targeted groups of unemployed. The annual budget allocation for this program is \$8.8 million.
 (b) The Government is providing \$34.9 million over the next four to support the recruitment of 6,000 apprentices and trainees into industries experiencing skill shortages. The additional funding will provide incentives for employers and additional training resources.
3. There are places for 125 trainees to participate in the program.
4. As outlined in the Article referred to, the Government is undertaking a range of measures to address skills development in the ICT industries, etc. Further information on these important initiatives are provided in the Budget document.