

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**7 June 2001**

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Lady SOUTHEY, AM

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**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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Mr P. J. RYAN

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Mr B. E. H. STEGGALL

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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
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Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip	Williamstown	ALP	MacLellan, Mr Robert Roy Cameron	Pakenham	LP
Brumby, Mr John Mansfield	Broadmeadows	ALP	McNamara, Mr Patrick John <sup>3</sup>	Benalla	NP
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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	Napthine, 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
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Languiller, Mr Telmo	Sunshine	ALP	Wilson, Mr Ronald Charles	Bennettswood	LP
Leigh, Mr Geoffrey Graeme	Mordialloc	LP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 3 November 1999

<sup>2</sup> Elected 11 December 1999

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 12 April 2000

<sup>4</sup> Elected 13 May 2000



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**Thursday, 7 June 2001**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos)** took the chair at 9.36 a.m. and read the prayer.

**NATIONAL PARKS (MARINE NATIONAL PARKS AND MARINE SANCTUARIES) BILL**

*Section 85 statement*

**Ms GARBUTT** (Minister for Environment and Conservation) (*By leave*) — I desire to give notice that I intend to make a statement, pursuant to section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975, of the reasons for altering or varying that section by clauses 19 and 26 of the National Parks (Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries) Bill, as amended by amendments that I intend to propose in committee, in lieu of the statement in the second-reading speech made in relation to those clauses on Thursday, 17 May 2001.

**PAPERS**

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Corporations (Victoria) Act 1990* — SR No 49

*Supreme Court Act 1986* — SR Nos 49, 50

*Transport Accident Act 1986* — SR No 48

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — Minister's exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 49, 50.

**BARLEY MARKETING (AMENDMENT) BILL**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Received from Council.**

**Read first time on motion of Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill).**

**Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)** — I move:

That the bill be printed and, by leave, be read a second time forthwith.

**Leave refused.**

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier and the Leader of the National Party!

**Ordered to be printed and second reading to be made order of the day for next day.**

**Mr Ryan** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek clarification of the situation with regard to the future of this legislation because it is important to country Victorians. If the government is open, honest and transparent the Premier owes an explanation to the Parliament as to why this bill cannot be brought on forthwith and debated. I ask for clarification of the issue.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the National Party has raised a point of order and has proceeded to debate the issue. I will not allow him to continue along those lines. Suffice for me to rule on his point of order that the standing orders and rules of this house are that when a bill is transmitted from the Legislative Council it can be read forthwith if leave is granted and the house concurs. That not having occurred, the rules of the chamber are that the bill will be read a second time tomorrow.

**Mr McArthur** — On a further point of order, Mr Speaker, and in relation to the issue that was just dealt with, I point out to you, Sir, that the sessional orders provide for the introduction and debate of private member's bills during the normal time scheduled for matters of public importance on a Wednesday. I further point out, Sir, that next Wednesday's matter of public importance is allocated to the National Party and that the honourable member for Mildura supports the introduction and debate of this legislation, which comes on message from the upper house.

I seek an assurance from the government that it will cooperate and assist the house in debating this matter and allocating time, which is at its discretion, during the time allotted for next week's matter of public importance to ensure that this matter can be dealt with.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I was very tolerant of the honourable member for Monbulk in allowing him to proceed with his point of order. However, he is aware, as is the house, that I can only rule that there is no point of order. The matters he raises — although of much interest to the house — are, as I have indicated previously, questions for the Leader of the House and the manager of opposition business to resolve in amending the sessional order.

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Yarra Ranges: Reconciliation Week

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — When I was a commissioner at the Shire of Yarra Ranges the council was fortunate to secure the services of Joy Murphy as its Aboriginal liaison officer.

The work done by Joy set very high standards and was important during that period of time in liaising with the general community. Joy, with her brother, Jim Wandin, and Aunty Dot Peters — whose son is now doing excellent work at Swinburne University in encouraging young Aboriginals to participate and further their education — have reached out to the whole community and given tirelessly of their time. They attend many community functions, not just in the shire but throughout Victoria, and even the rest of Australia. They are generous of their time and support of the wide community in the Yarra Ranges.

Last week Adam Frogley, who is now the shire's Aboriginal liaison officer, organised a series of events celebrating Reconciliation Week. Unfortunately, because of parliamentary sittings I was not able to attend many of the events. My staff and friends who attended, however, came back with glowing reports. I sincerely congratulate Adam on a job well done.

One event I want to highlight is the launch by our mayor, Di Moore, of a book called *Your Journey Towards Good Health*, aimed specifically at the Koori community. Artwork was done by Kerry Thompson and the Yarra Valley division of general practice, and the Yarra Valley Community Health Service indigenous health team contributed and assisted in the production.

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

### Taxis: airport dispute

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — I call upon the government to resolve the long-running dispute between taxidriviers and the management of Melbourne Airport about the new fee to be introduced.

Like many other honourable members I flew into Melbourne Airport on Monday night. I came in from Hobart to find the airport in a state of unmitigated chaos. Without going into all the gory details I can state that the situation featured crying children, stressed mothers, tourists who wondered what had hit them, a business community in complete confusion, and angry cab drivers and people at large.

I appreciate that a working party was established some weeks ago by the minister to deal with this issue. I have read the report of that party dated 14 March. When I met with representatives of a taxidriviers association yesterday, however, I found what the problem is — that no such association is directly represented on the working party. The Transport Workers Union is represented, but that body does not represent a majority of the drivers; so it is the drivers who are the missing link and need to be consulted to get a proper outcome. Another problem is that the drivers want a copy of the agreement executed by the parties so they can see what they have been committed to.

Most of all, the government needs to get involved and do the job that the transport minister should be doing and get the issue resolved. All Victorians are suffering, not only because of the disruption of the use of the airport but also because Victoria's reputation is in tatters over the poor handling of this matter.

### Fay and Barry Van Ekeren

**Ms GILLETT** (Werribee) — I draw the attention of the house to the plight of two of my constituents, Fay and Barry Van Ekeren. Fay and Barry undertook the building of their home in 1993. On 29 December 1994, between Christmas and New Year, they moved into what they hoped would be their dream home.

Unfortunately, the problems Fay and Barry have had with their new home have persisted over the past five or six years. Fay and Barry built their home with Mega Homes, and the trouble they have had getting that firm to address their difficulties since then is unbelievable. Fay was able to report to me that the Housing Guarantee Fund had been very helpful, but that their problems were still not resolved.

Fay showed me photographs that go back through the whole period, and they were heartbreaking. There were pipes leaking and water draining away under the house and slabs set too low, with consequent structural difficulties. Fay has a report for which she paid \$4000 indicating that the house cannot be saved and needs to be demolished; yet still they cannot get proper satisfaction from Mega Homes.

Fay and Barry are now required to go through the process of taking action in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to attempt to get some resolution to their awful situation.

I cannot think of anything worse. I congratulate Fay and Barry Ekeren — —

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

### **Workcover: management**

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise to express the concern of all Victorians at the uncovering by the Auditor-General of the massive blow-out in Workcover payments under the Labor government and the complete mismanagement of Workcover by the minister responsible.

In his report tabled yesterday the Auditor-General highlights the \$651 million deficit incurred in the six months to 31 December. The Auditor-General asserts that the most significant reason for such a deficit is the enactment of the new legislation and the mismanagement of it by the Labor government. He further says the Labor government claims it will be back in the black in 2003, despite the changes it has made. However, he uncovers that it will be at least 2006 before it is back in the black. The people across Victoria, particularly the employers, are absolutely fearful.

When the words 'Labor government', 'Workcover', and 'blow-out' are associated the people of Victoria know exactly what the Labor party does with the workers compensation system. It does not matter whether it is ruining Workcover now or Workcare in the past, which had a \$2 billion deficit. The Labor Party simply cannot manage the finances of the state and cannot manage workers compensation.

### **Shirley Mitchell**

**Ms OVERINGTON** (Ballarat West) — I wish to place on public record, particularly in the International Year of Volunteers, the efforts and dedication of Mrs Shirley Mitchell and her late husband Kevin for their work with the wildlife refuge in Ballarat.

Over many years Shirley and Kevin saved numerous animals within the Ballarat region. Their centre based in Albert Street, Sebastopol, has been an interesting development. When I first got to know the couple they occasionally took in kangaroos and joeys. I remember Kevin, who worked as an electrician, used to design and make tiny electric blankets and drape them on the backs of the kitchen chairs to keep the joeys warm in the pouches.

Their backyard became increasingly enclosed with cages for these animals. Koalas, wombats, echidnas and birds of many varieties have been saved, nurtured and returned to the wild during that period. After Kevin's death two years ago and despite her decreased income

Shirley has continued to look after these animals, but with her increasing age it is becoming more difficult. I salute Shirley Mitchell for her efforts.

### **Back-to-Back Wool Challenge**

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — I would like to mention an event that is coming up this Sunday in Omeo in my electorate. It is called the Back-to-Back Wool Challenge. In 1811 in Newbury, Berkshire in the United Kingdom a £1000 wager was made on making a coat from a sheep's back to a man's back in one day. Five thousand people watched as the task was completed in 13 hours. The sheep was eaten afterwards.

In 1995 the international Back-to-Back Wool Challenge was inaugurated to raise the profile of wool and raise funds for cancer research. Teams from Scotland, Australia, Canada, the United States of America and England competed in a unique contest using the ancient skills of blade shearing, spinning and knitting to create a jumper within 8 hours. In 1977 the world record was set in the Shetland Isles and the team took an amazing 5 hours and 9 minutes to shear the sheep, spin the wool and knit a jumper.

The Back-to-Back Wool Challenge is on this weekend at Omeo, and I will be there to do the countdown. I encourage all members to come to Omeo this weekend considering it coincides with the opening of the ski season. You could go to the local wineries like Mount Markey or Ensay wineries, the tea rooms at Omeo or visit the historic Chinese diggings.

### **Multicultural affairs: initiatives**

**Mr KOTSIRAS** (Bulleen) — The government has promised a whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs to continue the good work undertaken by the former Premier in this state. After 18 months in office I asked the Premier what new initiatives had been implemented to coordinate a whole-of-government approach. Unfortunately there have been no new major initiatives. However, the Premier responded by saying:

Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic diversity of this government's cabinet, the highest number of ministers of non-English-speaking backgrounds, means that the issue of addressing multicultural issues is incorporated within the decision-making processes within cabinet and therefore across all portfolios.

The Premier feels that just because some of his ministers have rediscovered themselves and gone back to their roots there is no need to put extra money into this area. It is disappointing that the government has taken \$1 million from last year's budget because it feels

that just because some honourable members have rediscovered themselves they will meet the needs of our multicultural communities. Statements claiming the government has enhanced the commitment to Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities is a farce. It is a total joke! I urge the minister assisting the Premier and the honourable member for Coburg, who is full of rhetoric but is only a puppet of the minister, to recognise the needs of these communities.

### **Hartwell and Wattle Park primary schools**

**Mr STENSHOLT** (Burwood) — I congratulate Hartwell Primary School and Wattle Park Primary School on the completion of their new school buildings which I had the privilege of opening recently. Both of these schools are fine examples of the resurgent public education system in Victoria, particularly in my electorate of Burwood. Our local communities are justly proud of their schools.

Hartwell Primary School has a new performing arts centre with a half-size basketball court, music facilities and a canteen. New landscaping has also been done in the school grounds. I pay tribute to the school community, which raised the magnificent sum of \$700 000 towards this development. Those to be congratulated include the school's principal, David Ross, and the school's council representatives, particularly Ron Mason, Phillip Jordan, Ros Taylor, Tim Wilson and Trevor Webster, who have served over many years.

Wattle Park Primary School now has a new staff and administration area and school entrance, and three classrooms and the library area have been fully refurbished. This completes the upgrade of the school under its master plan. I congratulate principal Nick Farley and the school council members on their innovative work in selling surplus land at the back of the school to raise money for the building. Special mention should be made of the work of Colin Scott, Perry Niven and Andrew Corcoran as well as all teachers and parents.

Both of these schools are strongly supported by their local communities and they show that real excellence in education is being achieved in public schools in my electorate of Burwood. I am proud to have assisted the schools in many and varied ways to achieve the completion of these new buildings.

### **Geelong: Croatian community**

**Mr SPRY** (Bellarine) — I pay a tribute to the Croatian community in Geelong for its hospitality to a number of people last Saturday night. The occasion was the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the declaration of independence of the Croatian nation. The Croatian community in Geelong is a very proud community. Although situated in a troubled geographic region of the globe, Croatia is proud of its independence, its freedom and its history, which extends back to the seventh century AD.

The celebration was attended by about 500 people, who ranged in age from the very young to the very old, and it was great to see such a huge range of families in attendance. It was organised by a number of groups in the Croatian community. These included the community's pensioners association, the Croatian Saturday school group, the folklore group Lado which performed magnificently throughout the evening, the Croatian Democratic Union group and the Croatian Catholic Centre. The celebration was attended by such luminaries as the Croatian Ambassador to Australia, Dr Mladen Ibler and Sanja Novakovic, the Vice-Consul in Melbourne.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and I thank profoundly the people who were our hosts on that particular night. *Živjela Hrvatska!*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Keilor has 30 seconds.

### **Taylor's Lakes Recreation Club**

**Mr SEITZ** (Keilor) — Thirty seconds! I place on record my appreciation of the Taylor's Lakes Recreation Club and its committee members, who deserve not only a certificate in the International Year of Volunteers but a gold medal for the work they have been carrying out at Taylor's Lakes. They have done so against all adversity and without any support from the City of Brimbank in developing their new clubrooms. The club has spent over \$20 000 on planning its recreation rooms, clubrooms and dressing rooms, yet it is still missing out in the budget. The committee has continued — —

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

**TRANSPORT (FURTHER AMENDMENT)  
BILL***Second reading*

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The main purposes of the bill are:

to amend provisions of the Transport Act 1983 to provide a mechanism for the winding-up of the Public Transport Corporation;

to make a number of consequential amendments to the Transport Act and other acts; and

to amend the Melbourne City Link Act 1995:

to facilitate the introduction of weekend passes and more flexible arrangements for the infrequent user; and

to ensure the ability to use warning notices as part of the range of enforcement measures continues to be available.

As honourable members will be aware, the Public Transport Corporation was created as the statutory corporation which owned and ran the public transport network, including infrastructure and rolling stock.

As a result of the franchising of the transport system, the overwhelming majority of the PTC's assets have been transferred to Victorian Rail Track or to the private operators of the train and tram networks.

The PTC continues to be responsible for a number of functions, particularly finalising a number of legal actions to which it is a party.

However, these matters should be finalised in the short to medium term and there is no substantial reason why the organisation should continue as a separate statutory corporation in the longer term.

The bill provides that the administrator and deputy administrator of the PTC will go out of office when the winding up of the PTC takes effect and that the Secretary to the Department of Infrastructure on behalf of the Crown will take over any remaining assets and liabilities of that organisation. This is appropriate given the nature of the PTC's assets and liabilities and the functions and powers which the secretary has under the Transport Act.

The changes to the Melbourne City Link Act facilitate the introduction of weekend passes and other more flexible tolling arrangements for the infrequent user.

The act will also be amended to remove an amendment, which is not yet in operation, which otherwise would sunset the ability to use warning notices as part of the range of enforcement measures available. This change is necessary because infrequent users still make up a large portion of City Link traffic and first offenders continue to comprise 50 per cent of all offences. Repealing the sunset of warning letters will enable a measure of leniency for first offenders to be maintained and the availability of warning letters as a deterrent.

The bill also provides for a number of corrections to existing acts and consequential amendments to take account of the proposed winding-up of the Public Transport Corporation.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc).**

**Debate adjourned until Thursday, 21 June.**

**CRIMES (VALIDATION OF ORDERS) BILL***Second reading*

**Mr HULLS** (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

DNA technology is a valuable investigative and evidentiary tool. The value of DNA information lies not only in its capacity to implicate a person in the commission of an offence, but also in its ability to eliminate a person from suspicion.

The forensic procedure provisions contained in the Crimes Act 1958 allow for forensic samples to be taken from suspects, prisoners and convicted offenders. The existing forensic procedure provisions also enable DNA information obtained from such samples to be placed on a computerised database for analysis against unsolved crime scene evidence.

The Crimes Act sets out the procedure by which the police can apply to the Magistrates Court for an order allowing them to take a forensic sample from a person convicted of a serious offence who is serving a term of imprisonment. To process the large volume of applications magistrates were hearing these applications in chambers.

A legal challenge to the procedure for hearing applications in chambers was brought before the Supreme Court in December 2000 in the case of *Lednar and Ors v. The Magistrates' Court and Anor*. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that the hearing of such applications in chambers did not comply with the requirement in section 125 of the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 and that all proceedings should be heard in open court.

The court held that the breach of the Magistrates' Court Act was such that the making of each of the orders in question was voidable. As a result, it could be argued by other convicted offenders that the orders made by magistrates in chambers are invalid.

This bill validates those orders made by magistrates in chambers prior to the decision of the Supreme Court. The bill will affect some 1064 orders which were made and executed and a further 1384 orders which were made but which have not yet been executed.

The bill brings certainty to forensic procedures provisions and seeks to clarify what was understood by magistrates to be lawful at the time the orders were made. If these orders are not validated valuable DNA information may have to be removed from the computerised database. This would be contrary to the spirit of the legislation and could jeopardise not only the future investigation of crimes but also the value in retaining DNA samples as a deterrent against future offending.

To require police to apply for these orders again would impose a substantial financial and administrative burden on Victoria Police and the Magistrates Court. Offenders would also be exposed to a further intrusion in their lives if an additional forensic sample had to be taken.

This bill reflects this government's firm commitment to effective law enforcement and the promotion of public confidence in the criminal justice system.

I commend this bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrantdyte).**

**Debate adjourned until Thursday, 21 June.**

**STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT  
(RELATIONSHIPS) BILL**

*Council's amendments*

**Returned from Council with message relating to following amendments:**

1. Clause 1, page 2, after line 2 insert —  
  
“( ) It is a further object of this Act to prevent discrimination under legislation specified in the Schedules by ensuring that all couples irrespective of gender have the same rights and obligations while at the same time recognising the importance of a commitment to a long term relationship and the security of children.”.
2. Schedule 1, page 6, lines 15 to 30, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert —  
  
“(1) If an intestate leaves both a spouse and a domestic partner, the entitlement to the partner's share of the intestate's residuary estate is to be determined in accordance with the following table.

**TABLE**

<i>Period that domestic partner has lived as domestic partner of intestate continuously before intestate's death</i>	<i>Spouse's entitlement to partner's share</i>	<i>Domestic partner's entitlement to partner's share</i>
less than 4 years	two-thirds	one-third
4 years or more but less than 5 years	half	half
5 years or more but less than 6 years	one-third	two-thirds
6 years or more	none	all

Note: There is a minimum requirement that the domestic partner lived with the intestate continuously for at least 2 years immediately before the intestate's death, unless the domestic partner is the parent of a child of the intestate who was under 18 at the time of the intestate's death — see definition of “domestic partner” in section 3(1).’.

**Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I move:**

That amendment 1 be agreed to.

This house amendment to this very important piece of legislation inserts an additional objects clause into the bill to make it clear that one of the objects of the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill is to prevent discrimination under legislation specified in the schedules by ensuring that all couples, irrespective of gender, have the same rights and obligations, while at the same time recognising the importance of a commitment to a long-term relationship and the security of children. In a general sense this amendment

moved by the government, as well as the other amendment that the house will deal with shortly, will enable this bill to become law. As honourable members know, it has already gone through the upper house and I am hopeful it will receive support in this house.

It is a very proud day for the government in relation to this legislation because this is the biggest reform package ever undertaken in Victoria to end discrimination against the gay and lesbian community. It is long overdue. It is legislation that I believe should have been introduced quite some time ago. However, for whatever reason, the previous government did not have the will or the desire to introduce such groundbreaking legislation. It has taken the vision and the courage of the Bracks government to finally end discrimination against the gay and lesbian community.

I am more than happy to talk about the negotiations that took place between, might I say, not the shadow Attorney-General, but Peter Katsambanis in the other place, who showed an enormous amount of goodwill in his negotiations, and my parliamentary secretary, Mr Richard Wynne. I know there are a number of democratic members of the opposition — the Liberal Party — who have been pushing for some time for this legislation to be passed. I understand they applied a fair amount of pressure, particularly on the shadow Attorney-General, in relation to this matter.

It is a very proud moment for the Bracks government to be introducing these amendments, particularly this amendment — —

**Mr Lupton** — Whose amendment?

**Mr HULLS** — Which is moved by the government to ensure the passage of this legislation.

**Dr DEAN** (Berwick) — How sad it is to hear what we have just heard from the Attorney-General, who could have stood up in this place and just got on with the business of moving a couple of amendments — which he voted against in the lower house, and which his entire party voted against in the lower house! How sad it is, and what a pity, that instead of just getting up in goodwill and talking about the conversations that I had with his parliamentary secretary on the Monday night — when the parliamentary secretary said, ‘Yes, we’ll accept your amendment’, which is this particular amendment, and I said, ‘Thank you very much because it is a good amendment’ — the Attorney-General could not have just got up and said, ‘Isn’t it a good thing that we together have been able to do something which enables this bill to get through’!

But instead of that, this entirely 100 per cent political Attorney-General had to get up and try to use politics on an issue like this, which is just so sad. The Attorney-General should see that at least part of his job is getting on with the process of legislation. I was not going to say any of this, not a word. I was just going to say, ‘Great, let’s just get it and go’.

But honourable members must understand that this is an amendment which the Attorney-General voted against in the lower house, and which followed some 65 amendments that he had to make to the bill. Each of the three or four major parts of the bill that he introduced, which were the substance of it, had major amendments made to it. Why? Because the bill was a heap of rubbish and because it was going to do things it was not intended to do. The Liberal Party said right from the beginning that there were two things it stood for: it was anti discrimination, and from that point of view it would support the bill; but it was also pro families and long-term relationships. It said that because of shoddy drafting the bill would interfere with both those notions and that until it was amended the Liberal Party would not vote for it.

What did the government do? It had to back down and amend its bill to ensure the shoddy drafting was fixed up and that long-term relationships and families were protected. None of this would have been said by me — not a word; I would have walked out of the chamber quietly. But this Attorney-General cannot help but put his foot into the political arena, and I am telling him that every time he does he will have it chopped off, as he has seen for the past two weeks.

I put it to him that there is another amendment to this bill that the house is about to consider. Perhaps he should just go ahead and note the amendment. I will not even say anything about the negotiations or discussions about that. He should just explain that this is an amendment that allows the bill to flow through and enable it to now achieve the two objects, with which the Liberal Party agrees, along with him, of preventing discrimination but not undermining families. I call on him to do that when the next amendment is dealt with because that would be best for this house.

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — The National Party opposes this amendment. It did so when the bill was first debated in this house, and it did so when it was dealt with in another place. I oppose it again today on behalf of the National Party. The National Party opposes it because this is an issue relating to the basic tenor of the bill. It is a matter that, as can be seen when you read it, goes right to the core of why we had an objection to the whole legislation.

National Party members have never viewed this issue as one of discrimination. We have never seen it that way. We have always been at pains to say throughout the whole discussion that people are perfectly entitled to live their lives as they choose and that the issue of what relationships might therefore be developed on the basis of people's consideration of those choices is absolutely and entirely one for them — and heaven forbid that we be perceived as lecturing people about how they should live their lives. That is not the issue.

As a matter of law the content of this amendment is simply wrong. It cannot be said as a matter of legal fact that all couples, irrespective of gender, have the same rights and obligations. That is simply wrong as a matter of law. People who marry pursuant to the commonwealth Marriage Act are married pursuant to the terms of that act, and so to make a statement of this nature is not something with which my party can agree. Therefore we oppose the content of this amendment.

We do not agree that all couples have the same rights and obligations. There are clear distinctions and we do not believe this statement in the amendment, taken in the way that it appears before the house today, is accurately representative of the position either at law or in fact.

**Mr SAVAGE (Mildura)** — I have been looking with some puzzlement at the nature of the amendment that has come from the other house. There was a fair bit of rhetoric in this house when the bill was passed, saying that there would be some significant protections for families. When I look at this amendment I see some rather puzzling issues relating to the protection of families. I just cannot see how you can apply a preamble or amendment that says:

... to prevent discrimination under legislation specified in the Schedules by ensuring that all couples irrespective of gender have the same rights and obligations while at the same time recognising the importance of a commitment to a long-term relationship and the security of children.

How does that have any bearing on the bill and its application? As I said, I am somewhat puzzled. I recall being cooked alive by the honourable member for Berwick, who issued a press release in my electorate, which is his right — and he does it frequently — under the heading 'Savage votes against family amendments'. Like the National Party, I voted against everything in this bill because I believe it is anti family and it makes a direct attack on marriage.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — This amendment! At the bottom of your press release you said that the Liberal Party

would pass the amendments in the upper house to ensure families and children are protected.

I would like to know specifically how the amendment protects children and the security of marriage. It does absolutely nothing because now we come down — —

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — The greatest achievement you have had is that you have extended the time for the dispersion of property to six years. One year extra! What an achievement!

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — I'm sorry. We are talking about the same bill. Is this the only amendment that you could achieve in the upper house? Is this it?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member should be debating in the third person through the Chair.

**Mr SAVAGE** — I take your wise counsel, Mr Speaker. I would have to say that the shadow Attorney-General has the integrity and the veracity of a used car dealer! He is a man — —

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — It is a sell out!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order.

**Dr Dean** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, you and I know that the reputation of used car dealers is not high, and I ask the honourable member to withdraw his comment. He is out of control.

**Mr Hulls** — It is an insult to used car dealers!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick has found the comments of the honourable member for Mildura offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

**Dr Dean** — Mr Speaker — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order. The Chair needs to resolve this issue first. The honourable member for Mildura, withdrawing.

**Mr SAVAGE** — I withdraw the reference to used car dealers, but I maintain that the — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member shall withdraw.

**Mr SAVAGE** — I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Thank you.

**Dr Dean** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, across the table the Attorney-General yelled out, ‘It is an insult to used car dealers’, thereby impugning my character, and I ask him to withdraw that comment.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick has found the comments of the Attorney-General unacceptable. I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw.

**Mr Hulls** — Come in Spinner! I withdraw.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the house to come to order. The honourable member for Mildura, on the amendment.

**Mr SAVAGE** — I recall the debate in this house, and I also recall the importance the Liberal Party placed on this legislation. I was given the direct impression that there was going to be a significant fight and that if the amendments that were put forward in the lower house were not accepted in the upper house, the Liberal Party would not accept the bill. Were the amendments accepted? They are not here, so why has the Liberal Party bent over backwards — —

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr SAVAGE** — Come on! This is a very shallow opportunity for the Liberal Party to get five bob each way. They get the votes if they do and they get the votes if they don’t! Together with the National Party I am pleased to vote against the bill and the amendment.

**Mr MACLELLAN** (Pakenham) — I support my colleague, the honourable member for Berwick. We are in an extraordinary position. Sometimes you begin to understand later conversations that are held around the house. I remember having a conversation with a government member and asking, ‘Are you going to accept the opposition amendments in the Legislative Council?’. The honourable member for Berwick said in debate in this place that if the amendments were not accepted the opposition would insist on them in another place. I asked the government member if he was going to accept them and I must say I was curious at the comment that came to me: ‘Yes, we will accept them but we will need to change them a bit’. When I hear the Attorney-General today, it makes sense. The government needs to change the bill so that it can have ownership of it.

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**Mr MACLELLAN** — That is what the Attorney-General is saying, and I hear the protest from the other side. I will make one more comment and then I will identify whom I had the conversation with because I found it a curious conversation at the time. It is a curious situation because now the Attorney-General wants to claim credit in this house for opposition amendments the honourable member for Berwick said the Liberal Party would insist on and would move in another place.

I say to the honourable member for Mildura, for heaven’s sake, I was not sure which amendment he was attacking. I will give him at least some marks for consistency along with the National Party — they are still attacking the bill. They did not like the bill when it was first in this place, and they do not like the bill now. That is okay. I think it is an inherently sleazy and — strictly in a parliamentary sense — dishonest effort when the government, in this case represented by the Attorney-General, seeks to claim credit for amendments which it never thought of and never supported and which are being adopted now only because they were insisted upon by the Liberal Party opposition and the honourable member for Berwick as its representative.

It is a sad day when the Attorney-General does not have the generosity to acknowledge the honourable member for Berwick and the team that worked with him — —

*Government members interjecting.*

**Mr MACLELLAN** — A team of members worked with him, as he would be the first to acknowledge. He is the leading spokesperson for the opposition on this bill, and that is where the authorship for the changes which honourable members are about to approve and which the National Party and the honourable member for Mildura consistently oppose were initiated.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — Thank you, Mr Speaker — —

**Ms McCall** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — I ask the honourable member opposite who made quite a stupid and offensive comment — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order!

**Mr WYNNE** — Mr Speaker, particularly in relation to this bill, it was quite a cheap shot and I ask her to withdraw. It is just silly, and you know it is!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Richmond shall address the Chair and not honourable members across the table. The honourable member for Richmond has found the remark made by the honourable member for Frankston offensive. I ask her to withdraw it.

**Ms McCall** — I am happy to withdraw it.

**Mr WYNNE** — On the first amendment, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Pakenham suggested in his contribution that this debate goes to the question of ownership of the bill. The issue of ownership of the bill is simple: for seven years the previous government did nothing to end discrimination against same-sex couples. This government has done that through this bill after only 18 months in office. As the Attorney-General said, this bill is groundbreaking legislation.

If the honourable member for Pakenham wants to talk about ownership of the bill he should acknowledge that it is this government that has brought in the legislation and negotiated it through the house. The community, particularly the gay and lesbian community, knows which government initiated and fought for the legislation. The advisory committee, which worked assiduously with the government, and the gay and lesbian lobby, know which government introduced the legislation into the house.

Finally, on the question of the two amendments, which — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Richmond, speaking on the first amendment!

**Mr WYNNE** — On the first amendment, Mr Speaker, and I will make a further contribution relating to the second amendment if required, there has been extensive consultation and negotiation relating to the amendment. Both sides of the house would agree that it is a substantial change from the amendment that was originally introduced into the house. It was negotiated between Mr Katsambanis and me initially, and between the shadow Attorney-General and me on Monday night, and it was subsequently introduced into both party rooms on Tuesday morning.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr WYNNE** — There may be a bit of history that needs to be revisited in this debate. The opposition wants to talk about ownership of the bill, but it is clear to the community where the ownership of the bill lay and who initiated it — it was initiated by the Attorney-General!

**Mr SMITH** (Glen Waverley) — I wish to make a short contribution to the debate on the Legislative Council's amendments to the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill. It was sad to hear the remarks made by the government this morning. I am sure they were all part of the smokescreen the Attorney-General is trying to put up to hide his role in the Michael Adams affair.

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — I also speak on the amendments to the Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill that have come from the upper house. The first amendment put forward is only changing the objects of the bill. Honourable members from the legal profession would know that changing the objects of the bill will do very little to change the substance of the bill.

I thank the shadow Attorney-General for assisting me in understanding the effect of the amendment. Changing the objects of the bill does very little to go down the line stated by the shadow Attorney-General in the press release he put out, thankfully in my electorate! Because I was doing a similar thing in his electorate, I can understand why he did that. I do not wish to upset the shadow Attorney-General in any way!

The amendments do very little. The Independents opposed the amendments that were introduced when the bill first came before the house, because they will do very little. They are only window-dressing to protect the Liberal Party from having to support the bill, and as such they should be opposed.

**House divided on motion:**

*Ayes, 77*

Allan, Ms	Lenders, Mr
Allen, Ms	Lim, Mr
Asher, Ms	Lindell, Ms
Ashley, Mr	Loney, Mr
Baillieu, Mr	Lupton, Mr
Barker, Ms	McArthur, Mr
Batchelor, Mr	McCall, Ms
Beattie, Ms	McIntosh, Mr
Bracks, Mr	MacLellan, Mr
Brumby, Mr	Maddigan, Mrs
Burke, Ms	Maxfield, Mr
Cameron, Mr	Mildenhall, Mr
Campbell, Ms	Mulder, Mr
Carli, Mr	Naphine, Dr
Cooper, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Davies, Ms	Overington, Ms
Dean, Dr	Pandazopoulos, Mr
Delahunty, Ms	Paterson, Mr
Dixon, Mr	Perton, Mr
Doyle, Mr	Phillips, Mr
Duncan, Ms	Pike, Ms
Elliott, Mrs	Plowman, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs	Richardson, Mr

Garbutt, Ms	Robinson, Mr
Gillett, Ms	Rowe, Mr
Haermeyer, Mr	Seitz, Mr
Hamilton, Mr	Shardey, Mrs
Hardman, Mr	Smith, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )
Helper, Mr	Spry, Mr
Holding, Mr	Stensholt, Mr
Honeywood, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Howard, Mr	Thwaites, Mr
Hulls, Mr	Trezise, Mr
Kosky, Ms	Viney, Mr
Kotsiras, Mr	Vogels, Mr
Langdon, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )	Wells, Mr
Languiller, Mr	Wilson, Mr
Leigh, Mr	Wynne, Mr
Leighton, Mr	

*Noes, 7*

Delahunty, Mr	Ryan, Mr
Ingram, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )	Savage, Mr
Jasper, Mr	Steggall, Mr
Maughan, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )	

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling the Attorney-General to move a motion on amendment 2, I indicate to the house that I was tolerant in allowing a wide-ranging debate on amendment 1 about the circumstances leading to these amendments. I shall not be as tolerant in debate on amendment 2. I ask members to cooperate by confining their remarks to amendment 2.

**Mr HULLS** (Attorney-General) — I will certainly confine my remarks to amendment 2 in relation to this groundbreaking piece of legislation.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Attorney-General to move that the amendment be agreed to.

**Mr HULLS** — I move:

That amendment 2 be agreed to.

This amendment inserts a new statutory distribution scheme for the division of an intestate's property where the intestate leaves both a spouse and a domestic partner. Under the proposed new scheme, where a domestic partner has lived as the domestic partner of the intestate continuously for at least two years but less than four years, the intestate's spouse is entitled to two-thirds of the intestate's residuary estate and the domestic partner one-third.

Where the domestic partner has lived with the intestate for four years or more but fewer than five years, the spouse is entitled to half the domestic partner's estate and half the intestate's residuary estate. Where the domestic partner has lived with the intestate for five

years or more but fewer than six years, the spouse is entitled to one-third and the domestic partner to two-thirds of the intestate's residuary estate. Finally, where the domestic partner has lived with the intestate for six years or more, the domestic partner is entitled to the whole intestate's residuary estate and the spouse has no entitlement to that estate at all.

I am sure the shadow Attorney-General will agree, albeit reluctantly, that this amendment, which has been moved by the government, differs from the amendment he moved in this place. As I recall, his amendment would have referred this part of the bill off to a committee — in other words, to never-never land. The result could well have been that many people living in domestic relationships where one partner died intestate would have been left with basically nothing or would have had to make an application to the Supreme Court under the relevant legislation.

The amendment ensures that the legislation can pass. The government has been advised by the AIDS council that each year some 70 people in this sort of domestic relationship die without leaving a will. If this scheme had not been included in the legislation, those 70 partners would be adversely affected. A long delay could result if this is sent off to a parliamentary committee for its consideration and then returned to this house for debate some time in the future. The delay would result in people missing out on their proper entitlements under the legislation.

That is why it is absolutely crucial that this scheme be agreed to, albeit after some negotiation. The legislation will result in people who have been living in domestic relationships for a period of time receiving entitlements where no wills have been left. On behalf of the government I am proud to move the amendment, and I hope it is supported by the opposition.

**Dr DEAN** (Berwick) — The problem that I referred to about the Attorney-General's approach has arisen again. Someone has to break that cycle, so I will not go down that path. I will advise the house why the opposition wrote this amendment and put it to the government.

The proposal in the original bill was effectively that after five years the spouse got nothing but after two years it was a half-and-half situation. That was unacceptable to us, because we felt it was not appropriate for the spouse. We were concerned about a situation where a spouse might be looking after the children of a previous marriage. Although there is a special reference to children, in that in a situation of intestacy a large proportion of the estate automatically

goes to them, we were still not satisfied that after such a short term things should be split half and half and after five years the spouse would get nothing.

After giving it close consideration the opposition drafted an amendment that would mean that for the first two years everything would go to the spouse, between two and four years it would be split one-third and two-thirds, for four to five years it would be split half and half, and for six years and beyond it would go to the domestic partner. We thought that would be a lot fairer.

Our amendment would simply remove the government's original proposal in relation to two years and five years. The government came to us and said that that would leave the situation as it is — that is, the spouse would always get everything — and that even as a holding position while there was further inquiry it would be a bit unfair. I think that is right. Although we disagreed with what the government came up with, the previous situation was probably just as bad if not worse.

We put our heads down and decided to fix it once and for all, rather than sending it to a committee that would spend ages inquiring into it. We know there are groups, such as the gay and lesbian movement, that are keen to have the legislation passed. We did not want it to be delayed. As we had struck out the amendment we believed we had an obligation to say what we wanted, rather than have someone else fight it out. We put our heads down and worked out a solution. The original solution was seven years, which was not agreed to by the government. After some discussions we said we could live with six. The government agreed to six, together with the variations of one-third and two-thirds — so we had an agreement.

I conclude by saying that it is a good result because it is much better than it was. Obviously the government is happy because it has moved the amendment we proposed in the upper house. However, I will tell honourable members what will probably happen in the upper house. Instead of allowing the government's amendments to go through, we will vote against them — even though they are the ones we have agreed to — and instead move them ourselves. That is a real shame, because — —

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**Dr DEAN** — I will tell you why. We will do that because in response to our insisting on an amendment you have used the fact that we said, 'All right, you move it', to beat us with — and that is not appropriate.

You could have come into this house, as I said before — —

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**Dr DEAN** — That is what I am talking about, Mr Speaker. I am not raising the temperature but keeping it where it should be. We were not happy with the original bill. We wanted to remove the original amendment completely and have the matter sent to the Law Reform Committee for its consideration. The government suggested that we try to define what we wanted. We did that, but the government did not agree, so there were some negotiations. The amendment was moved as it is now, and we are happy with it. That is all the Attorney-General should have said, but now I have said it. We support the amendment because we wrote it.

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — Consistent with our basic approach to the legislation, we oppose this amendment.

**Mr SAVAGE** (Mildura) — I echo the words of the Leader of the National Party. I do not believe this amendment is an appropriate one to protect families and married couples.

**Motion agreed to.**

## APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL

### *Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 6 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).**

**Mr SPRY** (Bellarine) — When my contribution was interrupted pursuant to standing orders last night I was talking about infrastructure spending. I will now concentrate on Geelong infrastructure projects — or should I say, the lack of them.

Despite their frequent forays into the pages of the local press the honourable member for Geelong and his Labor colleagues — I am sorry to see they have left the chamber — have proved to be totally ineffectual in trying to persuade their government that some necessary infrastructure projects must be undertaken in Geelong as a matter of urgency.

The most important one — not only to Geelong and the region itself but further to the west and the east, because it has the potential to influence the whole of the greater Port Phillip region — is the eastern Geelong ring-road. That project has been debated for some years. About 30 years ago a western ring-road was put on the Geelong planning map as the logical way to bypass the

city and allow traffic to continue on to the west, south and east.

Many people believe an eastern ring-road would be more effective because of the six or seven roads in its ambit. I refer to the roads to Portarlington, Queenscliff, Barwon Heads, Torquay and Anglesea before the road eventually returns to Princes Highway West.

The government does not seem to care about the potential that alternative offers. Rather, it is hidebound in its adherence to the western ring-road alternative. That is a short-sighted attitude to the search for a solution to the blocking or clogging of the centre of the city through Latrobe Terrace, particularly in light of the Melbourne–Geelong road being triplicated both ways and therefore being likely to attract more traffic than it does than at present. In highlighting that issue I hope and trust the Labor Party will have the vision to consider the alternative and the cost benefits that might flow from it.

A couple of projects that have been picked up by this Labor government give an entirely new meaning to the word 'surrogacy'. I refer to the Thompson Estate redevelopment, which honourable members heard the honourable member for Geelong speaking about and claiming ownership of last night. He has forgotten that that whole project was the brainchild of the former Minister for Housing, the Honourable Ann Henderson. He has totally ignored what a terrific job she did in implementing that redevelopment program. It was a tremendous effort.

In due course government members representing the Geelong area will no doubt claim ownership of the Newcomb Community Health Centre. When they do I hope they have the grace to acknowledge the effort and commitment the former Kennett government put into that necessary development, which is now up and running. I have had the pleasure and the honour of visiting the centre, and I am deeply impressed with the service it is providing to the community. The initiative was driven — I say this with modesty — by me and others, but it was given effect to by the former Kennett government.

While on the subject of infrastructure and surrogacy, one pet project of mine is the provision of gas to North Bellarine. As long-serving members of this house will be aware, I have spoken in the chamber on this subject no less than 14 times over the past eight years, and my Liberal Party colleagues in the other place have been equally supportive. When the announcement was made in Portarlington on 18 May that gas would finally be provided to Portarlington, Indented Heads and

St Leonards through a \$1.75 million government subsidy to a private gas company, Texas Utilities, those present could have been forgiven for thinking that the outcome was due solely to area newcomer Elaine Carbines, a member for Geelong Province in another place, such as the self-congratulatory nature of her message.

In deference to the 10 years of hard work and dedication by the many who preceded her, let me set the record straight. The push was begun in earnest in 1992 by a gentleman named Max Burrell and members of the St Leonards Progress Association, the Indented Heads–St Leonards foreshore committee, the Portarlington foreshore committee and the Portarlington Development Association in a joint submission to the then government's so-called social development cabinet meeting in Drysdale, I think it was.

After the change of government following the 1992 election, Ann Nichol, a local legend, Jean Cull, Beryl Bell — now Beryl Halpin — Bob Crouch and others wrote to me on behalf of the North Bellarine Hostel for the Aged — later to be appropriately renamed the Ann Nichol House — urging that the gas supply main be extended to North Bellarine and to the hostel for the aged in particular.

The former Gas and Fuel Corporation was prohibited from extending gas supply on other than commercially viable projects. Ironically, that policy remains in force through the Office of the Regulator-General, even under this government. The former coalition government and the former Minister for Energy and Minerals, Jim Plowman, were in the process of framing legislation to overcome the problem. Local residents Bob Gibb, David Lea, Greg Foote, Ann Nichol and Beryl Halpin, Marilyn Anderson, Joe Carey, Ray McWhinney from Ocean Grove, whose wife was a councillor at the time, Max Burrell and Bob Firman joined forces with me to pursue the issue with the government. We made slow but significant progress.

Finally, and very significantly, the critical support and involvement of the City of Greater Geelong was secured as a facilitator of the push. It was only the involvement of the City of Greater Geelong, which that original ad hoc committee managed to achieve, that finally made it possible for any government to act and procure gas for North Bellarine.

Finally, in 1997 an elected and very focused committee comprising Sue Wilson, Alec Finney, Bob Gibb and the late but highly regarded Laurie Quin, with the able assistance of the City of Greater Geelong through Bill Hall, the general manager of development services, was

able to force the issue, at least in a political sense, and achieve the community's objective. To those people as well as a raft of others who gave at times vocal and unstinting support I express the profound gratitude of the residents of Portarlington, Indented Heads and St Leonards, both present and future. The benefits to those communities of beginning the process and of the long struggle to achieve gas in their area will be enormous.

In conclusion, and going back to the budget, these and other infrastructure projects are vital for the confidence and prosperity of regional Victoria, particularly my electorate of Bellarine. When all is said and done it was the good management of the previous coalition government that provided the budget surplus which has enabled the Bracks Labor government to honour its pre-election capital-spending promises, at least in these areas, despite the fact that it has taken a lot of effort to actually drag it to and get it across the final barrier, especially on the provision of gas.

Let us hope that the government can now show some strength of character, particularly in resisting union demands on current account spending — a very significant worry to the community — in the interests of Victoria's long-term prosperity. Regrettably, I doubt that the Bracks Labor government has the ticker!

**Mr MILDENHALL** (Footscray) — It is a pleasure to participate in the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. After listening to the honourable member for Bellarine you know that the budget is in pretty good shape — when the debate is around who can take credit for the great works going on in his electorate! When debate brings forth expressions such as, 'No, it was my idea', 'It was their idea' or 'They're claiming credit but it should be mine', you know that the fundamentals are fairly good. It is clear that the community is moving ahead in leaps and bounds in all parts of the state, including Bellarine.

Although the honourable member for Bellarine complained about a lack of commitment to infrastructure by the Bracks government, in the context of the state government's having led the triplication of the Geelong road — that is, the \$250 million project involving the Princes Highway down to Geelong — it ill-behoves him to now say, 'Look, there's not enough investment in regional roads heading into the Geelong area'.

Having said that by way of introduction, it is clear that the budget is in good shape. It has all the essential characteristics you would look for in a budget of any major organisation, particularly the most important in

the state. To be running with a significant and healthy surplus of \$509 million and to be able at the same time to set aside substantial funds for innovation and technology — that is, the real brain power to scan, embrace and engage with the future by building the capacity to plan and integrate services and infrastructure into the demands of a new era as technology, markets and the community change quickly — is a wise investment indeed.

For the government to be able at the same time to invest so substantially in infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, which not only provides a stimulus to employment to counter the impact of the GST and the way the federal government has mugged the national economy but also meets the need for a state government in the current government's situation to provide counter-cyclical investment to maintain a healthy employment base, is not only wise policy but enables essential infrastructure to be put on the ground to reverse the long drift of population growth towards the cities and of young people moving away from provincial and rural communities.

To reverse that trend by an innovative and nation-building commitment to fast rail links is the manifestation of a forward-looking government with a commitment to community growth. It is in stark contrast to the actions of the previous government, which accelerated that drift to the cities by closing down many services, cutting off lifelines to the bush and strangling rural communities.

**Mr Leigh** interjected.

**Mr MILDENHALL** — It is no wonder the Labor Party is now the natural party for country people, because those people were betrayed, let down and abandoned by the Kennett government and its enthusiastic supporters such as the honourable member for Mordialloc, who would say, 'Close more schools! Cut more ambulances! We don't care'. The honourable member's record is that he has never cared. After seven years of his urging cutbacks he is now arguing that the government needs to do more.

Another sign that the budget is in good shape is the ability to afford to make substantial improvements and investments in the health system. When opposition members ask, 'Where are your major projects?', they should look at the redevelopment of the Austin hospital.

That is a magnificent \$300 million-plus commitment and stands in stark contrast to the previous government's commitment which was going to be, 'Flog it! Let somebody else build it and somebody else

run it'. This government believes in public health and in the public system, and knows the community is looking for that rock solid guarantee they can only get with a well-managed, well-developed health service.

On top of all those essential features we have the tax cuts, a stimulus to the private sector to grow that component of the state. That makes it a well-rounded, well-balanced, forward-looking and forward-thinking budget. The only criticism opposition members can make of it is that projects being delivered are based on their ideas rather than on ideas of the current government. As I said in my opening remarks, if that is all they can argue about, the substance — the base of the pyramid — is obviously in good shape.

In the electorate of Footscray budget debating time is the time to draw a breath, look at how we are travelling and do a stocktake. What sorts of things need doing? How far have we come in recent years? It is fair to say that in the community of Footscray we are putting some rubber on the road, getting traction, in a number of important areas.

Footscray's poor socioeconomic profile, the lowest of any profile in the metropolitan area, shows up in reports such as the *Burden of Disease* report, which shows that Footscray has, for example, the highest levels of addiction and mental illness. Characteristics of that sort show that it is a community with more than its fair share of problems. Nevertheless, the compassion, dedication and commitment of the Bracks government is making inroads in a number of areas. The significant funding set aside in the government's drugs program is a welcome relief. It is starting to turn the tide and push back the excesses: the public face of poverty, the social difficulties, the family distress and the issues of law enforcement that spring from the illicit drugs trade.

The number of police officers at the local police station has been doubled; a public primary health centre will receive significant funds; drug safety workers will enter the streets — all as part of an integrated approach that has already made the street scene much quieter. Community workers and the community generally can see the results of this more substantial effort being put into better assistance, quicker treatment and many other facets of the effort to improve the drugs situation.

In the education sector, Footscray — along with most electorates, I would imagine — receives significant capital investment. I look forward to the rehabilitation of education. In the technical and further education (TAFE) sector a better word than 'rehabilitation' would be 'resuscitation' after those dreadful years of cutbacks. New life is now being breathed into the TAFE system.

The news arrived a few days ago that we now have 100 000 Victorians in apprenticeships and traineeships. The news was a milestone and a significant achievement by this still-fledgling government for us to reflect upon.

**Mr McArthur** — That's it, fledgling: not a feather to fly with!

**Mr MILDENHALL** — It is fledgling in the sense that the government — compared with the previous government, like a turtle with its head stuck inside its shell, absolutely reluctant to engage with the community and just as comfortable going backwards as trying to go forwards — is an eagle soaring.

The Footscray electorate has a significant problem with trucks in residential areas. That is part of the problem of success, of course. The port is booming and there is an enormous increase in cartage of containerised goods around Melbourne. Truckies being truckies, however, they look for the shortest distance between two points, often without guidance or a complete knowledge of the community's concerns. They go the shortest possible route between their pick-up point and the distribution centre.

I am working with a number of government agencies, including Vicroads, the Department of Infrastructure, the Maribyrnong City Council and the Environment Protection Authority, to ameliorate the environmental and residential impact of truck traffic. We have developed a nine-stream integrated strategy which we expect will make a substantial difference over the forthcoming six months. Francis Street in Yarraville has 10 000 trucks a day passing down it. The government expects to stand up and be counted on that issue, but finding a solution that has that delicate balance between environmental concerns and economic growth is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the government is determined to make inroads into the area of trucks on residential roads.

Many residents are of the view that the way of dealing with a high number of trucks is simply to ban them and force them to go somewhere else. Life, however, is a bit more complicated than that. The government needs to be sensitive to everyone's needs. I sympathise with the residents who take the view that everyone has a right to a night's sleep and that the trucks in their thousands that pass through residential areas every night are certainly a significant issue.

I am working extremely hard with a number of other people to make a significant difference and resolve the

problem. The government is also working on other significant projects in the Footscray area.

It is good to reflect on the dilemma that I and many in the community have of deciding which of all the possible projects, innovations or new developments we should turn our attention to. The climate change is amazing. Rather than the situation of five or six years ago of trying to work out which service or community organisation to defend, we are now in the situation of deciding how to ensure that our new one-stop-shop youth centre hits the ground running; how to ensure that the application for a major extension to our community arts centre — one of the most successful in Australia — is put on the ground at the right time; how to ensure that the newly redeveloped swim centre will be located in the right part of the community; that the planning for an airport fast rail link is developed in the most appropriate way and the economic spin-offs are achieved; and that the case for a redeveloped police station, which is becoming a critical issue mainly because of the increased investment in manpower at the police station, is put forward in the best possible way. At the moment the choices and range of projects for the further development of my electorate are quite broad.

In conclusion, and ending on a slightly more negative note, it would have been a lot better in my electorate had the government's legislative program not been stifled and impeded by a conservative-dominated upper house. It seems to have the Chicken Little approach that the sky is falling. Despite the fact that every other state has a home detention program in some form or another this crew has decided that Victoria should not have it.

Opposition members are relaxed about the fact that young people and others can be caught and permanently integrated into the criminal justice system, while the government wants to get them into the community and to find a way out of that dreadful downward spiral the graduates of the criminal justice system so often fall into. How many more lives would have been saved had it not been for the head-in-the-sand attitude of the Liberal Party towards supervised injecting facilities? Even on matters like the racial and religious tolerance legislation — which is everywhere else around the country and which it was finally able to support — the Chicken Little approach of saying, 'Oh, no! Watch out! The sky is going to fall on us', dominated.

The government is about adapting to the changing conditions in the community, about moving forward; it is not about embracing the past. This opposition crew is looking more like John Howard all the time. It finds inspiration, direction, guidance and strategy from the

past. As a community and as a state we have to move forward with the changes at the pace of those changes and ensure that through the budget we embrace the future with intelligent investment and a capacity to innovate, understand and adapt to the future in a constructive way.

**Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk)** — It is indeed a pleasure to follow the honourable member for Footscray in the budget debate. I will deal more with him later.

For six or seven years in this place I have had a tradition of following the honourable member for Morwell, now the Minister for Agriculture, in budget debates. While I am now shadowing and therefore somewhat at cross-purposes with the honourable member for Morwell, the minister, I enjoy his company and his speeches. I like the man, but that does not mean I agree with everything he says or does, and I will get to that later, too. The minister and I had a relationship across the chamber where we used to spar with one another and perhaps he will get up on his hind legs during the debate and tell us what he will do in agriculture across the state. I will tell the house a bit about what he is not doing yet. That seems to be the tradition of the Labor Party and its budgets.

In the information that is now before the house the government tells us about a lot of things it is going to do but, as the honourable member for Brighton said, not just yet. It is indeed following St Augustine's prayer, 'Lord make me chaste but not just yet'. It says, 'We will build some rail lines but not just yet; we will bring down taxes but not just yet; we will build infrastructure but not just yet; we will bring down unemployment but not just yet'.

There are clichés in budgets. In the 1960s, as all honourable members will remember, following a federal budget you would always see on the front page of the *Herald Sun*, 'Beer up, cigs up'. That cliché in federal budgets seems to have gone into history and is not seen any more, but there is rapidly becoming common in Labor budgets, particularly state Labor budgets, a cliché that is simply summarised in three phrases: taxes up, spending up, jobs down.

It is clear to all who have a close look that those things are rapidly becoming an entrenched part of Labor's approach to the financial and fiscal government of Victoria. Victorians now have higher payroll taxes, higher land taxes, more stamp duties and higher gambling taxes than they have ever had. Under this budget taxes on insurance will reach record levels as well.

We also have higher spending. This government has increased spending from \$19.3 billion in the 1999–2000 budget, which was the last Kennett budget, to \$22.9 billion in this budget. This is an increase of something over \$3.5 billion dollars or a rise of 18.6 per cent in only two years. That is a greater increase than in the whole of the seven years of the Kennett government. This government has managed to spend almost 20 per cent more of the Victorian public's money in two budgets. And what have we got for it? Do we have any new roads? No. Do we have any new project? No. Do we have lower unemployment? No. Do we have any better conditions? No!

Manufacturing is leaving the state as quickly as it possibly can. Why would it do that, you might ask. Simply because taxes and charges are going up. Workcover is strangling enterprise and initiative and it will also strangle employment, but more of that a little later on.

Very simply, this is a boring and disappointing but thoroughly traditional Labor budget, and the Treasurer should hang his head in shame for what he has foisted on the people of Victoria. Just as the previous Labor Treasurer lasted only one budget, I pray for the good of Victorians that this Treasurer gets no more because he will inflict pain on the community if he stays there for very long.

In agriculture this is a budget of missed opportunities. There are some welcome spending initiatives, and I recognise those and acknowledge the minister for them. There is an investment of \$50 million over a three-year program to improve research work at places like Ellinbank, Horsham, Bendigo, Hamilton, Kyabram and Rutherglen. This is a good move on the minister's part and I congratulate him for that. However, there are other areas where not enough is being done. There is not enough money in the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), and although while the Treasurer has loudly trumpeted its virtues across rural Victoria on many occasions it is a small fund and provides little to benefit genuine rural communities. The number of applications means the fund is vastly overcommitted.

If the government is really to promote rural and regional infrastructure development it must do one of two things: firstly, it should increase the allocation to the fund and improve the transparency and accountability of the funds going out; and secondly, it should extend the fund's coverage area.

About a month or so ago I raised in this chamber the issue of a dairy underpass for the Wildes family at

Yannathan. A few minutes ago the minister told me across the table that he has found funding for that family's dairy cattle underpass. The reason the government should extend the coverage of the RIDF is simple: lots and lots of regional areas are excluded from applying to the fund simply because they are part of municipalities which are not in the schedule of the act. The shires of Cardinia, Yarra Ranges, Hume and — what's the one out at Werribee?

**Mr Baillieu** — Wyndham.

**Mr McARTHUR** — I thank the honourable member for Hawthorn for that. These shires are excluded from applying for funding. That is a pity, because there are genuine rural projects within those municipalities which should meet the criteria of the fund and should be funded through it. I call on the minister to assist us in getting that coverage extended. It costs the budget nothing. Any decision to increase the amount in the fund is one the Treasurer must take separately, but extending the coverage of the fund will not increase the commitment of dollars. All it does is provide a genuine opportunity for people who are currently discriminated against because they live on the wrong side of a municipal boundary. The minister recognised that because he found a way to fund the Wildes family's underpass in Yannathan. If he recognises that it is an anomaly in this case then he should also recognise that there are many other anomalies, and I ask him to help us to resolve them.

There is a real problem in agricultural industries in terms of Workcover and the impact it is having on agricultural industries. I refer not only to the direct Workcover premium that will apply to farmers, but also to massive increases in Workcover premiums on agricultural service and supply industries. There are examples in wineries, meatworks, transport companies and contracting companies which provide fertilisers and other contracting services to agriculture. That is impacting on the viability of those servicing companies. Their going broke will cause massive problems in rural communities. On the other hand, if they are not forced into going broke they will be forced to pass on the costs, which will result in increased costs to farmers.

**Mr Hamilton** interjected.

**Mr McARTHUR** — I agree with the minister that we need to improve safe working practices, but I disagree with him that we need common-law access with Workcover. That is going to cause massive increases in the costs of premiums. Only yesterday the Auditor-General said in his report that that has blown the Workcover budget right out the water and it has

increased massively the unfunded liabilities. The Minister for Workcover then came into this place and made the absolutely unsustainable statement that that deficit and the increase in the Workcover unfunded liability would not lead to an increase in premiums. I listened to him carefully and I fear he has made a dreadful mistake because it is a very brave statement for a minister to make in this place. I am sure he will be reminded of it many times in years to come.

Honourable members should see the funding in this budget for the Melbourne showgrounds. There is none. There is an allocation for some planning money. The Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) is done with the planning; it has been working on planning for years. Minister, find it some money to refurbish what should be an icon for agriculture in Victoria! Provide an opportunity where agriculture can display what it produces and what it can do for the broader community!

Before the 1999 election the then coalition government made a commitment to invest up to \$50 million over five years to help redevelop the Melbourne showgrounds at Flemington. I hope the current minister will find a way to provide similar funding to allow the RAS to refurbish what is an historic and much-loved precinct in desperate need of upgrading. Farmbis is to lose its funding in 2001–02. That is a pity, and I think the minister should change that.

It is disappointing that the business tax package took the easy way out and provided some tax cuts that are not particularly useful to agriculture. It would have been better to reduce or abolish some stamp duties, because that would have provided much more benefit to agriculture than the payroll tax deductions the government has agreed to.

It would have been better if management and pest animal and pest plant programs were better funded under this budget, but they are not. The minister should do some work on that. There is very little commitment in that regard.

There are a significant number of missed opportunities. The government has rejected the recommendations of the Law Reform Committee's report on its review of the Fences Act — recommendations which were supported in its pre-election promises but which it has now rejected. The government has stopped the ovine Johne's disease program dead in its tracks, despite the recommendations of the all-party parliamentary committee on the issue. The Minister for State and Regional Development promised \$8 million

to upgrade powerlines in the south-west. He has broken that promise.

It is not just in agriculture that these things are disappointing. Let us examine the area of water. The water issues are characterised by a lack of direction, knowledge, vision and leadership from the Minister for Environment and Conservation, who is clearly out of her depth. She needs firstly to gain some information about the water industry and water and natural resource management and then she needs to take some action rapidly.

The only thing the minister has managed to do is run a political campaign about sewage treatment plants in rural communities. There is no vision about what can be done in waste water treatment and management — nothing at all in the two years she has been in that portfolio. There is no commitment to reducing the release of waste water into the marine environment, or to increasing water reuse and recycling. There is no vision from the minister on those things.

We are seeing also that the minister has no commitment to the catchment management authorities (CMAs). She came in running a political campaign to abolish the CMA levies but failed to provide the necessary funding to replace them, and then failed to provide growth funding for the projects that should have been funded under those levies. CMA staff and board members come to me regularly saying they do not have the funding and they cannot do the work they have committed to in the past.

A while ago I was dealing with one CMA in an area very close to the electorate of the Minister for Agriculture. That authority said it had a 30-year project to remove all willows from streams, but now it is battling to maintain just the areas from which it has already removed willows. It cannot, under its current funding levels, ever take the project further. So it has gone from being a 30-year project to rehabilitate the stream banks to being a never-never project because under the current arrangement it can never happen. Perhaps the Minister for Agriculture can talk to his colleague the Minister for Environment and Conservation and do something about that.

There are many areas where this budget is a dismal and disappointing failure. I refer the Minister for Agriculture to the allocations for his portfolio at page 208 of budget paper 3, and particularly the output services to improve market access, market development and consumer confidence in food and agricultural products. That is clearly a key output for any department of agriculture in any state in any country of

the world — an output that provides systems, standards and services to Victoria's food and agriculture sector, enhanced market access, market development and consumer confidence, including improved product integrity, quality assurance, business and value change facilitation and other things. They are all very sensible things for any department of agriculture to do.

For 2000–01 the projected spending in that output is \$53.7 million. I direct the minister's attention to the fact that in the budget for 2001–02 it is \$43.7 million — a 20 per cent reduction. Why, Minister? How can you allow this to happen? What will you do to redress this situation, and what will you do to explain it?

I shall refer briefly to some local issues. Again, the budget is very disappointing for my electorate. The Scoresby transport corridor sham commitment of the Minister for Transport has now been exposed. The federal government has committed \$220 million. The state government has committed nothing at all. That exposes the minister's sham, and it is a pity. There is a \$6.5 million injection to the Angliss Hospital for improvement of services to older patients. That comes at the expense of building the Knox hospital and it ignores the desperate need for upgrading of the emergency services section of the Angliss, which, while excellent, is vastly overpressured, suffering excessive demand and going on bypass more than ever in its history.

The delivery of capital works spending on schools is unclear in this budget. I hope the Minister for Education, who is in the chamber, will find some money to refurbish the Boronia Primary School. The former coalition government was committed to it, and I believe she should fund it in this budget; I hope she does.

I refer also to the problem the Monbulk Primary School has with the department's determination to remove from the school several critical portable classrooms which, if removed, would rip the heart out of the school.

The budget also shows a decrease in tourism marketing and development funding. Tourism is a critical industry to people in my electorate. It is disappointing to see a \$1.8 million cut in that important program because it will hurt businesses in the area. I hope the minister reverses that cut.

I call on the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Education, who are in the chamber, to do something in their respective portfolios to address the shortcomings in this area. They have increased

spending, but the spending is to no good purpose. It provides us with no new services and no new infrastructure. It is a disappointment in all ways: spending up, taxes up, jobs down, and vision non-existent.

**Ms OVERINGTON** (Ballarat West) — Like all other members on the government side of the house, I am extremely pleased to support this bill. I pay tribute to the Treasurer, the Honourable John Brumby, who three weeks ago delivered to Victoria a budget for all Victorians, whether they live in Melbourne or in regional and rural Victoria. Unlike the previous government, the Bracks Labor government is delivering today, building for tomorrow.

The former Kennett government focused on Melbourne, ignoring country Victoria. It closed schools and hospitals, amalgamated councils, sacked thousands of teachers and nurses and depleted many services. It brought local communities to their knees. Honourable members on the opposition side of the house should be totally ashamed because what the Kennett government did destroyed some of those communities. That is why they now sit on the opposition benches — because people out there just got sick of it. But Labor listens and Labor cares.

Now it has the task of rebuilding those communities. That is what the Bracks Labor government is doing, and my electorate of Ballarat West is part of that community building. On 16 May the front page of the Ballarat *Courier* gave testimony to that:

Ballarat a winner in state budget.

I also quote from the editorial of the same day:

It would be hard to argue Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and Treasurer John Brumby have failed to redeem their pledge to country Victoria and the regional electorate that played such a key role in putting them in office in yesterday's budget.

The editorial repeatedly says it is a wonderful budget, bringing back investment to regional and rural Victoria.

Infrastructure education in my electorate received an enormous boost. I note the Minister for Education is at the table and I thank her because she is an excellent Minister for Education. After so many years Sebastopol Secondary College has been allocated \$2.34 million for a new science learning centre, upgraded classrooms and a new gymnasium. This proud school has waited 10 long years for its redevelopment. For the past seven years the previous local member of Parliament repeatedly promised the school that it would be in next year's budget, but of course it never happened! The previous government never kept its promises, but Labor

has and the school is going to receive those much-needed funds.

Forest Street Primary School has been funded for a new multipurpose physical education facility at a cost of \$1.15 million. Pleasant Street Primary School has also been allocated \$1.15 million to provide new permanent classrooms to replace the portable ones that it has been forced to use for so many years. There is exciting news that a further \$5 million has been allocated for the Ballarat Vocational Futures Learning Exchange which will benefit regional secondary schools and vocational education providers and enhance pathways and options for Ballarat youth. It is much needed after so many years of neglect. But it gets better. The University of Ballarat has been allocated \$1.5 million to refurbish five of its existing buildings at the School of Mines campus. Spending of the education dollar has been enormous.

I am not going to mention the schools that have been funded in Ballarat East as I will leave that to the honourable member for Ballarat East, but in my electorate \$12.5 million will be spent on education infrastructure. Not only will it benefit education but it will give Ballarat an economic boost. Added to this is the \$200 million dedicated for the fast train link to Ballarat, which is part of the total commitment of \$550 million. The government promised the feasibility study and funding thereafter. It has delivered on the feasibility study and now it is delivering on the services.

Health was a major winner in the budget with \$1.1 billion to be spent across the state. Once again, in Ballarat \$4 million has been allocated for the Queen Elizabeth Geriatric Centre for a geriatric evaluation facility. The facility will make a huge difference by improving the delivery of care to the elderly in Ballarat. I say 'improving' because Ballarat has exceptional facilities for the care of its aged people. I cannot speak highly enough of the nurses who work in those areas.

Some \$2 million dollars in recurrent funding has been allocated for the radiotherapy unit. In the last few weeks, the opposition spokesperson on health has made comments about that asking when the unit was going to be built and saying that Ballarat was never going to get it. I have been part of the radiotherapy group in Ballarat for over 10 years. The former Minister for Health promised and promised but gave nothing. It did not happen. For all those years the previous government was strong but careless in its rhetoric. It was as if it enjoyed playing with people's emotions, and the radiotherapy unit in Ballarat has been an emotional rollercoaster. I can inform the house that the

foundations have been dug, the tender has been let and the unit will be open by Christmas. This government cares!

The budget has provided injections of money for drug education, and a number of agencies in my electorate will benefit from that funding.

The community renewal project in Wendouree West will receive \$3.1 million. This proud community has been ignored for far too long and the only solution the previous government gave was to suggest it changed its name to amalgamate with Wendouree. That is disgusting. It is a proud community, and I am pleased to have been asked to chair the new project. I look forward to working with the residents of that area.

Under the heading 'Wendouree West facelift long overdue', an editorial in the *Courier* states:

... the state government's decision to spend \$3.1 million on upgrading public housing in Ballarat's best known battler's precinct is overdue.

It has long been known that despite the very real disadvantage that afflicts a part of our community where many families are battling to get by on fixed and basic incomes, area residents are fiercely proud of their neighbourhood.

This pride was made manifest when prior to the last state election, moves to divorce the area from its former name of Wendouree West provoked a strong local reaction.

As I said, it is an extremely proud community, and I look forward to working with it.

Last week the Treasurer was in Ballarat again to announce funding of \$2.7 million for the revitalisation of the Bridge Street Mall. During the seven years I was councillor that was something that had been promised time and again at budget time. It has now been delivered.

There is also an injection of \$750 000 for the Camp Street project, which brings the total to \$12 million. Unfortunately that injection of funding was needed because there was an overrun on the project caused by the federal government's GST. The federal government will not put its hand into its pocket to reimburse the university for the GST, and we will know its fate after the next federal election. As I said, the budget is all good news for Ballarat. I am proud and privileged to be the member for Ballarat West. I look forward to continuing to work very closely with my community in the coming years. There is now a feeling in Ballarat that very positive things are happening.

The local newspaper, the *Courier*, has been honest in its reporting, and it is all positive. Can the house see all the

positive headlines? They are wonderful! One headline reads 'While the rest of the world talks about slowing down, Ballarat just won't listen! Ballarat ... makes it happen'.

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Hawthorn) — Last year I said the budget was one of complacency, and it was, but this budget is one of regret. This budget is an expansionary budget in a slowing economy. It shows diminishing surpluses and cash deficits, and it is high taxing and high spending. It is a budget to regret.

I fear about the direction Victoria is heading in with this government. The clouds are gathering on the horizon and the barometer is dropping. That means watch out! Despite the promises and the commitments to the Independents, this Premier is on the hunt for an early election before the storm hits. The positioning has already started. The Premier, and even the honourable member for Footscray earlier in this debate, were muttering about upper house obstruction. Nothing could be further from the truth. The upper house in this Parliament has already saved the government from itself on a number of occasions.

So far as the Hawthorn electorate is concerned, the budget last year delivered almost nothing. This year's budget is not much better. I am grateful for the funding that the Swinburne Secondary College will receive, but it comes as a continuation of a Kennett government project. I thank the minister for that, but that is about it. There is no money for the upgrades to the Hawthorn and Camberwell police stations. There is only master planning money for the Camberwell South Primary School. Despite the fact that the Minister for Education used the school for her own publicity purposes in this house, she has turned her back on it instead of getting on with a job that is urgent in Camberwell South. The minister is now at the table, and I urge her to include in next year's budget funding for the full program at the school.

As I did last year, I draw attention to other projects with pressing financial needs in the Hawthorn electorate. They include the need for funding for the Hawthorn West and Camberwell primary schools and the Hawthorn Town Hall restoration. That town hall is a prominent and preferred music venue for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and it is in desperate need of funding and assistance for an upgrade. Other projects worthy of support are Boroondara City Council's graffiti program and the Cansurvive program, involving volunteers who are cancer survivors providing advice and support for other cancer sufferers. The program is a worthy project. I have spoken to the

Minister for Health about the matter, and I urge him to consider the possibilities for it in the near future.

I also note the need in Hawthorn for support for the implementation of kindergarten disability codes. I have heard reports that some kindergartens will be faced with the costs of complying with those codes of up to \$30 000. That is an issue for the future.

However, the matter that concerns me greatly is that the Hawthorn electorate will be paying more as a result of the removal of the winter power bonus, as is the case with all electorates. Another major problem that will be looming large in many electorates next year but is already looming large in the Hawthorn electorate is the massive uncapped land tax increases. I will draw the attention of the house briefly to a couple of examples. One also affects the neighbouring electorate of Kew in particular, and the honourable member for Kew and I have been dealing with the matter. I know it has also been drawn to the attention of the Treasurer and the honourable member for Richmond.

Heavy uncapped land tax increases as a consequence of equalisation factors and revaluation particularly affect properties with heritage issues at stake. I refer to the property in Creswick Street, Hawthorn, owned by Fairlie Springall. Two years ago she was paying \$4000 in land tax, in the following year she paid \$5000, this year she will pay \$10 000, and she has been advised that next year her land tax bill will be \$30 000 before she pays her rates and charges. The total of her taxes and charges exceeds her income. The property, which she has lived in for 30 years, is a registered historic property. The situation is causing grief, harm, hurt and illness among many people who have lived for a long time in heritage properties. I urge the Treasurer to deal with the uncapped land tax increases, which are most inequitable.

I turn now to my shadow portfolio areas, particularly post-compulsory education and training. Last year I said I feared that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment would put post-compulsory education on the backburner — and I believe that is exactly what has happened. Last year the Department of Education, Employment and Training recorded a 15 per cent increase in its budget, but this year it is just 4 per cent. In last year's budget debate I warned that the \$127 million extra being directed towards technical and further education (TAFE) colleges would go straight through to salaries. Lo and behold the Auditor-General highlighted that very fact in the report tabled yesterday:

We recommend that the Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment undertakes a thorough

review of the outcomes of enterprise bargaining, particularly over the management of unfunded salary increases ...

The minister signed off on this extraordinary enterprise bargaining agreement, which will be a concern for TAFE colleges into the future.

The Auditor-General also drew attention to the fact that while six TAFE colleges were in financial difficulty at the time of last year's budget, five are still facing financial difficulty. This minister has wasted the money that was meant to assist the colleges to get through that problem. She was warned about the problem, but she has allowed it to continue anyway. Interestingly, the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment made almost no mention of TAFE colleges in her contribution to this debate. From the Auditor-General's report I think we can see why.

Over the past 18 months the minister has scuttled the International Fibre Centre at Geelong, which I mentioned yesterday. In the same report the Auditor-General draws attention to the government's conscious decision to run down the finances of the IFC and, despite what was said in the Geelong region, to transfer the equipment from its Geelong campus to the CSIRO and the Brunswick campus. The Minister for Community Services said yesterday that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment had saved the IFC and got it back on track, but the IFC in Geelong has been completely scuttled. That is a tragedy for a visionary project.

As I said yesterday in a debate, the minister has also let the side down over the Institute of Land and Food Resources. This minister's style is to look to blame somebody else whenever there are financial difficulties. She did it with the IFC and with the Building Industry Group System. BIGS failed under the minister's leadership; despite receiving a clean bill of health from the department it has gone to the wall. She did it with Lavin Australia, she did it with the TAFE colleges and ironically many years ago she did it with the Footscray Football Club. It is her natural disposition — and she has also done it with the private providers of post-compulsory education.

In that regard I note that the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment has still refused to lift the freeze on traineeships with private providers, which is essentially the freeze on user choice. Her prejudice against non-TAFE providers continues. The minister has failed to lift the freeze despite massive additional growth funds being offered by the federal government. I note that the ministerial conference is this Friday. I urge the minister to get on with it, lift the freeze and stop playing politics with the

lives of trainees and the businesses of those legitimate private providers. The Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment underspent her own budget last year, yet she is still crying to the commonwealth for money.

Additional funds have been made available to the Wodonga Institute of TAFE for a new library and learning centre, which is to be commended. However, I note that the Auditor-General has alerted us to the fact that the Wodonga institute is suffering financial difficulties.

To summarise the state of tertiary education in Victoria: another reduction in student contact hours is predicted; there are to be fewer audits of registered trainee organisations; government-funded student contact hours through adult community education providers are to be substantially reduced by nearly 700 000; and ministerial staff will be increased and departmental staff slightly reduced as a consequence. One can only wonder what is going on there.

I will briefly mention two projects. The first is the Maryborough education precinct, which is worthy of support. In concept it is a good project, but I fear that the brakes have been put on. Having visited the campuses and the bodies that will make up the precinct, I can see dangers in the repetitive consultation process that is taking place. I can also see that this project, which should be an all-or-nothing project on the new site, will end up being on a substantially split site to appease ALP local branch members. That is a great concern. Similarly, the Gippsland precinct is an interesting concept. I have visited the site and am concerned that the plan will result not in a consolidated campus but, again, in a split campus.

I move now to my other portfolio, gaming. This is the first budget I have had the pleasure of reviewing as the shadow Minister for Gaming. In doing so I pay tribute to the Honourable Roger Hallam in another place, who was both the previous minister and the previous shadow minister. His probity, dignity, strength and integrity were of the highest standard. I think Roger did a fantastic job in all respects. However, since then we have seen in the gaming portfolio the greatest act of hypocrisy and deceit ever undertaken by an incoming government. The government has abandoned integrity. It has the weakest possible minister, his ministry is inept, and the government has defied almost every promise made in its policy.

I sat here in fascination last night listening to the Minister for Gaming contribute to the budget debate. He said at one stage:

I now refer to my portfolio areas ...

There followed not one single mention of gaming — and no wonder. This minister has been an embarrassment, a total wipe-out. We heard about the shards when he talked about his major projects portfolio, and we heard about the showgrounds, but we did not hear about the sham in gaming. At the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing last week the Minister for Gaming said several times, 'I am not responsible'. At one stage he even said, 'I don't care'. This is the government that made promises to the Independents about gaming. I will be interested to hear their comments on gaming revenue.

What is the starting point for gaming in Victoria? In 1998–99, the last full year of the Kennett government, total revenues from gaming were \$1.40 billion. At the time the Labor opposition was feral in its anti-gaming posture. It was led by the current racing minister, the current Treasurer and the current Premier. They were all anti-Crown, anti-casino and anti-pokies, despite the fact that Labor had introduced all those forms of gaming to Victoria. In opposition the ALP promised:

Labor will ... reduce the state government's reliance on revenue from gambling.

That promise may have defied Labor's historic love affair with gambling, but no-one in Victoria could have been in any doubt about what it intended to do. Where are we now? Page 133 of last year's budget paper said:

Overall, gambling tax revenue in 2000–01 is expected to fall 19 per cent to \$1 235 million.

That is what the budget said last year. On 3AW on 13 February in response to a question about the rise in gaming revenue the Premier said:

Yeah, well, it is going up, um, it's about \$1.5 billion. That includes GST as well.

The budget papers said \$1.235 billion; the Premier said \$1.5 billion. On 9 February on 3AW the Minister for Gaming said in response to a question from Neil Mitchell about gaming revenue:

Well, it is \$2.2 billion at the moment.

He was asked if that included the GST, and his answer was no. It did not include the GST, so there was something more. Obviously the Premier, the Minister for Gaming and the Treasurer disagree — so what are the facts?

During its term the government has sought to conceal the facts on gaming. It has concealed the GST take and hidden it in the budget papers. The government gets the

GST and the Treasurer, in a second-reading speech on the Tattersalls Consultations (Amendment) Bill, said just that: that all the GST money comes back to Victoria.

The actual total is worth looking at. I refer to page 202 of budget paper 2 where gambling revenue is listed as \$1.374 billion. When the GST component, which is at page 125 of budget paper 2, of \$390 million is added, the total for 2001–02 is \$1.764 billion. That is \$356 million more — not less, as was promised in the budget papers. Half the surplus is raised by additional gambling taxes, and it is an increasing proportion of the revenue.

What is ahead? By 2004–05, the declared revenues are \$1.64 billion plus the GST component of \$0.47 billion, which returns to this state, giving a total of \$2.11 billion. Maybe that is why the minister did not make any comment about gaming. It is more than 50 per cent ahead of the starting point from the last full year of the Kennett government.

Interestingly, for four years of the Bracks government a total projection of nearly \$6.8 billion is shown for gambling revenue. The last projection of the Kennett government for that same period was for \$5.9 million. That is a projected increase over the life of the Bracks government of \$811 million, an extraordinary policy turnaround and in complete defiance of its promised gaming policy.

The measures introduced by the government have been a sham. The minister is now the Minister for Shards, Shows and Sham. His policies are dogs and were introduced for political purposes only. Regional caps have been a disaster. They apply in only four of seven regional areas. The 24-hour reduction and the introduction of clocks and daylight provisions in gambling venues have been shams.

An interesting development has occurred with public hearings. The Chelsea Heights Hotel is on the border of the Dandenong capped area. What did it get? It got its pokies just a few weeks ago — advocated, interestingly, by Stuart Morris, a former ALP candidate for Waverley Province, in front of the current ALP-preferred candidate for Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Peter McMullen, and with an ALP council that ran dead.

Operators have been driven mad by the government, which has required measures that make no difference — but it has been taking the dollars. When it comes to the casino all is revealed. This minister sold out under instructions. Honourable members will

remember the post-election period when the Premier got a visit from Graham Richardson who said, 'Premier, here is your chance', and then \$100 000 changed hands. That was the absolutely unspoken-about donation; it has since been agreed that Crown was spoken about. Since then the royal commission has been dropped; Rob Hulls has been dropped from the portfolio; the Habersberger investigation has been dropped; and Crown has been exempted from regional caps, the 24-hour ban and public hearings.

There has been reduced surveillance of Crown, and Crown has been exempted from controlled contracts. The triennial review of Crown was swept through with barely a mention. Fundraising functions of the ALP have been held at Crown Casino, as have government functions. Now Crown Towers is being changed — and what a hypocritical act that was — and it appears that the lyric theatre will not proceed.

The classic thing about the change was the action of the Premier, who in this house just a few weeks ago denied any knowledge of any plans to change Crown Towers. That was despite the fact that in his report last year the Auditor-General said the Minister for Gaming was advised of those plans in June last year. However, the Premier denied any knowledge of it.

This has been an extraordinary turnaround. The dollars and the donations have been pulling the strings. The Premier and his Panda have become puppets of the pokies. They have sold out completely. There is no doubt that the minister is the weakest minister in gaming in Australia. He has become a soft touch for all elements of the gaming industry. It is extraordinary because he has harassed the gaming industry with things that have made no difference. At the same time the government has been raking in the dollars. They are the puppets. The Premier is a puppet and the minister is the chief puppet.

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

**Mr SAVAGE** (Mildura) — My contribution to the budget debate will be positive. The recent budget has been good for regional Victoria and for Victoria as a whole. It reflects justice and equity in the distribution of the state's assets, the common wealth of Victoria, so that everybody has a share.

I note with interest that the Bracks government will spend a total of \$2.13 billion on infrastructure projects that will commence in 2001–02, which is the biggest new budget investment of public infrastructure in

Victoria's history. Over the next four years Victoria will increase spending on asset investment by a massive 45 per cent.

My region will gain significant benefits from the budget. I congratulate the government on making those decisions. The first thing of great importance is provision for the bridge at Robinvale, although it is not yet part of my electorate but will be soon. This bridge has been lingering for many years, obstructing the smooth movement of traffic across the border between Victoria and New South Wales. Mildura vehicles use this bridge because there is no route in Victoria that goes directly to Robinvale. It is an old railway bridge that was constructed in the 1920s, and it has been maintained over those years only to the extent that it is now a single-lane bridge and causes extreme disruption to commerce.

Some questions have been asked about what the government will do with the bridge. There have been some negative suggestions that it will do nothing. Obviously, the people who have said that have difficulty reading the forward estimates. On page 249 of budget paper 2 an allocation for regional arterial road and bridge links for 2001–2 of \$5.7 million has been made, and it goes up to \$40 million in the forward estimates. The bridge will be constructed, and if the federal and New South Wales governments can resolve their issues of preferred route and the extent of their contributions towards the bridge, work could start in the next financial year, which would be well received in the communities of Robinvale and Mildura.

The government is investing some \$50 million in environment and agricultural resources for research and development at Gippsland, Tatura, Mildura and Horsham. The Sunraysia Horticultural College will receive \$4 million. That is an important type of investment on the basis that the region's agricultural investment and benefits to Victoria are significant. I acknowledge the government's decision on that issue.

I refer to police and corrections. The Underbool community will receive a new police station worth \$250 000. Underbool is a small community to the west of Ouyen. As do all small country towns, it suffers from predatory downsizing of its population, so it is a great boost to a community such as Underbool to see that the government recognises its worth and its entitlement to appropriate policing levels. The investment of that money in Underbool will be of great benefit to the region. It also highlights the fact that every community is deserving of consideration in policing. Underbool is a remote area that works on a cluster policing system between Murrayville, Underbool and Ouyen, and on

many occasions there is only one policeman available, and on some of those occasions that is at Underbool.

Transport is an issue that is close to my heart. One of the reasons I was elected to this place back in 1996 was the loss of Mildura's rail passenger service. One of the most significant announcements in the recent budget was the commitment to return that service to Mildura.

**Mr Baillieu** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — The honourable member for Hawthorn asks when we will get it. We know when it was taken away, and we know who did it, so I would suggest that any reference by opposition members to the consequences of the mean-spirited behaviour that occurred in 1993 is inappropriate. I remember the Liberal Party saying that if the Labor Party regained government in 1988 it would take the train away. What happened? It was not the Labor Party that took the train away between 1988 and 1992. One of the first acts of the former Kennett government was to axe the service. Ever since, the community has suffered a significant vacuum in appropriate public transport.

Despite it being a long haul, this government has indicated that at the conclusion of the rail gauge standardisation and the fast train project it is committed to the return of the passenger service. I think that is an appropriate time frame. I am convinced the service will come back. Many people thought it would never happen, but I have great confidence that it will.

The rail gauge standardisation is vital to the economic wellbeing of the mineral sands traffic. Mineral sands are now being trucked to the port of Portland. Without a standardised link to Portland 70 trucks will be travelling both ways between Mildura and Portland when the full treatment process comes on line. No honourable member would advocate that inefficient misuse of Victoria's roads. The standardisation of the rail gauge is appropriate and will help make Victoria part of an efficient transport grid.

The \$96 million standardisation — with Mildura moving up the list to be first cab off the rank — will enhance the grain traffic that runs from Robinvale and Kulwin as well as the traffic that runs south of Mildura. The Yelta line already carries 100 000 tonnes of grain each year, and the standardisation will improve that and the feeder lines.

The service will be part of the fast train link from Ballarat. We could have a journey of between 5½ and 6 hours. I have received no complaints about the length of time. We would all like it tomorrow, but if you are fiscally responsible you cannot do everything in

5 seconds. People are prepared to wait if they know they will receive something worthwhile in the end, which in this case will be good public transport. Likewise, the people of Bairnsdale will view that as a great achievement. They have also languished for a long time, having to put up with inappropriate public transport.

Engineering studies indicate that the track between Mildura and Ballarat has some defects, so \$7.7 million has been allocated in the budget to upgrade the track to facilitate the return of a passenger service. Currently the V/Line passenger service carries 65 000 people each year. When the train service returns it is expected that a further 32 000 passenger trips will increase the usage of the service. As the Minister for Transport said, 'If you don't use it you will lose it', and that is an appropriate policy. Except for Mildura and Bairnsdale, every other centre has an appropriate regional transport service. This is an issue of equity.

I turn now to the investment in education in the Mildura region. I congratulate the Minister for Education, who is present in the chamber, on the investment her government is making in the Red Cliffs Secondary College, the Mildura Special Development School and the senior college. Those appropriate and significant investments, which total more than \$4 million, have been well received by the community I represent.

The budget is good for all Victorians, and it is certainly good for regional Victoria. It is a change from the former philosophy of focusing on federation squares and issues of non-economic return. The budget is there to invest in infrastructure and make Victoria more efficient; it is there to make the dollars we invest turn around and produce something rather than build something just to be looked at.

**Mr Baillieu** interjected.

**Mr SAVAGE** — When it comes to gaming I am surprised that any opposition member would reflect on the criticism of this government, which has acted to restrain and curb out-of-control gaming. I have serious concerns about the effect of gambling on Victorians and have been happy to support measures that restrain it. However, that issue is not relevant to this debate, which is about responding to and reflecting on the good budget produced by the Bracks government.

I congratulate the government. This has been a pleasing exercise for me, and this budget a turnaround from some of the scorched-earth, mean-spirited budgets we have seen in the past.

**Mr PATERSON** (South Barwon) — This government promised so much for Geelong but has not delivered on it. The city that was so instrumental in delivering government to the Labor Party was largely ignored on budget day. An editorial in the *Geelong Advertiser* headed ‘The budget: where is it all?’ said that the government seems intent on ignoring the fact that its grasp on power is held by 16 votes in the lower house seat of Geelong. The newspaper described the budget as bad news for Geelong. It became quite clear by the next day’s edition — on the Thursday — that the government had whinged and whined to the newspaper, with the honourable member for Geelong North — the ALP’s chief whinger in Geelong — accusing the newspaper of being deliberately negative.

But the newspaper had found even more bad news for Geelong, with stories of preschool strikes and of the community legal centre complaining that it had been failed by the budget. A spokesperson for the legal centre said that the budget was a let-down, while the executive officer of the Geelong Kindergarten Association said that the Labor budget cast doubt on the very future of kindergartens. How did the community services minister respond to the plight of the preschool sector? She told the *Geelong Advertiser* that a ministerial review was still being finalised and that the government would consider the outcomes of the review once it was completed. No leadership, no capacity to make a decision, just more reviews.

This Labor government has tried to make a great deal of its budget allocation to the Grace McKellar Centre for the aged and those in need of rehabilitation. Government members trumpet, ‘\$19 million!’, but just how much of the \$19 million will flow next year for the much needed redevelopment project? A paltry \$3 million! That is all the government could find next year to help the aged and infirm in Geelong — \$3 million! — on a project that is probably worth between \$75 million and \$80 million. Of course, if the previous government’s plan for the centre had been embraced by this government, nursing home residents would already be in their new facilities under the care of organisations such as the Uniting Church. But what did the Bracks government do? It threw out the plan on coming to power, displaying just how petty-minded it was.

This budget was a disappointment. Where was the money for the Grovedale railway station? The feasibility study on the project was given to the government in October last year — it has had the report for more than six months. I suppose we should not be surprised that the government has done nothing about it, but the people of Geelong are entitled to expect that

it will respond in reasonable time. The study, which incidentally cost \$60 000, has obviously just been gathering dust on the minister’s desk. Why can’t this government make a decision? Capital works for the project are estimated to cost \$7.5 million — they were six months ago — with an annual operating subsidy required of \$330 000. Passenger predictions would see 100 000 commuters a year using the service, 30 000 of them being new passengers.

The ALP candidate at the last state election committed Labor to delivering the project, but now that Labor is in power it could not care less about the people of Grovedale, Belmont and the surrounding areas, including commuters from towns such as Torquay, Jan Juc, Barwon Heads and across to places like Moriac. The budget scores a fail on public transport.

What about law and order and emergency services? Did Torquay get any money for its much-needed new police station? Has this hopeless government made a start on the promised new Country Fire Authority station in Torquay, or made a decision on the location of the new ambulance service? The answers are: no, no, no! Torquay has been ignored by this government.

Not one school in the South Barwon electorate was mentioned in the budget papers for a major capital works project. Under the previous Liberal government schools in my electorate were major beneficiaries when it came to budget time. It seems under this government the cupboard is bare.

**Ms Delahunty** interjected.

**Mr PATERSON** — I take up the interjection of the Minister for Education, who indicates that there was no money for people in South Barwon. She says, ‘It’s now someone else’s turn’. I will happily convey to my constituents that the minister has that view.

Where was the money in the budget for the Princes Highway duplication between Geelong and Colac, as committed to by the previous government, or the upgrade of the Great Ocean Road to ease access problems for Jan Juc residents? It was left out — that is what happened!

Where was the money for the Barwon River upgrade? Geelong is desperately trying to save the schoolgirls regatta — the boys Head of the River has already left town because of this government — but there is not a word of any funding for the project in the budget documents. Government members have bleated in the past that they are committed to doing something about this issue, but in reality they are just sitting on their hands.

What has happened to Minister Madden's review of rowing courses in Victoria? Why is the Minister for Sport and Recreation in the other place sitting on it? Again it is another example of this lacklustre government's pretending it has an agenda for regional Victoria.

Then there is the Guggenheim museum project, which is being promoted very ably by Geelong's Jim Cousins. Geelong is lucky to have someone of Jim's calibre, but did the government have the foresight to set aside any money for the project? Of course the answer is no! Jim Cousins was very diplomatic in his comments after the budget, saying that the government contribution was now expected to be in the form of a departmental grant. Now that the government has finally offered an Arts Victoria officer to the project, hopefully the Guggenheim dream can go that next step.

At the last election the ALP candidate in South Barwon tried to make a hero of himself by demanding that the state government pay for the relocation of the Barwon Heads Football and Netball Club. He succeeded in one thing — he took the Labor vote in South Barwon backwards. The government, however, has yet to commit 1 cent to the project.

The government has also ignored pleas from Barwon Heads for assistance to have the town connected to natural gas. The Minister for State and Regional Development recently told a local newspaper, the *Echo*, that he had never heard of the issue. What an indictment of the local Labor upper house member! That was despite my putting a question on notice to the minister on the issue some weeks earlier. The government pretends to care about towns like Barwon Heads, but the truth is that it could not care less.

Also ignored were the recreational and commercial fishermen of Torquay and surrounding areas. Money has been provided for the marine park proposals, but the government has so hopelessly mishandled the issue that one group has been pitted against another as some receive favours and others are snubbed.

This budget is taking Victoria into a world of cash deficits. Table D.7 on page 300 of *Budget Statement 2001–02*, which is budget paper no. 2, shows that Victoria's cash flow position will deteriorate from a \$1.199 billion surplus in 2000–01 to a cash deficit of \$22 million next year and a deficit of \$295 million the year after. That is followed by cash deficits of \$142 million and \$138 million. As the *Australian Financial Review* observed, the government is dipping into the state's fiscal inheritance.

Access Economics, the government's favoured economic consultant, has revealed that the only reason this smoke-and-mirrors government can get away with it at this stage is the healthy budgetary position it inherited from the previous Liberal government. As all members of this house — certainly members on this side at least — are aware, the last thing a government should signal to business is that taxes will need to rise to pay for the state's expenditure program. Business will think twice about investing in Victoria and will look seriously at other locations. We are already seeing evidence of that, and the workers of this state will be the losers.

The budget papers clearly show that the Bracks government has given up on unemployed Victorians, with the unemployment rate still expected to average 6.25 per cent in the 2003 June quarter. The Labor government is officially predicting higher state unemployment, rising to 6.5 per cent next year. In addition, Victoria's employment growth is expected to fall from the 1.5 per cent estimate announced by the Treasurer in January to a negligible 0.5 per cent now. That is totally unacceptable. The government's election promise of 5 per cent unemployment has now proved to be a sham.

On the revenue front, we know the government pretends to be concerned about gambling, despite being the party that introduced gaming machines and the casino to Victoria. Indeed, the budget papers reveal that revenue from gambling taxes has risen to nearly \$1800 million and will rise further to more than \$2 billion by 2004–05. In an extraordinary admission the budget says poker machine revenue will rise by nearly 15 per cent, from \$780 million to \$894 million, and casino revenue will rise by 16 per cent, from \$80 million to \$93 million, under the Bracks government.

The pretenders who make up this government are gradually being exposed. It is to be hoped that Victoria is not forced to plumb the depths of Cain and Kirner in the 1980s and early 1990s before they are exposed absolutely.

**Ms LINDELL** (Carrum) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. I acknowledge the fine work of the Treasurer in putting together a balanced and sensible approach for the next financial year.

It is coincidental that I follow two regional members, the honourable members for Mildura and Ballarat West, both of whom spoke of their pleasure at seeing a government budget that recognises the state's rural and

regional areas. As a member with a metropolitan seat, I can also say that the budget has great benefits for my constituents as well. It is a testament to the work of the Treasurer that he recognised that all Victorians can benefit from growth and that all can benefit from good, balanced government. There is no need to pit one community against another or to have winners and losers. With enough goodwill, hard work and integrity in a budget, all Victorians can be winners.

The electorate of Carrum will benefit from the substantial improvements in education, both in infrastructure and in enhanced learning opportunities for students. Edithvale Primary School will receive funds to complete a rebuilding project commenced by the former Kennett government. After many years of waiting — I think it was in the queue for seven years — it is a delight to see that the school will now, finally, be completed.

Chelsea Heights Primary School has been advised that it can go from master planning to full planning for a \$1.7 million upgrade. The upgrade will include new general classrooms, toilet block and staffroom and the existing buildings will be extended to create new music facilities and a canteen. As far as buildings and facilities go, Chelsea Heights Primary School has hobbled along. The hardworking community at Chelsea Heights has done its best and is trying to provide good facilities for the students, but it has had no government assistance for many years. It is fabulous to see that finally a government has acknowledged the hard work done by the community and the dire straits of the school facilities and has committed to the full planning for the \$1.7 million upgrade.

A brand-new school is being constructed at Aspendale Gardens in my electorate. This was a major election commitment. Initially the government said it would build the school during its first term. We began with an opening date of February 2004, but with the hardworking community at Aspendale Gardens, the school action group headed by Kerry McKenna and Travis Stone, and a government that will recognise the merit of communities' arguments, the school will open in February 2002. It is a terrific result for the new and rapidly growing community of Aspendale Gardens — a community that was consistently denied the school under the previous government, regardless of the fact that land for a school had been purchased in 1992. The community was denied its school by the previous government and its opening will be testimony to the hard work of the community and the good listening of the Minister for Education.

I was told recently that the school will open in 2002 with a projected enrolment of between 250 and 300 students in its first year of operation. That shows how uncaring, mean, narrow and totally out of touch the Kennett government was with new communities. The need for the school was denied and the community was denied funds and support. Some members, now fortunately in opposition, worked actively against the school becoming a reality.

Amazing news about teachers has been announced in the budget. While at the moment there is an issue with some teachers, I assure honourable members that the teachers I speak to are all happy with the provision of new laptop computers, Internet connections and email access for all students and teachers. The commitment of the government to the expansion of IT provision in schools is recognised and supported throughout the education community, especially in my electorate.

We have a fine school where, I admit, my two children are students. It runs its own community-funded laptop programs with five classrooms where students do the majority of their work on computers, and the provision for students in other areas of the school is high. The school has a low ratio of students to computers, with many classrooms networked and a successful intranet program.

Much recognised are the additional funds committed to Patterson River Secondary College and Mordialloc College as part of the middle years program, Patterson River receiving a further \$72 500 and Mordialloc College a further \$43 000. The period of middle school years is an area of great need. The years from year 5 to year 9 are when many students disengage from their schools. Funds are greatly needed to put in place programs that will keep students connected with the school and interested in the world and the community around them. The further funding going into middle schools is well supported at a school level. Teachers and school communities understand that as a society we must keep our teenagers connected to both their learning and community roles to enable them to continue to be a part of and to progress along a track that will lead to maximisation of their individual opportunities.

I would like to say something about the infrastructure announced in the budget for Frankston Hospital. There is an ongoing program of rebuilding at Frankston Hospital that will entail expenditure of \$21 million.

This budget announced expenditure of \$9 million for new maternity and paediatric facilities at the hospital. This is an area of great need in the south-eastern

suburbs, where there is huge growth resulting from many young families coming into the area. In 1996 the Mordialloc-Cheltenham Community Hospital closed and that removed maternity and paediatric facilities from the Mordialloc area. Currently the closest facilities for many people in my electorate are at the Frankston Hospital. The new facilities will be greatly appreciated and will service a great need in the southern end of my electorate.

At the Central Bayside Community Health Service in Mordialloc a public dental program has been struggling with waiting lists for a considerable time due to the removal of the commonwealth public dental program. Increased public dental money announced in this budget will see extra teenagers and adults being seen at the centre. This has been an issue of contention in my local area during the past few months, and it is greatly appreciated that the state government has allowed extra money to go into the centre's public dental program. It is hoped that when the federal government is replaced the new government will also reignite the much-needed commonwealth dental program.

The electorate of Carrum has a higher number of aged people per head of population than most other electorates in Victoria. The increased funding for health services and home and community care services meets a considerable need, and the extra \$26 million that is forecast in this budget is welcomed. It would be nice to see the federal coalition government match that funding, but its mean-spiritedness seems to know no bounds. There is a great need for 5000 residential aged care beds right across Victoria. Last year the Riverside Nursing Home closed in unfortunate circumstances. That facility is still empty. Extra beds are needed right across Victoria, but especially in my electorate, which suffered the loss of 33 beds when that nursing home was closed.

In this budget the issue of breast screening reflects well on the women who represent Victorians in this Parliament. There is a need to provide services for breast screening and menopausal education. Perhaps women in Parliament from all sides of the political spectrum, including the honourable member for Gippsland East, can take heart that women are making a difference and acknowledge that there is a great need in the community for both breast screening and menopausal education services. It is terrific to see that women's influence in the Parliament is being reflected in budgetary allocations.

The 1300 new nurses and improved facilities at hospitals, such as increases in emergency and elective surgery departments at major metropolitan hospitals,

will lead to better services. The electorate of Carrum does not have a major facility, and its residents rely on local metropolitan hospitals in Frankston, Dandenong, Clayton and Sandringham. The substantial funds allocated to health in this budget will give us much better services from a range of hospitals that Carrum residents need to attend.

The money for the supply of needles for diabetics is greatly welcomed. It is an issue that has been raised with me by many people, perhaps because I am a diabetic myself. They seem to think that it is a fair cop for me to actually listen to their view that the supply of injection needles for diabetics is something the government should respond to. I am glad to see this being funded; although it relies on commonwealth funding, it is nevertheless a welcome initiative in this budget.

In the couple of minutes I have left, I will make some comments about the integrated transport plan for the Scoresby corridor. I welcome the \$2 million that has been made available in the budget for project planning and development for public transport. Honourable members will know that there are 1 million people and 28 per cent of Melbourne's jobs in the Scoresby corridor. We need good transport facilities and they should, of course, cover both roads and public transport. If there is an area in which the former government really did drop the ball, it was in the provision of public transport. It is terrific to see money in the budget for the planning and development of an integrated transport plan, rather than simply a commitment to building another freeway.

Last week the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Honourable Justin Madden, came to my electorate where he announced the upgrade of Dolomore oval at Mentone. That has come about as a result of a fabulous community effort by three local athletics clubs banding together and coming up with a very impressive business plan and getting local and state government on board. I congratulate the working party of the Mentone athletics club on securing the funding for its athletics track, which is a regional athletics track. Many athletes use it, from members of Little Athletics right through to seniors. Frank McGuire, a local historian, athlete and judge of great note, at 89 years of age still has a walking group that uses Dolomore oval. He was delighted that the state government was able to come forward with \$91 000 as a contribution towards the upgrade of that track.

In conclusion, I reiterate the general comments I made at the beginning of my contribution: it does not need to be a case of one community versus another community

and it does not need to be a matter of winners at the expense of others, so that there are winners and losers. With sound financial application we can see win-win situations right across Victoria for the Victorian community.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Seitz)** — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for Warrnambool will get the call when the matter is next before the Chair, as this is an appropriate time to break for lunch.

**Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

**Sitting suspended 1.58 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.**

### ABSENCE OF PREMIER

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have advised that the Premier will be absent from question time today as he is attending a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. The Deputy Premier will answer in his stead.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Workcover: management

**Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition)** — My question is directed to Blow-out Bob, the Minister for Workcover.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member shall address his remarks — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order! All members shall address other members by their correct titles.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — My question is to the Minister for Workcover, who has presided over a \$651 million deficit in the six months to December 2000. Given that we are now within a few weeks of the end of the financial year and five months before this calendar year has passed, I ask: what advice will the minister give the house about how much further Workcover's deficit will blow out by 30 June?

**Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover)** — I would have to say it is regrettable that the Leader of the Opposition does not know much about finances. I shall take him through it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order!

**Mr CAMERON** — He reads the first sentence and he rushes out there. What he does not read is the detail; he has not taken in the detail — that is, the increase in liabilities is as a result of activities during the Kennett era.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order!

**Mr CAMERON** — We had an increase in claims relating to the pre-November 1997 era. All those claims had to be in, and being in they could then be quantified.

Mr Speaker, you would be aware that I informed this house in February this year of the true position — that is, the Bracks government inherited over \$1 billion of Liberal liabilities. You would also be aware, Sir, that the matters contained in the Auditor-General's report are those matters that were released in the half yearly report of Workcover. It is simply taking up those matters. What we have is the simple reality: a confirmation of the enormous Liberal liabilities.

**Dr Napthine** — Mr Speaker, the point of order I raise goes to a matter of relevance.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Springvale!

**Dr Napthine** — The Auditor-General has already blown the cover on the enormous \$600 million blow-out under this minister. The question went to the issue of what has happened in the previous five months of this year. If the minister is not getting regular updates from the Workcover authority he ought to tell the house that. If he is not on top of his portfolio, he ought to tell the house that, or he ought to tell the house how much further the blow-out will go.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition is using a point of order to make a point in debate.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister, back to answering the question.

**Mr CAMERON** — Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have inherited Liberal liabilities. The Liberal liabilities are identified. The Leader of the Opposition is the

Liberal liability! In addition, a lot of those liabilities — a quarter of a billion — that we inherited relate to the GST. Now, Mr Speaker — —

**Dr Napthine** — Again on a point of order on the question of relevance, Mr Speaker, you advised the minister to address the question. We know about the previous liabilities. The question is what has happened this year. Has the liability got worse? That is what we want to know.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Chair has indicated that it is not in a position to direct a minister to answer in a particular way. However, it is an obligation of a minister to answer the question and not debate it.

**Mr CAMERON** — These things have been pinpointed. Although they do not relate to activities of this government, they have to be put into this accounting period. What honourable members opposite need to do is look at the Auditor-General's report, and what that will tell them is that the scheme is heading back into the black. In other words, we are going in the right direction. We have these enormous liabilities; we inherited them. We are heading back into the black. That is what the Auditor-General confirms. We are heading back into the black, and we will get there.

### **Building industry: performance**

**Mr LONEY** (Geelong North) — Will the Deputy Premier inform the house of the latest information concerning construction activity across Victoria?

**Mr THWAITES** (Deputy Premier) — I thank the honourable member for his question — it is a very important topic. The building industry in Victoria continues to defy the national trends despite the opposition's predictions of a construction downturn. I am very pleased to advise the house that the industry has posted the highest level of total building approvals and non-residential building approvals for the month of April this year. It is because we have a strong government in the Bracks government with a vision for a construction industry that supports the industry. That is why builders are coming from right around Australia to Victoria. The figures indicate that — —

**Ms Asher** interjected.

**Mr THWAITES** — The shadow Treasurer says the same sort of thing the shadow planning minister has been saying — that is, that builders are moving out. The facts do not demonstrate that. In fact, the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that the

value of total building approvals in Victoria in April was \$794 million — the highest in Australia — representing some 31 per cent of the Australian total. Victoria is doing better than any other state. Builders are choosing to build in Victoria under a Bracks government. In relation to non-residential building approvals the figures indicate Victoria recorded \$346.9 million — again the highest in Australia — representing 32 per cent of the Australian total.

These ABS statistics are supported by the statistics from the Building Control Commission. They indicate that, despite the effect of the GST and the collapse of HIH, Victoria is doing very well indeed. The building industry has certainly had it tough, mainly because of the bungling of the Howard government with the GST and the HIH collapse. But in Victoria, despite those tough conditions, the building industry is doing very well.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr THWAITES** — The honourable member for Box Hill interjects. In April he put out a press release saying that a very large part of the Victorian building industry would grind to a halt. That is what he was saying. He was doing his best to talk down the industry.

**Ms Asher** interjected.

**Mr THWAITES** — The shadow Treasurer is saying he will be right. They are all wanting to cheer on a collapse. They want a collapse; that is what they want.

All I can say to the shadow Treasurer and the honourable member for Box Hill is what has been very well expressed by the Housing Industry Association:

Comments to the effect that the Victorian housing industry and new home buyers are in the midst of a crisis are incorrect, inflammatory and irresponsible.

### **Hospitals: funding**

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — I refer the Minister for Health to the Auditor-General's report tabled yesterday which shows that an unprecedented 12 hospitals are operating under financial difficulties, a 50 per cent worsening of the 1999 result, with 9 of them in country Victoria. Now almost two years into its term, how has the government managed to oversee this deterioration of the health system described by the Auditor-General?

**Mr THWAITES** (Minister for Health) — I thank the Leader of the National Party, who was a member of the previous government, for his question. He referred to financial difficulties of certain hospitals, and

12 hospitals in particular. What he did not refer to was the fact that the year before the Auditor-General reported, when he was in government, 18 hospitals were in financial difficulties!

*Government members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Narracan!

**Mr THWAITES** — In 1998 the Auditor-General's report said that 18 hospitals were in financial difficulty. The honourable member referred to country hospitals. It reminds me of the comments made yesterday about this by the shadow Minister for Health, who with crocodile tears in his eyes said, 'I hope this does not lead to any hospital closures'. Where was he when 12 hospitals closed? Where was the Leader of the National Party when the Lismore and Clunes hospitals and hospitals right around the state were closed? Where was the shadow health minister when the Essendon and Burwood hospitals closed?

There are two differences between the government and the opposition: the government is putting money into hospitals, and it is opening beds. It is no accident that there are now Labor members of Parliament in Essendon and Burwood, where the hospitals were closed.

### **Essential Services Commission: establishment**

**Mr SEITZ** (Keilor) — Will the Treasurer update the house on the government's progress in establishing the Essential Services Commission for Victoria's utility services?

**Mr BRUMBY** (Treasurer) — I am pleased to advise the house that I have today released the exposure draft of the legislation to establish the Essential Services Commission (ESC). This is the final draft that will go out to the public. It includes the proposed legislation and follows on from a consultation process that was begun in July last year. The government received something like 72 submissions from organisations, businesses and consumer groups. The legislation has been developed from that and is now out for final public comment. I will be introducing the final legislation into the house in the first two weeks of the spring session, for passage during that session. The ESC will be established from 1 January 2002.

The water and sewerage industry will be incorporated under the coverage of the ESC, commencing from 1 January 2003. The ESC will regulate the price and quality requirements for water from 1 July 2004.

The current Regulator-General, Dr John Tamblyn, who has been in that position for four years, will be the inaugural chairman of the ESC. I congratulate Dr Tamblyn on the job he has done over the past four years. His reappointment through to 31 December 2003 will provide stability, certainty and continuity to the new regulatory arrangements.

The essential element of the ESC is that it is different to the Office of the Regulator-General arrangements in a number of ways. Firstly, its charter is broader and includes water and sewerage services, so a wider range of essential utilities are covered. Secondly, it has a different decision-making framework. It has a commissioner and two associate commissioners — the chairperson, John Tamblyn, and two associates. Its decision-making structure is different to those of the Office of the Regulator-General.

Thirdly, the ESC will have substantially increased powers in relation to reliability of supply and will report annually to the government about reliability of supply, with the option of making specific reports at the request of the minister on the specific reliability of supply issues. Fourthly, the government has established new arrangements to give consumers a strong voice. A new body called the Essential Utility Services Consumer Advocacy Centre will be established. It will be funded to the tune of \$500 000 per annum and will provide a forum for consumers to put their views to the ESC about consumer interests. Fifthly, fines have been increased from \$100 000 to \$500 000.

Finally, there will be new transparency and accountability arrangements for the ESC that do not apply to the Office of the Regulator-General. The government is bringing regulatory arrangements in Victoria up to Australian best and possibly world best standards. It will mean improved reliability of supply across water, gas, electricity and other essential services. It will mean greater transparency in relation to pricing and a bigger, better and stronger voice for consumers. When coupled with the energy and water ombudsman, it will give consumers better avenues of redress for specific complaints.

The government believes this is a good package. It will be welcomed by consumers and industry alike. It provides world-leading practice. I look forward to introducing in the spring session the legislation to establish the Essential Services Commission from 1 January 2002.

**Essential Media Communications consultancy**

**Mr DOYLE** (Malvern) — I refer the Minister for Health to his department's dealings and contracts with Essential Media Communications for four lucrative consultancies. Will he guarantee that all proper and lawful selection criteria for these consultancies were met and that Essential Media Communications provided, within project time lines, the contractually required written strategies for each of these consultancies?

**Mr THWAITES** (Minister for Health) — The honourable member for Malvern is flogging a dead horse. He raised this issue yesterday, when I made it clear that the advice I had received from the department is that the appropriate procedures had been followed. Compare that to the fact that under the previous government massive contracts were entered into without appropriate procedures.

Of the four contracts to which he referred, two come under my portfolio responsibility and two come under the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Housing. If he has questions relating to the two under the responsibility of the Minister for Housing I suggest he put them to her. But I am sure that in those cases, as in the cases for which I am responsible, the proper procedures will have been followed.

**Energy: winter concessions**

**Ms DUNCAN** (Gisborne) — I ask the Minister for Community Services to inform the house of the relief available to concession card holders for the cost of electricity and gas this winter.

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Minister for Community Services) — I thank the honourable member for Gisborne for her question. As part of its commitment to improving the lives of Victorians during the winter, the government has begun a campaign to ensure that people are informed about the government's winter energy concession.

The winter energy concessions assist low-income families and individuals who require relief with their electricity and gas bills over winter. The concessions run from mid-May to mid-November. Unfortunately, the government has had to embark on an additional campaign this winter to ensure that members of the public understand that they are entitled to it. That is because the opposition has engaged in a misleading campaign by suggesting that health care card holders are no longer eligible for this winter energy concession when the fact is that they are still eligible.

This government will make sure that health care card holders know exactly what they are entitled to and that they can apply for the concession and receive it. The so-called — —

**Mr McArthur** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, on the issue of relevance, if the minister wants members of the public to be informed she should tell them that she took the \$60 winter power bonus from them.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms CAMPBELL** — The poor old honourable member for Monbulk has perhaps not read the Kennett government's budget papers, so I will provide an extract from them that clearly outlines that the \$60 — —

**Mr Leigh** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc!

**Ms CAMPBELL** — The poor old honourable member for Monbulk is confusing people in his electorate. If he wants specific briefings I will be happy to provide him with a personal briefing on exactly what the Kennett government did with the winter energy bonus. We are talking about the importance of health care card holders receiving this money, and the government will make sure they receive it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr Seitz** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, there is too much audible conversation by way of interjection. I cannot hear the minister, and I ask her to pause until there is order in the house.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the house to quieten down. Answers to questions need to be heard by all honourable members.

**Ms CAMPBELL** — This government will make sure that health care card holders understand clearly what they are entitled to and that they should apply for and receive the winter energy concession. The government will ensure that they also understand that the 1998–99 budget provided for a winter power bonus that expired this year.

**Mr Cooper** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the honourable member for Mornington not to interject in that loud manner — or to interject at all!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Chair is now having difficulty hearing the minister.

**Ms CAMPBELL** — Under the Bracks government the winter energy concession has been extended to ensure that more people receive more money. In 1999–2000 more than 689 000 Victorians took up the bonus, and over June the government will be promoting their eligibility and making sure they get this money.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Dr Napthine** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting. I inform the Minister for Community Services that as she has concluded her answer she is not to respond.

### Essential Media Communications consultancy

**Mr DOYLE** (Malvern) — Noting the previous answer of the Minister for Health and his claim yesterday that Essential Media Communications consultancies followed proper process, I refer to the retrospective rewording of a contractual document advised by his department and to the alteration of and increase in the contracted amount paid to the successful consultancy — over 200 per cent — after the work had been completed.

Can the minister confirm that Essential Media Communications, the beneficiary of the contract variation, including an increased payment of nearly \$45 000, is run by three directors — Mr Mark Civatella, Ms Elizabeth Lukin and Mr James Douglas — who are recent business partners and directors of Auspoll, along with the Attorney-General's parliamentary secretary, the honourable member for Frankston East?

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order! The honourable member for Kew!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr THWAITES** (Minister for Health) — As I said in answer to the last question, the honourable member is flogging a dead horse. This is exactly the same question that was asked of me yesterday, to which I gave a comprehensive answer. However, this question is not a surprise. Last night the honourable member for Glen Waverley told the honourable member for Frankston East that the opposition would ask this question today. I thank him very much for that. As a result, I can further inform the house that this great exposé of the honourable member for Malvern was raised by the shadow Treasurer in the adjournment debate on 17 May. She raised exactly the same point! I again thank the honourable member for Glen Waverley for tipping the government off.

In answer to the question, I can confirm that on 24 August 1999 — before the last state election — the honourable member for Frankston East sold all his shares and divested himself of any interest in this company.

**Mr Doyle** — On a point of order on the questions of relevance and debating the question, Mr Speaker, if the answer is simply yes, the minister should simply say so.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the minister not to debate the question but to come back to answering it.

**Mr THWAITES** — The honourable member for Malvern does not like the answer, which is why he wants to put the alternative answer. The Attorney-General responded in full on this very matter on 17 May when he replied to the issues about Auspoll raised by the shadow Treasurer. I well remember the statement the Attorney-General made. He told the shadow Treasurer that:

... it would not matter if it was Auspoll, Newspoll, the North Pole or an icy pole! The fact is that the poll makes it quite clear that the opposition is rating at 31 per cent!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order! I have already asked the minister to cease debating the question and come back to answering it.

**Mr THWAITES** — In conclusion, I would like to thank the opposition —

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order — —

**Mr Brumby** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Treasurer!

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister has spent a number of minutes debating this issue. He has not sought to address the question one iota. The question related to whether the \$45 000 benefited the three people who are former close business partners of the honourable member for Frankston East. The minister needs to come back and answer that question. If the answer is yes, the minister needs to simply say, 'Yes, it is true'.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have on two occasions asked the Minister for Health to cease debating the question and come back to answering it. However, the Chair is not in a position to direct the minister to answer in any particular way.

**Mr THWAITES** — I have answered this question absolutely clearly. Members on the other side have sought to try to make some imputation against the honourable member for Frankston East on the false basis that he was in some way a business partner of these people or benefited from this contract. I have answered that, but members opposite do not like the answer. I thank the opposition for giving the government the chance to set the facts before the house and, in particular, to repeat the comments of the Attorney-General, which were made somewhat late at night. We have now had the opportunity to hear them in the middle of the day.

**An Opposition Member** — Turn your back on us, John!

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

### **Aged care: places**

**Ms BARKER** (Oakleigh) — I ask the Minister for Aged Care what action is the government taking in relation to the dramatic shortage of commonwealth nursing home and hostel beds in Victoria.

**Ms PIKE** (Minister for Aged Care) — I thank the honourable member for Oakleigh for her question and for giving me an opportunity to talk about what this government is doing to assist older people in the state. It is true that there is a critical shortage of aged care places in Victoria. We know that Victoria is at least 5000 beds short of the commonwealth government's own benchmarks for residential aged care services.

Victoria receives less commonwealth funding for its population aged 70 and over than any other state, and we have ample evidence of this. The commonwealth government's benchmarks show this, as do many independent reports. One need only ask any person in this state who is trying to find a place for their elderly relative. They will tell you that the situation is just disgraceful — in fact, it is chronic. Between June 1996 and June 2000 we saw an 11 per cent decline in planned and operational nursing home places in Victoria. We can see what is happening out there as a result of this.

Between 1995 and 1999 the previous government spent lots of time closing and privatising hundreds of Victoria's nursing home beds. I am pleased to announce to the house that the Bracks government is reopening beds closed by the Kennett government. The government is making use of some closed wards and providing \$4.9 million in capital. It will be redeveloping and reopening 110 closed beds at four locations. There will be 60 beds at the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre in Heidelberg, 30 beds at the Caulfield General Medical Centre, 15 beds at the Grace McKellar Centre, and 5 beds at the Mount Eliza geriatric centre.

The government is providing not just the capital but \$1 million in additional recurrent funding per year because the commonwealth is not only penny pinching and depriving Victorians of adequate numbers of beds but is no longer providing adequate subsidies to cover the proper cost of care and staffing.

It is important to note that the opposition helped the Howard government by closing beds, yet I am astounded and amazed that it continues to defend the Howard government and its appalling actions when Victoria's elderly and their families are hurting. The Howard government and the Victorian opposition are a double act that is an absolute disaster for Victoria's health and aged care system. There are facilities in our community that are ready to go: Cabrini in Ashwood, Andrew Kerr in Mornington, Rose Lodge in Wonthaggi, and the Dousta Galla aged care services in the western suburbs. All they need to open are the licences from the Howard government.

Instead of squeaking and squawking about small issues, the opposition should be focusing on the big picture, that there are 5000 fewer beds than we need in Victoria. Older people are really hurting. The opposition needs to send a message to the Howard government and stop apologising for its behaviour, stop colluding with it, and focus on the needs of Victorians.

**Attorney-General: former Chief Magistrate**

**Dr DEAN** (Berwick) — I refer the Attorney-General to the increasing raft of evidence surrounding him about the murky role he and his Labor friends, Stary, Dreyfus and Punshon, SC, played in the Adams affair, and his refusal to even release the names of the Adams accusers. I refer to a *Herald Sun* editorial of today's date calling for an inquiry and note that for an Attorney-General to collude with others to remove a member of the judiciary is the worst offence any Attorney-General could commit and would normally require his immediate resignation. Will the Attorney-General now agree to release all documents, including diary entries for the period January 2000 to October 2000 that concern the Attorney-General's meetings with magistrates, visits to court complexes, and discussions with Bob Stary, Mark Dreyfus and Roy Punshon, SC?

**Mr HULLS** (Attorney-General) — For about a week now the shadow Attorney-General has come into this place and under parliamentary privilege has defamed a number of people he alleges were involved in a conspiracy over the former Chief Magistrate. I have continually said that not only was there no conspiracy, but the former Chief Magistrate would still be Chief Magistrate today had those formal complaints not been made, had a motion of no confidence not been moved and had he not resigned, of course. I remind the shadow Attorney-General that on numerous occasions — and I am sure he can confirm this — I attempted to mediate the matters in relation to complaints.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk!

**Mr HULLS** — In attempting to back up his conspiracy theory the shadow Attorney-General has come into this place and vilified one particular magistrate. He has come in here deliberately, knowing what the process was — —

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Attorney-General is now debating the issue and has been debating the issue since he got to his feet. The question related to whether he would release all the relevant documents. I ask you to tell him to cease debating the question and answer the question — yes or no, will he release the documents?

**Mr Thwaites** — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the question was extraordinarily long, containing numerous allegations, and it is appropriate for the

Attorney-General to have a proper opportunity to respond.

**Dr Dean** — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the question was very short. It was one paragraph and was simply: will he or will he not release documents? That was the question. The honourable member is talking about the preamble.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Attorney-General in providing his answer was in my view being relevant to the question. However, I will not allow him to give a long dissertation into the history of this matter. I ask him to come back to answering the question.

**Dr Napthine** — Release the documents!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr HULLS** — The process for the appointment of magistrates, which was set up under the previous government, was not only followed by this government in relation to Caitlin English, but there was an expert panel that unanimously recommended her, and Michael Adams was on the panel. Michael Adams was on the panel that unanimously recommended Caitlin English!

**Dr Dean** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, no sooner had you said that you would not allow the Attorney-General to go into a dissertation as to the background than he immediately went into such a dissertation. I ask you to ask him to come back to the documents.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Police and Emergency Services! The honourable member for Doncaster!

I ask the Attorney-General to come back to answering the question.

**Mr HULLS** — The main thrust of this conspiracy theory is that one particular magistrate was involved. The process of her appointment was followed and she was unanimously recommended by an independent panel made up of Michael Adams — —

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Attorney-General is continuing to defy your ruling. The question relates to whether he would release certain documents and his diary. That is the question. If he can't answer the question, sit him down!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not need the advice of the Leader of the Opposition to do that. I have indicated to the Attorney-General that it is my expectation that he come back to answering the question. Has the minister concluded his answer?

**Mr HULLS** — Yes.

**Rail: Bendigo blockade**

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — I refer the Minister for Transport to the recent blockade of the Bendigo to Melbourne train service. Will the minister inform the house of how this blockade inconvenienced train commuters and the level of support the blockade received from the public?

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Transport) — As the honourable member for Bendigo East lives and works in the Bendigo community she would know that the disruption to the Bendigo train, in particular the targeting of that train by members of the Liberal Party, caused great inconvenience. On 23 April a protest was conducted at the St Albans railway crossing and caused huge disruption to the people of Bendigo.

The protest was led by some local traders, including the failed Liberal Party candidate for Keilor, Mr Joe Fenech, who in one of the greatest acts of hypocrisy was protesting about a former Liberal government policy. Knowing this area well, Honourable Speaker, you will recall that the former Liberal government proposed the upgrading of the St Albans railway station and set the matter in contractual stone.

The protest was attended by the honourable member for Mordialloc, who encouraged people to engage in dangerous behaviour. The disruption to regional transport services was huge.

**Mr Leigh** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, as the Minister for Transport knows, I was never on the Bolte Bridge but on the sidelines. I did nothing illegal but simply observed with the media.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc appears to be making a personal explanation rather than taking a point of order, which I will not permit.

**Mr Leigh** — On a further point of order, Mr Speaker — a really, truly one again, Sir — under standing order 108 I believe the Minister for Transport is making a personal imputation against me and I ask that you ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Rowe** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Cranbourne! The honourable member for Mordialloc has indicated that he has taken offence at the remarks of the Minister for Transport. I remind the minister of standing order 108, which he must not infringe. I ask him to cooperate by withdrawing his remarks about the behaviour of the honourable member for Mordialloc.

**Mr BATCHELOR** — To assist me to do that, Honourable Speaker, would you ask the honourable member for Mordialloc to identify what he found offensive about my remarks that breached standing order 108?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Chair understands that the honourable member for Mordialloc has taken offence at the implication that he promoted dangerous behaviour.

**Mr BATCHELOR** — If the honourable member for Mordialloc took offence at his behaviour, I will withdraw.

**Mr Leigh** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc is not assisting his cause.

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order and to assist the matter, Mr Speaker, the Minister for Transport should simply withdraw. The honourable member for Mordialloc did not take offence at his behaviour, but at the words used by the Minister for Transport regarding his behaviour. The minister should withdraw.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Transport has withdrawn. However, the honourable member for Mordialloc, by way of interjection, chooses to inflame the situation. I will not hesitate to use sessional order 10 to restore order if he persists.

**Mr BATCHELOR** — I inform the house that the good citizens of Bendigo were so outraged at their train being targeted and the service being disrupted that traders and residents from St Albans travelled to Bendigo and apologised for their actions. The only person who has not apologised is the honourable member for Mordialloc. He still opposes the introduction of a fast rail service to Bendigo and does not care about country Victorians. His party is opposed to the reintroduction of passenger rail services across country Victoria and is now opposing the extension of the electrification of the line to Sydenham. It is the honourable member for Mordialloc who should apologise; and if he doesn't, the Leader of the Opposition should make him!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The time set down for questions without notice has expired and a minimum number of questions have been dealt with.

**Mr Loney** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your clarification and guidance about the form in which questions are acceptable in this chamber. Over the past week, in the increasingly frantic thrashing about of the honourable member for Berwick to create a conspiracy theory, we have seen the abuse of the forms of the house in the framing of questions.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr Loney** — The honourable member for Berwick is obviously indicating he will not be a member after the election, but currently he is. The issue has a number of parameters, but I go particularly to a question asked today. The honourable member for Berwick confirmed my view when he took a point of order saying that his question was short. The question contained a great deal of superfluous preamble, which is not allowed under the forms of the house.

If you turn to page 110 of *Rulings from the Chair 1920–1999*, Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the 1987 ruling of Speaker Edmunds:

Quotations when asking questions debase question time and questions should be asked without notes or quoting from a document.

He further ruled:

It is out of order to quote from newspapers in asking a question ...

I believe both rulings were breached today by the honourable member for Berwick, and I would have suggested that his question was actually out of order.

On previous occasions this week a whole raft of other Speakers' rulings have been breached by the form in which the honourable member put his questions. I invite you, Mr Speaker, to consider previous rulings from the Chair in relation to the form and content of acceptable questions allowed in this house in the future in determining whether the honourable member's questions are to be allowed.

I will not go to each of those rulings now, but I invite you to consider them with regard to the allowability of opinion in questions, the allowability of quotations in questions, and various other things. I also refer to the current sessional orders requiring not only answers to be succinct and factual but also questions to be succinct and factual. I invite you, Mr Speaker, to give a clarification to the house on the acceptability of

questions within question time, particularly in relation to the question that was put by the honourable member for Berwick in today's question time.

**Mr Cooper** — I welcome the point of order made by the honourable member for Geelong North, Mr Speaker, because if you accept it it will give you the opportunity to look at a number of issues relating to questions, and not just on the matter of how questions are phrased. I would also urge you, Sir, to look at the way in which points of order can be taken in regard to ministers avoiding answering a question and the fact that in making such a point of order on the basis of relevance it is almost impossible for a member not to repeat in some way, shape or form a part or the essence of the question that has been asked.

In doing all of that I draw your attention to a ruling by Speaker Delzoppo on 7 March 1995 when he said:

A member may not use the opportunity to make a speech when asking a question. He only has to use as sufficient information as would make the question clear and understandable.

There are instances where a question can be asked in very few words, indeed, but there are other times when, as Speaker Delzoppo said, to make a question clear and understandable there is a need for some background information to be given.

My recollection of the question asked by the honourable member for Berwick today is that he gave sufficient information and background in asking a question of the Attorney-General as to make it clear and understandable. Given that that is my recollection of the question asked by the honourable member for Berwick, nevertheless it is an opportune time — as the honourable member for Geelong North has taken — to ask you to look at the matter of questions, to examine not only the issue of questions themselves and the sort of content that can be placed in them to make them clear and understandable, but all of the other issues that are a matter of concern, I hope, to honourable members on both sides of the house. As I said before, this would include points of order that are taken in regard to the issue of relevance when ministers fail to answer a question or to touch upon the salient facts of the question.

It is all very well, Mr Speaker, as I am sure you would agree, for demands to be made that questions be short, to the point and contain as little information as possible, but it is also fair in that instance to draw to your attention and to the attention of the house that answers must also be on the point. They cannot be answers that avoid the point. When that occurs, Sir, that is when

there is significant disruption of the house by way of interjection.

I support the point of order. I urge you to take up the matter that has been raised by the honourable member for Geelong North. In doing so, I also urge you to take up the matters that I have referred to in my contribution on this matter.

**Mr Batchelor** — Likewise, I support the point of order raised by the honourable member for Geelong North. In particular, Sir, I draw your attention to sessional order 3(4) which requires all questions to be, firstly, direct; secondly, succinct; and thirdly, seeking factual information. In your deliberations you should go back to the question asked and you would find that it failed the three tests — all of which must be satisfied in order to make a question admissible.

Previously members of the opposition would take points of order and use that opportunity as a device to simply repeat the question — and that is a chronic problem that has been introduced into the house and is difficult for you, Mr Speaker, to deal with — but the new tactic signalled by the honourable member for Berwick today is to load up an extensive preamble in a question. It clearly signals a new direction that will be attempted to be repeated. It needs your attention, Sir, and you need to do that in reference to the rules. We ask for your guidance on how this can be prevented from happening in the future.

**Mr McArthur** — Let me briefly deal with two issues on the point of order, Mr Speaker. Firstly, the honourable member for Geelong North, who raised the point of order, objected on the ground that he thought the honourable member for Berwick had quoted from this morning's *Herald Sun* editorial. I can assure the honourable member that was not the case. He referred to an editorial and to what was contained in it, but certainly did not quote from it.

I will not deal with the issues covered by the honourable member for Mornington about introducing sufficient material. I simply point out to the honourable member for Geelong North that if he wants all of Speaker Edmunds' rulings enforced then perhaps he should advise his own members that according to Speaker Edmunds they are not allowed to read their speeches, either. That might cause a good deal of difficulty for some of the government backbenchers, who have to be carefully schooled in reading their questions; it would take them a good deal of time to learn them by heart.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Geelong North raised a point of order in regard to the question that was asked by the honourable member for Berwick. Subsequent speakers have used the opportunity to express their point of view in relation to both questions and answers.

I say from the chair that it is true, as the honourable member for Geelong North has said, that we are governed by precedent on this issue, particularly previous rulings. I indicate to the house that those rulings are consolidated on pages 122 and 123 of *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2000*. Other speakers on the point of order have referred to sessional orders, which are summarised at pages 2 and 3 of the sessional orders for the 54th Parliament.

It is apparent to the Chair that there are occasions when both questions and answers could be deemed not to have been succinct in nature. The Chair has tried on such occasions to point that out. It seems to me that in view of the comments that have been made those asking the questions and those answering them are not satisfied with the interpretations of the Chair. I will undertake to conduct a study of what has occurred thus far and, if necessary, make a further ruling in regard to this matter.

## APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL

### *Second reading*

#### Debate resumed.

**Mr VOGELS** (Warrnambool) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on this year's budget brought down by the Bracks Labor government. When I was first elected to state Parliament in September 1999 both sides of this house were busy negotiating support from the Independents with the formation of a government hinging on the outcome. There was a magical Independents charter, which claimed many things, among them that budgets needed to be clear and concise and comparable to previous outcomes — in other words, they needed to be understood by the average Victorian.

I refer to an article written by an economics writer for the *Age*, Kenneth Davidson, whose thoughts I have quite often heard the honourable member for Gippsland West espousing. Davidson stated in an article headed 'A budget unworthy of the name', reported on Monday 21 May, just after the budget came down, as follows:

Knowledge may be power, but the state has gone too far with its unintelligible data.

Mr Davidson went on to say that backbenchers and journalists covering state politics should be able to understand the priorities of the government of the day by reference to the budget documents, not by the spin that is spun by ministerial and press statements and background briefings.

What is in the budget for rural Victoria, and in particular for my electorate of Warrnambool? When the Bracks government won power it was left with a surplus of about \$1.7 billion. Honourable members often hear ministers spruiking about their support for a rural and regional Victoria, yet this government has committed only \$170 million over four years out of its \$1.7 billion surplus. Even if that amount were expended it would still amount to only 10 per cent of the surplus the government inherited.

All honourable members have heard ad nauseam about major project announcements in the budget, such as better train services for rural Victoria. While some are very worth while, such as standardising the rail lines to Portland, they are all years away. In fact, it will be the incumbent government of a future time that will have to carry out those works, and as history has demonstrated, all outgoing Labor governments have left the coffers bare. I cannot foresee any exception to the rule in the case of this Labor government. It has already set the high-spending money wheel in motion, once again to the detriment of Victorians, who will be left to bear the burden of its big spending due to its irresponsible leadership and irresponsible management of government affairs.

The government has provided large wage increases to public servants without understanding the consequences of its actions in rural Victoria. Let me give the house some examples. The teachers awards handed down have run more than half of all rural schools into trouble. The average pay for a teacher of approximately \$53 000 might work in the city where there is a mix of newly graduated and longer serving staff, but in rural Victoria teachers tend to stay in one place for much longer periods. There may be many reasons for that: they might prefer living in rural Victoria, there may be a lack of other job opportunities or they might marry locally. The average teacher's wage of \$53 000 is then not enough, so rural schools' budgets are severely threatened.

Page 66 of the 2001 Auditor-General's *Report on Ministerial Portfolios* states that \$28 million of transition funding for the 2001 school year had to go into these schools. And where did that money come from? It was sourced from within the Department of

Education, Employment and Training. It is education money, so now there is less for other things.

Similarly, the nurses awards are having a catastrophic effect on level D and E hospitals in rural Victoria. You cannot transfer city hospital routines into the procedures of rural hospitals. Officials from nurses unions threaten smaller hospitals with all sorts of demands they cannot meet, yet the Minister for Health says there are no problems. Honourable members will find that in the next Auditor-General's report transitional funding will be sourced from outside the health system because the money is just not there, which means other services will suffer.

The budget surplus inherited by the government will be exhausted by recurrent spending alone, which is why we are already seeing escalating taxes, charges and fines. The government just loves fines. Step one inch out of line and you will be fined. That is what socialist governments love — control.

What is needed in my electorate of Warrnambool is capital works funding — that is, one-off funding which creates jobs while the work is being done and infrastructure to create permanent jobs for many generations.

I would like to touch on the area of health and I bring to your attention Lyndoch, a wonderful aged care facility that needs some \$18 million to be spent on it by 2003 in order to meet accreditation standards. The Lyndoch board has provided the first \$6 million to kick-start the development but it desperately needs to know that the state government will come on board to ensure the project reaches completion within the necessary time frame. In this budget nothing is provided and nothing is in sight.

Warrnambool and District Base Hospital under the South Western Alliance of Rural Hospitals is a top hospital in Warrnambool. It is near the top of the tree for major capital works but once again nothing was provided in the budget.

Health services in Terang and Mortlake need a large injection of funds for a new hospital — nothing is provided in the budget; Abbeyfield aged care facility in Mortlake — nothing; Koroit and Port Fairy — nothing; the ambulance service in Timboon — nothing; an emergency helicopter service in the south-west — nothing. These are all important projects. All of them together would not add up to the \$50 million wasted on the MAS Royal Commission and amount to less than 20 per cent of the cost of the new Austin hospital project.

What is wrong with the projects I have mentioned? Is it that they are based in rural Victoria and that this city-centric government has no comprehension or understanding of rural areas? Or is it that the government is ignorant or does not give a damn!

It should also be noted that in rural Victoria each of these very worthy projects has a huge input from volunteers who give their time for the never-ending fundraising activities which are supported enormously well by rural Victorians.

The new Warrnambool courthouse promised by the previous government and costing about \$8 million was first denied by the Attorney-General but he has had to change his mind. However, the first sod is yet to be turned. Nothing has happened. We all remember the Attorney-General appointing Roy Reekie, the failed ALP candidate for Warrnambool, to a committee to look into the issue. That is nearly two years ago but nothing has happened. Again I was looking for funds or for the project to be on the way by now.

The government has shown little concern for our essential services, and Warrnambool has recently seen the closure of the regional office of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) due to a decrease in funding from the government and staff redundancies. The regional officer who was based in Warrnambool serviced 280 clients from Geelong to the South Australian border. These vulnerable, frightened people now have to rely on a service from Melbourne or Horsham, which is proving totally ineffective despite assurances from the RVIB to the contrary. It would have been great if we had seen some money for the RVIB for this essential service, but again — nothing. Life is difficult enough for people with no disabilities to traverse bureaucracy but imagine doing it when you are blind.

On the matter of education I request that the Bracks government take action to ensure that agricultural colleges in rural Victoria receive adequate funding to remain viable. Surely it is not too much to ask that at least agricultural subjects be taught in rural Victoria. Glenormiston Agricultural College in my electorate has been stripped of government support. We need to know where the higher degree courses fit in and where technical and further education colleges stand in regard to funding? What is the future of Glenormiston? Many years ago this rural campus was set up by the Honourable Ian Smith when he was the Minister for Agriculture to deliver higher education courses in rural Victoria. What a great idea! It has worked well in the past, but with no support from the government it has had to stop funding and running these courses.

The Kennett government had the vision and foresight to introduce policies with economic benefits for Victoria's future, such as achieving \$12 billion worth of food exports by 2010. In my electorate of Warrnambool the focus should be on dairying, energy, higher education, fishing, agriculture, horticulture, timber and tourism. They are our strengths.

The budget should be supporting these competitive advantages and marketing our clean, green image. They are the key to a prosperous economy in the south-west allowing the population to grow.

It is a budget of missed opportunities. Thanks to the legacy of a large surplus left by the previous government it was the Bracks government's best opportunity to think and plan for Victoria's future with opportunities to provide for the needs of rural Victorians. However, vision is obviously not one of their strengths.

Good infrastructure — in roads, rail, telecommunications and other services — is a fundamental requirement of rural Victorians. If a region has good infrastructure it will attract industry to value-add its product, creating employment and selling the message of employment prospects to young people in the region.

In conclusion, it is the role of the Bracks government to give effective support to enterprises and industry groups as well as local government and to ensure that rural Victorians benefit from state government taxes and charges. There is no doubt rural Victorians will meet the challenges ahead of them in facing the global economy — we have been doing it for years — but they deserve more from this city-centric government. There are people beyond Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

**Mr HARDMAN** (Seymour) — It is a great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation bill.

**Mr Perton** — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I thought we were moving on to another bill.

**Mr HARDMAN** — Mr Acting Speaker, may I continue?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman)** — Order! Continue, there is no point of order.

**Mr HARDMAN** — This budget is about the government delivering on promises it made and about building for the future of Victoria. Looking through the budget papers you can see where investment is happening both in the Seymour electorate and around

Victoria. It is great to see that it is spread around. I note that for you, Sir, the allocation of \$30 million for rail and urban improvements in Wodonga is a fantastic development. I am sure that the people who live in the city of Wodonga, which I know quite well because I drove through there regularly when I had family in Albury, will appreciate the brilliant effect it will have on the area.

The standardisation of the rail gauge, which I might talk about later, will have real and positive effects for Victoria. As it goes through from Heywood to the South Australian border and right up along the Hume corridor and into Wodonga, it will bring more investment opportunities to Victoria as well as creating a more efficient transport system. After 100 years, which is about how long it has taken for this decision to be made, the \$96 million invested by the government in the standardisation project will benefit not only rural and regional Victoria but the whole of the state in years to come.

Through the budget the government has made some great investments in education. I will concentrate on my own electorate, which has benefited from that investment. One of the schools to benefit is Wallan Primary School. Wallan is a fast-growing community in the south of my electorate — it is just north of Melbourne — that is also becoming a commuter town. People from Wallan generally do not work in the town because there is not a lot happening in the area. Instead they commute to and from their places of work each day. Last year the government provided some assistance for an industrial development that will eventually provide jobs in the area. I am working with the community to try to improve the facilities and attract new businesses so that the town becomes a place where people can live and work and not have to commute each day.

An allocation of \$2.5 million has been made to enable Wallan Primary School to build multipurpose facilities for music and physical education and construct technology-enhanced classrooms. Most of the new classrooms mentioned in the budget document, including those in the electorate of the honourable member for Warrnambool, are described as technology-enhanced classrooms. CAT 5 cabling will be built into those classrooms to meet the future education needs of schoolchildren.

Much to my surprise, because it is in a small town, Whittlesea Secondary College now has over 1100 students. Students come to Whittlesea from Wallan, Wandong, Kilmore and even Craigieburn. The college has received another \$1 million, which is in part to enhance its technology department, which is an

important initiative. School staff have travelled up the freeway to Wangaratta and other places to talk about the vocational education and training program at the college. This program has great support in the community. If the tenders go out quickly enough, the college will soon have new science buildings and an administration block, which was paid for in the last budget. This new project is great to see.

I recently visited Healesville Primary School. Some honourable members may recall that last year a firebug or arsonist lit a number of fires in schools and public buildings in the Healesville area. Unfortunately, part of the historic Healesville Primary School was burnt down. In the last budget the government allocated \$1.5 million to honour a promise made by the previous government to rebuild the school. In this budget, to the happiness and glee of the school community, a further \$1.4 million has been provided on top of that to replace the buildings that were burnt down. That is good investment in education in this state.

Policing has been a big issue in my electorate, especially in the southern part of the Mitchell shire. In this budget the Bracks government has honoured an election promise to provide \$4.5 million to build a 24-hour police station, which will look after the fast-growing areas of Wallan, Heathcote Junction and Wandong. At the moment the residents of those places are not getting the services they believe they are entitled to so far as the ability of police to attend break-ins goes, and so on.

On the health front, there is nothing specific in the budget for the Seymour electorate, but the government does have on record a doubling of the number of ambulance officers in Kilmore and Seymour. This has come about as a result of one of the government's earlier promises to boost ambulance services in the area. That means that when an ambulance attends an accident it will have a driver and a paramedic as well — in other words, someone to treat the injured people as well as someone to drive them to hospital. In the past the driver was also the paramedic, so he could not fill both roles. That meant that other people needing an ambulance had to wait longer than they should have. We now have two-officer crewing — and I have to say 'officer', because I know there are women ambulance officers as well as men in Kilmore and Seymour.

I know that other honourable members representing country electorates — and even the shadow minister for conservation and environment, who is at the table — would agree that when you move around country areas the local farmers and Landcare group members will talk to you about salinity and weeds. It is great to see that this budget provides an extra boost for salinity control.

Honourable members whose electorates contain national parks would also be well aware of the problems of weed infestation and weed control in national parks and the lack of people on the ground to do something about it. It is great to see that the national parks budget provides extra money to address those issues.

I contrast this government's attitude to the budget with that of the previous government. The Bracks government has appointed 2000 new teachers or staff in Victorian schools, whereas the previous government cut 8000 teachers. This government has employed about 1300 new nurses, whereas the previous government sacked or cut 2000 nurses from the system. The previous government closed hundreds of schools, now there are probably many more new schools being opened in growth areas.

I know that schools like Strathewen in my electorate that once would have been in real difficulty because their enrolments had declined to that magic number 12 — that was increased from 7 — now have a choice about whether or not to stay open. Having been a school principal, and from discussions with my regional general manager, I know that the Kennett government started to examine that situation a little more towards the end of its term. But now it is there as policy and it is not a given that a school will close once its enrolments decrease to a certain number. The angst and the uncertainty no longer exist in the community when that number is reached, because schools now get to choose whether or not they close. That is a marvellous thing.

Obviously this budget gives the health system a great boost. All honourable members would have had constituents coming into their electorate offices complaining about being unable to access services, having to wait on trolleys — if they could actually get to a trolley — and having to sit around hospital emergency departments for very long periods. The budgetary provisions in health over the past two budgets have meant that emergency departments at Seymour and Kilmore are now funded and are run by special emergency-trained staff and nurses; and after-hours services have really improved in my electorate because of the Bracks government's commitment to hospitals.

The privatisation of Victoria's health system that occurred under the previous government was a great mistake. I am really proud to be part of a government — the Bracks government — that has stopped that and decided to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in hospitals. The Austin hospital development is a major project worth hundreds of millions of dollars. I am pleased that money will be put into important

social infrastructure rather than into icons built in the middle of Melbourne for the glory of former premiers, such as Federation Square. The square seems to be a bottomless pit, and I am certainly not very happy about it because I know the \$400 million or whatever the cost has blown out to could be well spent in creating tourism attractions in my electorate and thus bringing great prosperity to the people of the area.

The funding of 660 extra beds is also an important achievement of the government since it came to office. It is obviously something it is working on; it is showing that instead of closing 1000 beds, as the previous government did, it is prepared to open 660 — a contrast with what occurred before.

The budget provides a further \$384 million for health, which will allow 30 000 more patients to be treated each year and means significantly fewer people will be on waiting lists. It also means that significantly fewer people will visit honourable members' electorate offices — even members of the opposition — hassling them and asking, 'Why can't you fix this or that'. The thing is that this government is fixing it! It is wonderful, and something I am proud to tell the people of Seymour.

This budget is for all Victorians. I also contrast it with the federal government's budget, which has neglected families, young people, regional and rural areas, public education and public health. The federal government has done —

**Mr Perton** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman)** — Order! The honourable member for Seymour, without the assistance of the honourable member for Doncaster!

**Mr HARDMAN** — The Bracks government is providing for the physical and social infrastructure of the whole state. In this budget the government is investing heavily, again in contrast to the former government, in health, education, community building and the environment. This government has invested, listened to what people have said, heard what people have wanted and needed in their communities, and it is delivering those things for the future of Victoria. These are all important things. They provide equal opportunity, or perhaps more opportunities, for all people to enjoy the benefits our society has to offer. It sets the Labor Party and the Labor government apart from the Liberal Party, the Howard federal government and the former Victorian government.

The transport budget in this Bracks government budget — I suppose we could call it the Brumby budget — is iconic and symbolic of what Labor

believes is right for the future of our state, and even our country, in regard to the money spent on transport. I know the honourable member for Ripon gloats when he hears this because the rail line to Ararat has been or will be reopened. It is not expensive. On a rough estimate — I cannot remember the exact figure — the four new lines altogether will amount to some \$37.6 million. The communities in those areas will benefit greatly from that new investment. That is wonderful. The former Kennett government closed lines and privatised rail services. I am sure honourable members opposite are regretting the day those services were privatised.

I conclude my remarks by again congratulating John Brumby on the new budget. I also congratulate the expenditure review committee and the whole government team on delivering for Victoria a budget that will set it up for a great future.

**Mr DIXON** (Dromana) — In my unbiased view there is not much in this budget for the electorate of Dromana. I thought that might be my view, so I talked to my constituents about this as well. Many community groups, interest groups and individuals have approached me about the budget asking, ‘What is wrong with the peninsula? Why aren’t we getting anything? We certainly make our presence felt’. That thought has been very much reflected in local newspapers as well, not only in individual articles written by journalists but also in editorials. They are very disappointed that when you look across the raft of departments and ministries there is just nothing there for Dromana.

The biggest concern for the Mornington Peninsula is public transport. The specific problem is the fact that it is not part of the Met zone. There are areas of Melbourne that are further away from Melbourne where the need is less but which are part of the Met zone. The cost to get from the Mornington Peninsula into the city is almost double what it would be for people in equivalent areas around Melbourne. You have to pay a fare to get to Frankston and then you have to pay another fare to get into the Met.

That makes it economically impossible to commute past Frankston for work purposes, medical assistance or training and further education. It really is a major block. My electorate has the highest percentage of low-income people of all the 88 electorates in this place. They do not have much disposable income, yet they have to rely on this high-priced public transport.

The buses are few and far between, with an average of about 1¼ hours between services. It is not an effective

means of transport for the many people who cannot afford to buy cars. In a lot of cases, because the electorate has the oldest age profile of any in the state, many of them do not drive — and often, although the husband drove his widowed partner does not. All those people are constrained by the lack of services. Young people — being the father of teenage children I know about these things — often want to travel out of the area. However, after-hours and weekend buses are few and far between or sometimes non-existent.

A solution to the problem was being developed before the last election, and it has the total support of the community, the bus services, the local council and me. The solution is to include the Mornington Peninsula in the Met zone, which would halve the average cost of the fares and vastly increase the frequency of bus services. It would not be a high recurrent cost — about \$700 000 a year — and it would benefit a lot of people.

The proposal has been put before the minister on a number of occasions, and I have met with staff from his office to discuss it. I was hoping for an announcement in the budget, but it has not happened. The honourable member for Coburg, who is the minister’s parliamentary secretary, has indicated that the government is looking at a model one-off fare. Although it would not be part of the Met structure, anyone travelling through Frankston would be able to access Met services having paid one fare rather than a double fare as they do now. I am disappointed that there has been no announcement about that, because it is the biggest single issue on the Mornington Peninsula.

It is interesting to note that although the budget allocates over \$200 million for new bus routes and stops throughout Melbourne, not 1 cent has been allocated for public transport in one of the fastest growing areas of Melbourne, which is also an area of greatest need.

Geography counts against the Mornington Peninsula. Because it is a peninsula you can go in only one direction to access services. All those factors work against the provision of and improved access to better transport services, which the population needs. At the same time, a few people in my electorate have commented to me, and I agree with them, that it is outrageous that the government is subsidising unprofitable, high-recurrent-cost rail lines in the Independent electorates of West Gippsland, East Gippsland and Mildura. The costs will be incredible, and that applies not only to the up-front capital cost but to the recurrent costs, year after year. I am not asking for capital costs but for \$700 000 in recurrent funding to meet the needs of the general population and the

tourism industry on the peninsula. However, absolutely nothing is happening!

I refer to the Lotus Lodge Hostel, which is a wonderful and much-needed facility on the peninsula. The previous government had planned to upgrade, refurbish and extend the facility as a condition of its sale. The proceeds from its sale were to go to the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre for an upgrade, including putting in a \$1 million hydrotherapy pool. With the change of government all that was put on hold. Absolutely nothing has happened to Lotus Lodge Hostel and, therefore, to the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre.

The minister has promised that a decision has been made not to sell anything and that money will be allocated and the centre will be operated by the state. The government has presented two budgets since it came to office, but not 1 cent has been allocated. Mine has the oldest population profile of any electorate in the state, but neither the main hostel nor the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre has been allocated any funds.

Parks Victoria has done a great job on the peninsula. Finally the \$2 million that the previous government allocated for the Rosebud foreshore has been spent — and well spent! However, the national parks and foreshores along the Mornington Peninsula still have some real needs.

Our young people, especially in the Rosebud area, are in need of facilities. A skate park is needed, because at the moment elderly citizens and other pedestrians are being knocked over by young people on skateboards and rollerblades. The Rosebud foreshore is a great community reserve. There are areas of natural bushland as well as areas for day facilities, playgrounds and barbecues. There is a great need for a skate park, which would not be expensive given the high level of use it would get.

Building a skate park would send a message to young people that they are a valued part of the community. The community is not just about retired people and holiday-makers, it is also about the young people who live there. There is not a lot there for them to do, so to find any real entertainment they have to travel out of the area — and that gets back to my comments about public transport. They cannot afford to travel out of the area, and even if they could, the access they need to public transport is just not there.

A contribution towards a skate park from Parks Victoria, which manages the Rosebud foreshore, would not be a huge ask. It would cost about \$80 000, which would be money well spent. Members of the

community are not expecting it to be just delivered. They are happy to put in the work to help design and build it and to do the landscaping. All sections of the community, including small businesses and young people, want to be part of the project. It would be an absolute winner for everyone.

The previous government spent \$2 million on the Rosebud foreshore, but that has only scraped the surface. A lot more needs to be done to upgrade the facilities and restore many of the environmental values. At the moment funds are being applied by Parks Victoria to a trailer park and boat launching facility at Rosebud.

You would think an area like Rosebud, which is renowned for its camping facilities, foreshore and beach, would have a boating facility. This government insists that any money that is spent on public land has to be spent by the government — no private moneys can be used. I know some people are more than happy to pay for the building of that boating facility and to lease the area of land from the government. The government does not want them to do that; it wants to pay for it, so we have to wait longer for it. It is a real need, and Parks Victoria is applying for the money for it. It conducted a plan to establish whether it is feasible, and it is. Funding for the facility would provide a great recreational and boating centre, not only for the Mornington Peninsula but for the whole of Port Phillip Bay.

The final point I make about the Parks Victoria budget concerns Flinders. I have had numerous calls over about the past two or three years for an upgrade of the Flinders Pier and a new breakwater. A breakwater there that sheltered a large number of the fishing vessels, both commercial and recreational, had to be demolished because of its dangerous state — boards were breaking loose and damaging boats — and now a whole fleet of boats are exposed to the open weather.

The pier is also now starting to deteriorate. The load limits on the cranes and on the use of the pier have been restricted further as the pier deteriorates, and it needs not a lot of money but certainly some solid work to enhance it and bring it up to the condition it was in before, and to provide some sort of breakwater. The people of Flinders have been very patient despite asking for it for a number of years, and it is their turn. Much great work has been done on piers and other structures around Port Phillip Bay on the Western Port Bay side, particularly along the southern peninsula.

My final point is about something I look forward to — I hope some funding will come through this budget for

the provision of gas at Balnarring. The honourable member for Bellarine has been a great advocate for the Bellarine area and getting gas down there. I sit next to him in the chamber, and I have heard him ask on many occasions, 'Where is my gas?'. He has now got his gas, because the government subsidised the pipeline to the Bellarine Peninsula to make it a viable proposition. Balnarring, which is a growing centre in my electorate, is a similar community to the Bellarine community, and gas is not far away — in Bittern.

The need for a gas pipeline to be extended to Balnarring is growing. A couple of years ago a feasibility study was undertaken and it was said there were not enough people in Balnarring and that the government could not afford to lay the pipeline and recoup the costs. However, following the precedent set at Bellarine it is important that a similar amount of money now be invested to extend the pipeline to Balnarring. Following on from the newly installed sewerage system, a gas pipeline would allow families moving into new homes being built in the area to connect gas.

That is my wish list. I do not think it is outrageous. They are things that will benefit the community. Even communities outside the peninsula will benefit because it is a recreational area for the whole of Melbourne and the rest of Victoria. My calls are not extravagant. Given that my area got nothing from the budget it is worth while my asking for just something.

**Ms ALLEN** (Benalla) — It is an absolute pleasure to support the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. I must say it is a beautiful set of figures. There is no doubt John Brumby must be the best Treasurer Victoria has seen since the last Treasurer we had in 2000.

The budget is again proof that the Bracks government is growing the whole of Victoria. It is turning the state of Victoria around, especially country Victoria. What Kennett disgracefully referred to as the toenails of Victoria has now had life put back into it. Rural people must never forget that is what he called them. I remind everyone that not one Liberal Party or National Party country member of Parliament spoke out against his condescending, despicable comments. I say to the people of rural Victoria, never forget!

The Bracks government has got the blood pumping back into rural Victoria. Rural communities everywhere, particularly in my electorate, are prospering from an unprecedented injections of funds. During the seven long, dark years of the Kennett government the previous member for Benalla was known in the electorate as the invisible man. He was

never seen there because he was always in Melbourne and did not care about the people or the electorate. He served 18 years as the member for Benalla, and during his last seven years there was an absolutely disgraceful downturn in the amount of funds spent in the Benalla electorate. He was too wrapped up in the trappings of power and the limousines that went with being part of the previous government.

**Mr Delahunty** — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the honourable member for Benalla is misleading the Parliament. Her remarks are totally untrue. Many dollars were spent in the Benalla electorate, and I could rattle off many of the initiatives undertaken there. I call on her to not mislead the Parliament.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Plowman)** — Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms ALLEN** — The honourable member for Wimmera claims that much money was spent there, but the fact that the constituents voted Pat McNamara out of office and put me in as their member of Parliament proves how disgracefully he performed when he was the member for Benalla during the seven years of the Kennett government.

That has all changed. The people of Benalla now have a member of Parliament who cares, not only about the issues of education, health and industry but also about the people as individuals. I will give a few examples of the neglect that occurred under the Kennett government and what has happened over the past 12 months since I have been the member for Benalla. The budget released in May is cause to reflect on the past 12 months and how well the Benalla electorate has done since the Bracks government has been in power.

The Bright ambulance station is a perfect example of something the previous member for Benalla and previous government badly neglected. People had been screaming out for years for a new ambulance service in Bright but their pleas fell on deaf ears. The previous government and the Liberal candidate in the Benalla by-election went around rabbiting on that they promised Bright an ambulance station but it was never forthcoming. It was not forthcoming because their promises were hollow. No money was allocated for an ambulance service in Bright until the Bracks government came to power. Bright now has a fabulous ambulance service, with three ambulance officers servicing the busy and beautiful tourist area comprising Bright, Wandiligong, Porepunkah and all the other small towns in the north-east part of my electorate.

Kirwins Bridge at Nagambie is another example of neglect by the previous member for Benalla and the previous government. It is a story in itself. It is a beautiful historic bridge that links the winery area to the highway at Nagambie and it had been falling down for years right under the previous member's nose, right in his backyard, because Nagambie is his home town. The former member did absolutely nothing except build himself a rowing course. All honourable members know that local bridges and roads are federally funded, but as per usual there were no funds coming from the federal government because it has not been supplying Victoria with its fair share of the petrol excise for a number of years.

A couple of months ago under its wonderful Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, the state government provided \$200 000 to top up the funding so the people who use Kirwins Bridge could get the beautiful historic bridge fixed. I have just had a meeting with the mayor of Strathbogie shire. He tells me that the shire has come up with equal funding. It will be tendering that project very shortly and it will go ahead. That is all thanks to the Bracks Labor government. The Bracks government has been topping up funding all around country Victoria, funding that the federal government refused to hand over to Victoria.

There are eight new probationary police constables on the ground in Benalla, which is fantastic. The people of Benalla feel a lot safer. Crime is down. The police are riding around Benalla on bikes. They are talking to the people of Benalla in the main street and the back streets of the town and forming relationships with them, so there is a positive attitude not only towards the police but also towards the breaking down of crime in the town. A number of drug-related crimes have been committed there over the years, but that is being dramatically reduced with this influx of eight new probationary constables.

The Benalla electorate was fortunate enough to secure two new police stations in this budget. One of them is at Lake Eildon. I have to call my electorate the tourist electorate, because I have some of the most stunning tourist attractions in Victoria.

**Mr Pandazopoulos** interjected.

**Ms ALLEN** — We will enjoy Mount Buller on the weekend. This \$545 000 injection into a new police station in Eildon will provide a home for the water police in summer. The current police station is an old State Electricity Commission house, which was constructed when the SEC was building the old weir. It is small, cramped and totally impractical for a police

station. The electorate has been fortunate enough to secure \$545 000 for a new police station at Eildon and \$250 000 for a new police station at Violet Town. Any honourable member who has been to Violet Town and seen the current police station would know that it is a shoe box.

The police have operated out of a tiny shoe box for a number of years, and the previous government and the former member for Benalla did nothing about it. When one drives into Violet Town one would not think it had a police station because it is about three streets off the main street and is a tiny shoe box that no-one would identify as a police station. How the local sergeants have worked out of that police station over the years is beyond my comprehension, because it is so totally impractical.

**Mr Lim** interjected.

**Ms ALLEN** — Of course they do, that is why they sacked them all. As I go around my electorate there is a collective sigh of relief because they now have a member of Parliament and a government that care about and believe in rural Victoria. The rail lines closed by the Kennett government have been opened up, encouraging greater, faster and safer transportation of produce and goods to Melbourne and city supermarkets. The honourable member for Mornington claimed in his speech that virtually no-one on the government benches had invested a dollar in business. We have all seen what Liberal mates do when they invest a dollar in business — they pay themselves millions of dollars, their businesses go broke and the workers do not even get that one dollar to reinvest in food, utilities, et cetera. Of course the workers would get their entitlements if they worked for John Howard's brother.

I had a fabulous little business in Alexandra, which I sold about five years ago. That business has thrived over the past few years, but when I was talking to the new owner only last week she said she is closing it because of the GST — another federal government disaster! And to think that the Liberal members in this house actually supported it!

Workers across Victoria are delighted with the Bracks government. It has put 2000 teachers back into the system after 9000 were sacked by the previous government, which was an absolute disgrace. There has been an increase in wages for teachers. The government has put over \$1 billion back into education. There are smaller class sizes and improved literacy. The government announced last week that it is putting \$2 million into a convention centre at the Goulburn

Ovens TAFE college in Benalla. It is one of the best TAFE colleges around the state; so good that it is attracting students from right across the state. This injection of \$2 million into a convention centre in Benalla will go a long way to further improving the college's services and providing a facility where people from right across the electorate can hold functions and conventions. It is something this electorate has been starved of for many years.

Roads and bridges are being repaired. I again refer to Kirwins Bridge, which will finally be fixed after many years. In addition, the government has allocated \$1 million to the soon-to-be-opened Tolmie to Whitfield road, which will open up the tourist drive from Jamieson to the King Valley.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Pursuant to the resolution of the house of 5 June the time has arrived for me to interrupt business and put the required questions to complete the items on the government business program.

### STATE TAXATION ACTS (TAXATION REFORM IMPLEMENTATION) BILL

*Second reading*

Debate resumed from 5 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages*

Passed remaining stages.

### DUTIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Second reading*

Debate resumed from 5 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages*

Passed remaining stages.

### VICTORIAN MANAGED INSURANCE AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Second reading*

Debate resumed from 6 June; motion of Ms KOSKY (Minister for Finance).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages*

Passed remaining stages.

### TRANSFER OF LAND (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Second reading*

Debate resumed from 6 June; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages*

Passed remaining stages.

### LAND SURVEYING BILL

*Second reading*

Debate resumed from 6 June; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

*Remaining stages*

Passed remaining stages.

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! It is my pleasure to welcome to our gallery Mr Jim Ziglar, the Sarjeant-at-Arms in the United States Senate, and Mr David Lyon, the American Consul-General. They are visiting the chamber to watch the guillotine procedure that just occurred. Welcome.

**APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

**Ms ALLEN** (Benalla) — I invite the wonderful Americans in our gallery to visit the beautiful electorate of Benalla because it has so many tourist attractions for them to look at. The wonderful minister for tourism is sitting at the table.

I will pick up from where I left off. At a cost of nearly \$1 million the Tolmie–Whitfield Road has been upgraded and is due to be opened. It will open up the tourist drive from Jamieson to King Valley. There are many beautiful boutique wineries popping up there and the small communities along that way are prospering.

After the seven long, dark years of the Kennett government closing schools — 167, to be precise — education is now the highest priority in this state, not the lowest, as it was under the previous government. The health system has had an injection of more than \$2 billion to repair the damage done to it during those seven dark years. Under the Kennett government 2000 nurses were sacked. The government has provided more nursing places, scholarships and senior positions and an increase in nurses wages. Country Victoria is to share in that good fortune.

I refer back to the education system. Bright P–12 College has received an injection of \$1.26 million for a master plan. It has been crying out for that money for years. Of course, the previous local member totally ignored it. The number of students at the college will increase because of the quality of education and dedicated teachers there.

The Dunlop campus of Benalla College will receive an injection of more than \$300 000. That campus was falling down and had been deliberately neglected and allowed to rot away because the Kennett government wanted the site sold. The injection of those funds into the Dunlop campus has built it back up again. There are no more holes in the walls or in the floor. It is a beautiful campus and is due to be reopened.

Alexandra Secondary College has been allocated \$900 000 for a new science and technology wing. I attended Alexandra Secondary College, and it is a fantastic school.

Over 20 months \$2.2 billion will be injected into education. Country schools in my electorate will share in that funding, and what a joy it is to see the teachers and the students happy about education for the first

time since the Kennett government was sacked by the people of Victoria.

I refer to industry. A piggery and a mushroom farm will be developed at Euroa, increasing employment as they grow.

The responses to the budget from members of the Liberal and National parties show just how out of touch they are. As the honourable member for Essendon said, they must live in another state. I will go further: I think they live on another planet or in la-la land. With no leadership, unity or policies, what does one expect?

The Nationals are totally irrelevant. They say they have parted company with the Libs but we all know they will go back because without each other they will never be in power. They are still as firmly attached as they were during the seven long, dark years of the Kennett government because they salivate over the power and the limousines they enjoyed.

We still have much to do to repair the damage done under the previous government. This budget is absolute proof that the Bracks government governs for all Victoria. We are putting the heart and soul back into rural Victoria because we believe in country people, rural industry and the beautiful towns that provide Victoria with fabulous tourism destinations.

The Benalla electorate is prospering under the Bracks government. Everywhere I go in my electorate people tell me they have never seen so much money spent in the electorate.

**Mr Wynne** — Tell us about the beautiful art gallery.

**Ms ALLEN** — The beautiful art gallery, of course: earlier this year it received another injection of funds of \$67 000.

**Mr Perton** interjected.

**Ms ALLEN** — Obviously the honourable member for Doncaster has not been there. It shows you know nothing about country Victoria. I invite you to come to Benalla and visit the art gallery.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member should address her remarks through the Chair.

**Ms ALLEN** — As I said, everywhere I go in my electorate people tell me that they have never seen so much money spent in the electorate. That is because I believe in the people and the Bracks government believes in the people — and this budget proves it.

**Mr PERTON** (Doncaster) — The honourable member for Benalla must be looking at the state of Victoria through rose-coloured glasses. In the immediate vicinity of her electorate in the Rural City of Wangaratta the Solectron company has recently announced its closure. The closure has meant the loss of some 220 jobs, which represents 220 incomes for families in that area. In not noting that closure as a direct result of the failures of the Bracks government's information technology policy, the honourable member, as a member representing regional Victoria, has not paid attention to the need for the modernisation of the Australian economy, and particularly to the failure of the Bracks government to seize the opportunities for Victoria.

Doncaster is an electorate made up of a diverse and interesting set of ethnicities and people from an amazingly different set of businesses and occupations. In terms of new initiatives or announcements in the budget, the Doncaster electorate has received nothing. My electorate looks to what benefits the whole of the state. The Bracks budget is not a budget that assists the people of Victoria, it is not a budget that assists the people of Doncaster, and it is not a budget that manages to do anything at all to enhance the future of this state.

As honourable members are well aware, when we talk about the future of the state we talk about young people and their concerns, aspirations and ambitions. It should be the role of government to provide inspiration and leadership to the young people of Victoria. That has been sadly lacking from this government. In addition to their concerns about gaining a sound occupation in a profession in which they can excel and meet their ambitions, young people are also extremely altruistic and ambitious for their community.

One of the areas of greatest concern is the environment, and not just the environment in their immediate neighbourhood but of the whole state. They want clean air, they want clean water, and they want Victoria to play its part in meeting the great national challenges facing the environment in salinity and forest management. They also expect us to play our part in international environmental responsibilities such as greenhouse and oceans policy.

From the propaganda emanating from the government one could believe that the budget contained something for the environment. Sadly, there is very little. Most of the matters portrayed as being initiatives are merely the shuffling of funding and announcements made about recurrent expenditure.

**Mr Pandazopoulos** interjected.

**Mr PERTON** — The Minister for Major Projects and Tourism has interjected across the table asking, 'What about marine parks?'. It is a good question and one being asked by coastal communities across the state. It is claimed that the package is \$39 million, but what is delicately avoided is that it is \$39 million over four years. Part of that \$39 million is to build up the policing activities so badly neglected by the government.

Wherever I have travelled along the coast people have complained about the lack of fisheries inspectors. I have heard complaints that fisheries inspectors are being transferred away from the coast to inland regional centres, which shows a strange set of priorities when one is purporting to set up marine parks. I will not enter the marine parks debate in this speech, because that bill is scheduled for debate on Tuesday. However, no money is available in this budget for compensation to those who will be detrimentally affected by the parks. Marine parks will be good for Victoria and the preservation of stocks. On the other hand, in creating this public good some people will lose. It is a principle now well recognised by the United Nations development agency and the United Nations environmental program that where individuals suffer for a public good they ought to be compensated.

**Mr Pandazopoulos** interjected.

**Mr PERTON** — The minister is again interjecting across the table, but if his house were taken for a road-widening scheme he would be paid not just the market value but a 20 per cent solatium.

**Mr Pandazopoulos** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies)** — Order! The Minister for Major Projects and Tourism will have his chance.

**Mr PERTON** — If any of his constituents had their businesses taken away or acquired by the government for a public good they would receive full market value plus 20 per cent. The minister expects that for himself and for his electorate. However, people who live in your electorate, Madam Acting Speaker, and people who are fishermen — in many cases with intergenerational businesses — are denied compensation altogether. The exercise is dishonest. When one examines the environmental budget one finds that the \$39 million for marine parks is taken from other programs for the management of marine parks and biodiversity programs.

**Mr McArthur** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies)** — Order! The honourable member for Monbulk is disturbing the debate.

**Mr PERTON** — The creation of marine national parks means a reduction in funding to other national parks and biodiversity programs. One need look only at the statistics at work in the budget documents to find an utterly misleading figure for the use of woodchips. It is said that 1.6 million tonnes will be allocated from state forests, and then there is a term inserted that no annual figures are available for the two preceding years. When one returns to previous budget documents one finds statistics of less than 1 million tonnes. It appears that the government is engaging in a major increase in woodchipping from state forests but is trying to hide the figures in its budget documents. When the people of the Otways region environmental network undertake a close analysis of that budget document, when the people in the Wombat State Forest in the electorate of Gisborne — soon to be in the electorate of Macedon — look at the figures, they will know to blame the Minister for Environment and Conservation. She made promises to those communities before the election but has since betrayed them at every opportunity to demonstrate her goodwill.

It does not matter whether it is the Cobboboonee Forest, with the destruction of habitat and Aboriginal-heritage trees, in the Otways, where the minister broke an agreement with the activists, or in the Wombat Forest, where the powerful owl is at threat. Not only has the minister failed to comply with her own Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, but she lied about what she has been doing and ordered the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to publish propaganda in all newspapers in the region providing misleading information about the protection of that endangered species and the use of those forests.

The waste in her budget is not in that area alone. The Otways region environmental network has pointed out that the documents published by the government on the hydrological study in the Geelong area are misleading and a huge waste of public expenditure to prop up this minister and her inappropriate management of her department.

In the interests of all honourable members making a contribution today I will cut short the contribution I would otherwise make. I turn now to my other areas of responsibility, which are information technology and multimedia. In these areas the government has shown itself to be completely out of touch with the needs of a modern Victoria. The honourable member for Clayton is giggling in the chamber, as is his wont. He does not

make much of a serious contribution to the Parliament but has lots of giggles between branch stacks!

The first point I should make is that Victoria has become the only state in Australia that does not have a minister for information technology or multimedia. It has an office of multimedia, which was established under the Kennett government, but it has not had a director for more than six months. That department should have had an information technology advisory committee established in November 1999 — and the minister promised that a chairman would be appointed some two weeks after he made his speech at the beginning of 1999. That committee has been appointed only this month! An innovation centre was to be built in Collins Street and opened at the beginning of the year, yet the fit-out has not even started. In the area of new technologies this is a government that is not just falling behind the rest of the country and the world but is falling behind in its own project management and scheduling.

The government is big on spending on the technology of the last century and the century before. You, Madam Acting Speaker, would know the figures that are being outlaid on roads. Some \$470 million has been allocated to fast rail links between Melbourne and four regional destinations. Compare that figure to a mere \$3 million allocated to regional telecommunications infrastructure programs. Country people, who need the Internet and high-speed communications much more than city people, are being absolutely abandoned by the government. The budget allocates \$30 million to complete the electronic version of the land titles register, but only \$3 million to the needs of a million Victorians living outside Melbourne and their need for telecommunications.

Another indication of the government's lack of consciousness of new media and multimedia is the allocation of \$32 million for investments in film and television, because the Minister for the Arts, who is known as Queen Mary, wants to be able to give funds to her mates in the film and television industry and has completely cut dead young artists and producers in the new media. Interestingly, the minister is theoretically responsible for allocations to the arts in those new media, but not one mention is made in the budget speech or documents about support in that area. If we want young people to stay and have a future in Victoria we need to be able to offer them those opportunities. However, there will be opportunities for me to raise these matters in other forums and other speeches.

This is a budget that has missed the point. New technology and the environment are crucially important

to the future of the state of Victoria. Gaining prosperity through the use of new technology and being a world leader in new environmental technologies are what young people are looking for from a Victorian government. It is what the people of my electorate are looking for.

One of the most important components missing from this budget document is a sense of vision. Two other important components that are missing are a commitment to the environment and the application of new technology — and the budget is sorely lacking in both cases. I believe Victoria will only again become a leader in new technology and environmental technologies when there is again a Liberal Party government sitting on the Treasury benches.

**Mr LIM** (Clayton) — I start my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill by saying that it is a fantastic budget. I say that not because honourable members on this side of the house have been singing the praises of the architecture and content of the budget itself, but because of the mediocre contribution from honourable members on the other side of the house. The budget must have stunted them and put them in their proper places. The miserable contribution from their lead speaker, the shadow Treasurer, is a classic case of what the opposition is all about.

Having said that, let me quote from articles that appeared in daily newspapers when the budget was released. The editorial in the *Australian* of 16 May is headed 'High marks for Brumby's budget'. I am tempted to read all of this extensive article, but I will remain selective and quote just some of it:

The Victorian budget's apparent generosity should not be interpreted as a slackening of discipline. Out of sight, but not out of Treasurer John Brumby's mind.

That reflects the fact that it is a financially responsible budget. Later honourable members will see from my contribution that this is also a progressive and socially responsible budget. The editorial also states:

Mr Brumby's first budget — last year's budget was the work of Mr Bracks — is a concrete expression of their joint vision for Victoria.

I repeat, 'vision for Victoria'. The editorial continues:

That is, the creation of a better balance between Melbourne and the bush. Jeff Kennett's government was city-centric and gave Melbourne a new prosperity to go with its classy urban refurbishment. But the former Premier lost large slabs of the bush with passenger rail closures and other curtailed regional services.

Honourable members have seen the consequence of the action of the former coalition government. The editorial goes on to say:

Mr Brumby has been able to find money for social infrastructure without compromising the surplus ... Moreover, extra money for health and hospitals is evidence of the Bracks government's priorities. Overcrowding and strained hospital services seriously damaged the Kennett government's social policy credentials.

Now comes the bit I like best:

The previously announced \$774 million in business tax cuts, spread over four years, is designed to make Victoria more attractive to investors.

Why indulge in discussion of the broader significance of the budget rather than concentrating on what it offers in a particular electorate? We tend to forget or take for granted how miserable the seven years of the former Kennett government were for Victoria, so it is worth reminding each other as Victorians, and especially as members of Parliament, of the significance of this budget and how it affects the state as a whole.

I now quote from the *Herald Sun* — bearing in mind that the *Herald Sun* has never been a Labor mate, and has always taken every opportunity possible to cut Labor down to size. The *Herald Sun* of 16 May carried an editorial which included the following words:

... Mr Brumby's commitment to spend \$2.13 billion over the next four years on Victoria's biggest ever investment in public infrastructure targets areas which most Victorians would heartily endorse.

Beneficiaries are health, education, transport and other key areas which languished under the draconian economies —

That is, the draconian economies of the former Kennett government —

... Business tax will fall by \$774 million over the next four years. Victorians are benefiting at long last ...

The key phrase here is, 'Victorians are benefiting at long last'.

How are Victorians benefiting from the budget? I refer to one area that is particularly close to my heart, the area of health. Health got the biggest chunk of the budget. Under another headline, 'Cash injection will aid 30 000 patients', the *Herald Sun* reported on the same day that:

A record \$1.6 billion earmarked to improve Victoria's health system will upgrade hospitals and free up beds.

An extra 30 000 patients each year will benefit from the cash injection, with about 300 new beds to open.

I take a particular interest in this area of the budget because Clayton is the home of the best hospital in Australia, if not in the world, the Monash Medical Centre. That hospital caters for something like 50 000 patients in a year. That is a significant number of patients. We should never forget that it was built by a Labor government and is the finest hospital in Victoria and a top medical teaching institution. It will benefit substantially from the injection of funds in the budget resulting from the actions of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health.

I will now refer briefly to some of the benefits coming to the hospital system in the budget, and I will again use the *Herald Sun* as my source. The article states that the government will spend:

More than \$96 million for more nurses.

About \$9.5 million to upgrade the state's road and air ambulance fleets.

About \$11 million in mental health programs and resources.

It goes on to state:

Mr Thwaites also announced \$1.2 million a year for four years to provide free needles to diabetics, but said it depended on support from the federal government.

That is a significant issue. The government had received many complaints from sufferers of diabetes, who claimed that while the government was going out of its way to look after drug addicts by supplying them with clean needles, it seemed to be neglecting equally needy diabetics. The new supply of needles for diabetics is a fantastic response by the Bracks government.

The article continues:

In capital works, totalling \$500 million over six years, the state government has committed to:

Almost \$30 million for expansions to Maroondah, Angliss, Ararat, Stawell and Kyneton hospitals.

The list goes on and on. I mentioned those examples again in this debate because they are so significant.

Another area I am particularly keen to mention again, but in a different way from other honourable members, is education. When the Labor Party was in opposition I raised in this chamber from time to time my concern about the slash-and-burn policies of the former Kennett government in the education area.

I have seen first hand the effects of cuts to student welfare and careers teachers. Coming from a refugee community background myself I have seen members of

various refugee communities suffer tremendously. Young kids entering the Victorian education system suddenly lacked the support of ESL — English as a second language — teachers, remedial teachers, support teachers, welfare and careers teachers, and related support services within the schools. They had nothing to go on, so the lure or attraction of the drug subculture in the local area became at times overpowering for them. Members of communities that had come here from a background of horrendous experiences had never had to deal with drugs before in their lives.

The injection of funds into this area of education by the Bracks government speaks volumes about its care and concern, and that is what the Bracks government is all about: it seeks to look after the people who cannot properly look after themselves. The system will receive \$43 million annually to enhance the delivery of specialist support through the provision of student support officers; \$25 million to employ 200 student welfare coordinators in secondary schools; and \$13.1 million for each school year from 2002 onwards.

There will be an additional \$22 million for students with disabilities and impairments; \$4.6 million each school year to fund alternative programs to support students who have difficulty adjusting to mainstream schooling — that is significant; \$1.02 million annually for the School Focused Youth Service; and an additional \$10 million annually for students with special learning needs. The list goes on.

In view of the time restriction and to allow time for the long list of speakers behind me to contribute I will touch quickly on the other area close to my heart, and that is ethnic and multicultural affairs. Honourable members should never forget what happened during the dark years under Jeff Kennett. The first thing the Kennett government did when it came to power in 1992 was to completely gut the then Ethnic Affairs Commission. At the time Labor lost government funding was at its peak of \$750 000 in small community grants. What did the Kennett government do? For the first year it did nothing and increased funding by a miserable \$200 000 each year up to 1996, when it lost government. In this chamber I reminded the government time and again to compare itself to New South Wales and other governments around Australia. I said that the then government members should hang their heads in shame, because at the same time they were going around with a patronising attitude, saying how much they cared about ethnic affairs and multiculturalism.

Look at what the Bracks government is doing. In the first year alone the commission went back to the budget

it had before Labor lost power of \$750 000 — straightaway!

**Mrs Shardey** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies)** — Order! The honourable member for Caulfield.

**Mr LIM** — What have we got this year? The government has increased funding to \$1 million. On top of that, a minor capital works program of \$130 000 in 2000–01 has been established, with a further \$250 000 per annum, as well as an ethnic youth web site program to encourage ethnic youth who have not been able to establish a site on their own. Other initiatives are the allocation of additional resources to enhance the capacity of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs to review the development of policies, and an increase in funding to the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, the peak body of the ethnic community, from \$60 000 to \$140 000 to allow it to play its proper role in the community. I could go on. It is an understatement to say this is a fantastic budget on the part of the government. I congratulate the Treasurer on such a fantastic budget, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** (Wimmera) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the appropriation bill on behalf of the Wimmera electorate. I am following the honourable member for Clayton. The parliamentary handbook states that he was elected to the Parliament in 1996, so he was not here in 1993 when the previous government landed here.

In its budget papers the government shows it has no shame at all at having been so negative even though it has been in government for only two years. It has no shame in the fact that the previous government arrived in this place in 1993 with a recurrent deficit of \$2 billion per annum and a debt of \$32 billion. It did not have any money. Every bit of money it had to spend was borrowed money.

This budget is again a big-spending and high-taxing budget and continues the old Labor tradition. The government will end up having to go back to printing money. According to some reports the budget will be in deficit next year. I highlight that by reading from an editorial of the *Australian Financial Review* under the heading 'Bracks budget disappointing'. It states:

The Bracks government's second budget is a disappointing document. The Victorian general government sector is about to be pushed back into cash deficit, and that deficit is projected to rise to almost \$300 million in 2002–03.

Already the major commentators are concerned. The concern expressed in the article is also reflected by the

people in my area, where the budget is a major concern. Those people do not believe the approach taken by the government will improve competitiveness for the Wimmera or Victoria. Today we compete against not only other states but also the rest of the world. As honourable members see here, we are very much a multicultural society, and importantly, we are exporting a lot of our produce. In order for us to be able to spend money in Victoria, Australia needs to be a good exporting country.

I have heard a lot in the debate about country Victoria. I remind the house that the previous government was not in a good financial position when it came to power. I would like to highlight that under those difficult financial conditions the Wimmera received well over \$100 million for many projects, including \$27 million for health facilities; \$24 million to bring natural gas to the region; \$26 million to upgrade water and waste water facilities — I will come back to that; millions of dollars to upgrade schools in Horsham and Stawell; and — I note the presence of the Minister for Transport in the chamber — money on roads.

Things were happening in the Wimmera and they are still happening but the budget raises some concerns. It is a mixed bag for rural Victoria. Some positive projects have come to the Wimmera through my representations to the government. I am pleased to see the spending on the standardisation of rail in western Victoria. Honourable members may remember that the Keating government standardised the rail line from Adelaide through to Melbourne, disenfranchising three spur lines in the process. Under difficult financial conditions the previous government found \$22 million to standardise these spur lines. I want to make sure the standardisation happens as quickly as possible — I heard the honourable member for Mildura speak about this — to ensure the links are there to service the mineral sands industry.

I also see reference to fast trains in the papers. I hope not only that the fast trains get going but also that we have a fast implementation time. One thing that has been overlooked is that bus services now go right across the state. The rail lines do not and I am very concerned about that and will be keeping the government up to the task of making sure bus services are provided across the state to places such as Bendigo.

Obviously, health and aged care is a major concern for any community. I am delighted to see in the budget a \$3.9 million allocation to the Rainbow Hospital and aged care facilities. The people up there are over the moon about that.

**Mr Mulder** — A hard-working local member!

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — I thank the honourable member for Polwarth.

The people of the Wimmera are entitled to top-quality health services in their community. I have spoken to and written to the minister in relation to the fact that the previous government allocated \$3.2 million for aged care facilities at Warracknabeal, particularly to the Landt Nursing Home. About a year ago, when the home amalgamated with those at Beulah and Hopetoun, it was thought there was a more urgent need to move the money north, and that was done. Those involved were led to believe that this money would be back-filled in this budget. That did not happen, and I call on the government to make sure it does as soon as possible so that the facilities are brought up to standard. The facility has a certification score of only one when the average for other facilities is three or above. That money is needed urgently. The next 12 months will see new health and aged care facilities opened in Jeparit, Horsham and Dimboola. The expenditure of a lot of money was projected by the previous government, and it has taken a little while for that to come through.

Areas of need for other capital works include Nhill, Edenhope and Stawell, specifically the second stage of the hospital. I am disappointed the honourable member for Ripon is not here because, as we all know, a joint project was funded from Ararat and Stawell where \$10 million was spent on two facilities. About \$3.3 million was spent on the first stage at Stawell. I call on the government to make sure that the next budget contains money for the second stage so the hospital is completed.

**Mr Mulder** — That was Liberal and National government programming that put those in, wasn't it?

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — I don't know. You've beat me.

Education is important to any community and I highlight the fact that I read in the paper that this government would spend \$100 million on education facilities. I am disappointed that Murtoa, Edenhope and Nhill missed out on these programs. As I said, youth are our investment in the future.

While on the subject of education I will touch on kindergartens. This government has been in government for nearly two years, yet we see now a differential between the wages of kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers of between 20 and 30 per cent. It is difficult to get staff, particularly in rural Victoria. I have been working with the minister in

relation to some exemptions and she has been fairly cooperative, for which I must thank her. But the reality is that the government has to address the nub of the issue. We know of the Kirby report on this matter and that committees in the area are waiting for the release of that report. Education is vital for the continued development of the Wimmera and I ask the government to address the concerns at Murtoa, Nhill and Edenhope, particularly the needs of kindergartens.

The Victorian Institute of Dryland Agriculture (VIDA) in Horsham, Australia's tidiest town — —

**Mr Hamilton** — A top organisation!

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — It is a top organisation. The Minister for Agriculture has just moved into the chamber. VIDA is the premier institute in Victoria and Australia for research and development in cereals, pulses and all seeds. I see the Minister for Agriculture nodding, so I take it that the staff will take that as a very complimentary pat on the back. I want the minister to hear that I am pleased to see the government has continued funding to upgrade the facilities at VIDA.

I am disappointed the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism has moved out of the chamber. The government supported the Stawell Gift — and we thank it for that — but further developments are planned in Stawell, particularly on the oval and the Hall of Fame. I look forward to the government supporting this major initiative for a major event in country Victoria.

Tourism is a growth industry in Victoria and it creates many opportunities in the Wimmera, but I am disappointed to see a relatively small increase of \$4 million in the tourism budget. I believe the government has missed a great opportunity by not capitalising on the low value of the Australian dollar and doing more to attract international visitors to our region.

Other tourism priorities in the Wimmera are for an information centre at Halls Gap. Everyone knows that the Grampians are a Mecca for tourists in Victoria. An information centre is needed there. The Johnny Muller interpretive centre at Harrow in the West Wimmera shire is looking for capital to do that, and it may access money through the Community Support Fund. Now that Nhill has federal money to upgrade the roads through the centre of the town it needs to improve and upgrade its information centre as well. We are looking for the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism to dip into his pocket and get some money out.

On the issue of law and order, I am pleased to see the upgrading of Apsley and Kaniva police stations.

Residents of the West Wimmera shire are concerned about getting police to their area. They believe the upgrading of these facilities will help, but there are many other police stations in the area that need funding. Warracknabeal has some concerns that people may have read about in the media, and the Yarriambiack Shire Council under the leadership of its new mayor, Cr Denis Bell, is looking for funding for a 24-hour police station. I have already spoken to the minister about that.

The preservation of our natural assets is paramount. The Wimmera environment is fragile and, as I said in my maiden speech, issues such as salinity, flood management and waterway degradation must be addressed. In the budget \$157 million has been allocated over seven years to work on a national action plan for salinity and water in Victoria. In my area the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority will play an important role in delivering on this expenditure. Salinity and water management are key issues in the Wimmera electorate, and I will continue working with the catchment authority and other organisations to maximise the benefits of this expenditure. The problem is that it is going to take seven years to get all that money and use it. We look forward to that continuing.

The Minister for Transport is in the chamber so I will add that the Wimmera road network needs to be adequately maintained for efficient community and freight transport. There is a budget allocation for regional arterial road links, but there is little money for local roads and bridges in the Wimmera. The West Wimmera shire is looking for support for timber roads and, importantly, Vivians Road at Kaniva. I am sure the minister has been lobbied in relation to that matter.

All of my councils need assistance to maintain the road network. Thankfully John Anderson and the federal government have put in a lot of money through the Roads to Recovery program to help councils in my area.

**Mr Batchelor** — Spend it!

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — They are spending it. It is a great initiative. I wish this government would do likewise and put some of its money into rural roads in country Victoria.

**Mr Batchelor** interjected.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — Did the Minister for Transport say, 'No way!'? He has already forgotten country Victoria. I hope he looks after them on the matters I have raised in my speech.

**Mr Maclellan** — The minister just said, 'No way!'.

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — I heard that and quoted it. I hope it goes in: the minister said 'No way!' to rural roads.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Davies)** — Order! The honourable member, continuing his speech!

**Mr DELAHUNTY** — A major disappointment is the little relief given to business and to employment creation. On many occasions I have called for cuts in payroll tax, stamp duty, Workcover premiums and land taxes. As honourable members know, the previous government lowered payroll tax in difficult circumstances by more than \$300 million and created 18 000 long-term jobs. Stamp duty is another major concern.

Importantly, as we all read, yesterday the Attorney-General expressed concern about increases in Workcover losses. I quote from a leaflet that provides a brief summary of the June 2001 *Report on Ministerial Portfolios*. It says:

During the six-month period to 31 December 2000, the Victorian Workcover Authority incurred an operating loss of \$651 million, bringing the accumulated losses to almost \$1.1 billion.

Here we go again, we are on the slide down again! It also states:

The common-law component of the outstanding claims liability had increased by around 138 per cent from \$630 million to over \$1.5 billion since 30 June 1998 ...

Many small business and job creation opportunities will be wound back if the state cannot get a handle on such important cost increases.

The National Party has been calling on the government to show positive discrimination to country Victoria by having payroll tax discounted by up to 2 per cent. Again the government has shown that it has no shame by promoting the fact that there will be \$774 million worth of cuts to businesses. The reality is that that will happen over four years; the National Party wants it to happen as soon as possible. If that did happen and there was positive discrimination on payroll tax, that would greatly assist our unemployed and our youth in country Victoria to find jobs.

Water is a finite resource and the current level of water evaporation and seepage from the open channel system is unacceptable. Western Victoria has seen great benefits from the piping of the Wimmera Mallee stock

and domestic water channel system. The March newsletter of the Wimmera Mallee Water piping feasibility study, which is almost complete, covers many key findings. Under 'Current water use and losses' it states:

An analysis of current water use and inflows has indicated that annual losses from the distribution system are around 85 000 ML/year (mainly due to seepage), with an additional 18 000 ML/year lost from evaporation and seepage from farm dams ...

Under 'Possible water saving concepts', the newsletter lists full piping, part piping, lining of main channels and lining and covering of farm dams and urban storages.

It is important to note that economic development opportunities will be created if that marvellous program of piping the Wimmera Mallee stock and domestic water system continues. Improved water supply quality and security will provide multiple economic developments, which are also listed in the newsletter. Environmental issues and values will be picked up in the report. I highlight that the opportunity for recreation water needs will be addressed in the report, because I know that is important for people around Stawell and right across the Wimmera electorate. The lakes and dams are very low, in fact down to 12 per cent capacity, and water is needed to ensure survival.

I would like to cover many other matters, and will refer quickly to some of them. Public housing is becoming an issue, particularly at Horsham and Nhill. The Dunmunkle sump oilers would be disappointed if I did not give them a plug; and a marvellous group around Minyip, Rupanyup and Murtoa is doing some work.

As the National Party spokesperson on youth, I refer to Freeza events, which have been a marvellous thing for country youth. I am sure that you, Madam Acting Speaker, as the honourable member for Gippsland West will say that they have also been very good in your area. There has been a great opportunity to bring major music groups and bands into country areas to drug-and-alcohol-free venues. I hope the government will continue funding that program.

I am also disappointed that the government did not find the money to work on the rural youth strategy that was developed last year by a lot of young people across Victoria.

Water and waste water facilities are important for the development of country areas, particularly small towns. In the past couple of months three or four facilities that were an initiative of the previous government have opened. I see the honourable member for Ripon in the chamber. Many facilities have also been developed in

his area. Although they were initiatives of the previous government, it has been given no recognition at all for them. There are still towns, such as Rupanyup, where the government needs to make sure there are appropriate waste water facilities. I look forward to the government continuing the initiative of the previous government in water and waste water facilities.

I finish by saying that I support the initiative of the honourable member for Swan Hill, who spoke about the vision for agriculture and called on the government, particularly the Minister for Agriculture, to make a ministerial statement on the future of agriculture and the benefits he sees in that for not only rural Victoria but the whole state. I look forward to that ministerial statement and a discussion of that in this Parliament.

**Mr HAERMEYER** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — In this budget in my portfolio areas of police and emergency services and corrections the government has continued down the trajectory it embarked upon last year. Firstly, that was about rebuilding the Victorian police force, which was so appallingly cut back by the previous government. The cutbacks of 800 police officers certainly had a significant detrimental effect on the Victoria Police.

All honourable members know what happened prior to the last election. In the last round of enterprise bargaining negotiations in 1996, the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services offered to spill police blood on the wharves when he was refusing to pay them and was cutting back police numbers, and when police were working 12-hour shifts on the wharves and being fed Mars bars and orange juice! What happened in that enterprise bargaining negotiation? The previous government gave police a 3 per cent by three-year pay rise. That was very generous, except that at the same time the government was cutting back police numbers by 800. It paid for the pay rise by cutting back police numbers, exposing our police and leaving our police stations short staffed.

It is interesting that lately members of the opposition and National Party are getting up in this place and with monotonous repetition saying, 'We want more police', and, 'We want new police stations'. The people who sat here silent like a pack of mummies while the previous government was running down the police force, refusing to build police stations and cutting back police numbers have suddenly found their voice. This government is doing it! Those opposite sat in this place and allowed the previous government to cut our police force to ribbons. The government is restoring the numbers and morale in the Victoria Police.

**Mr Maughan** interjected.

**Mr HAERMEYER** — How many more police? We have more than 160 additional police officers on the ground, and more than 400 police in the academy at the moment. The government will achieve the target of 800. What the honourable member for Rodney should have been asking when he was sitting on the government benches was, ‘How many fewer police?’ because the previous government was deliberately running down police numbers. By his silence he consented to that. He supported the budget that did that — he voted for the budget that did that!

Apart from the additional police, and on top of the large number of new police stations that were announced last year, this year the government has announced more new police stations. It is good to see the member for the Otways, the honourable member for Polwarth. He received five new police stations under the last Labor budget and should be applauding the Bracks Labor government.

**Mr Batchelor** — He does, in private.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr HAERMEYER** — Yes. It is interesting what people do behind closed doors, with the blinds pulled. In this budget the government has provided 23 new police stations. I am pleased to say that 7 of those are new 24-hour police stations, and 16 are in country areas. They offer reassurance about the future of policing in those areas. They provide the accommodation that will enable us to retain existing personnel and attract additional police officers to those country areas. The seven new 24-hour stations are important.

Last year the government looked after long-neglected inner-suburban police stations such as those at Preston and Northcote, which were pretty much the worst in the state but which the previous state government completely overlooked. This year we are building police stations in growth areas like Rowville in the electorate of the honourable member for Wantirna. I recall the honourable member expressing some doubt about whether a police station was needed there. I spoke to and asked questions of the local community and local police officers. They are unambiguous in their view that a police station is needed there. So notwithstanding the reservations of the honourable member for Wantirna, the government believes there is a need for a police station in Rowville. It is funded in the budget, it will be built, and it will be up and running within two years.

A police station will also be built in Endeavour Hills. It is interesting to note that although he would have had some idea of what was happening in the law and order portfolio, when he was parliamentary secretary for justice the honourable member for Berwick did nothing. Despite the numerous public meetings that were held in the Endeavour Hills area in support of a new police station, he sat on his hands and did absolutely nothing. When in the run-up to the last state election the Labor Party committed to building a police station there, he suddenly extracted a big commitment from the former government, which was to stick a police officer in with the local SES unit for a few hours a day! That was his commitment to Endeavour Hills.

Since the Bracks government was elected to office, the honourable member for Berwick has been a voice of negativity. First of all he asked where the money was, saying that the Labor Party would never fund the Endeavour Hills police station. I point out that it has been funded; the money is in this budget. The police station is coming, and it will be up and running in two years. Despite that, Doubting Robert, the honourable member for Berwick, has expressed doubt about the police station being built, as reported in an article in the local press headed ‘MP doubt on station’. The money is there, and the police station will be built.

I will be happy to turn up at the opening of that police station 18 months to two years down the track and pay homage to the work that has been done by the honourable member for Dandenong, the honourable member for Dandenong North and numerous local councillors to obtain a commitment to and the funding for and construction of that station. The honourable member for Berwick will no doubt still be sitting on that side, but the station will be there — no thanks to him. All the time this guy has been wishing it will not be built, because he is embarrassed about having done nothing about it when he was on the government benches.

The Bracks government has also made a commitment regarding the Diamond Creek police station, which is in a wonderful electorate. It is intended to build a co-located complex that will include a 24-hour police station; a brand new, state-of-the-art fire station for the Diamond Creek CFA, which services the area with great distinction; and a facility for the new ambulance service, which the government provided last November. That area previously had ambulance response times in excess of 40 minutes.

Also on the police front, the government has committed funding for protective personal equipment for police officers. They will have new lightweight state-of-the-art

protective vests and screens to protect them when they are transporting offenders in their vehicles. All this is in the budget. This government is certainly committed to delivering on policing. It has looked after the localities that require new police stations and a police presence, and it is also looking after the personal safety of police officers.

On the corrections front the government also inherited a disastrous situation. Under the previous government the prison population increased by more than 1000 — by one-third — yet fewer than 100 additional prison beds were provided. No wonder we now have overcrowding! Yesterday I heard the honourable member for Wantirna talking about the budget not providing funding for enough beds in the system. I certainly never heard him say one thing about overcrowding in the system under the previous government. However, now that we are providing more than 1100 beds — that is a net figure — he says there are not enough. Not only will there be 1100 new beds in four new prisons, the government is providing 375 beds in existing prisons, funding for which was in the last budget.

**Mr Batchelor** interjected.

**Mr HAERMEYER** — He was ineffectual in government. I never heard him once express concern about overcrowding in police cells or police station staffing levels. In fact, when I went through *Hansard* I discovered that in seven years in government the honourable member for Wantirna never once mentioned the Country Fire Authority, despite the fact that his electorate encompasses a number of significant CFA brigades.

In addition to the 375 beds the government funded last year to ensure maximum flexibility in the prison system, it is funding 300 relocatable beds for the prison system in this budget. By next year we will have removed most, if not all, prisoners from police cells. The new prisons are part of the planning that has been done to accommodate any future growth in the prison system. When the previous government came to office the prison system was running at around 85 per cent capacity, which is about where it should be. However, when it left office, the prison system was running at 112 per cent capacity.

I shall say a few words about what is happening in the northern suburbs, in which I have an abiding interest. The previous government's neglect of the northern suburbs was of great concern to me. Under this government the Northern Hospital has received \$12 million in additional funding, including \$9 million

in this budget. Transport services will also be improved in growing areas like Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. As part of that provision has been made for an extended bus service to those localities. The last budget provided funding for the duplication of Pascoe Vale Road — which is a real bottleneck — and there is also funding for the duplication of Cooper Street, Epping, which is on the boundary of my electorate and that of the Minister for Transport. Many things are and will be happening in Epping, including the duplication of Cooper Street, which the previous government refused to do.

This government is also allocating funds for the new Craigieburn bypass, on which the previous government refused to make a decision. I also refer to the Epping North development, which was stalled for too long. We have seen the development of Epping Plaza and other commercial areas in that part of northern Melbourne. It is the most exciting, go-ahead part of Melbourne at the moment, yet — —

**Ms Beattie** interjected.

**Mr HAERMEYER** — As the honourable member for Tullamarine says, that includes Mickleham Road, Tullamarine.

A card-carrying member of the Liberal Party — one of the Liberal Party bagmen and power brokers in the area — by the name of Tom Love has opposed virtually every single one of those projects. He has objected to the Cooper Street duplication and the Craigieburn bypass, and he is now objecting to the Epping North development.

An article in last week's paper states:

Taxpayers could be forced to pay up to \$200 million compensation to a landowner whose quarries lie in the path of the proposed Craigieburn bypass.

On reading further I saw that it was all about Mr Love. It states:

Epping quarry owner Tom Love fears a historic family homestead on the property — built about 1870 — will be bulldozed to make way for the 16.7 km Hume Highway extension.

As I said, Mr Tom Love is a prominent Liberal Party identity. He is the local warlord and the Liberal Party's major bagman. He is trying to hold up hundreds of millions of dollars worth of development that will assist the north. Exciting stuff is happening out there. It is all about jobs, increased property values, better services and better facilities — and he is holding all of that up.

He wants \$200 million in compensation for his quarry. The quarry is a load of junk — there is nothing but crap in it — yet he wants to hold all this development up because of it. It is about time the Liberal Party and Mr Love learned that Epping has gone beyond being the perpetual quarry hole of the north. The government is delivering to the northern suburbs. In the seven years of the previous government Victoria saw what it had seen under other Liberal conservative governments — and that is a complete neglect of the north. Schools were closed and infrastructure and services were run down. The government is trying to deliver good things for the northern suburbs, but a prominent local member of the Liberal Party is trying to obstruct their development.

**Mr SMITH** (Glen Waverley) — We have heard a lot of drivel from certain members of the government during the budget debate. This is a sad budget, because the government has taxed more and spent more. It is a typical Labor budget. As the honourable member for Wimmera said, that is exactly what people will find out, because blow-outs will occur in every area.

The previous government inherited a state debt of \$32 billion, which had reduced to about \$4 billion when it left office. It is normal for Labor governments to have blow-outs in budgets because they borrow when they are not taxing people. Eventually the time will come when people's confidence goes, as it did prior to 1992 when job losses were at their highest.

The people of Glen Waverley will be worse off as a result of the Bracks government's budget. It will be a cold winter for the poorest families after the government's cancellation of the \$60 winter power bonus, which was brought in four years ago by the previous government. The Premier will collect increased revenue through rises in stamp duty on conveyancing, land taxes, gaming taxes and payroll tax. The shame is that payroll tax increases — which we are seeing in Victoria — adversely affect the willingness of employers to take on staff. It is a natural reaction: even when they are thinking of increasing staff numbers, they will not do so. This will also cause concern to people in employment, because small businesses will be caught in the payroll tax net. The Premier has already spent \$5.5 million of the goods and services tax paid by Glen Waverley families, but they will not see \$1 of it put back into their economy through tax cuts. Blow-outs are occurring in salaries and in building and construction work, which the government has not properly supervised.

When it was in opposition the government promised cuts in consultancies and advertising. In the past couple

of days honourable members have heard that that has not occurred. In fact, spending in these areas has increased dramatically.

If they are fair dinkum about it, members opposite will admit that they are unaware of any new major projects being built by the government. Building major projects is one of the great ways to increase employment. The government is good at opening coalition initiated projects, but it is not good at building anything itself.

The Labor Party says it will build the Scoresby freeway, but the budget commits nothing towards it except \$2 million for a freeway planning study. This is in stark contrast to the federal government's allocation of \$220 million to the project.

People in Glen Waverley feel justifiably let down by this big spending, big taxing government. I was sent a copy of a letter from the Wheelers Hill Secondary College that is addressed to the Honourable Mary Delahunty and signed by Stephen Mead, the school council president. In the letter Mr Mead talks about the state of his school and what has happened over the past few years as a result of its not receiving the money that had been promised to it. The coalition government had promised the school \$1 million for its justifiable upgrade. Mr Mead states:

... the next step in the college's major upgrade process was announced in this year's budget ...

The school feels let down. He continues:

The college has completed two master plans in 10 years.

I worked with the school, helping it get its plans through to the Minister for Education — and the money for the upgrade was promised prior to the 1998 election. Mr Mead discovered this year that the school has once again been overlooked:

... I immediately rang Phil Dawkins of the Eastern region and was told yet again that the college may be on a list of schools approved to move from master plan to further planning published in June ... We only get so much funding ... All projects are on a needs basis ... and that I should continue to be patient.

Minister, you have often stated that funding is based on a needs basis, yet we see recently built primary schools in nearby marginal seats receiving additional funding for upgrades and allocations of \$6 million dollars, to special projects at secondary colleges ...

By that I think he means 'projects up to and including \$6 million in marginal areas'. The letter further states:

... the most effective way to obtain funding is not by doing the right thing and following procedures, as we have patiently

done in the last 10 years, but by political bullying and nepotism.

As a council that is not the way we prefer to handle disputes with the department however, we see the quick response that Berwick and Carlton schools received by going to press and are seriously tempted to take a similar course of action.

**I will ensure that that course of action is taken. The letter continues:**

Wheelers Hill has been in desperate need of both a major capital works upgrade and major maintenance for years.

...

The college has for many years had a positive policy of implementing innovative and popular programs.

**It is interesting that in the past four to five years the school population has risen by 100 students a year, so there are currently just under 1000 students in a school that was originally designed for a few hundred. The letter further states:**

The popularity of these programs at the school is evidenced by the wide catchment area ...

**Students are coming from as far away as South Oakleigh, Belgrave, Lysterfield, Mount Waverley and Dandenong to take advantage of the programs offered at the school. The letter further states:**

Despite keeping maintenance spending to an absolute minimum, during 2000, all maintenance and minor works funding was expended on this purpose, and the allocated budget ran in deficit to the tune of \$35 000.

**Mr Mead provides an enormous list of things in the school that need upgrading. If the government had allocated that \$1 million promised when it came to office in 1999 the school would now have many of those things, such as 24 relocatable classrooms, 3 relocatable staff workrooms and even 2 relocatable student toilet blocks. The whole list reflects the neglect of this government during its time in office. The letter further states:**

As I did when I wrote to you —

**that is, the Minister for Education —**

on 10 February, 2000 and received no reply, I again extend an invitation for you to visit the school and see first hand the poor state of the facilities at the school and the cramped and unsafe conditions that both the staff and the students are forced to endure.

**That is one of the areas this government has neglected because it feels it does not have to give the school its unqualified support.**

**Another matter of great concern to the people in my electorate is referred to in a letter dated 1 June from**

**Ms Jennifer Downes of Wheelers Hill. She speaks on behalf of all taxpayers when she says she is writing:**

... to point out the gross inequity of charging 10 per cent stamp duty on top of a grossed up amount which includes GST on house and contents insurance and car registration.

**Mr Lenders interjected.**

**Mr SMITH — You do not understand — it is a tax on a tax, which is exactly her point.**

**An honourable member interjected.**

**Mr SMITH — This is interesting; are you listening? Mrs Downes later says:**

When Mr Brumby says he could not 'exclude GST from the dutiable ...

**Mr Stensholt interjected.**

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella) — Order! The honourable member for Burwood is out of his place.**

**Mr SMITH — He is out of his mind as well. To continue the quotation:**

When Mr Brumby says he could not 'exclude GST from the — —

**Mr Stensholt — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I would like the honourable member for Glen Waverley to withdraw his statement impugning me.**

**Mr SMITH — I withdraw.**

**Mrs Downes states:**

When Mr Brumby says he could not 'exclude GST from the dutiable value of transactions' because 'there would be a net decrease to state revenue of about \$100 million', he has not comprehended what our anger is about. The GST has to stay. It is the stamp duty which is a tax on a tax. In my latest car registration bill the GST is \$27 and the stamp duty was \$29.70. On my car insurance notice the GST is \$39.09 and stamp duty is \$43. We know which is the tax on a tax.

**Mr Brumby has received about \$100 million in extra revenue since the introduction of the GST. In my opinion it is \$100 million to which he is not entitled. Mrs Downes is an average constituent who wrote the letter to tell the newspapers about the problem with this tax. I receive on average four letters a week about this tax on a tax on things like car insurance and the other insurance referred to by Mrs Downes. The point is that the government does not understand.**

**For example, in New South Wales Treasurer Egan took stamp duty off the GST and gave it back to the people, because he said it was a windfall tax. That is not the**

case with this government. People are not silly! When ordinary retired people like Mrs Downes write letters showing that they understand what the tax is about, we know the message has absolutely got through.

I return to the matter of police. Glen Waverley has a police station that I think was opened in 1983 or 1984. Initially it had the wrong guttering system installed. Honourable members will have often seen the sort of guttering it has — I think it is called a Holmesglen design gutter — on houses, schools and many other buildings. It was also on my house. At the end of the tiles on my house there is a bargeboard, with the guttering on the inside. After water got inside and ruined the ceilings we found we had to take it off and put in extended guttering along the outside. Now when the water comes down from the tiles there is nothing to stop it and force it to go back into the inner wall, and it consequently goes into the gutter and away. There are now no further problems.

The old guttering on our house had a design fault, and it is the same guttering that is still on the Glen Waverley police station. As I said, it has been there since 1983 or 1984. Over the years, and I have pointed this out on many occasions, repairs have been done inside the building and the damage to equipment from water is always fixed, but no-one ever gets around to replacing the guttering.

The police station building needs complete new guttering on the outside, as we did with our house. They say it might not be the best aesthetically but, for goodness' sake, the station has not been painted since then and the outside walls look an absolute disgrace. If only the message could get through. The sergeants were recently flooded out again; they were working in wet conditions and using telephone books to try to hold the carpets up. I would rather see a delay in replacing the carpets while the guttering is fixed. If they do not fix the guttering the water will keep coming through.

I have had this matter raised in the local newspapers. The minister has responded by saying I have a responsibility to go through him and not to go to the newspapers. What nonsense! The guttering needs to be fixed first and all these other things done secondly. Morale in Glen Waverley police station is not good because the officers know that this government does not care.

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services was in here before trumpeting about what he is doing about numbers. In Glen Waverley they have exactly the same numbers as they have had for donkey's years. The point is that when the coalition was in government the police

were getting 15 to 20 recruits from the academy to bolster the staff. That is not happening now and consequently at one stage recently there was one patrol wagon for Glen Waverley and none for Oakleigh, so the paddy wagon had to do Oakleigh as well as Glen Waverley.

The government trumpets about these things happening, but they do not occur. I know this because the police there ring me. They come and see me and I go to lunch with them because they are interested in getting their message across. I have been going out with them for years and I have had this very good relationship with them. The point is, the message is not getting through. The government says it has fixed all the problems and done all this. It has not fixed the problems. It certainly has not fixed the problems in regard to police numbers overall because, despite what the minister says, police are still going out the other end through attrition. They are finding jobs outside and they are leaving the force at younger ages. Of course people are going to leave work when they reach the age of 55 because their pensions take them out, but police are going out at a much younger age.

The senior constables cannot see promotional opportunities and they are very concerned about this: I am sure we could all think of a better word for that. They are concerned and they are getting out. In spite of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services saying the force is getting thousands of applicants and putting lots of people through the academy — I know that because the academy is in my electorate and I drive past it every day — they are not getting any more than 130 net, and that is counting the recruits going through the course.

In conclusion, because I know that other members want to make their contributions to the debate, we have a government that is high taxing and high spending, a government that is going into the same pattern as its predecessors, the Cain and Kirner governments, and we must try to get it to realise, through an arrogant Treasurer who will not listen to anything, that if it goes down this track it will get Victoria back into the state of bankruptcy that it was in before.

**Ms DAVIES** (Gippsland West) — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. I appreciate the benefits allocated to ordinary people right across Victoria in this budget. In particular, I appreciate the benefits allocated to rural areas, including my own electorate of Gippsland West.

It was always going to take considerable amounts of time to rebuild and redevelop these rural areas given the

many years of hardship they suffered. It will take time, but the intent of the government is obvious and the progress has been tangible. That is not to say that difficulties will not arise, because they will. We have had setbacks, and I am sure we will have more as industry changes and goes up and down. Not long ago we lost a factory in Wonthaggi, the Smith and Nephew factory. The Bonlac reorganisations in Drouin, Longwarry and Toora did not help, nor did the closure of Prom Meats in South Gippsland. Yet there have been gains and changes. We have a building boom in Bass Coast and unemployment levels have dropped marginally. There are changes but they do not necessarily indicate disaster; they may just be changes.

I will continue to do my part to urge the government to persevere with the attention it is paying to rural areas and the rebuilding that needs to happen. Several highly significant gains have been made in Gippsland West in this budget. They represent symbolic and very practical changes of direction from the previous government. Probably the most obvious is the reopening of the railway line to Leongatha. That reopening means that the towns of Koo Wee Rup, Lang Lang, Nyora, Loch, Korumburra and Leongatha will be rejoined to that special and vital artery of rail line. I cannot emphasise enough how important I see that as being. Koo Wee Rup, Nyora and soon Loch are bypassed by the major highways and those towns have felt very vulnerable for a long time. Each of them has communities that have worked very hard to rebuild their towns and keep them strong, and the reopening of the railway line will do much to help them feel linked to the rest of the state.

Once we have a decent track and brand-new rolling stock and we are connected to the express route to the city, each of one those towns will be in easy commuting distance of the city. We have a highly mobile work force these days. Those rural communities can offer people a superb lifestyle. We have very good, very strong community infrastructure in our schools and hospitals and we have community spirit, and I am sure that having a comfortable, safe and fast railway line will add hugely to the attractiveness of these towns.

The government subsidy on the track upgrade will make freight a much more economically viable possibility. The areas around Lang Lang, Nyora and Grantville are major sand and gravel fields. The gravel and sand extraction industry is important, but it has a considerable impact on the community with B-double trucks thundering up and down the roads. Getting that gravel off the road and onto the railway line is a very high priority. That will be a much more efficient means of transport for that sort of bulk. Freight Australia has been working very hard in that area for a long time. I

know that it views this announcement of the reopening of the line very positively and I hope that it is able to work speedily towards that possibility.

If one looks at the map of Victoria and the five reopened railway lines and the high-speed railway lines that will be going into the more major centres, one sees that it is very much a symbolic reaching out and connecting up of different parts of Victoria with the centre. That is very important in helping all of us to feel a part of the greater whole; roads are not enough on their own.

There has been some scepticism about the time it will take to return these services. I think the people who are sceptical should not underestimate the amount of work that needs to be done. I want this reopening to happen properly. I do not want to wait any longer than necessary, but when I think about the time it will take I am reminded of my feelings when the City Link deal was announced and building commenced with what seemed at the time to be almost indecent haste. In view of the enormous problems that have since occurred with City Link in setting up the tolling system and the even more dangerous difficulties of an apparently shonky tunnel design and construction and the leakages that have occurred since then, I think it is important that we make haste slowly. Taking a bit of time to ensure that our railway lines are done properly as opposed to too quickly is not a bad thing.

Many deals and contracts that the previous government entered into with indecent haste have since gone pear shaped. I am not at all concerned if a little more time is taken to make sure fewer arrangements go pear shaped in this post-Kennett era.

A highly symbolic allocation to my area, and there were similar allocations to other areas, was the provision of \$3 million to rebuild the 30-bed Grabham Wing nursing home, which is attached to the Wonthaggi Hospital. The current Grabham Wing home contains 30 publicly run beds. It has strong community support, but its facilities are outdated.

During the 1999 election campaign there was a leak from the hospital suggesting that those 30 beds were about to be flogged off to the private sector. Because the campaign was close, the then Premier suddenly backed down, saying that no decisions had been made. A certain amount of deviousness went on during that campaign. After the election it was confirmed that those beds had been earmarked for sale. I have no doubt that if we still had a Kennett government those 30 beds would have been sold off to the private sector, even though, apart from being inhumane and not something

the community wanted, it would not have been economically sensible.

Armitage House is another 30-bed nursing home. If the 30-beds at Armitage House were attached to the 30 beds in the Grabham Wing we would have a 60-bed nursing home, which would be more economically viable than either of them separately. Having those nursing home beds attached to the Wonthaggi Hospital adds to the hospital's economic viability, because they could use common kitchen and heating facilities as well as common cleaning services. As I said, it would be economically sensible to have them together rather than apart. The only reason the previous government wished to sell off those beds was its foolish obsession with ideology — and perhaps a wish to oblige some mates.

After the 1999 election the new government quickly announced that there would be no sell off. The news that the beds will be rebuilt has been received with great joy. It is a truly excellent result for Wonthaggi itself, the hospital and the community. It is about public infrastructure being built in the public interest.

I note an oft-repeated comment that Liberal Party members use when, in referring to major projects, they say that the government has not announced any more monuments for Melbourne. That is what the previous government used to do, although it called them major projects. I accept that Melbourne needs public facilities such as the museum, the arts centre and Federation Square, but frankly we do not need any more monuments of that nature. I get much more excited about practical major projects in rural areas, such as the opening of railway lines and the Bass Highway duplication, another stage of which will be built as a result of the budget, which we are all pleased with. I am sure the millions of tourists who travel up and down the Bass Highway every year also will be pleased with the extended duplication of the highway, which will be much safer as a result.

Drouin Secondary College is to be rebuilt, Koo Wee Rup Secondary College will get additional facilities, and the primary school and police station at Lang Lang will be rebuilt. Those kinds of major projects have direct benefits for our citizens.

I listened carefully to the budget response of the shadow Treasurer, as I always do. I always ask myself whether she is raising issues that I need to consider or sending messages that I need to respond to. The messages I received from the shadow Treasurer included the one she repeated at the start, about not-yet spending. I have already discussed the fact that I prefer caution to rushing gung-ho into things that then have to

be fixed up later. I also heard the messages she gave about budget blow-outs and higher recurrent spending by this government.

If I had some criticisms or concerns about the budget, it would be about the continuing need to increase the rate of recurrent spending. We have not yet made up for the years of savage cuts by the former Kennett government. There are still obvious holes in the social fabric in this state. The main increase in this year's recurrent expenditure went to the health budget. I approve of that, because health is a primary concern of all citizens. We have an ageing population, and health costs are increasing all the time, so it is hard to argue against the increase in the recurrent expenditure on health.

However, that means other areas did not get the increases in recurrent expenditure for which they argued. Our kindergartens are still under stress despite the extra funding they have received, and kindergarten teachers are still waiting on a salary settlement, as are the police. Secondary schools are still under considerable staffing pressures. It is hard to deal with the difficult and complex needs of students if you do not have adequate time to spend with them individually.

In the human services area there are many worthy programs in need of more recurrent spending. There will continue to be tension between the need for financial responsibility and the need to achieve the good quality services that are required in a humane society.

I note the pressure the government is rightly being put under by the opposition to be financially responsible. I also note the pressure the government is being put under by the community to continue to rebuild services to proper and acceptable humane standards. The pressures coming from different directions will always be strong. I will continue to urge the government to look for a balance between the two, and considerable progress has been made in achieving it. I believe the government is moving in the right direction, and I appreciate the efforts it has made, particularly in spreading the benefits across the whole state.

These days no-one can be said not to matter. There is a much healthier atmosphere in Victoria. We do not have a society where people are sneered at as losers. That is the most extraordinary difference for me between the era of the Kennett years, which could be referred to as the sneering years, and now. It is obvious that a lot of hard work still needs to be done to achieve a balance between the need for financial responsibility, which we are all acutely aware of, and the need to fund services

and infrastructure to the point where we are truly a humane and civilised society.

**Mrs ELLIOTT** (Mooroolbark) — In making a contribution to the budget debate I set the record straight on some of the achievements of the former coalition government. During the years from 1992 to 1999 Victoria experienced the fastest growth in living standards of any state or territory. It had the highest growth of public sector investment anywhere in Australia. In 1992–93, 22.5 per cent of public sector revenue went to pay interest. By the budget of 1999–2000 that had been reduced to 2.5 per cent, which effectively added \$5.5 billion gross to capacity for spending on services and left the incoming Labor government and Treasurer with a budget surplus of \$1.2 billion.

After the Treasurer's budget speech two weeks ago I picked up the document *Growing the Whole State* to see what it contained for my electorate of Mooroolbark. I found some welcome funding to Wonga Park Primary School and Yarra Road Primary School to modernise their libraries and for technology-enhanced classrooms. The planning for those upgrades was undertaken while the Liberal Party was in power and is part of the rolling cycle of refurbishment of schools throughout the state. As I said, the Wonga Park and Yarra Road primary schools are very grateful for those funds, but they were expected, previously planned for, and have now been delivered.

Apart from that, there is nothing in this budget for my electorate. The nearest thing is slightly more than \$5 million to replace the Croydon police station. I am sure the Minister for Police and Emergency Services would back me when I say that I have hounded him about the Croydon police station. It is not in my electorate — it is in the electorate of Warrandyte — but it services my area. It is totally outmoded and is well overdue for replacement.

During the last election campaign the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services made a commitment to not only replace the station but also to have it fully manned 24 hours a day. I was delighted to see the figure of \$5.1 million in the budget for the replacement of that police station. The only problem is that no site has been identified. Croydon has a problem with graffiti, minor theft and drug-related crimes. The citizens of my area want a greater police presence on the streets.

As I said, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Treasurer have announced this \$5.1 million grant for the new Croydon police station

before finding a suitable site. I rather suspect that by the time the budget comes around next year the minister may be reannouncing that \$5.1 million unless he puts a rocket under his heels and works with the local community to find a site.

Apart from that there is the laughable \$2 million to plan for the Scoresby transport corridor which is wanted so much by the outer east businesses. The corridor will considerably enhance not only the income-earning potential of the people who own the businesses but also the job potential for people in the outer east.

When I examined the document even more closely I found that there was nothing for the Mooroolbark part of my electorate, the part that lies in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Not one cent has gone into the true outer east — the part of the outer east that is Mooroolbark, after which my electorate is named.

People in the outer east feel shunned by Labor governments, which is why they have consistently stuck with the Liberal Party during the past three elections. Not one cent is allocated to anything in the suburb named Mooroolbark, and the government stands condemned for that.

I turn now to the portfolio areas of which I am the shadow minister. The community services portfolio merited only seven lines in the budget. The spending on community services mirrors the few lines it received in the Treasurer's budget speech. Four of those seven lines related to the redevelopment of Kew residential services, yet there is not a dollar in the budget for that because it is a 6 to 10-year project. This government will not be delivering on that!

The government is under pressure in two areas, the first of which is preschools. Earlier speakers have spoken on that subject. A teachers strike will be held on 19 June. A large component of the strikers will be preschool teachers, who feel undervalued by this government. The Minister for Community Services, who last year commissioned a review of the responsibilities and pay of preschool teachers and the responsibilities of committees of management, remains silent.

She said in the house last week that she would release the Kirby report but has not done so. The community wants to know what that report contains. Preschool teachers want to know how much they are valued by the minister and how much she is prepared to pay them. Committees of management made up of parent volunteers want to know what the minister will do to alleviate the burden of running preschools, of being both employers and recipients of services for their

children, but the minister remains silent. The budget contains not one cent for preschools. That has been noticed right across the state.

**Mr Brumby** interjected.

**Mrs ELLIOTT** — I am corrected by the Treasurer. I should say that the inappropriate \$4 million that came from the profits of gaming has been converted into recurrent funding. Other than that, there was not one extra dollar for preschools — not one!

The other area that is under considerable pressure is early intervention for children with disabilities. I know that some honourable members on both sides of the house have children with varying sorts of disabilities. One of the greatest tragedies that can befall parents is to have a child who is less than perfect.

In the case of nearly all children with some form of disability early intervention is imperative. It gives them the best chance to live as close as possible to a normal life. There was some funding in the budget for early intervention — \$1 million — and although it sounds a great deal it is going to deliver services to 322 children. If you divide \$1 million among 322 children they will get the statewide average of \$3000 each — and that does not deliver too many services over a 52-week year, sometimes only a couple of hours a week, which is not sufficient to make a real difference.

The greatest complaint in the letters I have received relates not only to the funding gaps in the budget for early intervention, but to the community cabinet that occurred at Knox on 21 May. Parents and supporters of children with cerebral palsy and autism went to that cabinet in the hope of being able to speak to the Minister for Community Services. They stood outside with banners and placards. The minister asked her driver to drive around the back so that she could slip in a back door, unnoticed.

What has made the most unfavourable impression on the parents of those children is that the minister could not face them and would not agree to talk to them about their concerns. I say to the Minister for Community Services, ‘You may run, Minister, but you can’t hide: those parents will track you down and they will speak to you about their concerns’.

There is some money for disability services, but it is hard to see exactly how much. I urge the Treasurer not to force on non-government agencies that provide services to people with intellectual disabilities the 1.5 per cent productivity saving that is being imposed on all departments. It is unfair to expect agencies that spend more than 80 per cent of their income on salaries

to make savings on pens, papers, post-it notes and floppy disks. That 1.5 per cent should be absorbed by the department and not passed on to agencies like Melba Support Services.

No increase is predicted in the number of people in institutions participating in appropriate day activities. There has been no movement from last year’s budget. The government predicts that 970 people eligible for assessment for services will receive that assessment in the coming year, compared with 739 last year, yet there is no increase in funds.

I could go on and on, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I realise that we are coming to the end of the time. Suffice it to say that in the area of community services the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies said that people with disabilities have a right to feel short-changed by this year’s state budget.

The Community Welfare Association of Victoria lamented the fact that there was no increase in foster care allowances. Anglicare has expressed concern that non-government sector workers appear to have received little, if any, funds for the services it provides. It is a general thumbs down in the community services area for the Labor government’s budget.

I will move on very quickly to the arts. In the house yesterday the Minister for the Arts referred to the Kennett government’s edifice complex, yet at page 253 of the budget estimates this appears:

The coming year will see the opening of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image —

a Kennett government initiative —

and the Ian Potter Centre—National Gallery of Victoria —

a coalition government initiative —

Australian Art at Federation Square ...

And what a shambles Federation Square is! It is a coalition government initiative, but it was not a shambles when we began it. Page 253 also refers to the Malthouse development — also a coalition government initiative. Who has the edifice complex? It seems that the Minister for the Arts has.

The money for the arts in the budget is largely consumed by one of the minister’s pet projects, which is the film industry, although I am not decrying that. If we can get a viable film industry going in Victoria, all power to the minister and to the Treasurer. However, \$31.6 million over four years towards industry development and investment in film, television and new

media production and \$13.2 million to the Australian Centre for the Moving Image at Federation Square make up a large chunk of the budget allocation. The only other initiative is \$7 million for the major performing arts centres as part of the Nugent inquiry. There is nothing for the small and medium-sized companies that always struggle. They would have liked something in this budget, but they got nothing.

An announcement was made that there would be a 10-year plan for the arts to be developed and that research would be completed into the relationship between art and wellbeing. One would think that the government might have done this sort of research and developed its plan for the arts before coming into office, not waited until 20 months down the track.

In closing I note the allocation of \$10.3 million in capital funding for the North Melbourne Meat Market, a state-owned asset. The Minister for the Arts promised, when she was in opposition, and has promised since, that the meat market craft centre would reopen for the public. I called the centre the other day: it is not open to the public. So \$10.3 million sounds like a lot of money for something that exists, but for what purpose I am not sure.

This government saw fit to provide \$6.1 million for a space technology centre at a suburban secondary college. I am not sure about the merits of that. When there are children who cannot walk, children who cannot speak, children who cannot eat, children who cannot bathe themselves and children who cannot toilet themselves and they need funding, one does have to wonder where the priorities of this government lie.

In all the glowing speeches that come from the government about the budget, the message I am getting, particularly from the community services sector and my electorate of Mooroolbark, is that it is not a great budget at all.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Message read advising royal assent to House Contracts Guarantee (HH) Bill.**

**Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr BRUMBY (Minister for State and Regional Development).**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr BRUMBY** (Minister for State and Regional Development) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind**

**Mr VOGELS** (Warrnambool) — Almost 10 weeks has elapsed since I wrote to the Minister for Community Services requesting her intervention in the decision of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) to close its Warrnambool-based regional office. To date, not even an acknowledgment has been received from the minister's office. A petition was also tabled in the house on 2 May seeking intervention by the government and the minister to prevent this closure and requesting a continuation of present services. No acknowledgment has been received to date.

I now ask the minister what action she has taken to ensure continuity of services for these very vulnerable people. The RVIB has not only neglected its responsibilities but reneged on its promise that all its services will continue to be provided. It is not good enough for the minister to respond by saying that the RVIB is a statutory authority and therefore the government cannot get involved. The state government puts in many millions of dollars to the RVIB budget. This year RVIB funding went down, and because of an increase in Workcover premiums the institute has had to cut costs. It seems that south-western Victoria has been chosen to bear the brunt of those cuts.

Letters went out and people were told that the office in Warrnambool would close on 30 June — which is odd, because the office had already closed at the end of April. Prior to the closure of the Warrnambool office the institute told the media and RVIB clients there would be continuity of service, but that has failed to materialise. I am very disturbed to learn that the RVIB has made no contact with clients within the region as promised to reassure them and to advise them of where to go now. When they ring up head office in Melbourne they get the usual responses such as, 'Which office do you want?', 'Hold the line' and so on. It is absolutely hopeless.

None of the RVIB clients I have spoken to has received any correspondence from the institute explaining the reasons for the closure or how to access services in the future. RVIB clients have reported to me that they are feeling abandoned, mostly due to a lack of communication and lack of support. It has obviously been handled extremely badly by the RVIB, which had

promised to do so much more. I ask the minister to intervene.

### Winery Walkabout

**Mr JASPER** (Murray Valley) — I advise the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism and all honourable members that the Winery Walkabout will be conducted in north-east Victoria over the Queen's Birthday long weekend. The Winery Walkabout is based around the Rutherglen wineries and wineries in the surrounding areas. Thousands of wine lovers will travel to north-eastern Victoria and tour the wineries, tasting the various great wines produced in the north-east of the state, particularly around the Rutherglen area. They will enjoy the fine food and entertainment provided by those magnificent wineries.

Activities will include the Rutherglen Country Fair, which is conducted on the closed main street of Rutherglen on the Sunday. Over 300 stalls will be on the go in the main street, providing all sorts of foods, crafts and other goods for sale. There is also a great range of entertainment.

Included in the list of entertainments is the celebrity grape tread. Over the past two years I have invited two other members of Parliament to join in the celebrity grape tread, and this time the Minister for Sport and Recreation has agreed to join me. It will be a David and Goliath-sized job to beat him, of course, but I will be working hard to do so. I encourage any honourable members who have a free weekend to come up to north-eastern Victoria, visit Rutherglen and the wineries, and take part in the country fair.

I direct the minister's attention to the fact that the country fair, an integral part of the Winery Walkabout — which has won the Victorian tourism award on three occasions and the Australian award three times, too — is a major event. However, the volunteers who operate the country fair are concerned about increases in operating costs. Last year their public liability cover, for example, was \$1700. This year they have a bill for \$6278. The organising committee simply cannot afford that because the increase is too massive. Any profits they make by charging stallholders and by running other functions and activities on the day go to charity or to community projects around the area.

The minister should consider funding the Winery Walkabout to ensure that it maintains its position as the premier wine tourism event and wine festival in Victoria. I ask the minister to see what he can do to assist the organising committee of the country fair in particular in view of its hugely increased public liability

insurance premiums, perhaps by supporting it in the event that there is a claim against it. I hope he can also provide some information and assistance on that request, as well as assistance for the Winery Walkabout generally, so that it will be a great weekend for all.

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

### Rail: Montmorency station

**Mr PHILLIPS** (Eltham) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Transport and refers to a letter I received from a constituent on the problem of illegal parking at Montmorency railway station.

Although I have received an acknowledgment from the minister, my constituent, Ms Pauline Venn, has raised the problem. She received a letter from Connex which suggested that in August 2000 its authority to deal with car parking offences under the Road Safety Act was withdrawn by the government. The letter goes on to state that although Connex has been negotiating for some time to have the authority reinstated under the act, it is a long and drawn-out process that cannot be resolved quickly.

I would like the minister to look into this as a matter of urgency. It means that people can park illegally and block other cars at railway stations and neither Connex nor anyone else has the authority to book the drivers. The situation is totally unsatisfactory and creates a safety problem. I ask the minister to look into it and advise me accordingly. If negotiations are pending, I ask that he expedite them so the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible.

### Refinery Pier, Geelong: oil spill

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — Through the Minister for State and Regional Development I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Ports in another place. The issue I raise relates to an oil spill that occurred at Shell's Refinery Pier on 23 May. For the information of the house, on 23 May approximately 600 litres of crude oil spilt from a vessel berthed at Refinery Pier in Geelong.

The action I seek from the minister is that he investigate the possibility that Shell provide permanent booming around all oil tankers using its facility at Corio Bay. On many other oil refinery piers throughout Australia, including BP's pier at Western Port, oil companies provide permanent booming around their oil-carrying vessels. The permanent booming ensures that where an oil spill occurs from a berthed oil tanker the oil is corralled within the boom. As I said, BP provides

permanent booming at Western Port around all its visiting tankers. I commend BP for its proactive approach to oil spill control. That action at Western Port at least minimises the risk to the marine and shore environments there.

Nearly 200 oil tankers visit the Shell refinery on Corio Bay throughout a year. That is essentially 400 movements — 200 in and 200 out. Each vessel carries nearly 100 000 tonnes of oil-based product. In total something like 7 million tonnes of oil and petroleum is shipped through Geelong annually. A major oil spill at the refinery would be an absolute disaster for Corio Bay — an ecological disaster, a financial disaster for many industries, including tourism and the fishing industry, and a community disaster for Geelong.

Not only do I ask the minister to take action on the matter, but I call on the Shell refinery in Geelong to implement a permanent booming system around all the oil tankers that visit its berths on Corio Bay.

### **Marine parks: establishment**

**Mr PERTON** (Doncaster) — The action I ask of the Minister for Environment and Conservation is in the finest traditions of the house. I ask the minister to lay on the table of the library all ministerial and departmental files relating to the implementation of the Environment Conservation Council's final report on its marine, coastal and estuarine investigation. In particular, I ask for the files on the variation between the final report and the bill. I also ask for files containing legal advice and financial assessments of the possible liability of the state arising from the creation of the parks.

If the files are too voluminous, and again in accordance with the traditions of the house, honourable members would be happy to examine them in a departmental room under the same rules that apply to the tabling of documents in the library.

The minister is asking the opposition to support the bill while having politicised the process by bringing in a bill that alters a number of the major recommendations of the Environment Conservation Council. The government was elected on the basis of a charter saying it would be transparent. As I look at, for instance, clause 26 of the bill and other matters relating to the liability of the state, it is clear that it is appropriate that the advice of the Solicitor-General and the advice relating to possible legal actions by other parties ought to be made available to parliamentarians before they are expected to debate the bill.

That is so, too, in respect of Cape Howe and Ricketts Point, where the local government body is in favour of the implementation of the recommendations of the Environment Conservation Council. It is important for honourable members to know what submissions, assessments, meetings and delegations were made.

The tradition of the house has existed since the 1870s. You will recall, Madam Acting Speaker, that it was followed by previous Liberal and Labor governments, and even by ministers during the course of this government. I ask the minister to do that immediately in order to promote transparency and informed debate by honourable members and members of the community.

### **Ambulance services: community officers**

**Mr SAVAGE** (Mildura) — I raise an issue for the attention of the Minister for Health. On 11 May the Ambulance Employees Association issued a bulletin supporting its current enterprise bargaining claim. In the bulletin the position of community ambulance officers and their valuable work to the community was denigrated in a despicable way. The bulletin states:

RAV insist on calling people, who do not have an ambulance officer qualification, 'ambulance officer' and parade these well-intentioned people in unsuspecting communities in ambulance uniform.

The union says they should be called 'community officers', 'ambulance community officers' or 'community first responders' and should not look like counterfeit ambulance paramedics. The bulletin states:

They should not be used as scabs to undermine ambulance paramedics or their award.

I call upon the Minister for Health to acknowledge the work that community ambulance officers do and not to downgrade their positions. It is timely to acknowledge what these people do in our communities. From Manangatang to Rainbow, Hopetoun to Patchewollock, Ouyen to Murrayville and across the border in New South Wales at Wentworth, community ambulance officers are working in harmony and cooperatively with their full-time paramedic colleagues and are providing 24-hour ambulance service through 12 months of the year to their respective communities. They are on call for no financial benefit.

These people are on their tractors or feeding their children one minute and the next minute responding to potentially acute road trauma or similar activities. Their communities respect them and appreciate their efforts. They are not scabs or counterfeit ambulance paramedics, nor are they — —

**Mr SAVAGE** — Nor are they paraded in unsuspecting communities as well-intentioned people in ambulance uniform.

In 1954 people in Murrayville purchased their own ambulance and recently raised \$15 000 for a defibrillator, which they are authorised to use. They are trained to the level below an acute lifesaving course, and they have the ability to administer certain drugs. Perhaps I should have clarified what the training is.

At Wentworth they have raised \$250 000 out of the money they get as serving community ambulance officers and put it towards the cost of building their new station. These people deserve recognition and should not be denigrated in the way the union has chosen to do. Without these community ambulance officers we would be — —

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

### **Red Tape Busters Pty Ltd**

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — I direct to the attention of the Minister for State and Regional Development a matter for investigation by the Minister for Consumer Affairs. It relates to a matter brought to my attention on Monday this week when, as part of my regular constituent day in my electorate, I had a visit from a husband and wife who own a small business run by only the two of them. It is a transport company. They came to me to see what assistance could be sought from the state government for their business. The reason they had come to my office was because a few months ago on *A Current Affair* they had seen a story about a company called Red Tape Busters Pty Ltd. I ask the minister to investigate this company. The program reported that the company investigated state, federal and local government for advice that was available for small businesses from the three levels of government. *A Current Affair* showed a number of success stories.

This couple were interested in getting assistance for their small business and left a message on an answering machine on a number in Queensland. They received a letter which told them that, for initial work to be undertaken, the company could assist them in liaising and negotiating with governments at all levels, undertaking research, preparing relevant documentation and liaising with close media contacts. Those four tasks alone were charged for at \$88 per hour. The company also offered assistance in providing specialist assistance in developing business plans at a fee of \$66 per hour. Preparing all relevant documentation with regard to the

submission to the relevant funding program was charged for at \$88 per hour plus a 10 per cent success fee.

The letter went on to say that an initial investigation of the relevant programs available at the federal, state and local government levels and the preparation of the report generally takes between 5 and 10 hours. The letter said that more complex reports take between 10 and 20 hours, and all are charged at a flat hourly rate of \$88. Once that initial report has been received clients can request a relevant submission. Red Tape Busters will prepare that for the client, and they say that it generally takes around 10 hours to prepare a robust submission, all at \$88 per hour.

The letter then says that if clients are successful and the small business gets funding, the company will require the payment of a 10 per cent success fee. The letter also says that the company's service offers great value for money.

If my constituents had taken up this wonderful offer they would be out of pocket by at least around \$1700 for work that might not be successful. I am pleased to note that my constituents decided that their first course of action was to come and see their local member rather than shelling out the money.

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

### **Sandringham: cliff erosion**

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation. The relationship between Port Phillip Bay and the various organisations that conduct activities around it is an important one. Also important is the relationship between the government and local communities where there is a level of combined work and synergy regarding a range of practices that are undertaken.

The specific matter I raise with the minister is to ask her to ascertain the current level of progress of a request for government funding and remedial works that are to be undertaken near the base of Masefield Avenue, Sandringham, north of the Red Bluff area and in front of the Red Bluff Hotel.

Over the past six months or so there has been extensive undercutting of the cliff base. It is a matter that the minister is aware of and has responded to on previous occasions. I understand that some geological evaluation was undertaken to ascertain what works would be

appropriate to make sure that there were no further significant cliff collapses in that specific area.

However, as a consequence of that work being undertaken there has not been any communication between the government and, in turn, by the local council to the president of the Bayside Ratepayers Association, Mr Chris Carroll, who has taken a strong and diligent interest in this matter. This is where the relationship between government, local government and the local community is important so that people can be kept informed and apprised of progress that has been made. In that case a stitch in time may have saved nine. In this case it may have saved \$900 000 or so. I ask the minister if she could advise the house of current progress.

### Roads: cattle underpasses

**Mr MAXFIELD** (Narracan) — I refer the Minister for State and Regional Development to the government's \$4 million program, which is being run in cooperation with the Victorian Farmers Federation, to assist dairy farmers to construct cattle underpasses. During the seven dark years of the Kennett government dairy farmers were given absolutely no assistance on the issue of moving their cattle from one side of a road to another.

Dairy farming is a major industry in my electorate. The increasing trend to larger farms with properties on either side of the road is causing difficulties, especially when drivers from the city who are not used to country roads come charging around a corner without being aware that cattle may be crossing because they have not taken notice of the 'Cattle crossing' signs. As a result farmers have had to face the threat of their cattle being injured — not to mention the injuries suffered by those who run into the cattle.

During the last election campaign it was a great pleasure for me as the Labor candidate to outline the Labor Party's commitment to funding cattle underpasses. During the election campaign the now Minister for State and Regional Development announced in my electorate the Labor Party's commitment of \$4 million towards their construction. That commitment has certainly been warmly welcomed by the rural community. It can be contrasted with the years of Kennett government neglect of rural Victoria, when dairy farmers were completely and utterly abandoned by a city-centric government that was not interested in looking after them, even though they are the lifeblood of my community.

As someone who worked in the dairy industry for 10 years I know how important the dairy industry is to West Gippsland.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member has 1 minute. He must ask for action.

**Mr MAXFIELD** — The comments from the opposition clearly demonstrate their disregard for those fine members of my community.

Given the importance of this program to the dairy industry, will the minister confirm whether the government will consider extending this great program if the demand is there?

### Caulfield Junior College

**Mrs SHARDEY** (Caulfield) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. On 17 August last year I raised a matter relating to the Caulfield Junior College. As I said at that time, this multicampus college was formed in 1998 with the merger of Caulfield North Primary School and Caulfield Primary School in Caulfield South. In February last year the school council announced plans to merge the two campuses at Balaclava Road. This initiated a vigorous campaign from parents to keep the Glenhantly Road campus open. In fact, a lot of division had resulted in the community. Back in August I asked the minister to take appropriate action, consider the issue, come to a conclusion and inform parents. She told me at the time that a working party had been set up to examine the issue; that it would be reporting back to her the very next week; and that she hoped there would be some resolution. In fact, there has been no resolution.

I believe the minister has not only misled this house about the action she was contemplating, she also misled the local community. Since August last year all that has happened is that she has received the task force's report, which was all very good. The parents then put a recommendation to the minister — but what did she do? She called for yet another investigation, which was to take place in the first term of this year. Now that that investigation has been completed, a new draft report has been produced — and now we are into another process, which is responding to this draft report.

I am told that even though parents from the Caulfield South campus have banded together, the response they have prepared says that this report should not be considered on its own. I ask the minister whether, if I

make this report available, she will consider it as part of her deliberations.

### **Disability services: volunteers**

**Mr SEITZ** (Keilor) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Community Services — particularly as this is the International Year of Volunteers — the needs of volunteers who work in disability services. I especially refer to those people in self-help groups, who have big commitments and whose needs are often not taken into account. I ask the minister to consider funding for those small self-help groups, which usually get assistance only for administrative work and back-up type services.

The volunteers at the Keilor centre, who meet regularly, should be looked after because they have done a tremendous job in developing that service and assisting people to live in their own accommodation wherever possible. They also educate the parents, who are often scared to allow their children to live independently. These groups teach independent living skills, including how to use public transport, how to go shopping and even how to purchase clothing and so on.

The people associated with the Sunshine House of Happiness are getting a bit older. The parents need to be helped, and the skills their children require have to be developed and fostered. Self-help groups such as this have fewer opportunities for fundraising these days, so they would benefit greatly from some government support.

### **Roads: Winchelsea crossing**

**Mr MULDER** (Polwarth) — I call on the Minister for Transport to take action to install a pedestrian crossing in Winchelsea to link Winchelsea's hospital, aged care facilities and schools with the commercial centre of the town. At present the residents of the aged care facilities and schoolchildren have to negotiate often perilous road conditions in crossing the dual highway to get to the shopping centre. I call on the minister to take action to assist the people of Winchelsea, including the elderly and schoolchildren, who have to cross this dangerous section of road by installing traffic lights or a safe pedestrian crossing.

### **Macedonian language**

**Mr KOTSIRAS** (Bulleen) — I ask the Premier to investigate whether the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs instructed an officer from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to negotiate with the Macedonian Teachers Association to come up with a deal whereby the government would withdraw the term 'Macedonian Slavonic' but would have to pay

compensation and give an apology. I ask the Premier to investigate whether the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs was instrumental in the Macedonian Teachers Association coming to an agreement to ensure peace and harmony in our community!

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

### **Responses**

**Mr Brumby** — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Murray Valley raised a matter regarding tourism to which, obviously, the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism wishes to respond. The honourable member for Bulleen raised a question for the Premier in the Premier's capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The Minister for Major Projects and Tourism is also the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, so rather than my taking that matter as the minister at the table, it is obviously more appropriate for the minister to answer the honourable member for Bulleen.

**Mr McArthur** — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, that would be entirely inappropriate, because the action the honourable member for Bulleen requested was that the Premier investigate whether this minister was up to his neck in it!

**Mr Perton** — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, matters have been raised for the Minister for Environment and Conservation. As you are aware, this afternoon she was meant to enter into the committee stage of the debate, but the minister was not able to be found during the course of the afternoon. I think both the public and Parliament would be intrigued to know where the minister is, and you should call upon her to answer the matters that were raised with her.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster is raising another point of order and I have not yet ruled on the first point of order. The Chair cannot direct the ministers at the table on responding to matters. If the Minister assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs wishes to respond to the honourable member for Bulleen, he can do so.

If the honourable member for Doncaster wishes to raise another point of order, he can do so now.

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** (Minister for Major Projects and Tourism) — I thank the honourable member for Murray Valley for raising this matter and his courtesy in coming to see me and having a bit of a chat about it. In his contribution to the budget debate

yesterday the honourable member also referred to the fantastic tourism opportunities in the north-east region, and he is absolutely right.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** — He has done the right thing; he has come and spoken and wants an answer. The honourable member referred to the great events in the region. Obviously the government has increased funding for regional events across Victoria; we have dedicated an extra half a million dollars a year. Let us not forget that when we came to government the funding was \$75 000 a year. We funded small events and big events — the biggest being the Wangaratta jazz festival, which is in the honourable member's electorate and which receives ongoing support from Tourism Victoria.

I can advise the honourable member that, it having been designated a hallmark event, about \$10 000 was spent last year advertising the festival in Canberra and southern New South Wales. Negotiations are going on with festival organisers at the moment about how the government can further help it financially. Once an event is designated a hallmark event, it gets financial support to market the event. It also gets what is called the 'free spend' from Tourism Victoria. A hallmark events brochure goes to the whole industry and travel agencies, so events get promoted quite a lot. There are not many hallmark events, especially in regional Victoria, but the jazz festival at Wangaratta is one of them.

The government is putting a lot of money into regional events and encouraging local community organisations that are running events in regional Victoria to apply because resources are available. They should apply either through the Country Victoria Tourism Council for the minor regional events program or Tourism Victoria for separate or additional support. Events funded in the region include the 2001 Albury Wodonga Festival of Sport, the 2000 Albury Wodonga Food and Wine Festival, the Beechworth Harvest Celebration, the Historical Town Festival and the Golden Horseshoe Festival. Other events in the region include the Yackandandah Folk Festival.

Great events are happening on the Queen's Birthday long weekend in Rutherglen, including the Rutherglen Winery Walkabout — which the Minister for Sport and Recreation will be attending — and the Rutherglen Country Fair. They are Rutherglen's two big events, although many other good local events will also be held there. Many events are taking place across regional Victoria on the long weekend.

I encourage event organisers and the local member to think about how they can apply for funding to access some of the money, because my department is always keen to hear from them. There are three funding rounds in February, June and October each year for the minor events program. I have been surprised that sometimes the money allocated for those periods is not expended because event organisers have not applied for it. Resources are available, and I encourage organisers to apply.

The other issue raised by the honourable member for Murray Valley — he raised a couple of points — was in relation to the insurance of events. Public liability insurance has gone up for many events, including tourism events, local events and sporting events. The HIH Insurance Group was a public liability insurer, and I am concerned about the effects of its collapse on events across Victoria. Obviously it will affect Australia as well, as one insurer is no longer in the marketplace.

It is not only the Rutherglen Country Fair that is having its premiums increased. Other events, including council-organised ones, are also having their premiums increased. The advice I have from Tourism Victoria is that if events are auspiced by councils or on council property, it may be possible, depending on the type of public liability insurance the councils have, for them to be included in the councils' insurance policies.

I encourage the honourable member to contact his local council to see if the event can be included as part of the council's existing public liability cover. Most local events are included as part of the cover, but because of the arrangements some events have, they may not necessarily have been so included. I am happy to talk further with the honourable member for Murray Valley.

The honourable member for Bulleen, in his usual way, asked the Premier to ask me as the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs what I might have done in relation to some issues with the Macedonian Teachers Association.

**Mr Kotsiras** — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I asked for the Premier to investigate the minister, not to speak to him.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS** — We take a whole-of-government view in multicultural affairs and we are serious about it. I recall that not long ago the Premier, as Minister for Multicultural Affairs, replied to the honourable member's question on notice. The fact

is the honourable member has come in here with opposition conspiracy theories. He was told in the Premier's reply that no payments had been made to the Macedonian Teachers Association. There were no deals. There was a case at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which is administered by the federal government, and the fact is the government lost the case. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission decided to withdraw the directive, and the government is duty bound to do that.

The honourable member wants to play politics on this issue. That is the way he handles these issues. He wants to divide communities, but what he does not want to do is say that this thing was set up. The government carried it through to its logical conclusion, went to the High Court and got referred to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The umpire made a decision, and that is what the honourable member does not like.

Publications put out by the former government refer to the Macedonian community. Does he want to make an issue about that? No! In the recent debate on the Racial and Religious Tolerance Bill two opposition members referred to the Macedonian community, not the Macedonian Slavonic community or the Slav Macedonian community. Honourable members opposite want to criticise the government, which has accepted the umpire's decision, and they use terminology that they publicly say they reject. They are a bunch of hypocrites, and they should stop playing politics. The umpire has made his decision, and that is the way it is.

**Mr BRUMBY** (State and Regional Development) — The honourable member for Warrnambool raised the important issue of Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind services that previously existed in Warrnambool and are no longer provided, and he gave me some background information. He raised concerns that the former RVIB office in Warrnambool closed some 10 weeks ago and that, as a consequence, some 280 people throughout the area who have vision disabilities are no longer receiving the level of service they previously received.

I listened carefully to the contribution of the honourable member. I am sure all members of the house want to see proper services maintained for people in country Victoria, wherever they live. I do not know the background to the situation or the reasons for it, but I assure the honourable member that I will refer the matter to the Minister for Community Services. I understand the honourable member wrote some 10 weeks ago; I will refer the matter on and ask

whether there are any options available to assist in restoring services to their previous level.

The honourable member for Eltham raised a matter regarding illegal parking at Montmorency railway station. He said he had received a letter from Connex about the problem and asked that I convey the matter to the Minister for Transport. I will do that.

The honourable member for Geelong raised for the Minister for Ports in another place an oil spill at the port of Geelong on 3 May, when some 600 litres were spilt. He asked whether the government would look at putting in place regulations for permanent booming around refinery and oil transfers and alluded to some examples where this exists. I know the honourable member is a strong supporter of the port and of the importance of a good environment. I will ensure that the matter is referred to the minister for her consideration.

The honourable member for Doncaster raised the report of the Environment Conservation Council on marine areas, estuaries, coasts and parks, and asked whether the minister would consider laying all the files from that report, including the files on variations, legal advice and various other matters, on the table in the parliamentary library. I will refer the matter to the minister for her consideration. Obviously in the past there have been occasions where files have been made available. There have also been many occasions on which files have not been made available, and obviously the minister will take that into account.

The honourable member for Mildura raised the issue of community ambulance officers and spoke strongly in support of the services they provide. He asked for his comments to be conveyed to the Minister for Health. I will ensure they are conveyed to the minister.

The honourable member for Bendigo East raised an interesting question about a small business comprising a husband and wife team in her electorate who saw a show on television and were considering seeking assistance from a Queensland registered company called Red Tape Busters Pty Ltd. That company provides advice on getting assistance on small business matters from government at a cost of \$88 an hour. I advise businesses in Bendigo or Bendigo East, whether they are large businesses, small businesses or a medium-sized businesses, that the government's office, Small Business Victoria, is located in Bendigo. The Bracks government has expanded the range of advisory services available to businesses. In addition, the Minister for Small Business has put in place a new program called Showcasing Small Business.

The point of what I am saying is that there are more services available to support small business in Victoria than there have been previously. If for any reason a particular business wants even more assistance than is available through normal channels, it should feel free to approach the honourable member for Bendigo East, who is an outstanding member of Parliament, and her staff about any other support or assistance that may be available.

The honourable member for Sandringham raised a matter concerning the cliffs off Masefield Avenue in Sandringham near the Red Bluff Hotel and asked about funding and support arrangements. If my memory is correct, some additional funds were made available in the budget for coastal safety works — a generic description. I will ensure the minister is aware of the comments made by the honourable member for Sandringham. He raised a particular objection to the level of safety, and I will ensure the minister is made aware of it. Obviously, the government is keen to give a high priority to cliff safety.

The honourable member for Caulfield raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education concerning Caulfield Junior College. There is a report by the department and a subsequent report prepared by a working party of the Caulfield South campus. The honourable member has provided me with a copy of that report entitled 'Review of the draft report re future directions of Caulfield Junior College' and asked me to ensure that it is conveyed to the Minister for Education together with a copy of today's *Hansard*. Obviously, she will respond to the honourable member at the earliest opportunity.

The honourable member for Keilor raised the issue of volunteers working in disability services, particularly in some of the small self-help groups. This is the International Year of Volunteers, and we are all mindful of the wonderful contributions that volunteers make in our community, particularly in some of the smaller self-help groups. I will convey the comments of the honourable member to the Minister for Community Services.

The honourable member for Polwarth raised a matter relating to the pedestrian crossing in Winchelsea and the concerns he has for older members of the community using the crossing and the safety arrangements in place. I will refer that matter to the Minister for Transport for his consideration.

The honourable member for Narracan raised a matter with me, in my capacity as Minister for State and Regional Development, concerning the Regional

Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) and the cattle underpass and overpass program. He asked me to consider additional funding for the program. The government has committed \$4 million through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund for this program. It has been an outstanding success. When I say that, I am quoting from a press release issued on 7 May by the Victorian Farmers Federation, which describes the initiative as an outstanding success.

I say with some pride that it has been highly successful and popular with farmers. To date — I know the honourable member for Monbulk is interested in this issue as well — 215 applications for cattle underpasses have been submitted to the Victorian Farmers Federation, which administers the scheme on behalf of the government; 190 applications have been approved; and as at 31 May more than \$900 000 had been paid from the RIDF to 45 farmers for completed underpasses.

In the regional breakdown of payments made to dairy farmers for underpasses — the honourable member for Narracan raised this issue — in Gippsland there have been 21 payments; in the western region there have been 6 payments; in the north-eastern region there have been 2; and in the south-western region there have been 15, which is a total of 45 payments. Farmers in regional areas right across the state are getting the benefit of this program, whether it be in Allansford in the south-west or Poowong in South Gippsland.

The honourable member for Narracan asked me whether the government would consider additional funding, and I have also had a query from the Victorian Farmers Federation about whether it should submit a new application for an extension of the program. The honourable member for Narracan in particular is enthusiastic about the program because, as he said, it was launched in his electorate prior to the last election.

I understand the VFF is in the process of preparing an RIDF application for an extension to this program as the \$4 million is already fully committed, although it will not all be spent this year. There have been no programs of this type in the past, so there is a huge backlog. However, it is a great program for farmers and for rural communities, and it is creating a huge number of jobs in the construction industry across country Victoria.

I advise the house and the honourable member for Narracan that if the VFF submits that application, it will be considered by the RIDF interdepartmental committee, which will then make a recommendation to me on the project and I will closely examine the matter.

I believe it has been a very successful program, and if there is capacity within the RIDF budget and if the committee recommends an extension to the program, I will be inclined to look favourably upon it.

**Mr McArthur** — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer you to your ruling earlier in the adjournment debate on the point of order raised by the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, the minister for tourism, and I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair — 1920–2000* and in particular to the last item on page 13, which is a ruling that states:

Which ministers may reply. Either the minister at the table or the minister to whom the issue was addressed may reply. It is not open to another minister to reply.

That is a ruling given by a particularly distinguished Deputy Speaker who I believe was named Maddigan. Madam Deputy Speaker, in the light of that ruling, I ask you to reconsider the advice you gave the house earlier and to consider requesting the Treasurer to take this matter up and refer it to the minister to whom it was directed — in other words, the Premier — because on your own earlier ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, the relevant minister was not able to reply.

**Mr Brumby** — On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would have thought the matter is settled because the point of order was raised earlier, you ruled on it, and the minister assisting has already responded.

The shadow minister raised the point of order. However, there is a particular circumstance in which a portfolio has a minister assisting, and in the case of this adjournment matter, although the Premier is the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, he has a minister assisting on multicultural affairs. Obviously the Premier is not here, as he is at the Council of Australian Governments meeting, and the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs was actually in the chamber and was happy to respond to the question.

While I understand there has been a general ruling about these things, it would seem to me to be nonsense to suggest that in an arrangement where you have a minister and a minister assisting, if the minister assisting is present and the minister is not, the minister assisting cannot respond to a matter raised with the minister. I simply make that point.

**Mrs Shardey** — On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that you abide by the ruling you made previously, and not your ruling today. I suggest you stick with your earlier ruling on this type of issue, because the minister was being asked to investigate the

very minister who came into the house and wanted to answer the question. It begs the question and makes little sense from that point of view. I think your earlier ruling on this issue is appropriate, and I request that you ask the minister at the table to refer the matter to the Premier for him to do what has been asked by the honourable member for Bulleen — that is, investigate the matter relating to the minister assisting him in that portfolio.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I will not hear further on the point of order. I allowed the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs to respond because he has a ministerial responsibility in that area, which was not the case in the previous situation. However, I accept that because the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs was the subject of the request it would be appropriate for the Premier to investigate the matter. I shall ask the Premier to investigate the matters raised by the honourable member for Bulleen.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 6.56 p.m.**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

**Tuesday, 5 June 2001**

**Police and Emergency Services: Torquay station**

**293. MR PATERSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services — what — (a) is the Government’s timetable for the establishment of a new police station in Torquay; and (b) hours of operation are planned for the station.

**ANSWER:**

The Government is committed to upgrading police facilities along the surf coast; Lorne proudly boasts a new collocated police and emergency services facility and construction of a new 24 hour police station in Ocean Grove serving the surf coast and the Bellarine community will commence construction early in 2002.

The Torquay police station was built in 1960 and is currently a 16-hour station. While recent fit out and computer upgrades have improved the police station, the Victoria Police assessment of operational priority for the facility proposes that its replacement and upgrade to a 24 hour facility ideally occur within the next 5 years. This timeframe will need to recognise the availability of funding for upgrade of Police station assets and the competing demand of other capital projects across Government

The Government has to date made a substantive investment in police facilities and will also investigate possible opportunities for collocation of police and other emergency services in the area.

**Premier: racial and religious tolerance bill**

**301. MR KOTSIRAS** — To ask the Honourable the Premier with reference to submissions regarding the Government’s Discussion Paper and draft model Racial and Religious Tolerance Bill — (a) what was the total number of submissions, letters and emails received; (b) what proportion supported the model bill; (c) what proportion opposed the bill; and (d) what proportion sought amendment of the bill in order to give it support.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

The Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs received in excess of 5000 written submissions.

To provide an answer as to what proportion supported the model bill, what proportion opposed the bill and what proportion indicated support only if the proposed bill was amended, would require an inordinate amount of time and resources that are not available.

**Police and Emergency Services: full-time police**

**329. MR WELLS** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services — what was the effective number of full time police employed at — (a) 31 July 1999; (b) 31 August 1999; (c) 30 September 1999; and (d) 20 October 1999.

**ANSWER:**

The full time equivalent number of sworn police employed at the specified times are shown below. No data is available for the date of 20 October 1999, however data from the nearest date for which data is available, which is 25 October 1999, is included.

31 July 1999	9,312
31 August 1999	9,314
30 September 1999	9,306
25 October 1999	9,286

**Police and Emergency Services: Sandringham police station**

**335. MR THOMPSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services with reference to the Sandringham Police Station — what are the number of — (a) authorised police officers; (b) actual police officers; and (c) probationary constables at — (i) 1 February 1999; (ii) 30 June 1999; (iii) 20 October 1999; (iv) 1 February 2000; (v) 30 June 2000; and (vi) 1 February 2001.

**ANSWER:**

Where possible the following data is for the dates specified. Where that data was not available, data for the nearest date for which data is available is included.

	Authorised	Actual	Probationary Cons.
25 January 1999 (nearest to 1 Feb 99)	32	29	5
30 June 1999	32	29	0
20 October 1999	32	28	0
7 February 2000 (nearest to 1 Feb 00)	32	29	2
30 June 2000	32	31	7
29 January 2001 (nearest to 1 Feb 01)	32	37	10

Notes: 1. In line with police methodology, actual police numbers include Probationary Constables as they are fully operational at graduation and hence considered to be part of authorised strength. The listing of Probationary Constables is shown to indicate how many of the actual number they comprise. For example in the first date there are 29 members at Sandringham of whom 5 are Probationary Constables.

2. The number of approved police officers remained static throughout the period covered by the specified dates. However as a result of the implementation of the Statewide Management Model and the Minimum Service Delivery Standards the Assistant Commissioner (General Policing) has recently increased the number of authorised police officers at Sandringham Police Station to 38.

**Health: Sandringham hospital treatment numbers**

**341. MR THOMPSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Health how many patients were treated at the Sandringham Hospital for — (a) Accident and Emergency; (b) Obstetrics; and (c) Orthopaedic Surgery for the time frames — (i) 21 April 1999–20 October 1999; (ii) 21 October 1999–20 April 2000; (iii) 21 April 2000–20 October 2000; and (iv) 21 October 2000–20 April 2001.

**ANSWER:**

***Accident & Emergency Separations at Sandringham Hospital***

TREATED	Total
21 April 1999 to 20 October 1999	1380
21 October 1999 to 20 April 1999	2107
21 April 2000 to 20 October 2000	2067
21 October 2000 to 20 April 2001	2033
Grand Total	7587

*Notes: Accident & Emergency Separations are all Road emergency, Industrial (work) emergency, Other emergency admissions.*

***Obstetrics Separations at Sandringham Hospital***

TREATED	Total
21 April 1999 to 20 October 1999	417
21 October 1999 to 20 April 1999	594
21 April 2000 to 20 October 2000	545
21 October 2000 to 20 April 2001	452
Grand Total	2008

*Note: All Obstetrics Separations are admission in the Obstetrics Specialty derived by Diagnosis related Groups (DRGs).*

***Orthopaedic Surgery Separations at Sandringham Hospital***

TREATED	Total
21 April 1999 to 20 October 1999	314
21 October 1999 to 20 April 1999	419
21 April 2000 to 20 October 2000	421
21 October 2000 to 20 April 2001	376
Grand Total	1530

*Note: All Orthopaedic Surgery Separations are Surgical type admissions in the Orthopaedic Specialty derived by Diagnosis related Groups (DRGs).*

Notes:

Data for 21 October 2000 to 20 April 2001 period is provisional.

All separations are admitted patients discharged in treatment periods requested.

Source: Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED) 21 April 2001.

**Environment and Conservation: beaches at risk**

**343. MR THOMPSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation with reference to the Minister's announcement in March regarding a \$100,000 study to identify beaches at risk around Port Phillip Bay — (a) what was the date of the announcement; (b) who was in attendance at the announcement; and (c) what was the forum for the announcement.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

- (a) The 'Beaches at Risk' consultancy was announced on 15 March 2001.
- (b) Over 120 invited guests were in attendance including representatives of the Victorian Coastal Council, Regional Coastal Boards, Government Agencies, Local Government, individuals and community groups.
- (c) The forum for the announcement was the presentation of the Victorian Coastal Awards of Excellence 2001 by the Victorian Coastal Council in conjunction with Coast Action/Coastcare held at the Melbourne Museum.



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Wednesday, 6 June 2001

**Environment and Conservation: tree destruction**

**290. MR THOMPSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Environment and Conservation with reference to the ringbarking and poisoning of 100 trees, all estimated to be over 150 years old, in the Cobboboonee State Forest reported in *The Age* of 17 March 2001 on page 14 —

1. Which Regional Office employed the officer who organised the destruction of the trees.
2. How many years of experience with the Department did the regional officer have.
3. What protocols were in place, at the time the ring-barking and poisoning occurred, to instruct regional officers in relation to their responsibilities and in particular to the moratorium that was in place.
4. What changes in operational procedures have been implemented in — (a) the region; and (b) other departmental offices since the incident to ensure that the incident is not repeated.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

1. The officer supervising the culling operation for Forestry Victoria is based in the Heywood office of the Department.
2. The officer involved in instructing the crew in the culling operation has worked for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and its predecessors for 25 years.
3. Forest operations are guided by detailed forest harvesting prescriptions. In this case, the supervising officer inadvertently adopted a set of prescriptions for the operation that applied to another Forest Management Area (FMA). The operation was stopped immediately the supervising officer's manager became aware of it.
4. All Forestry Victoria staff will be advised in writing of all changes to Government policy as they occur.
5. In addition, an annual briefing on the forest harvesting prescriptions will be established in the Portland FMA and in all other FMAs to ensure staff are up-to-date with their contents and to provide a formal opportunity to amend or modify the prescriptions, including any amendments required as a result of new Government policies.

**Health: Grace McKellar Centre**

**295(a). MR PATERSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Health — what is the — (a) Government's timetable for the redevelopment of the Grace McKellar Centre in Geelong; and (b) extent of the financial contribution required from Barwon Health for the project.

**ANSWER:**

The question falls within the portfolio responsibility of my colleague, the Hon Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Housing and Aged Care who has answered this question previously.

**Police and Emergency Services: Beach Road traffic volume**

**342. MR THOMPSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Police and Emergency Services with reference to the cities of Bayside and Kingston — what are the — (a) dates when the Traffic Operations Group monitored traffic on Beach Road with radar and speed detection devices; and (b) number and dates of the speed infringements recorded for traffic on Beach Road from 1997 to 2001.

**ANSWER:**

- (a) The Traffic and Operations Support Department of Victoria Police has advised that it has speed cameras on a continual roster in Beach Road.
- (b) The Traffic and Operations Support Department of Victoria Police has supplied the number of speed camera infringements for the years 1999 to 2001 inclusive. The system used by Victoria Police to record this data was modified in 1998 and consequently figures for the period prior to 1999 are not readily available. The number of speed camera infringements recorded by Victoria Police is summarised in the table below.

	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001 (to date)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Beach Road Beaumaris</b>	2,994	418	232	3,644
<b>Beach Road Mordialloc</b>	559	857	480	1,896
<b>Beach Road Mordialloc</b>	298	165	0	463
<b>Beach Road Parkdale</b>	245	474	320	1,039
<b>Total</b>	4,096	1,914	1,032	7,042

In interpreting the numbers of infringements, it is important to note that:

- (i) The number of “on the spot” speeding infringements issued for the same dates are not recorded by offence location.
- (ii) The dates for each infringement issued vary over the respective year.
- (iii) Sites such as Beach Road Beaumaris in 1999 may be targeted due to the frequency of traumas or complaints of speeding vehicles. The targeting is discontinued once the frequency begins to diminish.
- (iv) The figures for 2001 are to date.