

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**14 June 2001**

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**FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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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
Delahunty, Ms Mary Elizabeth	Northcote	ALP	Paterson, Mr Alister Irvine	South Barwon	LP
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Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Savage, Mr Russell Irwin	Mildura	Ind
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Holding, Mr Timothy James	Springvale	ALP	Shardey, Mrs Helen Jean	Caulfield	LP
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Hulls, Mr Rob Justin	Niddrie	ALP	Steggall, Mr Barry Edward Hector	Swan Hill	NP
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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, 14 June 2001**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos) took the chair at 9.37 a.m. and read the prayer.**

**PETITIONS**

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

**Boneo Road, Rosebud: crossing**

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth:

The people who live west of Boneo Road, Rosebud, including many elderly, some in wheelchairs, scooters, walking frames and walking sticks, have difficulty crossing this busy road to access the Port Phillip Plaza shopping centre and the post office.

Your petitioners therefore pray that a pedestrian crossing be provided in an appropriate place between Cairns Avenue and Marks Avenue on Boneo Road, Rosebud.

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

**By Mr DIXON (Dromana) (277 signatures)**

**Women’s Petition**

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the state of Victoria sheweth:

that women desire a just and inclusive nation in which the voices of all its people and its many cultures are heard and respected;

that it is an inalienable right of all women to participate fully and equally in shaping our nation and have their contribution valued;

that we acknowledge and respect Australia’s indigenous peoples’ spiritual connection with and custodianship of the land and its waters. We recognise past hurt and we will work together to achieve justice and equity.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the government delivers for and with Victorian women and communities:

equal representation of women in all areas and levels of decision making;

a plan ensuring safety for women and children in the home, workplace and the community;

economic independence and security for all women, genuine equal pay for equal work, fair and family friendly working conditions and access to quality child care;

high-quality, lifelong and affordable education relevant to the diverse needs of all girls and women;

an accessible, well-funded community-based public health network which includes specific services for women and girls;

environmental sustainability to improve and protect the quality of our air, land and water;

presentations of women in the media and advertising which are positive and non-exploitative; and

a society where caring and unpaid work are valued and shared.

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

**By Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) (198 signatures)**

**Preschools: funding**

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

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria respectfully requests that the Victorian government release the findings of the preschool review and the government honour its promise to act on the findings immediately, with particular respect to:

pay parity to retain and attract teachers, and obtain relief teachers when necessary;

funding to reduce group sizes down from 30, to a more acceptable ratio of fewer than 25;

increased funding to decrease the workload for committees and reduce fees for all parents.

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

**By Mr LANGUILLER (Sunshine) (558 signatures)**

**Laid on table.**

**CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES**

**Films and videotapes**

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

That there be presented to this house a copy of the:

- (a) National Classification Code (Amendment No. 2); and
- (b) Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Videotapes (Amendment No. 3).

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) presented papers in compliance with foregoing order.**

**Laid on table.**

## VICTORIAN CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Annual report

**Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport), by leave, presented report of inquiries into child deaths: protection and care 2001.**

Laid on table.

## DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

### Crime trends

**Mr LUPTON (Knox) presented report, together with appendices.**

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

## COUNCIL OF MAGISTRATES

### Annual report

**Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) presented, by command of the Governor, report for 1999–2000.**

Laid on table.

## PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

*Financial Management Act 1994:*

Report from the Minister for Agriculture that he had received the 2000 Annual Report of the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board

Report from the Minister for Environment and Conservation that she had not received the 1999–2000 Annual Reports of the:

Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board

Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board

*Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978* — Summary of Variations notified between 23 November 2000 and 13 June 2001 — Ordered to be printed

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Health Services Act 1988* — SR No 51

*Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958* — SR No 52

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*

Minister's exception certificate in relation to Statutory Rule No 52

Minister's exemption certificate in relation to Statutory Rule No 51

Youth Parole and Youth Residential Board — Report for the year 1999–2000.

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Gas: Barwon Heads supply

**Mr PATERSON (South Barwon)** — The government has again misled the people of Barwon Heads. In another place last week Mrs Elaine Carbines, a member for Geelong Province, attempted to illustrate the benefits that would flow to the town from the Gas Industry Bill. The clear implication in her contribution was that clause 27 of the bill would provide energy provider TXU with the incentive to connect Barwon Heads to the natural gas grid. The claims made by the honourable member are false.

If the honourable member had bothered to check with senior officers of either the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) or the Office of the Regulator-General (ORG), she would have discovered that clause 27 of the bill has no bearing whatsoever on the stalled Barwon Heads project. Clause 27 of the Gas Industry Bill gives protection to energy providers against competition for a set period. Both DNRE and the ORG have confirmed to me that security or protection against competition is not an issue in the case of Barwon Heads and therefore the provisions of the legislation are irrelevant.

Attempts by this hopeless Labor government to deceive the people of Barwon Heads should be condemned. The government's gross mishandling of the Barwon Heads natural gas issue goes on and on. The Australian Labor Party continues to treat the people of the town as second-class citizens. Barwon Heads residents should receive a subsidy in line with the subsidy given to residents in North Bellarine, and it should be provided without any further delay.

### Goulburn Valley: salinity program

**Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton)** — I pay tribute to the people of the Goulburn Valley, who last Saturday night celebrated 10 years since the commencement of the salinity program, which has provided so many wonderful benefits for agriculture and ensured its future in the Goulburn Valley.

In particular, I pay tribute to Mr John Dainton, who in the initial stages was the person who originally woke up the farming community to the devastation that could be caused if nothing was done about salinity. He was wonderfully supported in those days by the then mayor of Shepparton, Jeremy Gaylard. They got together and developed the salinity program, which eventually became part of the catchment management authority.

Since that time, more than 2000 whole-farm plans have been put into operation, covering more than 45 per cent of the irrigated area. Whole-farm plans provide for the proper drainage of property. Massive surface drainage and wonderful environmental programs have taken place.

The people of the Goulburn Valley look back on the programs and salute those people for what they did. They have ensured that magnificent fruit — stone fruit, pome fruit, tomatoes and crops for grazing — will continue to grow in the Goulburn Valley. What those people did 10 or 12 years ago has enabled the Goulburn Valley to remain the food bowl of Australia.

### **Carrum Primary School**

**Ms LINDELL** (Carrum) — I ask all honourable members to join with me in congratulating Carrum Primary School on its magnificent school production entitled 'Heroes, thongs and Vegemite'. Together with Australia, the school this year celebrates its centenary. During the production each class in the school portrayed one decade of Australia's development.

The program contained cameo tributes to Don Bradman and Rolf Harris, and JO'K was there for us '60s rockers! The drawn Australian Football League Grand Final between North Melbourne and Collingwood was magnificently replayed, complete with the wonderful music of *Up There, Cazaly*.

I particularly congratulate the principal of Carrum Primary School, Alana O'Neil; the music teacher who put the original concept and narrative together, Carol Ray; the grade 6 students who were the narrators of the production — Hayley Simson, Maddy Criner, Jessica Arnott and Amanda Simpson; and the parents and school community who put in a terrific effort. The production had a large band of assistants —

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

### **Schools: rural Victoria**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — Much beating of drums has been done by this government about how

wonderful it is for Victorian education and the amount of money it is spending. Time and again honourable members have heard how it is increasing funding, which seems to apply unless you are a rural school inside the Melbourne statistical division (MSD).

If a school in the MSD is not receiving rurality funding, that will be changed. Schools that satisfy the size criteria will receive 50 per cent of the normal rural-size adjustment factor. That sounds really generous until it is discovered that funding will be halved for schools in the MSD already receiving rurality funding. Those not already funded will receive only 50 per cent of the normal rural-size funding. Funding will be slashed by 50 per cent for at least three schools in my electorate alone.

One school, which is currently receiving \$62 898.46, will have that reduced to \$31 450. This money was granted because of need, and now the school will have to cut essential specialist teaching programs. It is a typical case of a socialist government lowering the bar; a typical case of a minister who is interested only in sound bytes and not the nitty-gritty real problems of life — a minister who is robbing Peter to pay Paul!

### **Wendy Fletcher**

**Ms ALLEN** (Benalla) — We all know that people in country Victoria do it better than anybody else, especially our country schoolteachers. I congratulate a former country schoolteacher, Wendy Fletcher, who is an expert in dyslexia and was recently invited by the Canadian Dyslexia Association to make a keynote presentation on the Victorian scene at the association's international conference. Her presentation included a diagnostic model for identifying students with dyslexia, accommodation to assist students and inclusive teaching strategies based on multisensory teaching methods in the regular classroom.

Wendy was a teacher at the former Seymour Technical College and was seconded to the regional department in Benalla about 11 years ago. Her expertise in student welfare is extremely well regarded across the whole region. To have Wendy asked to attend an international conference overseas is a credit to country Victorians and country schoolteachers as a whole.

We have a number of dyslexic students in the region and Wendy's expertise has been a wonderful contribution to helping those students and their parents; and in particular helping students assimilate into ordinary school programs.

I congratulate Wendy. She is an expert — not only an expert schoolteacher, but a shining example —

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

### Chances for Children

**Mr SAVAGE** (Mildura) — I wish to place on record the Chances for Children concept, which is an initiative of the Sunraysia Rural Water Authority, the First Mildura Irrigation Trust and Lower Murray Water, in association with Mallee Family Care. The patron of Chances for Children is former Victorian Premier, Sir Rupert Hamer.

The mission statement of Chances for Children states:

'Chances for Children' is the fund established to ensure that the absence of money does not stand in the way of a youngster's ability to achieve their maximum potential, be it in the educational, social or cultural pursuits which contribute to the realisation of their potential — and the enhancement of their contribution to the communities of north-west Victoria and south-west New South Wales.

I also pay tribute to the tireless work of Vernon Knight, who is in charge of Mallee Family Care, and Ken Carr.

The official launch of Chances for Children will be on 16 June to set up a trust fund to provide financial help to people experiencing financial difficulties with the education of their children. This is a great concept. I advise honourable members that the basis for the scheme is a small contribution to the fund when their water accounts are paid to assist benefiting persons in financial difficulty with the education of their children.

### Citizens Electoral Council

**Mrs SHARDEY** (Caulfield) — I bring to the attention of the house the activities of the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia (CEC), which is widely recognised as the most highly financed racist group in Australia. It is claimed that it uses the political system in the country as a cover for fundraising campaigns.

The CEC targets the elderly and those who are educationally disempowered to support spreading its racist and bizarre political policies and beliefs and to raise relatively large amounts of money. It is said to be a branch of the organisation or groups that support the views of the American, Lyndon Larouche, who believes in an impending world crisis engineered by an alleged cabal of Jewish bankers based in Britain.

The CEC recently provoked outrage in my electorate by dropping its newsletter in areas known to be inhabited by the Jewish community, thus causing deep offence to both Jewish and non-Jewish residents. It is claimed that the organisation intends standing

candidates in a large number of seats in coming federal elections, including the by-election in the seat of Aston.

I call on the government and all party leaders to demonstrate leadership by publicly opposing the policies and views of the CEC, and I suggest that all honourable members vigilantly monitor the activities of this divisive and provocative group in their electorates.

### CFA: Gisborne brigades

**Ms DUNCAN** (Gisborne) — I wish to pay particular tribute to the volunteers of three Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades in the electorate of Gisborne.

Last Sunday morning, which was a beautiful, sunny morning, I had the pleasure of visiting the Heskett-Kerrie fire brigade and announcing funding for their various new tankers.

The Romsey CFA fire brigade also received \$35 000 from two sources, including the Community Safety Emergency Support Fund, which has helped all of the local brigades.

The CFA's Springfield fire brigade has raised the enormous sum of \$36 000 through its own efforts. What an amazing contribution!

I pay tribute to the captains of the brigades, Captain Pat Clarke, Captain Ron Cole and Captain James Dunn and their teams, and acknowledge all the work they do around the electorate. It is an area of very high risk. Last summer we were fortunate not to have any major outbreaks of fire, but many events still required the calling out of the CFA brigades and their volunteers.

Sunday morning is not the easiest time of the week to get up and put in the hours required to keep up training standards. The level of training required of CFA volunteers is ever increasing, and the responsibilities volunteers take on — on behalf of all of us! — are amazing. The government is very grateful to the CFA and its volunteers.

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

### Hospitals: services report

**Mr WILSON** (Bennettswood) — I raise the issue of the Minister for Health failing to release the *Hospital Services Report* for the March quarter of 2001.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr WILSON** — The report should be released while Parliament is sitting to give honourable members

the opportunity to assess and debate the performance of Victoria's public health system.

**Dr Napthine** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, it is very hard to hear the honourable member, who is making an intelligent and incisive contribution.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. The honourable member for Keilor shall cease interjecting forthwith. I ask the whole chamber to quieten down.

**Mr WILSON** — The December quarter report indicated that the position of Victoria's public hospitals had deteriorated significantly in the year December 1999 to December 2000. The minister has a habit of releasing the report late.

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr Maclellan** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, you had no sooner asked the house to settle down so the honourable member could make his comments than the Leader of the House, the Minister for Transport, started shouting at him and abusing him across the house. I cannot hear the honourable member from my seat here. I ask that he be given a go.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Once again I ask the house to quieten down. The Chair is now having difficulty hearing the honourable member.

**Mr WILSON** — The Minister for Health has a habit of releasing the report late and on days and at times when he thinks it will attract the least possible media and public attention.

It is imperative that this quarterly report be released so honourable members can see whether the performance of Victoria's public hospitals has improved or deteriorated in the first three months of this year. It is now mid-June and the Minister for Health must be in a position to release this important report. I call upon him to do so immediately.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Springvale has 20 seconds.

### **Members: register of interests**

**Mr HOLDING** (Springvale) — I ask when members of the opposition are going to declare their interests as required under the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act. According to Telstra's share registry, one honourable member has 1000 shares in Telstra that he acquired on 17 October 1999 and he has

still failed to declare. Another member has half the issued shares in Commercial Glazing Pty Ltd and, according to the latest company records, which I can make available to the house, is the beneficiary of half of the assets —

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

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Honourable members will come to order, particularly the honourable member for Polwarth. The honourable member for Narracan! The honourable member for Bentleigh!

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Bendigo sitting**

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

That so much of standing orders and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday, 16 August 2001, as to allow —

- (a) this house to invite Cr Barry Ackerman, mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, to attend on the floor of the house on Thursday, 16 August 2001, at 11.00 a.m. to address the house;
- (b) for the purposes of question time on that day, sessional order 3 to apply with the expression '2.10 p.m.' substituted for the expression '2.00 p.m.' wherever occurring; and
- (c) the time for business to be interrupted for the purpose of sessional order 5 to be, for that day, 5.00 p.m.

In doing so I would like to make some introductory comments. The motion sets up the procedures for the historic meeting of the Legislative Assembly in Bendigo. As all honourable members know, following an initiative of yours, Honourable Speaker, and as part of the centenary of Federation proposals, a sitting of the Legislative Assembly will occur in Bendigo on Thursday, 16 August. The motion sets up the procedures for what will happen in Bendigo.

When Parliament visits Bendigo the government intends to conduct as far as possible a normal parliamentary day. We want to go to Bendigo, which is an important part of regional Victoria, and take the Parliament to the people. To do so we need to have an establishment resolution setting out the mechanisms for achieving that objective.

The distance from Melbourne to Bendigo sets some conditions and presents some difficulties in logistics. Accordingly, and after consultation with the civic leaders in Bendigo, it has been suggested that the appropriate time for the commencement of Parliament is 11.00 a.m. We will essentially make up the time that would normally have been available before 11 o'clock by sitting through to a bit later in the early evening. The sitting will take place on a Thursday. The custom and practice of the house is to commence the adjournment debate at 4 o'clock, following the operation of the government business program resolution.

The government is putting forward a program that essentially tries to make up for the time that will be needed for people to travel from Melbourne and to set up, particularly the staff. It is probably important to place on the record that, as you, Honourable Speaker, would know, the parliamentary staff have to be in Bendigo for a longer period before and after the sitting. A large number of the staff have to travel up in the morning, and they need some time not only for travelling but also for setting up in Bendigo.

At the end of the parliamentary day, rather than, as I said, commencing the adjournment debate at 4 o'clock, as is traditional on a Thursday, the motion suggests that we commence the adjournment debate at 5 o'clock to make up time. It also fits in with the desires of the civic leaders in the City of Greater Bendigo, who will be inviting all members of Parliament after the sitting has concluded to attend a civic function to meet with not only the mayor, councillors and senior officials of the city but also other leading members of the Bendigo community. I would urge, as I guess you would, Honourable Speaker, all honourable members to make themselves available to join in that civic function.

The people of Bendigo are looking forward to the opportunity of having Parliament sit in their city. They are looking forward to the opportunity of having that dialogue with members of Parliament of all parties, including the Independents, as soon as the adjournment responses conclude that evening. We hope all honourable members will reciprocate that anticipation by making themselves available to take part.

In addition to setting out the commencement and finishing times, the motion provides for question time to commence at 10 minutes past 2, rather than at 2 o'clock. The reason is that for the first time, as the government understands, question time in the Victorian Parliament will be broadcast live on regional television.

**Mr Hulls** — A new tie!

**Mr BATCHELOR** — That's right. I take up the interjection from the Attorney-General and advise people to buy their new ties and prepare elegantly for the occasion.

The request has come from Channel 2 to have question time commencing at 2.10 p.m. to meet its scheduling requirements and to enable a short introductory documentary, if you like, to precede the broadcasting of parliamentary question time to set the scene.

**Mr Hulls** — Bananas in Pyjamas!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Attorney-General!

**Mr BATCHELOR** — We will not ask the Attorney-General to provide production advice — I think they can get on quite well without his suggestions.

The ABC will be providing a documentary that will develop the theme of the century of Federation, the important role Victoria has played in that, the importance of this institution in the life of democracy in this state and, of course, the visit to Bendigo.

The government also proposes to try to use it as a representative day within the confines of the times available for a traditional Thursday sitting day. In essence, we will commence the day with formal business, followed by the 90-second members statements. We are proposing that after that there be a period through to lunchtime for discussion of a motion. After the suspension for lunch there would be the usual question time, and after that there would be a second-reading debate on a bill already on the notice paper. In addition, there would be a second-reading speech, to demonstrate to the community of Bendigo how a bill is introduced at the second-reading stage as well as a second-reading debate. We will end the day with a traditional adjournment debate.

The exercise will be an historic adventure for us, and for the community and good citizens of Bendigo. It will provide us with an opportunity to enter into a dialogue. I understand the motion and the thrust of the motion has broad support across the chamber. In the discussions that have been held with the parties, there was no fundamental objection to what is set out.

**Ms Asher** interjected.

**Mr BATCHELOR** — That is what happened. The people we were speaking to had no objections — in fact, they were in furious agreement. I understand there may be other objections. Later speakers will deal with those should they arise.

It will be an important occasion, and we hope all members of Parliament treat it as such rather than seeing it as just an excursion to take them away from Melbourne to Bendigo.

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Leader of the Opposition) — The Liberal Party opposition welcomes the opportunity for the Legislative Assembly to go to Bendigo. It is a unique opportunity to take Parliament to regional Victoria, and the sitting will be greatly appreciated by the citizens of Bendigo and surrounds. I note that on the same day the Legislative Council, which is controlled by the Liberal Party, has decided to go to Ballarat. That will be a good opportunity for the people of Ballarat and district to see the upper house in action. We will show in regional areas that both houses of Parliament work effectively and, I hope, in a democratic way for the interests of Victorians.

However, the Liberal Party disagrees with the motion moved by the Leader of the House. It will not take the issue to a division but wishes its disagreement with particular aspects of the motion to be noted.

**Mr Maxfield** interjected.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — The honourable member for Narracan interjects, which is disorderly. I make it clear that the Liberal Party is happy to go to Bendigo. As a member who represents a regional electorate some 400 kilometres from Melbourne, it is not unusual for me to be in regional and rural Victoria. It may be unusual for a number of honourable members on the government benches —

**Ms Allan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Bendigo East should cease interjecting!

**Dr NAPTHINE** — As I said, as the member for Portland it is not unusual for me to be in regional and rural areas. I do not find it a great strain to travel a bit over 100 kilometres to go to Parliament.

**Ms Allan** — It's 150 kilometres.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have asked the honourable member for Bendigo East to cease interjecting. The Leader of the House!

**Dr NAPTHINE** — The Liberal Party disagrees with the motion. As I said, it will not take the issue to a division because it fundamentally supports the Legislative Assembly going to Bendigo and the upper house going to Ballarat to take Parliament to the people of Victoria. However, it disagrees with the motion

because it believes the people of rural and regional Victoria deserve to see Parliament in its full and proper operation, not a token version.

The purpose of taking the Legislative Assembly to Bendigo is to give the people of Bendigo and regional Victoria the opportunity to see Parliament as it happens on a normal day. It would be a bad advertisement for Parliament if the people of Bendigo saw only a token effort. I welcome the fact that there will be a full question time, a proper adjournment debate and debate on the second reading of a bill.

**Mr Mildenhall** interjected.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — The honourable member for Footscray says it is offensive. That is the very point I am making.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Footscray should cease interjecting.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — I believe the centenary of Federation sitting of the federal Parliament here, although historic, lacked something because it was not a proper sitting of the Parliament, and it should have been. There should have been a full day's sitting in this chamber as a mark of respect for the centenary of Federation. The federal Parliament's token effort was inadequate. That is why I want to make sure that when the Legislative Assembly goes to Bendigo it is not a token effort and therefore subject to the same sorts of criticism.

The parliamentary sitting day should start at 9.30 a.m., as normal sitting days do, and it should go to 10.00 p.m., which is when the house normally starts the adjournment debate, finishing at 11.00 or 11.30 p.m., at the conclusion of the adjournment debate. That would give the people of Bendigo a chance to see Parliament in proper session.

Unfortunately a number of people in Victoria already have diminished respect for the operation of state and federal parliaments and state and federal members of Parliament. Most honourable members would have been disappointed to read in the *Herald Sun* this week that when people were asked which professions they trusted least federal politicians topped the list and state politicians came second. Third on the list were real estate agents and then banks and oil companies. It was disappointing for all honourable members to see state politicians ranked so highly as people the community does not trust or respect.

One of the reasons politicians are neither trusted nor respected is that we treat the people with scant respect.

And this is a case in point. There is an opportunity to take Parliament as it really happens to the people of Bendigo and show them how Parliament truly works. The honourable members for Bendigo East and Bendigo West would say that many people in Bendigo are at work during the normal working hours of 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., but I am sure those people would love to have the opportunity after work to watch Parliament in action. They will be denied that opportunity because the government is putting up a token effort in the sitting of Parliament in Bendigo.

It is a good thing that the Legislative Assembly is going to Bendigo: I fully support that. But the Liberal Party would prefer and would recommend strongly to the government that, rather than having a partial sitting of Parliament, there be a full day's sitting starting at 9.30 a.m., going on to the adjournment at 10.00 p.m. and finishing at the end of the adjournment debate.

I understand there has been some comment across the table — which is absolutely disgraceful and inappropriate — to the effect that it is some sort of back-door attempt at restraining expenses. Let me assure you, Mr Speaker, and the Parliament, that as a member of Parliament I will not be claiming any expenses for the trip to Bendigo and neither will anybody else from the opposition side of the house. This is not about the Labor Party's approach to expenses. This is about providing an opportunity to take a true sitting of the Parliament to the people of Bendigo. The appropriate way to do that is to provide for a full day's sitting.

There is still the opportunity to have a civic reception from 6.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m., which all honourable members would be pleased to attend, with the mayor, councillors and leaders of the Bendigo community. There are a number of occasions when receptions are conducted by multicultural and interest groups in Queen's Hall or across the road between 6.30 and 8.00 p.m. during a normal sitting of Parliament. There is every opportunity for that to happen in Bendigo. The people who attend that civic reception would be welcome to sit in the gallery after 8.00 p.m. so they could see their members of Parliament in action.

In conclusion, while the Liberal Party is not opposing the motion and strongly supports the taking of the Legislative Assembly to Bendigo and the Legislative Council to Ballarat, it says that those cities deserve a full sitting of the Parliament, not a token sitting.

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — I echo some concerns that the National Party has about the proposals for the sitting in Bendigo. I am absolutely

delighted that the sitting will be undertaken in that fair city on that day. I lived in Bendigo for five years during the latter part of my primary and early part of my secondary education. It is a great city. While I am up there I will be delighted to visit Quarry Hill and Flora Hill, places where I have lived. I look forward to it. I had the great pleasure of attending a school run by the Marist Brothers in Bendigo for five years. My mother taught for the brothers for 28 years, 5 of which were spent in Bendigo. I have a lot of close associations with the city.

I am also concerned about the starting time for the sitting being 11 o'clock, but honourable members know the reason why it is starting at that time. For most members of the Labor Party this will be a first-time venture outside Melbourne! The worry is that government members do not want to get on the road in the early hours of the morning because they might get lost and not arrive! That is the real problem, and the reason for an 11 o'clock start; it is so they can get up there in daylight.

**Ms Allen** interjected.

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

**Mr RYAN** — It is so they will not get lost! For most members of the National Party in the lower house Bendigo will be closer to their places of residence than they are to Melbourne. We are delighted to be going to Bendigo for all of those reasons. It would be marvellous if there were a full sitting day as the expression is understood in this house. We need to ensure that this sitting in Bendigo is not perceived as an exercise in tokenism. Therefore I hope we can ensure that, within the parameters of the program which has been set out by the government, we are able to demonstrate to the people of Bendigo that this is a parliamentary sitting day in every sense of the expression, that the business is transacted in a fulsome sense and that they are not left with any impression that they are being short-changed. We want to ensure that we are up there in all seriousness with the Parliament functioning fully and that this historic day is treated in the manner intended by all honourable members.

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East) — As a local member I am very pleased to have the opportunity of welcoming my colleagues to Bendigo on 16 August and to be speaking in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the House. This will be an historic occasion for the city and the people of Bendigo. In my unbiased view Bendigo is the most appropriate place in country Victoria to hold such an historic sitting because of the



role the city's rich history has played over the past 150 years, firstly, in the development of Victoria as a state, and secondly, in its key role and the role of key local identities in the formation of our federation.

Gold was first discovered in Bendigo in, I believe, July 1851. Many celebrations have already occurred in Bendigo for the 150th anniversary of its discovery. Honourable members know of the importance that gold played in the development of Victoria as a state. Certainly the building that we work in was built on the riches that came from the goldfields of central Victoria, including places such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Clunes and other important central Victorian towns.

The discovery of gold at Golden Square by Mrs Farrell and Mrs Kennedy in 1851 led to a boom in the city. Bendigo attracted a wave of migrants, particularly from China. They landed at Robe in South Australia and walked the many hundreds of kilometres to Bendigo, a walk that was re-enacted in the two weeks leading up to Easter this year and which concluded on Easter Saturday. I am pleased that there were members of Parliament, including me, who participated in it. The Treasurer completed two legs of that walk. It was a fantastic occasion to walk into the city of Bendigo at lunchtime on Easter Saturday being led by the Chinese contingent. It was an historic occasion.

In talking about the role of gold, and particularly the role of the Chinese migrants who still play a key cultural role in Bendigo — —

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Ms ALLAN** — I thought the honourable member for Bentleigh was going to make a point of order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order! The honourable member for Bendigo East, continuing her remarks.

**Ms ALLAN** — The role that the discovery of gold and the activities of the Chinese migrants and many other people who came to and settled in Bendigo have played over the past 150 years has built the city into what it is today. An interesting statistic — I am not sure whether it is well founded in theory — is that one in five Australians can trace some ancestry back to the goldfields of Bendigo. I am very proud that many generations of my family have lived in Bendigo for many years. I welcome the visit to Bendigo by the state Parliament, not only as the local member but because I care passionately about the community of Bendigo.

It is the centenary of Federation as well as the 150th anniversary of the discovery of gold. If you look at the decision behind locating the historic sitting of the Parliament in Bendigo you have the key role that figures such as Sir John Quick played in the push for federation through the 1890s and the many meetings and discussions and constitutional conventions that were held which led to Australia being formed as a federation.

That is why it is fantastic that in coming to Bendigo for this historic sitting Parliament is recognising the importance of Bendigo and the crucial role it has played in the development of Victoria and Australia. It is disappointing to hear the Leader of the Opposition express some concerns about the program. I certainly know the City of Greater Bendigo is looking forward to this event. It is an opportunity for Bendigo to market itself to an audience that might not be familiar with the region. That happened when the city council put on the Bendigo on Display event in Queen's Hall on 1 May. It was a fantastic day, which highlighted the region's history and the local produce and featured Chinese dragons. The council did a great amount of work in organising that event.

The city council is also putting a huge amount of work into ensuring that the Bendigo sitting runs as smoothly as possible for members of Parliament. I know Mr Speaker has had many meetings with the council and its executive. I acknowledge the role of the chief executive officer, Andrew Paul, the mayor, Cr Barry Ackerman, and the many staff who are working with the Parliament to get the day just right. The motion that the Leader of the House has moved is in line with what is happening. It is about making sure the day is just right, because we have to acknowledge the historic importance of the day. We also have to acknowledge that part of the day will be ceremonial.

The mayor of Bendigo, Cr Ackerman, will address honourable members on the floor of the Parliament. For the first time ever the ABC will be televising question time throughout country Victoria. I know there has been a huge amount of interest in the Parliament coming to Bendigo. My office is receiving an increasing number of telephone calls every day from people wanting to find out about the details. It is important that this motion is passed by the house today so we can confirm those details for the people of Bendigo.

I am very pleased to be speaking in support of this motion. The Leader of the Opposition exposed his lack of knowledge of central Victoria in saying that Bendigo is only 100 kilometres from Melbourne. I would like to

correct the record for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, who claims to know about country Victoria. Bendigo is actually over 150 kilometres from Melbourne. I am looking forward to the Calder Highway being duplicated, and when the fast rail link to Bendigo is on track, making it an 80-minute journey each way, we could all go up on the train! These are commendable future initiatives of the Bracks government.

The current initiative — the historic sitting of the Parliament — will be a great day. I hope we all behave in a manner that befits our positions as members of Parliament, so that we not only show the people of Bendigo what a business day in the house is like but also hold the Parliament in high regard. We must remember, as the Leader of the Opposition said, about the views many people out there have of politicians. We have a perfect opportunity to work together and show central Victoria what we can do. This is not just an opportunity to showcase Parliament in Bendigo; many people throughout central Victoria are also looking forward to Parliament coming to their region. That is why I am very pleased to speak in support of the motion. By passing it today we will allow adequate time for the organisation of those important ceremonial events that will acknowledge the importance of Bendigo, not just in the past but also into the future.

Bendigo is a great, forward-looking city. I am proud to represent Bendigo in this place, and I will be very proud to be the local member when Parliament comes to Bendigo on 16 August. I commend the motion the house.

**Ms ASHER** (Brighton) — I note that the honourable member for Bendigo East was given considerable latitude by the Chair in making her contribution, even though the motion deals with a procedural issue, and I also note that the opposition did not raise a point of order about that.

I commend the honourable member for her enthusiasm for her electorate. I, too, welcome the historic sitting of the house in Bendigo — an area in which I have a considerable interest! I expect that I visit Bendigo more than most members of this chamber. Bendigo is a most appropriate venue, given its history, its role in Federation and its historic and current-day contributions to the state.

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, the Liberal Party clearly welcomes the sitting of Parliament in Bendigo. However, we oppose the fleeting nature of the visit, and we oppose the condensed nature of the day.

What we would like to see — although we will not divide on it — is a proper parliamentary day.

The government's proposal is to commence the sitting day at 11.00 a.m. and move the adjournment of the house at 5.00 p.m. I hope the citizens of Bendigo will not think that is a typical working day! It might be a typical working day in the dreams of the trade union movement, but it is not a typical working day for most people — and it is certainly not a typical working day for members of Parliament. It would have been more appropriate to schedule a standard sort of day, from a 9.30 a.m. start through to the 10.00 p.m. adjournment debate. It certainly would have been appropriate to schedule more time for a second-reading debate.

Notwithstanding the arguments about time, the government should have scheduled a reasonable parliamentary sitting day for Bendigo, not only to indicate to the citizens of Bendigo what members of Parliament do on a standard sitting day but also to give honourable members the chance of working through the usual items of business. By that I mean having not only question time — I, too, hope that honourable members behave themselves when question time is telecast live — but also a proper second-reading debate in addition to the adjournment debate.

The Leader of the Opposition also made the point that although the City of Greater Bendigo has indicated through its mayor, Cr Barry Ackerman, that it wishes to host a civic reception for members of Parliament — and I look forward to attending — that could have been conveniently scheduled during the usual dinner break, from 6.30 p.m. until 8.00 p.m., with parliamentary debate scheduled thereafter. The point has also been made that many people who are interested in politics and who would want to attend this historic sitting of the Legislative Assembly in their city will not have an opportunity to do so because they will be at work from 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock. There should have been an opportunity for them to attend after 8.00 p.m. to listen to a second-reading debate.

Although it is a source of disappointment that a proper working day has not been scheduled for the historic visit of the Parliament to Bendigo, we will not divide on the issue. We support the concept of the Parliament sitting at Bendigo, but the mistake the government has made is to make the sitting day largely ceremonial and therefore dismissive and not representative of the work we do. It is far too short a working day.

**Motion agreed to.**

## Sessional orders

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

That so much of sessional orders be suspended as to provide that the house, at its rising on Thursday, 14 June 2001, adjourn until — (a) Thursday, 16 August 2001, at the town hall, Bendigo, the Speaker taking the chair at 11.00 a.m.; or (b) a day and hour to be fixed by the Speaker, which time of meeting shall be notified in writing to each member of the house — which ever is the first to occur.

By way of brief explanation, the first part of the motion provides for the house to sit at Bendigo. The second part is the traditional motion that is moved on the last day of the sitting to enable the recommencement of Parliament under any circumstances, should they ever arise. I commend the motion to the house.

**Motion agreed to.**

## WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION BILL

### *Council's amendments*

**Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:**

1. Clause 10, lines 1 and 2, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert “**10. Privileges of Parliament and legal professional privilege not affected**”.
2. Clause 10, after line 2 insert —
 

“( ) Nothing in this Act derogates from the privileges, immunities and powers held, possessed or enjoyed by custom, statute or other law or otherwise of —

  - (a) the Parliament; and
  - (b) each House of Parliament; and
  - (c) the President of the Legislative Council; and
  - (d) the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; and
  - (e) the members and Committees of each House of Parliament; and
  - (f) the joint Committees of the Parliament.”.
3. Clause 10, line 3, before “Nothing” insert “(2)”.
4. Clause 13, lines 18 and 19, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
5. Clause 22, lines 29 to 31, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly.”.
6. Clause 23, page 17, lines 33 to 35 and page 18, line 1, omit “, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the

Legislative Assembly” and insert “or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.

7. Clause 23, page 18, lines 4 to 7, omit “, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.
8. Clause 96, lines 8 to 10, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly, as the case requires” and insert “Ombudsman for investigation”.
9. Clause 96, lines 11 to 28, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
10. Clause 97, lines 3 and 4, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.
11. Clause 98, lines 22 and 23, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.
12. Clause 99, lines 28 to 30, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.
13. Clause 101, lines 9 to 11, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.
14. Clause 101, lines 12 to 15, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
15. Clause 102, page 57, lines 8 to 10, omit “the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly” and insert “the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly”.

**The SPEAKER — Order!** Before calling the minister I inform the house that the second and third readings of the bill were passed with an absolute majority. I am of the opinion that the adoption of the amendments therefore require an absolute majority to be obtained.

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

That amendment 1 be agreed to.

The government believes the whistleblowers legislation is important legislation that I expect would have been utilised regularly under the previous government. In any event, the reason the government agrees to the amendments proposed by the opposition in the upper house is that we do not believe they impact upon the credibility of the bill or the general philosophy behind it. Nonetheless, the amendments have a history, and it is incumbent on me to inform the house of that history.

When the bill was first introduced a number of issues were raised by the opposition concerning the process that ought to be adopted by members of Parliament, and these amendments relate to honourable members. The original proposal by the government was that if a complaint is made in relation to a member of Parliament by a whistleblower the matter be referred to the Speaker, who would then make a decision as to whether the matter was of such a nature that it ought to be referred to the Ombudsman. That is what was in the original bill.

The government believes that was appropriate; however, the opposition did not believe it was appropriate, and the government agreed to further discussions. Those discussions, as I understand it, resulted in further changes being made to the bill, with a further step being put into place whereby the matter would be referred to the Speaker who would then refer it, if appropriate, to the Privileges Committee, which would decide whether the matter ought to go on to the Ombudsman. An extra step was put in place whereby the matter would go to the Privileges Committee. The government was prepared to agree to that, and as a result the amendments were moved in this place.

For whatever reason — I am sure the shadow Attorney-General is more than happy to tell us — there was a change of heart in relation to the opposition proposal, and the opposition decided to oppose the government amendments in the lower house and then move amendments in the upper house to bring the bill back to the same position. That is why it would be inappropriate for the government to oppose the amendments — they represent the government's original agreed position. I will be interested to hear from the shadow Attorney-General why there was a change in heart. I understand negotiations took place with the shadow Attorney-General and a number of other members of Parliament — I think the honourable member for Kew may have been involved, but I stand to be corrected in that aspect of the matter.

The government believes it is good legislation. In fact, members of the government believe it is groundbreaking legislation because any government with nothing to fear and nothing to hide should not worry about legislation such as this. If a person is a bona fide whistleblower and believes corrupt activities are taking place within government, they should have the right to report those matters without fear or favour. That is exactly what the legislation allows.

Some might say that from a political point of view it is a brave thing for the government to introduce the legislation because more often than not whistleblower

legislation is of benefit to oppositions rather than governments. However, in line with our policy of openness and transparency, the government takes the view that the legislation ought to be enacted and indeed that, as some have said in relation to other pieces of legislation, it is legislation whose time has come. The government is pleased to have introduced the legislation. In regard to the amendments moved by the opposition in the upper house, we believe they are in line with the intent of the legislation and with our original amendments. That is why we support the amendments.

**Dr DEAN (Berwick)** — It is an amazing thing. The words the Attorney-General used were 'change of heart'. There can only be one change of heart that is foremost and obvious in this morning's little exercise, and that is a change of heart by the government. The Attorney-General said he was going to give some history on how the matter came about. The Attorney-General said 'as I understand it', because he was not here at the time. I will tell the house exactly what happened, and I will quote from a press release issued by the Premier in which he also put his weight behind what I am about to say.

The normal arrangement is that if matters are to be debated during the week the Leader of the House talks to the manager of opposition business to determine which bills will be brought on for debate and so forth, and so the week progresses. You have to ask yourself, Mr Speaker, why the opposition was advised only last night that these amendments to the Whistleblowers Protection Bill would come before the house. If the Attorney-General's claim that the opposition has done the backflip rather than the government is true, why was the opposition notified only last night that the amendments would be brought before the house? I did not get notification until this morning when I arrived here.

The opposition said it would like some time to look at the amendments because there was much to be said about them and it would like to debate them at about 4.00 p.m. The government said, 'No, that is not possible. You have to do it now'. So, we are debating them now. Why? If you look behind you at the press gallery, Mr Speaker, you will find that it is empty, which is the first reason for the amendments being debated now.

Interestingly, there is another reason. We first debated this bill around midnight — in fact, we debated it in the early hours of the morning.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Dr DEAN** — Apparently, the opposition thought the amendments were okay, but it was just playing up! There was some conflict already, so why would the opposition be playing up if it liked the amendments? The opposition was playing up big time, because the amendments are deceitful. They take away from you, Mr Speaker — probably the most neutral person — the power to make a decision on whether a matter should go to the Ombudsman and give that power to the Privileges Committee, which is controlled by the government.

If there is a conflict as to whether the opposition or the government is right, we must go to the written record. There were discussions about whether the process was okay — if I remember correctly the discussions were mutual, so I do not know whether the opposition went to the government or the government went to the opposition. Many weeks after those discussions the opposition was given a chart, of which I have a copy. Opposition members had a look at the chart, had discussions among themselves and decided that no-one in their right mind would try to run a matter through the Privileges Committee rather than the Speaker. There should be another way to deal with matters — there are probably better ways.

The opposition decided that the second option in the flow chart was worse than the first option. It then asked, ‘Should we go back to the government and start telling it how to run its legislation?’. It thought not. It said, ‘For once in this government’s life, perhaps it will make its own decision. Does it want the opposition to tell it how to run its legislation? Does the opposition have to fix up all its legislation? Does the opposition have to tell it continually how to run its government? If the government wants to come back to us, it can’. So the opposition did nothing about it.

Then suddenly the Whistleblowers Protection Bill came back on for debate with little or no notice, and there were amendments. Those amendments will give the right to make the decision to the Privileges Committee. The opposition told the parliamentary secretary to the minister that they were totally unacceptable. During the day the minister said, ‘The government will go through with them’, and the opposition said, ‘No, they are totally unacceptable. We do not care what you thought or did not think about us not coming back to you on that, the fact is — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Dr DEAN** — Even if we accept the argument that the opposition at one time said, ‘Yes, we in the opposition want to subject ourselves to a

government-controlled committee to decide whether a matter should go to the Ombudsman’, and that it was stupid enough to say, ‘Yes, the opposition agrees to that’, on the day the amendments came forward everyone knew, including the parliamentary secretary, that the opposition was totally against them. We had the whole of that day to discuss them. The opposition sat in a room and said there had to be a better way. Whatever happened before that day — I say the government’s claim is bunkum, but let us assume the government is right about it — the government knew at the beginning of the day that the amendments were unacceptable to the opposition. The government could either pursue the amendments against the will of the opposition or not. What did it do? It came into this house and pursued those amendments to its own bill, which the opposition told it at the beginning of that day were totally unacceptable.

The honourable member for Richmond said during the debate that there was nothing wrong with the amendments. He said, ‘These amendments give the power to the Privileges Committee’. How can he suggest that the government-controlled Privileges Committee would not in the slightest way be biased. If a government member came before their colleagues who had the majority on that committee to decide whether a matter should go to the Ombudsman to be investigated, I am sure government members would send them off to the Ombudsman to be investigated! There would be no possibility of any conflict of interest!

I got up in this house, thumped the table and said, ‘Conflict of interest? That should never happen! That would be outrageous!’. But the government said, ‘No, we want these amendments’. The opposition said, ‘All right, you want the amendments, but if this bill goes to the upper house the opposition will take them out and put in other amendments to protect the privileges of this house — and that is that’. Again there was outrage. The government said, ‘How dare you use the upper house in that way. What a shocking thing to do. How dare the opposition take that stand’.

Then the Premier got into the act and issued a press release. As reported in the *Age*, the Premier said:

The Privileges Committee would determine if the matter should then be referred to the Ombudsman.

The article, written by Gabrielle Costa, continues:

The amendment was this week passed in the lower house with the support of Independent MPs —

it will be interesting to see how they will vote —

but it is likely to be cut again when it reaches the Liberal-dominated upper house. It then must be returned to the lower house to be reconsidered.

But Premier Bracks said that if that happened 'we will pull this off the table'.

In other words, 'We will get rid of this bill. If you even dare to change our amendment' — this deceitful and disgraceful amendment — 'we will pull this bill. We are in charge of this. No fear!'

What happened? It came back onto the notice paper on 29 May, and the government wrung its hands and asked, 'What are we going to do about this?'. Honourable members will recall other bills that went flying off into the stratosphere and remained dormant on the notice paper, whether it be the transvestite bill or God knows how many other bills that have just been — —

**Mr Hulls** — The transvestites bill?

**Dr DEAN** — The protection of transvestites bill. The Attorney-General does not remember his own bill. Never mind, I will get a copy of it for him.

Up into the stratosphere went those bills. This bill has sat on the notice paper from 29 May, and the government did not know what to do with it. The government also knew that the amendments it had moved were totally unsupportable out in the marketplace, because the people of Victoria know that parliamentary committees dominated by the government — or by the other side — are obviously going to be suspect. The government knew that the two persons who have the greatest respect from the community as being neutral are the Speaker and the President and that that tradition of this Parliament has continued down the years, so they knew the amendment was unsupportable.

The government also knew that it had voted against the amendment we had introduced, saying that as the bill may well interfere with the privileges of this house we had better have an amendment to ensure that the privileges of the house are maintained. One might think that was a pretty straightforward amendment, which is what we said in argument. We said, 'How can you possibly not accept an amendment that simply says, "We protect the privileges of this house"?'. Yet the government voted against that amendment!

We did what we said we would do — that is, that we would make sure the amendment was moved in the upper house, and it was. Both those amendments have come down to this house. The bill has been on the notice paper since 29 May, so the question has to be

asked: if this bill has been sitting on the notice paper since 29 May, why is it that only last night the government could summon up enough efficiency to give us notice that the amendments were coming on? How could that be, when every other bill that has been debated this week was scheduled by negotiation at the beginning of the week in the normal way?

The reason is that the government is ashamed of its conduct in this house when it voted against our amendment and put in its own deceitful amendment. It is ashamed that the Premier was misled. How was he misled? I will outline the scenario that I suggest took place.

I like the honourable member for Richmond; I really do. I get on with him pretty well. The honourable member for Richmond is not a bad bloke, and we get on all right. But the Attorney-General was away at the time this amendment was put forward, so the honourable member for Richmond had quite a responsibility on his shoulders. He knew he had better not muck this one up, because the boss was away. What happened? He decided, despite the fact that he was absolutely clear right from the beginning of that day — it might even have been from the night before, I cannot remember — that we were not going to accept such an amendment.

He was clear about that, but he did not know what to do. Therefore, because he was the one who had put the amendment forward — the amendment the government was dumping — he had to go ahead and support it. Fair enough. If I were the parliamentary secretary the last thing I would want to do is put forward an amendment, argue for it all day, and then say, 'Sorry. Okay, we'll drop it'. Imagine what the boss would say about that — 'What are you doing? You are putting forward amendments, you are pulling them out, and you are making us look like idiots!'. So the honourable member for Richmond pursued the amendment — he had to. He had to argue that we had previously agreed to an amendment that would force us to go up to the Privileges Committee, which would be dead against us should we go before it! He had to argue that.

**Mr Wynne** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Richmond will have the call next. I ask him to cease interjecting.

**Dr DEAN** — There was no way out for him but to argue that. I understand that, although using the entire resources of Parliament House to protect yourself is probably going too far. He could have said, 'Let's

debate this later on. We will put it off for a week and we will sit down with you. You are obviously not happy with that amendment. You said the original bill was a bit of a problem, so let's sit down and work out if there is a better way'. But for whatever reason — the boss being away or whatever — the honourable member for Richmond had to go on with it.

Then, of course, the Premier wanted to know, 'Why is it that I am getting called up by the press and asked why we are moving an amendment that effectively gives us the control of any complaints against parliamentarians over a previous amendment that was neutral? What is going on? I am having to answer Gabrielle Costa. She is angry, and she is saying, "The Liberals are saying this. What are you going to do?"'. So the honourable member for Richmond, as I would if I were in his place, said, 'It is all right, Mr Premier. We are right. This is a good amendment. This is absolutely right, and those rotten Liberals agreed to it months ago. I know they are not agreeing to it now, but they did, and we should pursue it'.

Once you have started a ball rolling it is pretty hard to stop. The Premier went out and said, 'We are fully behind this amendment — because the honourable member for Richmond has told me we must be — and what's more, if those rotten Liberals try to change it in the upper house, we will pull the whole bill'. It pulled it, and the bill floated all the way down onto the notice paper. Now the government is accepting the amendments. If that is pulling a bill, I would love to see it not actually proceeding with a bill or throwing a bill out.

It comes down to this: the government has done the right thing in the end, so we should give it a pat on the back for that. It has agreed to a proper amendment, and it has got rid of a deceitful little amendment it tried to protect itself with because it is worried. That came out of the mouth of the Attorney-General, who said, 'It is a very brave thing for a government to have a whistleblowers bill because the government is more likely to get into trouble than the opposition'. The government moved its amendment because it knows that is the case, and it moved its amendment because government members wanted protection. But we shone a spotlight on it and said, 'We will change it in the upper house'. We stuck to our guns, as we will always do, because it is a matter of principle.

The government does not want to admit it, but it has had a change of heart. People stood up and said, 'Your voting against our amendment is an outrageous thing, and your amendment is horrible'. Now the government is agreeing to our amendment, and it is agreeing to

chuck out what it did before. It has done the right thing. It should have done it earlier, and it should own up and say it should never have tried to do such a deceitful thing.

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — The National Party also supports the amendment. It is unfortunate that the whole affair has come to this. All honourable members know how Parliament operates. We know there is a government business program; we know there is discussion between the parties at the start of a sitting week; we know this issue has been on the notice paper but has not been part of the government business program; and we know this piece of legislation — which was introduced so long ago I cannot remember when it was, and which has been back on the notice paper since 29 May — is being brought to a conclusion on the last day of the autumn sittings.

All honourable members know the practices of Parliament and the way this place functions. As I just said to the Attorney-General across the table, methinks he protesteth too much. The reality is that the government has constructively brought this on for debate today in circumstances in which I certainly did not know it was going to happen until some little time ago, and it has done so while deliberately excluding it from the government business program. It surely cannot come here today and say anything other than that it deliberately excluded this matter from its business program, because otherwise, as a matter of sure logic and practice, it would have been on the business program.

There is no other explanation. The government deliberately chose to exclude it. That then begs the series of questions that have been raised by the shadow Attorney-General. At the end of this whole sorry mess from the perspective of the government — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr RYAN** — It is a sorry mess. It is unfortunate that this matter is being drawn to a close in this sort of environment. The government's whole approach to this matter is coloured by the way the house is conducting its business today.

The Premier has talked about pulling the bill, like honourable members witnessed yesterday with the marine parks legislation. If it so feels, the government is quite capable of pulling a bill or withdrawing legislation as it did yesterday. If the Premier were true to his word about the concerns expressed by the government at the time, the same sort of process should

have been followed. The government has on its hands the exact outcome which was foreshadowed when the debate was in the house weeks or months ago — however long ago it was.

Having gone through the process in the upper house the legislation, amended as was always intended by the Liberal Party, is back in the Assembly in a situation in which the government, by a process which can be described in no other way than one of stealth, wants to sling it in in the dying moments of the session on the final day to get this whole sorry chapter concluded. It does it no credit.

It is no good the honourable member for Richmond shaking his head about it; as I said before, he knows perfectly well. I agree with the shadow Attorney-General's assessment of this guy. He is a good bloke, quite frankly. But it is no good his shaking his head and saying it cannot be so. The reality is that for the reasons I have explained the matter should have been part of the government's normal business program. Then everybody would have been given proper notice that it would be back here today. The fact that it was not on the government business program absolutely telegraphs the message that the government wanted to bring the bill in today to rush it through without its being subject to the consideration it should have been given.

**Mr Wynne** interjected.

**Mr RYAN** — He still wants to go on with the discussion. I will be interested to hear what he has to say when he speaks. I put the question directly to him and to the Attorney-General: why was item 8 of the orders of the day not incorporated in the government business program at the start of this week, or indeed any of the previous weeks since 29 May? To put it the other way around, my second question is: why is it that on this, the last day of the autumn sessional period, when the matter has been sitting on the notice paper since 29 May and has been ready to be debated, the bill is brought on as the first item of business for the day? They are two questions I want answered by both the Attorney-General and the honourable member for Richmond. Unless they can be answered satisfactorily — and I do not believe they can — the reality is that the government will conclude the debate over this protracted issue, which has been here for many months, in a manner which will leave the legislation coloured in a way this government would not have chosen on the way in.

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**Mr RYAN** — Yes, I am quite happy with the legislation; I said that from the outset. You were not here at the time; you were away ill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr RYAN** — The Attorney-General was away, Mr Acting Speaker; I should make my comments through the Chair. In answer to what he says, yes, as I said at the time, we are quite happy with the legislation. But as was also said at the time, we are concerned about elements of it, and before us is one of them. Unfortunately the Attorney-General was absent and was not able to participate in the debate and see the whole sorry chapter of events unfold.

My point simply is that in bringing the legislation to a conclusion in the way it has chosen does the government no credit. Unless the government can satisfactorily answer the two questions I have posed, the legislation will pass in circumstances where forever and a day it will be coloured by the way it has come to a conclusion.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Lupton)** — Order! The amendment requires to be passed by an absolute majority. As there is not an absolute majority present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

**Bells rung.**

**Members having assembled in chamber:**

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 2 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 3 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 4 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 5 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**



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

That amendment 6 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 7 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 8 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 9 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 10 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 11 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 12 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 13 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 14 be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

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

That amendment 15 be agreed to.

In moving that amendment 15 be agreed to I refer to certain matters that were put in relation to the honourable member for Richmond. The reason he has not responded is because a deal was done with the shadow Attorney-General that only lead speakers would speak on these matters. That is the only reason

the honourable member for Richmond has not responded to the outrageous allegations made.

**Dr DEAN (Berwick)** — I simply make the point that any allegations made were based on facts put before the Parliament. It will be for the Parliament to decide the veracity or otherwise of those allegations.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

**APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 13 June; motion of Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer).**

**Mr MULDER (Polwarth)** — In commencing my contribution last night I raised my deep concerns about the lack of funding in the budget to assist the seafood industry in relation to the compensation package it was seeking due to the implementation of the marine national parks proposal. As I said, I am one of those fortunate people who travelled to New Zealand to look at the establishment of marine national parks in that country. The electorate of Polwarth includes a very large coastline from Anglesea through to Lorne and Apollo Bay. If the redistribution holds up the electorate will also take in Port Campbell. Therefore, I have a great interest in marine parks.

I have seen at first hand not only the education and research opportunities that result from the implementation of a marine national parks system but also the great growth in tourism the parks have provided to New Zealand. People will bypass what one would consider pristine beaches to swim in and be part of a marine national park. There is no doubt that marine national parks have a significant role to play. The Liberal Party strongly supports that concept and will fight to ensure that they are implemented in Victoria.

In relation to this whole process and the disgusting treatment by the government of the environmental movement, the seafood industry and the recreational fishermen of Victoria, one must ask why the legislation was pulled and not allowed to pass through the house. Why have the seafood people and the commercial fishermen been singled out for such unfair treatment? One can compare the government's treatment of those people with scallop dredgers in Port Phillip Bay when the government of the day sat down with the industry and negotiated a satisfactory outcome. That was done. All the parties agreed that that practice had to stop, and people were compensated to a degree that they were prepared to live with and walk away from the industry.

We had the issue with Workcover, where the Bracks government fought tooth and nail over common-law issues to allow workers rights to compensation, yet the government was prepared to lock commercial fishermen out of any form of compensation or access to common law should they lose significantly out of the process, which no doubt they would. To see that one only has to look at what happened with resource reduction in the Otways, where the resource was cut back by 40 per cent. Federal and state compensation packages for the timber processors and workers were needed once again.

The issue we are standing up and fighting for relates to the commercial fishermen and their families. Why have they been singled out for this type of treatment by the Bracks government? Why does the government hate commercial fishermen and their families? I have had the opportunity to sit around a table with these people and work through what they are asking for. They are not asking for the world, and they agree with the marine national parks. They are asking for nothing more than fair compensation for the effects the proposed process will have on them.

I am not talking about the wealthy end of town when I talk about these people. They are craggy-faced, rough-haired individuals who are out working all day. They turn up to see me in their wet-weather gear with their families beside them because they are devastated and worried about what the lack of a government compensation package will mean for them.

One has to ask whether the government really understands the issue of compensation and what is involved out there. Has it gone down the path of consultation with the industry? Does it understand the full impact of what is going to happen as a result of the establishment of marine national parks without a fair and equitable compensation package? I refer honourable members to an article that appeared in the *Age* of 13 June:

[The] section 85 amendments are required. We have already provided for separate compensation of \$1.2 million for relocating into other fishing areas', Mr Bracks said.

I repeat: \$1.2 million!

Let us look at one location — Port Campbell, say. About eight rock lobster boats, an abalone boat and a charter boat operate out of that harbour. Those boats are in-shore boats and are incapable of going out further. Something in the order of \$3 million or \$4 million would be required by Port Campbell fishermen to upgrade their fleet. That is for that township alone. However, if the fleet could be upgraded, how would

larger boats get into the harbour when it is capable of dealing only with boats weighing about 3 tonnes? Are we looking at a complete new fishing fleet to go out further, a dredging operation — and what would the environmentalists say about that? — and an upgrade of the harbour? The proposed \$1.2 million is totally and utterly inadequate! The government knows that that would not provide adequate compensation.

I turn to the families and the people I have met at Apollo Bay. The Polgeest family from Apollo Bay ran a fish and chip shop in Colac. I can remember as a little fellow trotting down the road to their family-operated fish shop. Their fishing operation was in Apollo Bay. They are the salt-of-the-earth, hardworking type of people who are being totally locked out of negotiations. There is no consideration whatever for this family and others like them in Apollo Bay.

One needs also to look at the whole Environment Conservation Council (ECC) report, which represents 10 years work, to see what has happened. It now looks something like a crossword puzzle. The recommendations have been brought into the house by the government with bits and pieces cut out of them and a lovely incision around Cape Howe. As to the honourable member for Gippsland East, in his own right, everywhere I have been — not just in relation to marine national parks, but also on all-party parliamentary committees — everyone says, 'By hell we're lucky. We've got a fisherman in Parliament! He's going to take care of our interests'. They say, 'Craig Ingram has been in the industry. He'll know how to look after us. He'll deal with us. Not a problem at all!'

The Great White Hope. But what has he done for them? He has looked after his own interests. If a ship were going down, he would be in the life raft and there would be mothers, fathers and children overboard — that is his attitude to the fishing industry. Out in the industry at the moment he is viewed as the Rex Hunt of the commercial fishing industry. One might ask why Mallacoota — that little section of the Victorian coastline — has been given favourable attention. The ECC report states:

However, the large size of the processing firm at Mallacoota makes it less vulnerable to potential impacts.

Essentially Mallacoota would be far less impacted on than the likes of Apollo Bay and Port Campbell. As the member representing Apollo Bay and a section of the people who live in the Port Campbell area I ask, as does my parliamentary colleague from Warrnambool, 'Why Mallacoota? Why not Apollo Bay and Port Campbell?', when you can see, particularly in the case of Port

Campbell, the implications are far worse for those communities.

Can I tell you exactly what the honourable member for Gippsland East has said to the industry? He said, 'A pox on the lot of you! This is for me. This is my pecuniary interest. I'm here to look after myself. The rest of you go in and fight for yourselves!'. It has been an absolutely disgraceful exhibition. With the support of the two other Independents he has the ability to have the government put together a package worth \$500 million to run passenger trains out to their electorates — they have done that — but in this case he is saying, 'I can't convince the government to put Cape Howe back in. The government did it off its own bat. I've had nothing to do with it. If anything happens in this house, I'm out the door. You won't see me!'.

He will have to live with that decision. All the families who put years and years of work into the commercial fishing industry will remember him as a traitor who betrayed that industry.

**Mr LEIGHTON** (Preston) — It is a pleasure to join the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. The election in 1999 of the Bracks Labor government was great news for Preston, and the last two budgets have been, too. I will speak particularly about a couple of the big-ticket items that demonstrate that the Bracks government is delivering to its heartland seats, such as the one I represent, because it cares for people in those electorates.

The first item on which I will report progress is the Preston integrated care centre. I am interested to see that the honourable member for Bennettswood is in the house, because he will probably remember as a former ministerial adviser and chief of staff the circumstances of the closure of the Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH), one of the greatest outrages perpetrated on my community. In the process the former government, for which he was a staffer, lied to my local community and cheated them.

**Mr Wilson** interjected.

**Mr LEIGHTON** — The honourable member for Bennettswood might even have drafted it for the former Minister for Health, Mr Knowles, who in his covering letter to the metropolitan health care plan announcing the closure of PANCH had this to say:

Redevelop site as Preston integrated care centre following the relocation of services to Northern Hospital. This model new integrated care centre will provide a comprehensive range of services including day surgery, renal dialysis, chemotherapy, medical procedures, outpatient clinics, diagnostic services and aged care day programs.

That was the covering statement signed by the former Liberal Minister for Health, Rob Knowles.

What did the former government do then? The moment PANCH was closed the former government reneged on that commitment and sold the site so the promise could never be delivered. It remained for the Labor Party, in the run-up to the 1999 election, to commit a Labor government to go ahead with the Preston integrated care centre, and that is exactly the \$5 million commitment that is now made.

Since the election I have been chairing a community consultative committee. The work of that committee is now concluded and an interim committee of management is about to be launched. The centre will be constructed and up and running by the end of next year.

The services the centre will provide include specialist medical clinics such as a renal dialysis clinic with eight chairs, general surgery, orthopaedics, urology, general medicine, antenatal, cardiology, family planning and midwifery; a range of dental services such as community adult services with four chairs and school dental with two chairs; allied health services providing physiotherapy, occupational therapy and podiatry; a range of aged care services such as an aged care assessment service, community rehabilitation, specialist aged care clinics, counselling, a resource centre and day programs; family and children's services including family and adolescent counselling; speech pathology; outpatient obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics; drug and alcohol services, including counselling, assessment for withdrawal and outpatient support for home-based withdrawal; and other services such as community information and liaison. The very commitment the previous government reneged on, we are delivering.

I am also pleased to report that because of a number of issues the committee had to work through over the past 12 months the government has increased its level of support from \$5 million to closer to \$6 million, largely to cover the purchase of the old car park opposite PANCH. We have been able to resolve the problem of the structure of the committee of management, which will now be similar to a community health centre management structure. Half the members will be appointed from the agencies providing services in the centre such as Northern Hospital and Darebin City Council, and the other half will be elected community representatives.

One need that has been highlighted during our work but that cannot be resolved at the state government level is general practitioner (GP) services. The problem highlights the fact that the federal government is

eroding Medicare by stealth, particularly by not increasing the scheduled fees. My concern as a local member is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find GPs who will bulk bill. One of the policies of federal Labor that I welcome is the commitment to after-hours Medicare. It will be a tremendous centre and will be open by the end of next year.

**Mr Doyle** interjected.

**Mr LEIGHTON** — I cannot commit federal Labor to anything but I can welcome their commitment to after-hours Medicare. It is an exciting policy.

I will express the importance of the Preston integrated care centre in human terms. With the closure of PANCH people had to access services by going either to the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre or to the Northern Hospital. In the case of the Northern Hospital many elderly people needed to access a range of specialist medical services such as cancer services. The Northern Hospital was not well serviced by public transport, so elderly people often had to walk the last leg of the trip or, because they could not afford to park their cars a couple of times a week in the car park for which they would be charged a fee, they would park at a shopping centre nearby and then walk cross-country.

**Mr Wilson** interjected.

**Mr LEIGHTON** — Those are the people who come into my electorate office. For such people the Preston integrated care centre will offer medical services weekly or more often, and will be accessible in their own local community.

**Mr Wilson** interjected.

**Mr LEIGHTON** — I was opposed to the closure of PANCH, but — —

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr LEIGHTON** — The irony is that the government is implementing the commitment originally given and then reneged on by the former Liberal government.

The other big-ticket item I will mention is the construction of the new Preston police station — another matter on which the former government has a fairly tatty history. When the Labor Party was last in government the decision was made to build a new police station in Preston, and three-way contracts were signed between the local council, the state government and a private developer to allow a swap of land and

provide a suitable spot for the construction of a new police station.

Following its election, the previous government tore up those contracts, and the Preston police station sat on the top of the Victoria Police priority list for that government's entire period in office. The Labor Party gave a commitment that an incoming Labor government would fund the construction of a new police station, at a cost of \$3.5 million. Last year's budget contained the announcement that the police station would go ahead and that the government had doubled its commitment to \$7 million. A lot of planning work has been done over the past 12 months, and I am pleased to say that the new police station will be constructed in the Preston business district centre, close to the existing police station. That is important not only because of its proximity to the Preston courthouse but also because it will play a part in the survival of the Preston CBD. I look forward to work on that project continuing over the next 12 months.

Because there is an agreement on time, I will not speak for much longer. However, I will briefly mention a couple of other items. Edwardes Lake in Reservoir has been a sore point for a number of years. It contains stormwater run-off from an area of approximately 40 square kilometres. As a result it has become highly polluted, and previous work has provided patchwork solutions and not fixed up the basic problem. Several weeks ago the Minister for Environment and Conservation announced funding support for the clean-up and rehabilitation of Edwardes Lake totalling \$500 000, with contributions of \$250 000 from the Victorian stormwater action program, \$180 000 from Melbourne Water and \$70 000 from Darebin City Council. It was welcome news that did not come a minute too soon, as a recent oil spill into the lake demonstrated the need for permanent measures to be taken.

Earlier this week the Minister for Community Services announced funding for a respite care facility in Reservoir, which was also welcome news. My electorate has had a number of large old historic institutions such as the Janefield and Kingsbury training centres for people with psychiatric illnesses and intellectual disabilities. Janefield once provided respite care, but it and the other institutions have now closed. Many families care for adult children with various disabilities at home. How they manage to cope 24 hours a day, 365 days a year amazes me. They are entitled to some assistance. The new facility to be established by Yooralla will receive \$375 000, which is welcome. It will particularly cater for adolescents and young adults aged from 15 to 24, and by providing weekend and

holiday accommodation it will enable primary carers to have a break from their responsibilities. The budget is good news for my electorate of Preston.

**Mrs SHARDEY** (Caulfield) — It is a challenge to speak on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill. Because I will be endeavouring to cover three portfolios and my electorate, my comments will be fairly brief on each.

There has been some disappointment with the budget across my electorate. Firstly, I will mention some issues to do with schools. The first involves Caulfield South Primary School, which had received approval from the previous government for some extension work on a multipurpose centre. Last year the government gave \$30 000 to enable plans to be drawn up, and the school was expecting the capital funding to come through in this budget. So far as I can see that money has not been made available, unless I cannot read the budget papers — although they are somewhat devious and a lot of things are well hidden! I certainly cannot see that any money has been allocated for the school's expansion. I am sure there will be huge disappointment over that issue.

The second issue, which affects Caulfield Junior College, is not about money but involves the Minister for Education making an appropriate decision. The school consists of two campuses — one in Caulfield North and one in Glenhuntly Road, Caulfield South — but the school council has proposed to the minister that the Caulfield South campus be sold off. Some of the parents at that campus are concerned and upset by the prospect and the minister is now required to make a decision.

I raised the matter in the house last week, because the decision was supposed to have been made in about August last year. The minister has still not made a decision, and the government needs to start paying attention. The Minister for Education should not leave the school and the parents dangling on this issue.

The third issue of concern is the Caulfield General Medical Centre. The previous government was to develop the centre as a hub for aged care, and funding of \$11 million was proposed for the development. Part of the centre was to have been sold off with the privatisation of the old nursing homes, which have been there for many years. This government stopped that process, but it has done very little to advance the development of the medical centre. It is to reopen some of the nursing home beds in the old Montgomery hostel. Other nursing home beds from Caulfield are being shipped off to areas such as Mount Eliza and Geelong.

The staff at Caulfield General Medical Centre and the people of Caulfield in general will be disappointed and upset with this government because it has not taken action to promote and to redevelop Caulfield hospital as it promised when it first came into power.

The area of multicultural affairs has received a lot of attention of late. The government has spoken with great rhetoric about its support for multicultural communities in Victoria, but this budget contains a \$1 million cut to the multicultural affairs budget which amounts to 19.6 per cent. There has been no increase in community grants; the government seems to be incapable of spending the money that was made available for such grants. Some of our communities would be most concerned to hear that there was unspent money which they could put to use.

Of the remaining \$3.9 million in the multicultural affairs budget, which is quite a small budget, it appears that 54 per cent has been allocated to the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs (VOMA) to provide briefs for government members. The output measures do not show anything different and they have been changed considerably to make sure that people who look at this budget are unable to compare apples with apples. There is a lack of performance indicators in the 2001–02 budget which would lead one to believe that all VOMA does is give briefs to government members of Parliament.

The funding for the education program which was meant to be attached to the introduction of the racial and religious tolerance legislation has not been properly accounted for. The government claims that there was \$1 million for it in last year's budget, but it has not made that obvious. There is no performance measure. If, as the minister has claimed, there was money left over, why is it not shown? It should have been rolled over into this budget.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report in 1999–2000 on budget outcomes for VOMA found that 25 per cent of the briefs supplied by VOMA to ministers were unsatisfactory and recommended a departmental review to explain it. That was followed by a January 2001 internal review of the Department of Premier and Cabinet by one Tom Hogg — and we all know whose brother he is! That review, which cost the government \$117 000, found that the briefs provided by VOMA were below standard and recommended a training program for staff and the employment of a principal speechwriter. By any account their performance is not seen as being up to scratch.

I put forward a request to the minister for the Honourable Carlo Furletti in another place, the opposition's parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs, the honourable member for Bulleen, who heads up the Liberal Party's policy committee for multicultural affairs, and me to attend a briefing by the new director of VOMA. I thought it was a reasonable request, but it has been denied. Apparently only the shadow minister is welcome for a briefing. I wonder what on earth the government has to hide that it cannot invite other members of our team — —

**Mr Pandazopoulos** interjected.

**Mrs SHARDEY** — You are meant to be running the transparent, open and democratic government. You have made all the claims, so it is time you started to put them into action.

The government has failed to communicate to multicultural communities in Victoria. One of the basic tenets of multiculturalism is that the government ensures that all Victorians, regardless of their linguistic background or ability, should have access to information about what is happening in the community and about community services. When it was in government the Liberal Party committed itself to spending 5 per cent of all advertising budgets on multicultural media across government departments and agencies. What have we found with this government? I give some examples of where this government has not performed.

In February 2000 the Bracks government failed to place any advertisements in multicultural or ethnic newspapers regarding power cuts which were made at the time. In March the Bracks government axed an advertising campaign aimed at problem gambling in multicultural communities despite places having been booked until April that year.

In February 2001 no multicultural advertising was carried out on the introduction of the 50-kilometre-an-hour speed limit. We are told that brochures were sent out to all Victorian households, but they were only in English — no languages other than English. In April the Traffic Accident Commission's Easter road toll campaign, 'A 15-minute power nap could save your life', totally ignored the multicultural press so people from a non-English-speaking background had no access to that information. Late in April South East Water's water restrictions campaign totally ignored the multicultural media and there was no information for people from a non-English-speaking background. By failing to communicate with Victorians from a non-English-speaking background the

government is ignoring one in five Victorians. This is something of which it should not be proud.

When the Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs gave his budget response he talked about his other portfolio areas, but I noted that he did not mention multicultural affairs at all. I found that extraordinary. Perhaps the Premier will raise it when he makes his speech on the budget.

Another multicultural affairs issue on which the government stands to face a lot of criticism is the closure of the Hellenic Antiquities Museum. The Immigration Museum staff have confirmed that the Hellenic antiquities space is now being used by the Immigration Museum and there are no exhibitions expected for the Hellenic Antiquities Museum. Last year Steve Bracks flew off to Greece; he was going to pull off a special memorandum of understanding with the Greek government and was going to deliver exhibitions to the Hellenic Antiquities Museum. He came back without any word. Not only did he not achieve what he set out to do, but he did not even have the decency to inform the Victorian public of the fact that he had failed and that the Hellenic Antiquities Museum would be closed. I am told that the government has said that it will reopen the museum when it has an exhibition for it, but I wonder if that will ever occur. It is a great pity that that has occurred and the government has been rather deceitful over the issue.

I will make some general observations about the aged care portfolio. I believe this budget has been carefully crafted to disguise the government's poor performance. It has left the welfare sector agencies confused and unable to determine the extent to which budget allocations are tied to previously announced initiatives. We seem to hear the same initiatives announced time and again. It has left people wondering what is in the budget and what is out of it, because everything seems to be reannounced. I believe the Victorian public is being duped by this government. Victorians are being misled into believing that the government is continuing to make new funding announcements for new programs when in fact it is reannouncing old ones. There are no significant measures in this budget that point to a growth in funding, particularly for the direct delivery of aged care services. In the main the budget reflects purely recurrent expenditure.

There are some areas in which the government should be looking at returning a dividend to Victorians. As honourable members are well aware, there has been a huge budget surplus. The shadow Treasurer talked of the need for the government to pay a dividend to individual Victorians, which in aged care this

government has certainly failed to do. There are a number of ways in which it could deliver benefits to the elderly — and one way, which has been mentioned by others in the community, is through rate concessions. Elderly citizens with health care cards are entitled to rate concessions, but with the recent council property re-evaluations there has been a huge increase in rates. Some people have had rate increases of 100 per cent, but the rebate has stayed fixed at \$135. That means the relative average benefit has decreased from 35 per cent of rates in 1993 to only 15 per cent today.

A second way in which the government should be paying back a dividend relates to the winter power bonus. That was a benefit that elderly Victorians in particular appreciated receiving from the previous government, and I am concerned that they are losing that bonus this year. The government should be criticised for abolishing that bonus, which the elderly need.

A third way relates to dental care. In its election policy this government made a huge commitment to address dental waiting lists for older people. However, this budget anticipates that there will be a lengthening of the waiting list.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs SHARDEY** — Read the budget papers. Even your lousy budget papers show that outcome, which is an increase in the waiting list.

Another area that I will briefly talk about is healthy ageing.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs SHARDEY** — I am talking about the elderly! The honourable member should read the government's own budget papers. Many people believe that this government's continued public focus on the frail aged in our community has caused confusion, given the difference in terminology between 'aged care' and 'programs for elderly citizens'. People are saying that although we need to cater for the needs of the frail aged, we also need to focus on healthy ageing and providing services for those who wish to remain independent. There is little in this budget that addresses those issues. Although there is a minuscule increase in funding for Elderly Citizens Week, there are no programs to assist older, unemployed Victorians. That is an issue that needs to be looked at most carefully.

Before I finish on aged care I will comment briefly on the government's demand strategy. I believe it is merely a rebadging of existing programs and therefore

is an attempt by the government to pull the wool over people's eyes. I am being asked to wind up, so I will comment more fully on my shadow portfolio responsibility of housing on another occasion. In examining the allocation of funding for housing one finds that the output measures have changed so dramatically that one cannot compare apples with apples. I believe there are huge problems in the allocation of funding for the homeless, which is an issue I will also explore on another occasion.

**Mr ROBINSON** (Mitcham) — It is my pleasure to speak in the debate on the appropriation for 2001–02. For the second year running this budget vindicates the faith Victorians have placed in the Labor Party. Their faith is not misplaced, and the budget lives up to the government's commitment to govern for all Victorians.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr ROBINSON** — The honourable member says by interjection that we are a minority government — but we are not half as small as a minority member who does not have a seat! He might well find himself — —

**An opposition member** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER** (Mr Lupton) — Order! I ask the honourable member to come back to the bill before the house.

**Mr ROBINSON** — The budget debate provides us with a timely opportunity to reflect on the state of the Victorian economy. All the indicators give us cause for optimism. The economy is in very robust shape.

The indicators can be looked at in a number of ways. Certainly employment growth is very strong. Half the employment created in Australia in the past few months has been a result of what is happening in Victoria. If honourable members opposite are thinking about an early departure from this place, the labour market in Victoria will accommodate them. They have a good chance of finding new careers if they decide to leave.

A second indicator is state debt, which the forward estimates show is expected to fall to \$2.9 billion. The significant point is that we have reached the stage where we are continuing to reduce debt without having to flog off valuable state assets.

A third indicator is investment in the state, which remains robust. The understanding of the food industry that I have gained from my work as the parliamentary secretary for state and regional development has given me great heart. Investment in the food industry continues to set new records, which shows that

confidence in this state remains extraordinarily high. I think investment is up around \$550 million per annum and growing — which is a great tribute to the industry and the government.

Another indicator is investment by the state, which is also at record levels. Since the last budget some \$2.13 billion in capital works has been approved, which is a fantastic achievement.

These indicators give the lie to the repeated claims by Liberal and National Party members that the state is in a bad way. I was at an institution of engineers function earlier this year where the Honourable Mark Birrell from another place told the audience that the economy was deteriorating at such a fast rate that we would end up seeing a net migration from Victoria. Mr Birrell must have been referring to an old speech — perhaps the one he pulled out when he spoke to the institution of engineers some 10 years ago. That might have been the case then, but if he and other Liberal members care to look at page 51 of budget paper 2 they will find that the population indicators are positive and clearly refer to an increase in net interstate migration. The claims by the Liberal Party on that front — and on a number of other fronts — are palpably incorrect.

The 2001–02 budget delivers considerable benefits to the Mitcham electorate, which I will spend a few moments talking about. Firstly, the Mitcham Primary School will receive an allocation in excess of \$1 million for a stage 2 upgrade. That is fantastic news for Ian Sloane, the principal, and the entire school community.

At the time of the Mitcham by-election in late 1997, I visited the Mitcham Primary School and it was in an appalling state. At the front it consists of one of the old 1920s-style school buildings and the plaster work had deteriorated to the point where you could, literally, put your hand in the cracks. Bits of plaster were falling out and parts of the building had to be put off limits —

**Mr Doyle** — It all happened in the previous seven years!

**Mr ROBINSON** — No, it did not happen in the previous seven years. What did happen under the previous government was a sad neglect of a public facility in an electorate that the Liberal Party called its own. It was sadly neglected and it took the election of a Labor government to, firstly, allocate \$250 000 at the earliest opportunity and, subsequently, allocate \$1 million for a stage 2 upgrade. That will provide the Mitcham Primary School with state-of-the-art information technology facilities and classrooms, and allow the very proud school community to further

develop the school and again demonstrate that public education can be excellent education.

The budget also delivers on the government commitment to fund the extension of the Eastern Freeway with longer tunnels from Springvale Road in Nunawading along the route to Ringwood. This is something I am particularly delighted with. It is the result of a thorough public consultation process, something the Labor Party committed itself to in opposition and followed through and honoured in government. The \$71 million will allow the project to be completed by 2004–05. Some mischievous claims have been made by the honourable member for Warrandyte in his local paper. He has moaned and whinged that somehow the government had delayed the program, that it is proceeding too slowly and that the work should be completed well ahead of that time.

For the benefit of the honourable member and his colleagues, let me advise that he should look at the final budget speech contribution of a former Liberal member in the other place, Mrs Varty. In 1999, in her final contribution on the budget debate, she refers to the then government's commitment to fund the Eastern Freeway extension without tunnels — there was no commitment to the long tunnels at that stage — and she says in her speech that the expected completion date was the 2004–05 financial year. So, in fact, there is no change to the anticipated completion date. It is on track. The difference being that the government took the community into its confidence, took the community's views on board and has allocated an additional \$71 million to allow a far better outcome with longer tunnels and all the environmental advantages that they bring.

There is a boost in health funding for the Maroondah and Angliss hospitals which service the eastern region — \$18.5 million principally for acute care — which is greatly welcomed. It will relieve the pressure on hospitals right through the eastern region and what a welcome change of policy it is to have considerable investment in public hospitals rather than to have money and resources stripped out of them.

The Box Hill Institute is another winner from the budget. I declare to the house that I am a former student at Box Hill TAFE, as it was known then. The institute has grown enormously in the past 15 years. I congratulate John Maddock for his work as chief executive officer. It is a big operation and probably one of the most prestigious technical and further education institutes in the state. The institute will benefit to the tune of \$6.5 million from the budget which will allow it to further develop its expertise in the services it offers



in information technology and knowledge industry training, which is to be greatly welcomed. I also understand the allocation will provide for a pedestrian overpass over the busy Elgar Road, which will facilitate easier access for the many students who use that important institute.

The budget also makes allowance for an increase in police numbers. That target is on track and it is great to see something we worked hard for in opposition being realised.

Local investment is picking up in the eastern suburbs. An announcement was made only a few days ago that the Hyatt International Corporation would locate its regional headquarters, including a service centre in Melbourne, in Box Hill, which will create around 60 new full-time positions. That is sensational. It is great to see the benefits of the state's robust economic growth spreading to the suburbs as well as the regions rather than just being concentrated in the central business district.

The budget delivers a better business environment with lower, fewer and simpler taxes. The government is committed to \$774 million of tax cuts over the next four years including considerable reductions in land tax. I am pleased about that because it was at the time of the Mitcham by-election that the land tax net was enlarged and a number of small businesses were hit with land tax for the first time. It is to the enduring shame of the Liberal Party that in 1997 when honourable members were saying that the fruits of all its hard work were to be shared around it slugged many small businesses for the first time with land tax. I am proud to be part of a government that is reversing that measure.

I refer the house to the rail standardisation commitment of the government — some \$96 million. It is a commitment of some significance in that even when Victoria was a colony — before we were a state — people and governments talked about standardising the rail system. It has been talked about ad nauseam for over 100 years, and it is finally a Labor government in this state that will help realise that vision.

One of the great beneficiaries in the state will be the community of Portland. Given that the Leader of the Opposition comes from Portland, it disappoints me that the opposition is not more supportive and encouraging of this commitment. I have visited Portland on a number of occasions.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr ROBINSON** — In the south-west, that is correct. I had the opportunity of visiting Portland with

the then Leader of the Opposition in 1998. It was apparent to us from the large number of people we talked to that rail standardisation would deliver great benefits, not only for the state but particularly for Portland and its local economy, and not just with the possibility of increased grain exports from Portland but also with the burgeoning mineral sands industry. It is a terrific step forward, and I am slightly disappointed that the opposition cannot find the energy to support this initiative fully. That reflects the state of the opposition at this point.

I wish to make some final remarks regarding the technology commercialisation program. The budget continues the support for that program, which is run out of the Department of State and Regional Development. It is a sensational program that allows the innovation and creativity of Victorian business people to be commercialised so their value can be captured and exploited — something Australia has not done well over many years.

I had the opportunity of attending a Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry function not so long ago. VECCI is one of the government's partners in delivering the technology commercialising program. At that function it was announced that about a dozen small business people were the successful applicants to go to San Francisco to attend the Berkeley campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and take part in an intensive, two-week venture capital management program.

I will read to the house the comments of one participant in that program. He said:

On behalf of my colleagues at —

the company —

and especially myself, I would like to thank the Victorian government and you for your role in making this event possible. To summarise the value of the course in a few words is very difficult. It has been a once in a lifetime opportunity not only for me and our company but also for all the Australian contingent who were there. I believe it will have (and has had) a significant impact on all of our lives, our outlook, on how business is done and on what we have to do to succeed in the international environment.

But beyond that I believe there will be a lasting impact that this group of individuals will bring to the Victorian and Australian business community.

It is a tremendously valuable program. In the context of Australia as a nation it is a modest program — it will cost some \$20 million over three years — but it is delivering something that Australia has not been able to

deliver before. It capitalises on the tremendous innovation of Australian, particularly Victorian, business people. It is a great reflection on this government's commitment to economic management. The government is prepared to invest in things that will deliver a benefit for Victoria not only today but in years to come.

I endorse the budget wholeheartedly. It delivers today and builds for tomorrow. I know the people in the electorate that I am very proud to represent will have continued confidence and faith in the Victorian government to deliver the things that matter for them.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Leader of the Opposition) — This is a budget of missed opportunities, and it is a budget that fails Victoria. The Labor government has missed the opportunity with this budget to invest in the future of Victoria. It has missed the opportunity to substantially cut business taxes and provide for new investment and new jobs, and it has missed the opportunity to make sure ordinary Victorians benefit from the good work of the previous government in building the strength of the Victorian economy.

This is a government that is all talk and no action. It is a gunna government. It is gunna do this, and it is gunna do that, but it never gets around to doing anything. It is a not-yet government. It says it is going do this and it is going do that, but not yet. It says but not yet on fast rail, but not yet on major projects, but not yet on reductions in business taxation.

This government and this budget have failed the people of Victoria. This budget shows that the same old Labor Party is back in power in Victoria. It is the same old Cain and Kirner economic management style. It is a high-taxing, high-spending government. This is a budget put together by a person who sees Rob Jolly as his economic idol. The current Treasurer sees Rob Jolly, the architect of the failure of the Victorian budgetary management system of the 1980s, as his idol, and we can see that in his budget.

The people of Victoria will see that this budget is the highest taxing budget ever produced in Victoria's history. It is not about tax reductions, it is about tax increases. Payroll taxes, land taxes, stamp duties, gambling taxes and taxes on insurance will all reach record levels in the next financial year under this budget. The budget reveals that the Labor Party's so-called business tax cuts are nothing more than a sham; they are nothing more than Clayton's tax cuts.

If you look at the figures on payroll tax you see that the payroll tax collections outlined in the budget are 2 per

cent higher than for the previous year. If you look at the figures for the previous year in last year's budget you see that the payroll tax take was predicted to be \$2.459 billion and the revised amount was \$2.555 billion. In this year's budget the predicted take from payroll tax after the so-called tax cuts is \$2.607 billion — an increase of \$52 million. That is a massive increase in payroll tax. Similarly, there is an increase in land tax from \$489 million in last year's budget to \$567 million in this year's budget.

That is an increase in payroll tax, an increase in land tax and an increase in gambling taxes! How hypocritical of this Labor government, which railed long and hard when in opposition about the former government's increasing dependence on gambling taxes, to increase gambling taxes in this budget and to introduce a new gambling tax on poker machines across the state, thereby massively increasing its dependency on gambling taxes!

All Victorians are concerned about the price of petrol, particularly those in regional and rural Victoria. The figures released this week have exposed members of the Bracks Labor government for the hypocrites they are. They are hypocritical on petrol taxes because they are saying to the federal government, 'Reduce your petrol taxes and reduce petrol excise!', but what does their government get out of petrol taxes?

You will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there used to be a state excise on petrol until a High Court decision said that was illegal, and the commonwealth then agreed to collect the excise on behalf of the states and hand it straight back to them. That excise goes straight back to the Treasurer and the Premier of this state! And what do the figures show? In 1998–99 the Victorian state government received \$433 million directly from that arrangement. What did the state government get directly out of petrol tax collected for it by the commonwealth government in 1999–2000? It got \$528 million! That is an increase of nearly \$100 million, or 22 per cent!

The Victorian Labor government is saying to the commonwealth, 'Reduce your excise', but it has the capacity to do that itself. Why does the government not follow the lead of the Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, who gives all that money back to Queenslanders in lower petrol prices? Why doesn't the Victorian state government give the money back by lowering petrol prices for Victorians, particularly those in country Victoria? There is no doubt about it: this government is the highest taxing Victorian government ever! It is a high-taxing government, and it is crippling Victorian investment, business and jobs as a result.

Let us look at the impact the government's high-taxing approach is having on Victoria. In his budget the Treasurer forecast lower business investment, falling from \$1.67 billion in 1999–2000 to only \$1.2 billion this year. Export facilitation is also expected to fall, and what is worse, Labor has even reduced its funding commitment to the important area of multimedia and information technology (IT) from \$12.1 million this year to only \$8.9 million next year. The 21st century technologies are IT and multimedia, but what have this government and this Treasurer done — they have cut their funding for multimedia and IT! They have no vision for the future of Victoria. They do not understand how important multimedia and IT are for the growth and development of Victoria.

The impact those sorts of reductions are having can be seen from a comparison of the predictions of this Treasurer and this government for the economic growth and development of this state with the predictions for Australia as a whole. That comparison has to be set in the context that over the past three or four years Victoria has been the leading state in Australia in economic growth. Under the previous government economic growth in Victoria exceeded the Australian average. Indeed, in economic growth, employment growth and all the other major indicators of economic development, Victoria was no. 1 of all the states and territories in Australia.

What is happening under this government, this Treasurer and this Premier? Their budget figures forecast slower jobs growth. They forecast jobs growth of only 0.5 per cent compared with an Australian average of 1 per cent. They are predicting that the unemployment rate will be 6.5 per cent, which is up from last year's budget rate of 5.75 per cent. That certainly throws out the window their election commitment of a 5 per cent unemployment rate. They now have to put their hands up and say that in their own budget figures they cannot deliver on their 1999 election promise of a 5 per cent unemployment rate.

As I said, under the previous government Victoria was the leading state in Australia in economic growth. Under this government it has gone backwards.

*Government members interjecting.*

**Dr NAPTHINE** — If the honourable member for Mitcham cares to read the data and if the honourable member for Frankston East cares to read the data — if he can understand it — they will see that last year the budget forecast an economic growth of 3.75 per cent for Victoria, but this year that growth has been slowed to 2.5 per cent. Australia as a whole is predicting

economic growth of 3.25 per cent, while Treasurer Brumby is predicting that Victoria, instead of being the leading state, will be the lagging state. Victoria will be the state dragging Australia backwards, instead of leading Australia as it did under the previous government.

It is about time this government, this Premier and this Treasurer got serious about doing something to create jobs and opportunities for Victorians. It is about time they started getting involved in some major projects instead of just swanning around opening projects that were started by the previous government and taking the credit for projects that were initiated, set up and constructed by the previous government. Whether it be the museum, the court complex, Federation Square or the Vodaphone Arena — I could go on and on — they are major projects that were started by the previous government and claimed by this government. However, when we start listing the projects this government has started, we find we have a big fat zero — no projects, no agenda and no vision!

**Mr Wells** — No Scoresby freeway!

**Dr NAPTHINE** — The government says it is committed to the Scoresby freeway — except for the Government Whip, the honourable member for Ivanhoe, who let the cat out of the bag! In a cheap attempt to buy votes in the Aston by-election he said Labor is opposed to the Scoresby freeway.

The government says it is committed to the Scoresby freeway, but where are its dollars for that freeway? The federal government has put \$220 million on the table, but there are no dollars from the state government to build that road. It has committed \$2 million for another study, but no money to build the road. There is \$220 million from the federal government and no money from the state government — none! Zero! No projects, no vision and no dollars for Scoresby!

Where are the government's dollars for the Knox hospital and the much-needed tertiary health services in the outer east? It does not care about the outer east, and it does not care about health services for the people in the outer east. The Labor Party simply does not understand the needs of the outer eastern suburbs and does not understand how to make a commitment for the Scoresby freeway or the Knox hospital.

It is clear Victoria again has a Labor Party of old — a Labor Party that simply cannot deliver! It has a Labor Party that has been exposed by the Auditor-General's recent *Report on Ministerial Portfolios*. The Cain and Kirner governments had a few Achilles heels, including

the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, Tricontinental and the State Bank, but the biggest was the old Workcare scheme, which was \$2 billion in the red as a result of massive mismanagement, massive robbing and lack of ministerial responsibility.

Where does the Auditor-General's report on Workcover say we are heading under a Labor government today? Have a look at the figures: for the six months to 31 December 2000, the Victorian Workcover Authority was \$651 million in the red. That is for six months; if you stretch that over 12 months, you see the VWA is over \$1 billion in deficit. Blow-out Bob is at it again, blowing out the Workcover deficit. Employers in Victoria faced massive premium increases last year of 30, 40, 50, 80 and 100 per cent. Despite those massive increases in Workcover premiums and the massive amount of extra income for the Workcover system, it is still \$651 million in the red.

The government and Blow-out Bob, the Minister for Workcover, promised that the scheme would be in the black by 2003. Now only a few months later the Auditor-General says that it will be struggling to be back in the black by 2006! This is a massive indictment.

I refer to other areas of government administration and services. Let us look at some of the major performance indicators in the health area. Since the election of this government waiting lists have increased by 30 per cent — a massive increase; waiting times for semi-urgent surgery have doubled; and ambulance bypasses are up 130 per cent. All the major indicators of the performance of our health system demonstrate that the system is being badly managed by a part-time minister who does not understand and cannot deliver. What is worse, the Auditor-General highlights further problems with the health system in his comments that the financial condition of the public hospital system remains weak and vulnerable.

**Mr Viney** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Frankston East!

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — The honourable member for Frankston East would be well advised to look at the table on page 88 of the Auditor-General's ministerial portfolios report, which indicates that public hospitals are expected to display signs of financial difficulty as at 30 June 2001. A whole series of hospitals, including two in my electorate — the Portland and District Hospital and Western District Health Services, which includes the Hamilton Base Hospital and the Penshurst

and District Memorial Hospital — are in real financial difficulty because of the mismanagement by this minister and this government.

Let us look at the absolutely critical and important area of early intervention services for those children with developmental delay and disabilities. I do not think anybody would disagree that there could not be an area that needs more assistance and funding. I was proud that every year I was Minister for Community Services the previous government increased funding for early intervention services. We now have an organisation such as — —

**Mr Brumby** interjected.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — The Treasurer interjects, referring to preschools. I am also proud that when I was the Minister for Community Services funding for preschools increased each and every year ahead of inflation and the consumer price index. That is an absolute fact. The Treasurer ought to look up the data.

Let me get back to early intervention services. Irabina, which provides services for young children aged 0 to 5 or 6 years of age who show autism or allied disorders and similar syndromes, is asking for \$100 000 to help those children and their families by helping to take people off the waiting list. Even if the callous, uncaring and cruel Minister for Community Services had an extra \$100 000, she would not give it to Irabina and to those children and families.

What is the Minister for Community Services doing to help the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre? That is a centre I am proud, as the former Minister for Community Services, to have funded and helped establish to provide services for disabled children with multiple and very severe physical and intellectual disabilities. Their parents and the centre staff deserve medals for the work they do, but they are being treated with contempt and disdain by this minister, who does not care or understand.

What does this budget do for ordinary Victorians across Victoria? Absolutely nothing. Worse than that, it takes away their \$60 winter power bonus. This winter pensioners, families and other people on low incomes will not receive the winter power bonus for their use of heating and lighting that they have received for the past three years, an initiative of the previous government. The fact that this government has taken that away is absolutely outrageous. It has taken that away but given nothing back to ordinary Victorians.

In summary, this is a budget that is cruel to ordinary Victorians. It does nothing for those people in need, and

does nothing to grow and develop and provide a vision and future for Victoria. It is a budget without projects, without vision, and without direction. It is a budget of high taxes that will make it harder for people to invest, grow their businesses and provide more jobs in this state. It is a budget that does not deliver on the health system. It is a budget that does not improve the education system. It is a budget that is not in the interests of Victoria.

The budget has been a cruel hoax on Victorians. The government said it would deliver for Victoria, but it has failed for regional and rural Victoria and for metropolitan Victoria, including the outer east. It has failed for business and for ordinary Victorians.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc! I call the honourable member for Rodney.

**Mr Viney** — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think I got the call.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I was advised by the previous person in the chair that the next speaker was to be the honourable member for Rodney, so I will check that with the Clerk.

**Mr VINEY** (Frankston East) — The only person smiling after that pathetic performance is the honourable member for Malvern. The Leader of the Opposition could draw only 31 members from his side to listen to his budget response — and the shadow Treasurer came into the chamber only for the last 1 or 2 minutes of her leader's speech. He cannot draw a full house! That indicates the support for the Leader of the Opposition, which is 8 per cent and going down. Standard and Poors issued a press release today that rated the Leader of the Opposition as going from DL to DN — from Dr Dolittle to Dr Donothing!

The Leader of the Opposition bleated on about tax. The Bracks government has cut payroll tax and is reducing the number of people caught in the land tax net, which is a problem created by members opposite. The Leader of the Opposition comes from the party of the GST. For a member of that party to have the gall to criticise this side of the house about taxation is breathtaking.

He went on about petrol taxes. When in government the Liberal Party presided over rising petrol prices. As well, the federal Liberal Party has lied to the people of Australia about the impact of the GST on petrol prices. Despite that, the Leader of the Opposition comes into this chamber and lectures the government on that issue.

He also raised concerns about information technology (IT). This government is introducing computers into schools at a ratio of one computer for every five students. In 1998, the last year of the opposition's time in power, the ratio was only 1 to 8 — and parents had to contribute to the cost of purchasing the computers. He talked further about information technology, and I could go on for ages about it. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Human Services I point out that the budget allocates \$30 million to improve information technology in the public hospital system. The Bracks government is delivering on its commitments across a broad range of areas.

I am pleased and proud to speak on this budget, particularly with the Treasurer at the table. The budget delivers for the people of Victoria: it delivers on infrastructure, on social capital and on the commitments we made in opposition when we consulted with the community. Labor listened to the needs and concerns of the community in the critical areas of human services, education and community safety. This side of politics is delivering on those commitments through increased recurrent expenditure and increased capital infrastructure.

I turn now to my responsibilities as parliamentary secretary. I was in the chamber during the contribution of the honourable member for Caulfield, who criticised the government over some areas of aged care. She forgets that it was her side of politics that proposed to privatise publicly owned aged care facilities, her side of politics that failed to invest in capital infrastructure in aged care facilities, and her side of politics that failed to deliver on aged care beds across Victoria, to the point where the Mornington Peninsula region is short of 600 aged care beds, which is causing a crisis not only in aged care services but in the hospital system.

I have spoken about aged care in this place on two occasions — once in a grievance debate and once in a debate on a matter of public importance. I have spoken extensively about the lack of commitment by the other side — particularly at the federal level — to aged care facilities, and the impact that has had on Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula generally. At the next federal election the residents of the federal electorate of Dunkley will have a great opportunity to elect a good member in Cr Mark Conroy, the mayor of Frankston, who with the federal Labor Party will deliver on aged care facilities.

What is the state government doing? It has allocated an additional \$26 million over four years for home and community care and an additional \$50.5 million for residential aged care. It has also allocated \$19 million

for the Grace McKellar Centre and \$25 million to upgrade aged care facilities in rural Victoria.

The Bracks government was left with a huge hole in aged care services, and the budget contains funding to cover a wide range of commitments. It has allocated an additional \$4 million to enable the reopening of 110 nursing home beds, including beds at the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre and, in my electorate, the Mount Eliza Aged Care and Rehabilitation Service, which is part of Peninsula Health. It has also allocated an additional \$4 million for the treatment of acquired brain injury programs and an additional \$6 million for fall prevention programs, including some good programs run out of the Mount Eliza centre.

For the honourable member for Caulfield to come into this place and criticise the government over aged care programs was pathetic. She was grasping at straws and showed no real understanding of the needs of aged care services and the damage that her side has done to aged care facilities.

I turn now to the health portfolio in the Department of Human Services. The first Labor budget allocated \$176 million to restore the viability and quality of hospitals. This budget injects a further \$247 million for demand management, recruitment and the retention of nurses. Hospital funding has received a boost of \$1.1 billion over four years.

Victoria has been faced with rising demand for services, rising pressures and rising costs. The former government left Victoria with a downgraded system, having cut nurses and closed hospital beds. The state of the Frankston Hospital was a critical issue in the last election campaign and in the subsequent supplementary election. The hospital had been decimated by the cuts made by the former government and was pleading for funds for additional beds.

What happened throughout that election campaign? The former government denied there was a need for additional beds. The honourable member for Frankston constantly criticised me and others in the Frankston community who were advocating additional beds, claiming we were criticising the hospital. It emerged that I and others were simply campaigning for what the hospital was pleading for. During the supplementary election campaign a freedom of information request revealed that the former government had received a submission for additional beds, which it rejected.

In the supplementary election the former Premier came to the electorate and promised Frankston Hospital the world, but it was the Labor Party that made clear what

it would do in government. In both this budget and the last, Labor has delivered on its commitments. Indeed, it has gone beyond the promises it made during the election campaign. A total of \$21 million has been committed to the upgrade of the Frankston Hospital, the biggest boost it has had in many years.

Included in that is funding for an additional 76-bed redevelopment. Having committed to providing 64 beds, the government has now provided the money for 76, including two new 30-bed wards and a 16-bed observation unit. The budget has allocated a further \$9 million, which will provide desperately needed paediatric facilities at a new maternity section. Those are the things the Bracks government is delivering for the community I am proud to represent.

Out of that \$1.1 billion fund for health, we have \$150 million to ease emergency demand and \$384 million to treat an extra 11 000 elective surgery patients, fund 280 additional renal dialysis treatments, handle 14 000 extra emergency admissions and open 300 new hospital beds. The commitment out of the budget is to treat an extra 30 000 patients per year in our hospital system. Some \$48 million is committed to take the pressure off emergency departments.

Other recurrent funding initiatives include an allocation of \$469 million to recruit 1300 new nurses. The previous government's record was one of sacking nurses. This government is putting nurses back into the system, where they are desperately needed.

Victorians were left with a mess in ambulance services. Day after day front-page headlines reported our ambulance service crisis. The Bracks government has delivered on its commitment to restore ambulances and improve response times with a \$35 million boost to include extra paramedics, an expanded air wing and to restore ambulance services across Victoria.

Some \$9.6 million is allocated for free needles and extra support for diabetics and the expansion of the breast screening program. Many honourable members have had pleas from people with diabetes about the cost of needles. It is this government that has delivered on those pleas. It is this government that has provided good news and provided free needles and extra support to people who suffer diabetes.

The honourable member for Caulfield suggested that the government was doing nothing in public dental services. The Bracks government has committed \$8.4 million for public dental services. The budget commits to treating an additional 30 000 teenagers and adults in public dental services. The previous

government failed to do anything. In contrast, the Bracks government is building a new dental hospital.

On that note, let me look at infrastructure in our public hospital system. Some \$502 million is allocated for the expansion and redevelopment of the public hospital system. It demonstrates a commitment to putting more money into our public hospitals to make them operate better and a commitment to modernising and renewing them in a way this state has never seen before.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh!

**Mr VINEY** — The budget includes a contribution of \$310 million towards a new \$325 million hospital at the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre. I am pleased to chair the ministerial council that is overseeing that project, which is one of the largest public hospital building projects in Australia. We are building this project as a publicly owned and operated facility, not as some pie-in-the-sky privatised concept of the sort the previous government talked about, which it could never deliver on. It could not get any private investor to sign up on that.

Allocations include \$18.5 million for the Maroondah and Angliss hospitals, \$9 million for the new paediatrics and midwifery wing at the Frankston Hospital, \$11 million for a new community health service in Wyndham, 30 additional beds and a day surgery unit for the Northern Hospital — the list goes on. This is the largest investment Victoria has ever seen in its public hospital system.

I have already dealt with residential aged care, but in housing the government has expanded its program with \$3.2 million additional recurrent funding to assist the homeless or those at risk. During 2001–02 some \$28 million will be provided for the acquisition or construction of 300 crisis support or transitional housing properties.

The government has expanded the supply of social housing. A total of \$144 million will be made available for the acquisition of an additional 1400 properties. This will be done through an innovative mix of public and private sector partnerships and will also involve the community sector and local councils.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh will cease interjecting.

**Mr VINEY** — To upgrade existing social housing stock a total of \$154 million is committed in 2001–02 to improve living conditions on public housing estates. I was pleased on behalf of the Minister for Housing to chair the initial process in looking at the Raglan Ingles estate. It was interesting to drive past it the other day and see that it is not there any more — all because we are getting on with the job of investing in our housing infrastructure.

Time does not permit me to go on too much more about the great news of this budget, but I want to talk about how the government has delivered on education in Frankston and the peninsula. A total of \$654 million has funded education initiatives across Victoria. Of that, \$6.9 million has contributed to improving the quality of education services in Frankston and the peninsula —

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh will cease interjecting.

**Mr VINEY** — Five schools in Frankston have received a total of more than \$318 000 as part of the Middle Years of Schooling program: Karingal Park Secondary College, \$98 000; Monterey Secondary College, \$56 000; Mount Erin Secondary College, \$59 000; Mount Eliza Secondary College, \$44 000; and Frankston High School, \$62 000. This is the commitment of the Bracks government — and what a contrast to the federal government!

Let us look at what it did with funding in the private school system: Geelong College, \$2.85 million; Scotch College, \$1.03 million; Wesley College, \$3.81 million; Ivanhoe Grammar School, \$2.41 million; and Caulfield Grammar School, \$3.6 million. What did Monterey Secondary College in the Pines in my electorate receive from the federal government? \$4000. What did Karingal Park Secondary College get from the federal government? \$4000. What did Frankston High School get from the federal government? \$4000.

What a contrast. The Bracks government is delivering on education. It is delivering on health and on aged care. And what a contrast it is to the political charlatans on the other side and to where their focus is in looking after their privileged mates ripping the heart out of our public infrastructure and the public system.

The Bracks government is a government we can all be proud of. It is a government Victorians will get behind and support. It is a government I am proud to stand here and support in this Parliament.

**Mr MAUGHAN** (Rodney) — I have listened to the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill, and particularly to the remarks of the honourable member for Frankston East, with a great deal of interest. Listening to honourable members on the other side of the house, one would believe all the previous government did was slash and burn, close schools and hospitals, and so on — not a single good thing for the state. Amazing, isn't it, that when the Labor government came to power, everything suddenly changed.

I am sad that some of the newer members, who look at things through rose-coloured glasses, actually believe what they are saying. The honourable member for Frankston East seems to have a bit more understanding than that, but still tends to believe what he is saying. They get carried away with their own rhetoric.

Time is limited so I will get straight into it. Firstly, I will talk about community services, because that is my interest as National Party spokesman on community services and because I believe it is the Achilles heel of this government. I am passionate about community services because I believe what happens in the first five years of a child's life is crucial to the child's ability to develop into a well-rounded individual.

I further believe if the government would put adequate resources into early childhood development and preschools it could do something to avoid many of the social problems people grapple with later in life, such as drugs, alcohol, juvenile delinquency and, later on, the justice system that costs the community such an enormous amount of money. Early childhood development and preschooling are absolutely essential.

Part of all that is positive parenting, assisting dysfunctional families, providing sufficient child psychologists and occupational therapists, diagnosing children with autism and putting sufficient funding into preschool education.

I comment in passing that out of a budget of \$23 000 million the government puts \$80 million a year into preschool education. What sort of commitment is that to helping families and young people overcome those problems? The hypocrisy of the other side is breathtaking. I have been writing letters on this issue for many years now, and when the new government made all sorts of promises I thought, 'Here is a chance for us to actually do something about delivering for children'. I wrote off with a great deal of enthusiasm to the new Minister for Community Services about a parenting resource service which my electorate shares with the electorate of Swan Hill, whose elected member

is in the chamber. I thought we might get some funding to continue the three-year service. Not a brass razoo! The minister wrote back and said it had been funded by the Community Support Fund and that the government had commissioned a report into parenting and a parenting future directions paper.

The previous program had been funded out of the Community Support Fund, which did not start with this government but was initiated by the previous government. The program was delivering great results, and yet the new government would not even continue the funding. One can go on and on listing such issues.

Preschools suffer enormous problems at the moment. Salaries are 25 per cent behind primary school salaries, administration is becoming more and more burdensome, there is no career structure, workloads are becoming more onerous, and a mere \$80 million is going into preschools. What did we get in additional funding in this budget? Not a single brass razoo for preschools! The government talks about the family and its concern for preschool teachers, but what does it deliver? Absolutely nothing. That is hypocrisy from members opposite.

I refer to the Treasurer's budget speech. The government has been crowing about all the wonderful things it has done. In the budget speech the Treasurer talks about more than \$2 billion for infrastructure, \$470 million for transport — much of which is on the never-never, but it is here in the budget — \$386 million for education, all there in the speech the Treasurer gave to the house. There is \$150 million over 10 years for the Snowy River, \$1.4 billion for health, and on it goes. How much for preschool education? Not a single brass razoo! That is despicable and unacceptable. The government must do a whole lot better for early childhood development.

The government came to power after building up the expectation that it would manage the state much better than the previous government. I have to say that the government, after being in power for 20 months, is a great disappointment. Things have not changed in country Victoria. Country Victorians believed there was going to be a significant change with this government, but there has been no significant change — no vision, no program such as the water and waste water program implemented by the previous government and all the flow-on effects that came from it. That program gave not only better water and waste water facilities but stimulated growth in the food industry, generated a boom in employment and boosted agriculture in farming communities.



The budget lacks vision. Where are the visionary projects? I have looked carefully through the budget papers and cannot see anything that has any great vision. Where is the vision that makes Victoria a world leader in, for example, information technology? The government has dropped the ball on information technology. Victoria had a head start and a chance to get up there and be a world leader, but it has now dropped the ball.

Now is the time to investigate microtechnology, where we still have an opportunity. The private sector is doing some great work in that area, and if the government picks up that ball and runs with it we could perhaps win back some of Victoria's pre-eminence.

Where is the vision for agriculture? There is none. Some things are happening, but that is the flow-on effect from the really good work done by the previous government. The honourable member for Swan Hill, who was parliamentary secretary for agriculture, did some great work providing a vision and assisting the development of our agricultural industries. That work is now flowing on, not because the government has done anything. I have to say, however, that the \$50 million in the budget for agricultural research initiatives is welcome and I congratulate and commend the Minister for Agriculture for being able to get that through. Agricultural research is absolutely vital.

I note that, apart from a whole range of other research institutes, the Kyabram institute in my electorate received \$600 000 for its dairy research centre. I remind members on the other side of the house that when Labor was last in power it went very close to closing that institute. Labor let the institute wind down during 10 years of government, and by the end our agricultural research institutes were in an appalling state. Kyabram was, according to the Baker report, to close. It was the coalition government that kept it open. Giving credit where credit is due, however, this Minister for Agriculture has provided additional funding, and I welcome that.

The time frame of many of the initiatives of the government is the never-never; it is not here and now. All sorts of programs that have been announced and some of the allocations I read from the Treasurer's speech are not happening this year; they are 4, 7 or 10 years away. They are being flagged, but where is the funding? In many cases there is a small amount of funding now, with the other funding to come in 3, 4 or 5 and in some case 10 years.

Small business has missed out badly in this budget. What has the government done for small business?

Small business is the powerhouse of our economy; it employs the vast majority of people who work in our communities. There was an opportunity to reduce payroll tax and taxes generally. What did they get? An increase in workers compensation premiums. Prior to the election members of the Labor Party were saying that they would reintroduce common-law rights for workers compensation and that would increase premiums by about 15 per cent. Tell that to the members of the business community who are being faced with premium increases of 30 or 40 per cent, and in some cases well above those figures.

What has the government done to recompense the not-for-profit organisations that have been hit with enormous increases in their workers compensation premiums and the costs of changing over motor vehicles? That has not been because of the GST, which the government will blame. The whole thing has been altered, and now changing over a motor vehicle is costing \$3000 or \$4000 a year, through no fault of those organisations. What is the government doing to assist the not-for-profit organisations? Absolutely nothing! The government says one thing and does another.

There are some good things in the budget, which I welcome. It provides \$96 million over five years for rail standardisation — one can question the figures, but nonetheless there is money — which is long overdue and very welcome. I certainly welcome it in my community, because the railway line between Echuca and Toolamba will be upgraded. I certainly welcome that and look forward to the day when we have Sprinter trains on that line. I remind the honourable members for Seymour and Bendigo East, who believe the former coalition government shut down all the rail systems, that when I was elected 12 years ago there was not a single passenger rail service left in my electorate — they had all been closed by the previous Labor government. The coalition government initiated additional passenger services to Echuca, which are continuing, and I welcome that.

I also welcome the funding of \$157 million over seven years for the salinity program. I remind honourable members on the other side of the house that it was the former government that really got things moving in salinity programs. As I said, I certainly welcome that.

Referring to my electorate, there is no significant funding in the budget for bridges over the Murray River. I want an unequivocal commitment from the Minister for Transport that the Victorian government will fund the necessary roadworks on the Echuca–Moama bridge and a public undertaking that

those works will be completed within a reasonable time frame, say five years. There has been a nominal commitment, but the people in Echuca–Moama do not believe the government is committed to doing its share in building that infrastructure. Likewise, at Robinvale and Cobram — there is \$700 000 in the budget for the three bridges — there needs to be a commitment from the government in just the same way that it has given a commitment on the Snowy scheme, for example, over 10 years. Let's have that commitment. Let's hear what the government is going to do to fund its share of the cost of those three bridges over the next three or five years.

The budget lacks vision, and it is not credible. I remind the house that many of the things honourable members opposite are singing about being able to deliver are possible only because the former government, which inherited a budget in deficit and a massive debt of \$32 000 million, cleaned it all up and got back the AAA credit rating. The tremendous work done by the previous government means that about \$5000 million can be spent on additional programs. Let's give credit where it is due. I give credit to the initiatives the government has taken, but let members of the government also acknowledge that when the coalition came to power the state was a basket case. The coalition government had to take some very difficult decisions and had to get Victoria back on track. It restored this state's finances and provided the wherewithal to enable this government to deliver the programs in which it now takes pride.

**Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

**Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.**

## ABSENCE OF MINISTER

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have been advised that the Minister for Community Services will be absent from question time today. The Minister for Health will answer questions on community services.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Rural Victoria: employment

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Leader of the Opposition) — Given the government's claim in the budget papers of significant jobs growth in regional and rural Victoria, will the Premier explain today's Australian Bureau of Statistics data which shows that during the first five months of 2001, 26 200 full-time jobs have been lost in country Victoria?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the National Party! I will not call the Premier until the house quietens down.

**Mr BRACKS** (Premier) — The budget papers give evidence that the figures on job growth around this state, including country and regional Victoria, are the highest in the nation by a country mile. The second highest job growth in the nation is in metropolitan Melbourne. Those are the two highest areas of job growth in the country. The government has created more jobs in regional Victoria than the previous crowd did in years and years.

The government has done it by ensuring there is a spread of infrastructure around the state. It is not just putting capital works into the city of Melbourne, but right around the state, including the electorates of people living in country and regional Victoria. The government is rebuilding country Victoria, and that is why Victoria has the best performance in jobs of any state in Australia.

**Mr Ryan** — It is just as well marine parks fell over, Premier!

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

### Preschools: Kirby report

**Mr RYAN** (Leader of the National Party) — My question was to have been for the Minister for Community Services, but in her absence I direct it to the Minister for Health. Given that Victoria's preschool sector, particularly smaller rural preschools, are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain suitably qualified staff and that voluntary committees of management are finding it hard to make ends meet, why has the government not released the Kirby report on preschool education in Victoria?

**Mr Phillips** interjected.

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

**Mr THWAITES** (Minister for Health) — The Minister for Community Services, unlike her predecessors, has been committed to strengthening and improving Victoria's preschool sector. That is why she has consulted widely. She gets the best expert evidence and acts upon it. That is what she will continue to do.

**Mr Plowman** interjected.

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

**Biotechnology: government initiatives**

**Mr CARLI** (Coburg) — Will the Premier inform the house of the latest action the government is taking to promote Victoria as an international centre for biotechnology investment?

**Mr BRACKS** (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for Coburg for his question and for his interest. His electorate contains significant biomedical and biotechnology research facilities.

The government understands the importance of biotechnology to Victoria's future job growth and future position in the world as a centre for biotechnology in the Asia-Pacific region. Melbourne is home to the nation's premier public and private research institutions and receives about 40 per cent of National Health and Medical Research Council funding despite having only 25 per cent of the nation's population and 25 per cent of the country's economic activity.

One-third of all Australian biotechnology companies are based in Victoria, including the country's biggest biotechnology company, CSL Ltd. The sector is growing rapidly, with 18 new companies being established in the past two years. The government's commitment to biotechnology is unparalleled around the Australian states. This year alone it will be putting \$100 million into the biotechnology industry. It has appointed Professor Adrienne Clark as its Ambassador for Biotechnology, and she is doing an excellent job around Australia and internationally, advocating effectively for Victoria.

The government has set up a science careers and courses web site to encourage students to pursue careers in science. For the first time in many years the number of students who are selecting science as an optional course is turning around. The government has set up a technology commercialisation program to commercialise biotechnology research at the source of discovery, so that instead of exporting those jobs it is making sure the discoveries are developed onshore. The government has embarked on the ambitious and effective Bio 21 project at the Parkville precinct. It is a shining light around Australia and across the world.

Later this month a delegation of 250 Australians will represent Australia at the Bio 2001 conference in San Diego. I am pleased to announce that 140 of the 250 Australians attending the conference are Victorians. It shows the enormous interest the state has

in Victorian industry and research in biotechnology. The delegation includes biotechnology companies, Victoria's tertiary institutions such as the University of Melbourne, Victoria's Ambassador of Biotechnology, Professor Adrienne Clark, and the Minister for State and Regional Development and Treasurer, who will join me in leading the delegation of 140 Victorians to San Diego very soon.

Victorian biotech companies will be on show at the biotech conference in San Diego, which will involve about 10 000 people from around the world and is the world's biggest biotechnology conference. I am pleased to say that Victoria is on the front foot of what is a growing job area around the world and one which will help job growth in the state.

**Manufacturing: employment**

**Ms ASHER** (Brighton) — I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to promote Victoria as Australia's manufacturing heartland and further refer to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released today that reveal that full-time employment in Victoria's manufacturing sector has declined by a net 19 400 in the six months to May 2001 and ask: when will the Bracks government stop playing games with industry audits and reviews and start to grow employment in Victoria's vitally important manufacturing sector?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Ms Overington** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Ballarat West!

**Mr BRACKS** (Premier) — The key question for the shadow Treasurer is: when will she start reading the figures properly? If you compare the figures that were released today with those for the period when opposition members were part of the Kennett government in 1999, you find that over 33 500 more people are employed in Victoria today than when they left office. There has been a 10 per cent increase in the number of people employed in manufacturing, an additional 33 000 since 1999 when they left office. Our manufacturing sector is going well.

**Dr Napthine** interjected.

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

**Mr BRACKS** — The government knows that across Australia and throughout the world there has been a slowdown in the economy. We are aware of that, and that has been reported on — —

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr BRACKS** — Oh, there is not! That has been reported on in the federal budget.

**Mr McArthur** interjected.

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

**Mr BRACKS** — Importantly, Mr Speaker — —

**Ms Asher** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting.

**Mr BRACKS** — Victoria is the stand-out economy in Australia. It is the best economy in Australia and a stand-out economy. We have had more job growth in Victoria than the rest of Australia. Victoria is performing well and has had 10 per cent more manufacturing jobs, or 33 000 more jobs than when the crowd opposite left office. This government is able to hold its head high in relation to other states.

### Hospitals: services report

**Ms BEATTIE** (Tullamarine) — Will the Minister for Health advise the house of the latest hospital statistics outlined in the March quarter *Hospital Services Report*?

**Mr THWAITES** (Minister for Health) — I thank the honourable member for her question and her continuing interest in health matters. This morning the honourable member for Bennettswood claimed that in some way there was some delay in releasing the *Hospital Services Report*. There is absolutely no delay whatsoever. I read it for the first time last night and I am happy to be releasing it today.

I will compare that to the honourable member for Bennettswood who was the ministerial adviser to the previous Minister for Health. Do you know that between January 1999 and October 1999 when it lost office the Kennett government did not release the *Hospital Services Report* once. Not once! And why was that?

**Mr Viney** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Frankston East!

**Mr THWAITES** — During the last 12 months of the Kennett government ambulance bypass increased by 359 per cent.

*Government members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask government benches to come to order.

**Mr THWAITES** — I am pleased to advise that the *Hospital Services Report* does show some improvements in a number of areas of hospital statistics that people are most concerned about. In relation to waiting lists the report indicates that they have decreased by more than 1000 in the past two quarters. The report also indicates that ambulance bypass is down by 2.6 per cent and 25 per cent over the last two quarters. Interestingly, the report notes that this improvement has occurred at the same time as a massive increase in the number of bed days that are being utilised by patients who should be in commonwealth nursing home beds. The report indicates — and this makes the improvement all the more — —

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr THWAITES** — They do not like to hear this. The report indicates that there has been a 46 per cent increase since November in the number of bed days in hospitals taken up by patients who should be in commonwealth nursing homes. There are 19 467 bed days being used by patients who have been assessed as needing commonwealth nursing home beds.

**Mr Doyle** interjected.

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

**Mr THWAITES** — This is the equivalent of a hospital the size of the Royal Melbourne Hospital being taken out of our system. The Howard federal government should stop dumping on our older citizens and give them the nursing home beds that they deserve. The government can see the importance of collecting patient management statistics.

A number of hospitals are achieving particular improvements as a result of better patient management. In particular I commend the Frankston Hospital, which is doing a good job despite the fact that there are not enough beds. There has also been a 25 per cent improvement in ambulance bypasses at the hospital

because of the patient management strategies that are being undertaken.

There are continuing problems at a number of hospitals, notably the Northern Hospital, where there is simply not enough space or enough beds. That is why this government is committing some \$12 million to grow the hospital, build more beds and put more staff on — something the other side never did.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

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

### Roads: cattle underpasses

**Mr INGRAM** (Gippsland East) — Given the importance of the dairy industry to East Gippsland and rural Victoria generally and the popularity with farmers of the under-and-over cattle pass program, will the Minister for State and Regional Development tell the house whether the government is prepared to continue funding this important program?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr BRUMBY** (Minister for State and Regional Development) — Honourable members will recall that prior to the last election, as part of its agriculture policy Labor promised to provide \$4 million to assist Victorian farmers to meet the cost of constructing cattle underpasses and overpasses.

We did that because it was a specific request of the Victorian Farmers Federation, with which we work very closely. On coming to government — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BRUMBY** — Mr Speaker, can I get some protection from these people?

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

**Dr Napthine** interjected.

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

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting.

**Mr BRUMBY** — This is just another hopeless failure of the opposition parties.

**Mr Wells** interjected.

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

**Mr BRUMBY** — Do you know how many cattle underpasses the Liberal Party and the National Party subsidised, supported, funded or assisted in seven years? The answer is zero!

**Mr Maxfield** interjected.

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

**Dr Napthine** interjected.

**Mr BRUMBY** — What are you on today? Eight per cent? Eight plus two is 10! The Liberal and National parties were stuck in a cattle grid for seven years. They would not provide money for the dairy industry, but the Bracks government is! It has provided \$4 million. I will tell the house what the Victorian Farmers Federation said in a press release of 7 May:

Farmers and motorists benefit from under/overpass funding.

...

The government's initiative to provide assistance...

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BRUMBY** — 'Under/overpass funding', yes.

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

**Mr BRUMBY** — That's what the headline of the VFF press release says.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BRUMBY** — Some they build over and some they build under.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Leader of the National Party to cease interjecting, and I ask the minister to cease responding to interjections.

**Mr BRUMBY** — Next time I will bring in some crayons for the National Party so I can draw a picture of what these look like. I will read the headline again:

Farmers and motorists benefit from under/overpass funding.

This is what — —

**Mr Robinson** interjected.

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

**Mr BRUMBY** — This is what is funded in this Bracks government program, which neither the National Party nor the Liberal Party ever funded once in seven years.

**Mr McArthur** — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I listened to the question carefully. It simply asked whether the minister would continue the funding. It seems to me that he is debating the issue rather than responding to the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I uphold the point of order and ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh is not assisting the proceedings.

**Mr BRUMBY** — As I was saying, the VFF has described this program as an outstanding success. I say with some pride that to date 215 applications have been submitted to the VFF for cattle underpasses, and to date 190 have been approved. As at 31 May more than \$900 000 had been paid from the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to 45 farmers for completed underpasses. Of these there have been 21 payments in Gippsland, 6 payments in the western region, 2 payments in the north-eastern region and 15 payments in the south-western region. Farmers right across the state from Allansford in the south-west to Poowong in South Gippsland have benefited from this program.

The honourable member for Narracan raised this issue last week during an adjournment debate, and the honourable member for Gippsland East has raised the issue again today. I understand the Victorian Farmers Federation has applied to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund for an additional \$2 million in order to meet the extraordinary demand for this program from farmers right across the state. I am able to inform the honourable member for Gippsland East that the application will be considered by the RIDF committee, and then it will come to me. If it comes to me with a supporting recommendation, I can assure the honourable member that the Bracks government will be favourably disposed towards extending this outstandingly successful program.

**Attorney-General: former Chief Magistrate**

**Dr DEAN (Berwick)** — My question is for the Attorney-General. I refer to the fact that early last year the Attorney-General summonsed Deputy Chief Magistrate Barrow to see him concerning changes to the Chief Magistrate's powers and that the Chief Magistrate, Michael Adams, refused permission for Mr Barrow to see him during court time. In response to that, did one of the Attorney-General's then advisers, Ms Kathy Ettershank, ring Michael Adams and threaten him with the words, 'You will regret this.'?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The opposition benches will come to order! The honourable member for Mitcham!

**Mr HULLS (Attorney-General)** — I repeat what I have said on numerous occasions, which is that I expect Michael Adams would still be the Chief Magistrate today had serious complaints not been made against him and had a motion of no confidence not been moved in relation to him.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

### **Rail: Holmesglen collision**

**Ms BARKER (Oakleigh)** — Will the Minister for Transport inform the house of the findings of the independent investigation into the Holmesglen train crash that occurred in July 2000?

**Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport)** — Last July when an empty passenger train was returning to Flinders Street — —

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

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

**Mr BATCHELOR** — When an empty passenger train was returning to Flinders Street station from Glen Waverley it collided with the rear of a passenger train that was stationary at the Holmesglen railway station. Both trains sustained serious damage. Twelve passengers were injured, thankfully none of them

seriously. Because of the serious nature of the accident I commissioned an independent investigation and asked that it be carried out by the safety and technical services branch of the Department of Infrastructure. Today I released that report.

The investigation, which looked into a range of issues relating to the accident, included extensive interviews with the drivers of the two trains, signalling and maintenance systems and driver training issues. The investigation found that the passenger train was delayed at Holmesglen while the driver attended to a faulty door. The empty train was running express to Flinders Street station and, after the train was delayed at a red signal between Jordanville station and Holmesglen station, the driver proceeded at a speed greater than the recommended travel-with-caution rule from the book of rules and operating procedures.

The investigation also found that train control was not informed of the delay at Holmesglen station. The report found, too, that vegetation on the approach to Holmesglen had limited the driver's ability to sight the stationary train.

The recommendations of the report include that a maximum speed be set for passing a signal at red and that technology be explored that would allow train speeds to be automatically limited following the passing of the signal at red. The report also recommends that the government set minimum standards for training, assessment and continuing competence of drivers. It recommends that driver safety audits be carried out concerning medication and the wearing of glasses by drivers if that is required by prescription. It further recommends that a permanent program for trackside vegetation be implemented.

The Department of Infrastructure has already carried out works consistent with the recommendations, including a whole-of-system analysis of vegetation and lines of sight. Testing has also begun to determine a safe speed for passing signals at red. The government is committed to having the recommendations of the report acted upon and to ensuring the safety of the passenger rail system.

I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of Connex and Melbourne's other private operator, M Train, as well as that of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union in responding to the recommendations in the report.

**Attorney-General: former Chief Magistrate**

**Dr DEAN** (Berwick) — My question is again to the Attorney-General. No, my question is to the Premier,

I'm sorry. I think I will ask the Premier. Why don't we ask the Premier?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order! The Treasurer! The Deputy Premier!

**Dr DEAN** — My question is to the Premier. Given the very large amount of evidence that suggests the Attorney-General — —

*Government members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Treasurer! I ask government benches to come to order. The Chair needs to hear the question that is being asked.

**Dr DEAN** — There is plenty of time to do this. Plenty of time!

I ask the Premier: given the very large amount of evidence that suggests the Attorney-General and his Labor lawyer mates such as Stary, Puncheon and Dreyfus were clearly involved in the removal of the former Chief Magistrate of Victoria, if the Premier, the Attorney-General and his so-called open government have nothing to hide, why hasn't the Premier agreed to a full judicial inquiry into the Adams affair to clear the stench of allegations of impropriety that surrounds the chief law officer of Victoria — none of which have been denied?

*Government members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! the Minister for Agriculture! The honourable member for Keilor!

**Mr BRACKS** (Premier) — I can see now why the honourable member left his previous occupation. There is no such evidence as alleged, and there will be no inquiry.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Education Week**

**Mr NARDELLA** (Melton) — Will the Minister for Education inform the house of how Victorians can participate in Education Week?

**Ms DELAHUNTY** (Minister for Education) — I thank the honourable member for his interest in education. This year Education Week will be celebrated

from Monday, 25 June, right through to Friday, 29 June. What will we be celebrating? This year we will celebrate the revival of public education under the Bracks government. We will celebrate the reinvestment in public education under the Bracks government. We will be celebrating the exorcising of the demons of the dark destructive days in education under the Liberals.

The week will begin with a Softnet cross to all schools. Students from all schools across Victoria will be able to participate in the Softnet broadcast to discuss images of education in 2020. I invite all members of Parliament from both sides of the house to participate with their local schools in Education Week.

The government will be hosting a parents' forum to celebrate parents as partners in education. It will recognise the high-achieving public schools — some of the outstanding public schools that are achieving good outcomes in retention rates, the Victorian certificate of education, the Middle Years of Schooling program and the student welfare program, Students at Risk.

At the gala dinner during Education Week — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — The government will be inviting some opposition members but not too many. At the gala dinner the government will be saluting some leading Victorians who have attended public schools.

Hundreds of events will be held across Victoria with our community partners. There will be programs at the Melbourne Aquarium, the Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks, the Australian Stock Exchange, the Parliament of Victoria and the Melbourne Zoo, which is important for the National Party.

It will be an outstanding Education Week, because the government will be saluting what education means under the Bracks government. What does it mean? E stands for excellence in everything we do in education, and providing the highest opportunities and standards in Victoria's schools for students.

*Opposition members interjecting.*

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

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — 'E' is for excellence. 'D' is for delivering. This government promised to bring down class sizes, and they are coming down at every level across Victoria. What would 'U' be for? 'U' is for understanding — understanding what really matters in education and understanding the new thinking in

education. The old thinking is represented by that side of the house, the new thinking is represented by this side of the house.

'C' is for caring for kids. The government is committed to offering our kids opportunities and not treating students as just numbers. 'A' is for action. The government is building new schools, hiring more teachers and putting more — —

**Mr Honeywood** — On a point of order on the issue of relevance, Mr Speaker, the opposition understands why the minister is getting appearance money today, but she is being tediously repetitious and irrelevant, and you should bring her back to order.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Warrandyte. However, I remind the minister of the need to be succinct, and I ask her to conclude her answer.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — I hope the honourable member for Warrandyte will attend some of the Education Week forums, where we will be celebrating precisely the investment made by the Bracks government.

'T' is for teachers, who are the difference between a good education and a better education. The government has hired more teachers, it is paying them more and it is valuing them more. 'I' is for innovation. Innovation and opportunity. 'O' is for onion. Why onion? Because the opposition's education policies are like an onion. If you peel them away, there is nothing left but a bad smell! 'N' is for now.

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the opposition benches to cease interjecting in that manner. I ask the minister to conclude her answer.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — If honourable members need to know all the events that are happening during Education Week, I invite them to have a look at the education web site at [www.deet.vic.gov.au](http://www.deet.vic.gov.au). Contrast that with the Liberal Party's web site, where the government looked for the opposition's education policies but found there are none. There are no ideas and no policies, which is no good for education!

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister has now been speaking for 8 minutes and has concluded her answer.



The time set down for questions without notice has expired, and a minimum number of questions have been dealt with.

## APPROPRIATION (2001/2002) BILL

### *Second reading*

#### Debate resumed.

**Mr LENDERS** (Dandenong North) — It gives me great delight to make my contribution to the budget debate. I have listened to the debate over the past few weeks since the Treasurer brought down the budget, and it has been a good debate.

As a member of the Bracks government I am delighted to be able to speak on this budget. As the honourable member for Mitcham said, as the son of Dutch immigrants it gives me great joy to speak on this budget! In all seriousness, there are three matters I wish to speak on regarding the budget.

Firstly, what is a budget and where does it fit into the context of this debate; secondly, the local issues in my electorate of Dandenong North; and thirdly, some comment on the contributions of other honourable members to the appropriation bill debate.

Firstly, what is a budget? We have been debating that question in a fairly general way for a long time. The budget is clearly the time when the government puts its set of priorities into place and leaves its mark on a community. The release of the budget is a critical time for a government, which is why we have the general debate on budget legislation in this place. I have taken great pride in being part of the communication of this budget, which is the government's statement of its priorities, to my electorate of Dandenong North.

I turn to the reasons why a government formulates a set of priorities and why the budget is such a key part of that process. The Labor Party went into an election in September 1999 committed to a number of fairly key issues. In my electorate of Dandenong North, as in most parts of the state, Labor was totally committed to restoring services in health and education, and in community safety in particular.

This is the second budget in which those services are being delivered — and delivered in spades. That is why it gives me, as a member who was elected on a platform to do that, enormous pride to speak yet again on these issues. I have had great joy in distributing in my electorate a report card on what this government has done in its budget. This is the second report card I have

now had the privilege of distributing in my electorate. The great joy in doorknocking in the streets of Mulgrave, Noble Park or Dandenong and distributing the budget leaflet entitled 'Getting on with the job — delivering today, building for tomorrow' is that the voters appreciate a style of government where, away from an election time, their representatives communicate with them and talk about the issues.

It is doubly valuable to do that: firstly, electors are entitled to see their representatives and to communicate with them about government, and that is an important communication device; and secondly, and more importantly, as members of the government it means we keep in touch with electors.

It would probably surprise the honourable member for Doncaster and many others opposite who probably do not have much to do with their electors that when you knock on doors in your electorate and communicate — and I have done that one-to-one with some 800 voters since this budget was released — you find that they talk to you about issues in the budget that are of importance to them, including what to many people would appear to be very small items. What has struck me about doorknocking in my electorate is the local issues that people have noticed in the budget. The big issue in the south-east of Melbourne is clearly the Scoresby transport corridor, and voters are asking questions about how genuine the federal government is about this issue and acknowledging that the state government is making its absolutely best endeavours to work on this project.

However, among the smaller issues people talk about are things like needles for people with diabetes, which is quite amazing. In the overall budget process it is a very small line item, but it has an extraordinary resonance among the older residents in my electorate, and in particular the people who over many years have seen an inconsistency in governments supporting needle exchanges and other programs while they have not had a hearing or a say on the issue of needles for diabetics. This government has listened and acted, and that is an example in the health area of it having struck an enormous chord.

I cannot let some of the statements I have heard in the debate from members opposite go without comment. I would be the first to admit that I have not been in the chamber for the entire debate; however, the flavour of what I have heard from the opposition has struck me in a couple of areas. The first general theme I will address is whether this is a responsible budget. We, as a government, do not shirk from our commitment to the electorate to be financially prudent. We will not go running up debts or doing any of those things, but we

are also not going to shirk from the fact that revenue collected from taxpayers should be spent on taxpayers for critical services and infrastructure. When there is a budget surplus, we will use that surplus not only to reduce debt but also to rebuild the infrastructure of the state.

Previous speakers have commented on the previous Labor government, but I will rest my argument on the following considerations. The situation Victoria was in during the 1990s was caused by a number of circumstances, but it is unbelievably hypocritical for those opposite to lecture this side of the house on financial policy when, for the entire 1991–92 period, they blocked every single proposal in the upper house to increase revenue, and the first thing they did in government was push up almost every tax in this state. Let's get the record straight on that.

However, from this government's perspective, we have delivered on service delivery in the three areas we promised — health, education and community safety — and we are doing that in spades in my electorate of Dandenong North. We are managing a fiscally prudent but socially responsible budgetary strategy, and we have not deviated from that and it is getting better as the days go by. And we have delivered significant business tax reform — the greatest this state has ever achieved — and wound back a lot of the regressive features of the previous government.

It has been an absolute privilege to be able to work in a minor role as part of this government with a very good Premier, an exceptionally good Treasurer and a wonderful team on the government side which has kept focused on the main issues. It has been a privilege, and it is great to see the government's program put in place in a wonderful budget.

**Mr WILSON** (Bennettswood) — I welcome the opportunity to join the appropriation debate. Honourable members have been asked to restrict their comments so that most honourable members who wish to make a contribution can do so, so I will restrict my comments mainly to the health area.

I wish to reflect upon some of the views and comments expressed by the honourable member for Preston in his contribution. The honourable member spent a lot of time talking about the closure of Preston and Northcote Community Hospital, known as PANCH, during the term of the previous government. What he failed to do was spend a considerable time on the building and opening of the Northern Hospital at Epping.

The great difference between my side of politics and the other side is that when it comes to great infrastructure projects and policies that look forward, it is this side of politics that takes the hard decisions. The building of the Northern Hospital, which is certainly not in an area where there are many votes for the Liberal or National parties, was identified as a need in health care, and this side of politics was committed to building new hospitals. The Labor Party fails to realise that there are population shifts and significant demographic changes taking place in Melbourne. Therefore, when the honourable member for Preston talked about the closure of PANCH and failed to talk about the building of the Northern Hospital, he failed to recognise that Melbourne is changing significantly.

The honourable member for Pakenham reminded me during lunch that in the fastest growing areas of Melbourne — in the south-eastern suburbs of Pakenham, Cranbourne and Berwick — we will not have a new hospital built under this government, or if we do, the government is certainly taking a long time to do anything about it. There are 100 000 adults enrolled in those electorates and probably about 75 000 to 100 000 children, and yet we do not have a public hospital in the Berwick region. That is an absolute outrage and it upsets me greatly. I know the electors of Berwick, Pakenham and Cranbourne — or whatever the new seats will be called when we get to the next state election — will make a very serious judgment upon the Bracks government.

If we think things are bad in Berwick, we can also reflect upon the area of Knox and the absolute failure of this government to commit to the building of a hospital in the Knox region. We are aware that in the outer eastern suburbs there are really only two major hospitals — the Maroondah Hospital and the Angliss hospital — and this government is committing itself to a patch-up job of those hospitals. Members on this side are certainly in favour of any development or redevelopment of those hospitals, but not at the expense of building a brand new tertiary hospital. The honourable member for Bayswater has often commented to me that the area east of Springvale Road has a population the size of the city of Adelaide, yet it is limited to two hospitals — the Maroondah and Angliss hospitals. The failure to build a hospital in Knox is a disgrace. The current Minister for Health will be condemned for his lack of action in this area.

I also reflect upon the fact that Labor was opposed to the building of a new hospital in Mildura and the building of the new Latrobe Regional Hospital. The difference, as I said earlier, is that this side of politics is committed to building and planning for the future.

Labor politics is very much reflected in this budget, which is aimed at getting cheap votes in marginal or Independent seats, as distinct from the previous coalition government, which was committed to good public policy for all Victorians into the future.

In my members statement this morning I reflected upon the fact that the Minister for Health had failed to release the *Health Services Report*. I am very pleased to see that by question time he had had a change of mind and released those figures. It will be very interesting to do a close analysis of that report, and the opposition plans to do just that. I am confident that the rosy picture the Minister for Health painted in his answer during question time will not be reflected in the report after some close analysis.

The last report showed that in the major indicators of ambulance bypass, elective surgery waiting lists, the number of patients having to wait on trolleys and overall waiting lists, the Victorian health system has suffered a major deterioration since the change of government in October 1999. The only way to look at the figures is to compare apples with apples, so the opposition will look at the figures and will compare the March quarter of 2001 with the March quarter of 2000 to see how this minister is performing.

At a local level I reflect on the fact that in his June 2000 report on ministerial portfolios the Auditor-General said that the Southern Health Care Network — and I notice the honourable member for Oakleigh is in the chamber and she would have similar concerns to me about that network — was displaying signs of financial difficulty. Apparently the June 2001 report found that the situation has not altered for the better.

At the other end of my electorate is the Box Hill Hospital. That hospital is under significant stress. The honourable member for Box Hill is also in the chamber; I am sure he would share my views that the government has performed very badly in managing this hospital. The good citizens of Melbourne's middle eastern suburbs are suffering because their hospitals are not being provided with adequate funds.

If I had longer I would talk about many other issues that impact upon my electorate. But out of respect for my colleagues who also wish to make contributions to the budget debate, I will end my comments there.

**Ms BARKER** (Oakleigh) — I too will try to limit my comments on this significant budget. I am pleased to contribute, although somewhat briefly, to the debate on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill, the first budget delivered by Treasurer John Brumby, which, as we

have indicated, we believe delivers for today and builds for tomorrow.

Education is a high priority for the Bracks government, and it has been a high priority for me all my life. It was a high priority for me while my children were at school, and it still is now that they have left school. During the election campaign Labor made a number of commitments for the Oakleigh electorate. It committed specific funds for the Amsleigh Park Primary School, Hughesdale Primary School, Oakleigh Primary School and Sussex Heights Primary School.

I am pleased to inform the house that in the past 12 months those amounts of funding have been committed and that most of the schools, particularly Oakleigh primary, have completed their works. Amsleigh Park primary is about to commence its tenders, and the last time I was there Hughesdale primary was in the middle of having painting work done, which was making the outside of the school look very nice. All those schools are very happy that the government has been able to tick off the commitments it made during the 1999 election campaign.

The 2001–02 budget continues to rebuild the public education system and build on the significant investment the Bracks government has already made of over \$600 million and 2000 new staff. I note that the Minister for Education is currently at the table; I applaud her work in education, as do schools in my area.

We are very proud on this side of the house that in education we have moved Victoria from being the lowest spending to the second-highest spending state per capita. We are getting on with the job of repairing education in this state.

I am also pleased that we were able to put further significant investment into the other sector of education I have learnt a lot about over a number of years — the technical and further education (TAFE) sector, which I think is one of the most exciting areas of education. The government has committed \$19 million over three years to upgrade the information, communications and technologies infrastructure of Victoria's TAFE institutes.

Just last week or the week before I was pleased to attend Holmesglen TAFE with the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Employment and Training, where she announced that as part of that funding Holmesglen TAFE will receive a significant \$4.8 million, \$3.8 million of which will be for the development of a design and information technology

centre. An amount of \$450 000 will be allocated for fitting out and relocating the industry skills department, and \$610 000 will be allocated for disabled access, which is a significant amount. I must congratulate Holmesglen TAFE on its employment programs and training for people with disabilities.

It was great to walk through the Holmesglen TAFE with members of the board, particularly around the area from which the industry skills department will be relocated to make way for a major expansion of the institute's bricklaying facilities. The members of the board are very enthusiastic about the work they do, and it was fascinating to hear the history of the place.

The honourable member for Bennettswood referred to my seat in connection with health services, which are of major importance to residents of the Oakleigh electorate. Despite some of the rhetoric from the other side, the Bracks government is committed to rebuilding Victoria's health system. In this budget it has put in place a long-term approach — which is very important — with funding and planning over four years. That way hospitals, in particular, can work in partnership with the government on planning how they will deal with emergencies and patient management and be funded appropriately over a period of years. They can put in place strategies that will deal with the issues today but will also ensure that the projected demand already known about — which is at least a 3 per cent to 4 per cent growth per year — is being met. The budget provides a \$1.1 billion boost to hospital funding over four years.

I join the Minister for Health, who outlined his concerns in question time, in expressing my concerns about the lack of aged care beds in Victoria. Recently an excellent new facility has been completed in the Ashwood area, which would assist residents in the Oakleigh electorate. The beautiful new facility, which was built and is operated by the Cabrini hospital, has 60 new beds — but they are empty because the commonwealth government refuses to fund them. It is a magnificent building, the beds are ready, and it is waiting to go. I think the federal government and the federal minister should fund it posthaste to get on with providing the aged care beds that are much needed by the people in that region.

The other area in which I am pleased to see a funding increase is the home and community care (HACC) program. As recently as March this year I was pleased to announce several increases in funding in the Oakleigh electorate as a result of the extra \$5.62 million that was announced at that time. For example, the Glen Eira City Council received increased funding — and I

know the honourable member for Bentleigh would share my view that the Glen Eira council needs more funding for HACC services. The area has an older population and the council should be congratulated on showing a real commitment to older people by providing more HACC services through its own budgetary allocations. The announcement in March of funding of at least \$48 000 as a recurrent grant to the Glen Eira council was very pleasing.

Further funds were allocated to the Monash City Council and to Monashlink Community Health Centre. Those funds could have been doubled if the federal government had matched the much-needed new growth funding required in HACC services. As I have indicated, health is a major priority for me and for the residents whom I represent. I congratulate the Minister for Health and the Treasurer on the extra funding they have allocated in this budget — real funding which is planned and targeted for over a period of four years.

There is additional funding for a patient management strategy and funding for the growth in demand for ambulance services. The new Carnegie ambulance station was recently opened by the Minister for Health to serve an identified area of need in Carnegie and Murrumbeena. If I recall correctly, it is believed that because of the high demand the placing of that ambulance station in Carnegie will reduce the time people wait for an ambulance by about 7 minutes, which is a significant time for those who are waiting for an ambulance.

There will be an expansion of public health services. Funding will be provided for people with diabetes to enable them to obtain needles and syringes. An issue that is important to me both personally through family members and as the honourable member for Oakleigh is that there will be additional recurrent funding for breast screening services. The additional recurrent funding of \$1.2 million to enable at least an additional 11 400 women to be screened in the coming year is so important that I cannot emphasise it enough.

Those are some of the initiatives I am pleased to note in the health area. As I said, the budget continues the rebuilding of Victoria's health system, not only in the short term but planned and funded over a period of four years. In all areas of government administration the budget shows that the Bracks government is providing responsible and socially progressive development of this great state. The budget delivers for today and builds for tomorrow.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — The opportunity to speak on the budget is also a time to

review the economic levels of activity in Victoria over the past decade. When several honourable members first entered this chamber we did so at a time when Victoria's record debt totalled some \$33 billion. It was suffering from record unemployment approaching 11.3 per cent, and the government of the day was refusing to accept responsibility for its contribution to the state's economic plight.

Victoria again has a Labor government, which already has reneged on its promise to achieve a 5 per cent unemployment target. Its much-touted efficiency dividend and public relations saving outlined in its Access Economics document will yield only half the expected savings. So the story continues!

One commentator in the *Australian* noted that the Bracks Labor government would spend the financial inheritance of the former Kennett government rather than build on it. It is important that government has a level of vision. It has sometimes been said that vision can at the same time be strategic and constructive or it can be blind, blurred, vision-blocked and stunted. One need only peruse the range of private sector economic activity that has significantly changed in recent times to understand that Victoria is not heading down a progressive path.

Over the past 12 months I have met with several businesses in my electorate to ascertain their concerns. Two principal concerns of major employers in my electorate were the need to encourage new investment and business confidence in the state and the achievement of the right balance.

A range of tax cuts was proposed and several were deferred, but none that will deliver substantive benefits to the Victorian economy. Prospective legislative measures included fair employment legislation. Proposed land tax reform saw a level of uncertainty where several propositions were not ruled out, as they should have been, at a much earlier stage.

A person in my electorate said that Victoria needed a government with courage that is prepared to look at new initiatives. He nominated a few that occurred between 1992 and 1999. Victoria today has few visionary major projects and very few major capital investment infrastructure projects on the public agenda when a number could be in place. What does it have? The answer is hundreds of job losses. They include some 300 jobs that never came to Victoria through Virgin Airlines setting up in Queensland; the loss of the BHP Administration Centre to South Australia — 500 jobs; the closure of the Bonlac plants at Drouin, Camperdown and Toora — 250 jobs; the closure of

Heinz in Dandenong — 192 jobs; Australian Cutting Systems in Brooklyn — 120 jobs; IBM moving to New South Wales — 400 jobs; Oracle moving to New South Wales — 150 jobs; the closure of Tenix in Williamstown — 250 jobs; and the transfer of Email-Chef to South Australia — 550 jobs. Those were only the direct job losses. A local company in my electorate has provided a range of componentry to Email-Chef for many years. The impact on that company and myriad other suppliers is significant.

The job losses continue: Budget Direct Financial Services moving to Queensland — 200 jobs; Bonlac-Spring Valley, Cheltenham — 170 jobs; Qantas Maintenance moving to Queensland — 500 jobs; a reduction in the output of Ford at Broadmeadows — 160 jobs; Denso Auto Parts, Altona — 170 jobs; the closure of Arnotts Biscuits, Burwood — 600 jobs; Solectron Corporation IT, Wangaratta — 225 jobs; and Diamond Press, Sunshine — 200 jobs. Those are all real jobs involving real people, which in turn affects local communities.

Governments need to be strategic in their planning and in their vision. Over the past few days the people of Victoria have seen the loss of an opportunity through the failure of the government to process its marine parks legislation. I have some active constituents in my electorate who are keen environmentalists and conservationists. They have put a lot of work into constructive developments around Victoria.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has stated as part of its scientific consensus:

Reserves result in long-lasting and often rapid increases in the abundance, diversity and productivity of marine organisms.

These changes are due to decreased mortality, decreased habitat destruction and to indirect ecosystem effects.

Reserves reduce the probability of extinction for marine species resident within them.

Increased reserve size results in increased benefits, but even small reserves have positive effects.

A small reserve and marine sanctuary was proposed for Ricketts Point, which, to the dismay of people in the real world who have these real concerns, has fallen off the government's agenda. Those people are not concerned about the politics but about life in the streets, life in the community and developing a worthy environment in a community with the prospect of gainful employment.

The budget does not address those concerns, which is unfortunate because it translates to a lack of opportunity for both the environment and the people of Victoria.

**Mr SEITZ (Keilor)** — I rise to support the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill and congratulate the Treasurer on the budget. In the short time allocated to me I will not waste my time refuting the doom-and-gloom view expressed by the honourable member for Sandringham.

After the budget was released on 16 May the *Herald Sun* ran a front-page headline ‘Spend up — Brumby unveils \$2.1 billion spree to build state’. That totally contradicts the views expressed in the house a few minutes ago. As honourable members know, the *Herald Sun* is not a Labor supporter. On that day the newspaper ran another article headed ‘It’s a bush bonanza’. Indeed, the country and the bush had been completely forgotten by the previous government.

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr SEITZ** — It is not me saying it. It is your own Tory newspaper.

A further positive report is seen in that newspaper under the heading ‘Cash to stop brain drain’. A building-the-state article appears in the *Australian Financial Review* of 16 May under the title ‘Bracks pumps \$2.1 billion into infrastructure’. Some further headlines include ‘Business backs high-tech focus’, discussing the state budget once again, on 16 May in the *Australian Financial Review*, and ‘High marks for Brumby’s budget’ in the *Australian*.

Page after page of headlines and articles appeared in well-respected daily Victorian and national newspapers, but time does not allow me to go through the whole stack of positive comments on the budget. All agree that it is a well-balanced budget. If I had the time I would go through each one of these items and present them to the house, but unfortunately due to the opposition’s antics this week time is cut short.

In contrast, the federal budget is lacking. The federal Treasurer tries to buy voters with his giveaway to senior citizens. In the meantime in my electorate in the western suburbs 200 nursing home beds are being closed and there are no places for the elderly. It is a desperate situation. People in my electorate can ill afford to pay the extra costs of being cared for and looked after in a public hospital because of the federal government’s mean-spirited attitude towards the care of elderly Victorians.

I quote again from the *Herald Sun* of 16 May. The article, headed ‘5 minute guide’, focuses on budget sectors:

Health  
\$1.1 billion increase ...  
Education  
\$654 million over the next four years —

I repeat, ‘education’ —

Business and industry  
\$12 million to create the Essential Services Commission.  
Transport  
\$203.2 million over four years ...  
Ambulance  
\$42 million to buy 24 ambulances and build two new stations.  
Roads  
\$71 million over two years ...  
Environment  
\$77.5 million over four years ...  
Law and order —

the opposition tries to be the party of law and order —

\$64.1 million  
Prisons  
\$334.5 million  
Country Victoria —

which the National Party forgot about when it was in the coalition government; it never defended country Victoria —

\$50 million to create a statewide network of science and education precincts.

The article also reports a budget allocation of \$31.6 million over four years for film and television production. Further:

Sports and recreation  
\$15 million upgrade of facilities, including \$3.2 million for an indoor velodrome at Northcote.

My electorate has done very well. I only wish I had the time to enumerate the benefits the change of government has given my electorate, particularly in new growth areas such as Keilor and Sydenham. I acknowledge that the Minister for Education, who is now at the table, allocated funds for the establishment of the Copperfield Secondary College campus. Negotiations with the school council led to plans to extend the hall on the site so it can be used for netball games and can be used by the general community. Sydenham will also benefit from improved kindergarten facilities.

Only the other week the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was in that district opening a new, fully staffed fire station. If honourable members care to check their records they will see that I raised the needs of my electorate before the budget speech. Sydenham is part of the Keilor–Melton corridor and is well known to a number of honourable members and recognised as the fastest growing area. The government has a commitment to provide bus services in that area. Well do I remember in the past presenting petition after petition to try to get an extra 2 or 3 kilometres of bus service into Albanvale, Delahey, Sydenham and Sugargum.

We do not need to go through that process now, we can gain access to the minister, and the community has access to the government and to the ministers, the public servants can speak out on what the needs are and discuss it with their local members. They do not have to fear that they will have to face the wrath of the minister or have the government on their backs if they speak to local members.

We are in a changing world. The funds that have been made available in my electorate, not to mention the information technology units in schools and the provision of computer services, will assist us in our attempts to keep abreast of those changes.

*Opposition members interjecting.*

**Mr SEITZ** — I get the message that it is time for me to wind up. As I said, I could go on all afternoon talking about this budget and my electorate, but I respect my colleagues. This budget is a budget that has taken into consideration seven years of deprivation in the west. I hope that in the future more funding allocations will be coming to the west.

**Mr MACLELLAN** (Pakenham) — At the outset I want to say that every family in my electorate is going to be worse off under this budget — —

**Ms Delahunty** — Oh rubbish!

**Mr MACLELLAN** — I hear the interjection by the Minister for Education, who does not wait to hear what anyone has to say. She merely starts on the interjection — —

**Mr Maxfield** interjected.

**Mr MACLELLAN** — And she is supported by the honourable member for Narracan.

Every family in my electorate will be worse off under this budget. For a start, the \$60 electricity bonus has been cancelled by this government.

**Mr Maxfield** interjected.

**Mr MACLELLAN** — The honourable member for Narracan can interject as much as he likes, but the truth of the matter is that every family in my electorate will be \$60 worse off this winter because of this government's electricity pricing policy.

With every tax identified in the budget, whether it is payroll tax, stamp duty, gaming taxes or land tax, the amount the government collects will increase. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, the government holds the record as the highest taxing state government Victoria has ever known. Who pays when companies and businesses add those costs on to the prices of the goods and services they provide? The answer is every family in my electorate.

Honourable members will have to make an exception of the Minister for Education and allow that some special families in my electorate may be better off under a Labor government. If you happen to be a member of the teachers union and are a government teacher you may have received a pay rise that may be more than the \$60 you will lose in the electricity bonus; and if you are a member of one of the other chosen unions you may have had a pay rise. The rest of the families in my electorate, however, will be worse off.

I wish I could, as the honourable member for Keilor did, rattle off a list of all of the good and wonderful things in my electorate that are being funded from the budget. Unfortunately, however, even though the Bracks Labor government has spent \$5.5 billion-worth of GST money, I do not see anything for my electorate that will make my families better off.

**Mr Stensholt** interjected.

**Mr MACLELLAN** — For the benefit of the honourable member for Burwood, the amount of GST money that has been spent is almost the exact equivalent of the amount that will be spent in the budget on human services. In other words, the GST — that hated tax, which is perhaps to be rolled back — is what pays for human services in Victoria. Or is it education, because that item has a \$5.1 billion price tag.

However, it is not always about the big-ticket items, because small items can sometimes illustrate what is wrong with a government. Take, for example, a visit by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Deputy Premier to the Pakenham police station. That

complex includes an old courthouse, a sergeant's residence and an old police station. The police in the area are struggling to provide a proper 24-hour service from a building that should be completely relocated and rebuilt. It was pointed out to the Deputy Premier that over the fence was an underutilised ambulance depot comprising two buildings, one of which could have been added to the police complex simply by putting a gate in the fence.

After the ministers left, what happened? It was a bit too difficult. It was not too difficult to spend millions of dollars on a stupid royal commission into the ambulance service, but supposedly due to a lack of money it was too difficult to build a proper police station or a proper ambulance depot on a new emergency services site. What happened after that? A rebuild job was approved down in Wonthaggi in the electorate of the honourable member for Gippsland West. I am glad the government is building a police station there. On the other hand, the government got an old shed for Pakenham and spent \$26 000 on it — and the police will not even use it! That is an illustration of what is wrong with this government.

The government cannot see the problem that is in front of it. This is a deficit government, a big-taxing government and a government that has left families in my electorate worse off.

**Ms GILLETT** (Werribee) — It will be a pleasure to speak for 6 minutes on the Appropriation (2001/2002) Bill, which is the time we each have available to us. For my community of Werribee the budget is a celebration and a recognition of the commitment of this government to the people of the western suburbs.

For 11 years I was told in numerous letters from the former Minister for Health, the Honourable Rob Knowles, that an integrated primary health care centre for the community of Wyndham was the highest priority for health in the western region of Melbourne. I took the former minister at his word, and during my time on the other side of the house I fervently hoped for tangible evidence of that commitment in one of the five budgets the previous government handed down.

It never happened. I never saw any tangible sign of that commitment to build the centre, even though I and others were told repeatedly as representatives of our community that it was the government's highest priority.

When the Bracks Labor government came to office in October 1999 I asked the new Minister for Health, John Thwaites, if he would investigate what had happened in

all those years to explain why our community still did not have an integrated primary health care centre. It did not take long for the minister to come back to me with an answer. He said plainly that although I had been assured of the top-priority status of the centre, it had never been through the previous government's budget processes.

It was a high priority, but there was no tangible or demonstrated commitment to delivering on that priority because no money had ever been attached to it. On a number of occasions I asked the new Minister for Health to see, within the responsible and enormous constraints the government has through the budgetary process, what he would be able to do. In the first Brumby budget, the Bracks Labor government has delivered to the community of Wyndham an \$11 million integrated primary health care centre.

Budget day was probably the best day I have spent as a member of Parliament because my community achieved \$11 million for primary health that had been promised and had been on the books for over a decade. It has finally been delivered and this government is absolutely committed to delivering the important and fundamental needs of people who have been promised a lot, but delivered little. It seems to be the general theme of opposition members in their replies to the budget that this budget promises a lot but delivers little. I will advise the house how different that is from my experience and my community's experience with the budget.

There have been no new bus services in the last eight years in the growing community of Wyndham. Yet there are thousands and thousands of new residents who need to use the bus service to connect to other public transport — the train service. I am absolutely overjoyed with the budget, even though the Minister for Transport was careful in my advocacy with him to say that there would be no money in this budget for new services. He said it clearly and plainly, but then in the lead-up to the budget he was able to provide \$900 000 for the beginning of some new bus services and to promise \$1.1 million in recurrent funding that would allow new bus services to come into my community for the first time in eight years. Far from promising a lot and delivering little, this budget has actually delivered on promises made and not kept for years and years.

The other area I refer to is schools. I congratulate the Minister for Education. Iramoo Primary School is a great school which is 21 years old. It has been allocated almost \$1 million for facilities funding that it should have had five or six years ago.



Overall this is a budget that promises, delivers and demonstrates a tangible commitment to the people of the western suburbs. I congratulate all of the ministers who were involved. I also congratulate the fine government backbenchers who are fabulous advocates for their communities. I will finish just a minute early!

**Ms BURKE (Prahran)** — I commence my contribution to the debate by saying that the budget holds no joy for the constituents of the Prahran electorate. Not even the Alfred hospital gets a guernsey. Yet this government is keen to ride on the coat-tails of the previous government's redevelopment success at the Alfred.

Honourable members' constituents continually tell them that until government can spend their money as well as they can, they would like to give it as little as possible. For all the talk about GST, no state Premier asked the Prime Minister to wind it back at last Friday's Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra. The states get every cent of the GST revenue which might as well be called the gross state tax. It is how it is spent by each state that will make the difference.

There is real anger in our communities about the stamp duty on insurance, property and the like, particularly the fact that those who are being hit by the extras are those who are trying to protect themselves with insurance and looking after themselves with things like new homes.

In this budget women are treated as badly as Liberal-held seats. Issues such as date rape are not even mentioned, which is a major concern to young women in this state. CASA houses, or centres against sexual assault, do not even have a 1800 number, and rape victims do not know quite where to call. Even if they do call, most of the time they will get minimal service. If you are raped or a victim interstate or overseas, forget it! You will get absolutely no counselling, even if you are a registered voter and someone who lives in Victoria normally.

Citizens who spend their after-tax funds on investments such as property as a safety net for their retirement should not be penalised for their self-funded pension planning. Increasing stamp duty, land tax, government fees and even local government fees cruelly erode their already taxed nest eggs. The tax on a tax is unreasonable. This government can use the same old catchcry, 'It's someone else's fault', but after this second Labor budget we are all pretty tired of it, especially when one considers that the state purse was full when the Labor Party came to government in 1999. That was far better than the empty cupboard the

previous government came to in 1992, with a \$32 billion debt. It is important that people do not forget it because Victoria could end up back there before long.

I will touch on the local government portfolio. I start with the Best Value Commission. The best value cry throughout local government is failing to be heard. It is hard to understand why we need \$3 million for the Best Value Commission to go on sorting out whether there is a state and local government partnership and whether it is achieving anything. The scheme has hardly been seen by ratepayers as an accountable and low-rating system. This year extra cost burdens from wages and increases in the Workcover premiums and insurance costs are skyrocketing. It is hardly viewed by ratepayers as best value.

Municipalities should be drivers and facilitators of economic development throughout the state. They are the fundamental stones that we as a state build on. Taking land use as an example, municipalities tell government where and how land will be used for housing, business, recreation, mining, forest, retail, airports or even institutions to help those in real need.

This government's hands-off approach might seem the politically safe thing to do, but Victorians want true partnership, not safe political speak.

I turn to the area of rail transport. We all agree that directing funds to passenger rail is politically safe, but the real advantages for this state are in the collaboration between industry and rail, in waste minimisation and rail transport from rural areas. One could go on and on. I realise that there are other honourable members who want to speak today, but let me say that Prahran got nothing out of this budget, women got nothing out of it and Liberal seats got nothing out of it. Let's just hope like hell that Victoria gets something out of it.

**Mr STENSHOLT (Burwood)** — I support this budget which delivers today and builds for tomorrow by being both financially responsible and socially progressive. This budget delivers improved services and is directed to promoting long-term growth right across Victoria. We see the continuation of change by a responsible government which is in touch with the people and delivering responsible outcomes. Let me tell you that they like the budget in the suburbs and streets of the Burwood electorate. People appreciate that more is going into education, health services, community safety, community services and the environment as well as into democratic institutions.

The electorate of Burwood appreciates the strong fiscal performance of the Bracks Labor government. The budget papers show the substantial surpluses that are being delivered and the fact that liabilities and debt are due to halve over the next three to four years by the end of June 2005.

A key feature of this budget is the long-term vision of the Bracks Labor government and the investment that it has put into infrastructure right across the state. The budget delivers a record \$2.13 billion in investment in new infrastructure throughout Victoria. This includes \$780 million for transport, \$514 million for health and \$336 million for community safety and community services.

There is extraordinary new investment in education. During the term of this government about a quarter of our schools will expect to get new and improved facilities as will technical and further education (TAFE) institutes. This budget delivers \$287 million for schools and TAFE institutes. The effects of this investment can be seen in schools throughout my electorate. In the last fortnight I opened new facilities at Wattle Park Primary School and Hartwell Primary School and I was more than happy to play a part in getting additional funds for Hartwell and help with the planning and construction phases at Wattle Park. Solway Primary School is having new facilities built. I was happy to assist that school in ensuring that a new library was included in the tender documents that went out only a couple of months ago. The budget is also delivering \$2.5 million for the new Princess Elizabeth Junior School for Deaf Children in Burwood. Late last year I was delighted to announce that on behalf of the minister.

For those who think that nothing is happening in other electorates, I point out that \$1.48 million and \$1.34 million have been allocated for Box Hill Senior Secondary College facilities, \$1.9 million and \$793 000 for Kew High School and \$869 000 for Mont Albert Primary School. These are some of the schools receiving allocations in the south-eastern suburbs and which look after schools in my area. These schools will benefit from investment in school programs. Class sizes are falling and more teachers and programs are available.

Independent schools, including the local Catholic primary schools in my electorate, are also benefiting from the budget from the \$50 million which is allocated to them over the lifetime of the Bracks government.

TAFE is also a big winner in this budget. There is great investment in the budget for this sector. This area was forgotten by the previous government, but the TAFE

sector is now alive and well and thriving. There are more traineeships and apprenticeships in Victoria than ever before. Holmesglen Institute of TAFE has received \$4.86 million. I was pleased to inspect it with the minister just the other day. I even discovered during my visit that my father had probably worked there designing tanks during the war. At the other end of my electorate, the Box Hill Institute has been allocated \$6.5 million for new facilities. This is an excellent achievement by the government.

Health is a major sector gaining from the budget: \$849 million in new services over four years and with \$514 million going into infrastructure. I applaud the \$5.5 million allocated for a public transport upgrade in Box Hill and look forward to the results of the feasibility study for the Burwood tram extension which is expected to be released later this year.

Community services is another area of vital importance. Funding has been allocated for 800 more police officers. I was in the Ashburton police station just the other day, which used to have four police officers; it now has seven. I also visited the Camberwell police station, which had fewer than 20 police officers; it now has 27 and expects to reach 32 early in the new year. Contrary to the views of the honourable member for Hawthorn, who does not seem to have an idea of what goes on around the place, \$700 000 is being provided for the upgrading of the Camberwell police station.

These are positive achievements by a government which is supporting business. Small business in Burwood is appreciative. I get support from traders in Burwood, Ashburton and Ashwood. They appreciate the \$774 million in business tax cuts. I have consulted with them extensively and they are happy with the result. The government is ensuring that these voices are being heard. It is a great budget now and for the future of Victoria.

**Mr PLOWMAN (Benambra)** — The honourable member for Burwood never once mentioned Arnott's; I wonder why! In my electorate one of the biggest fears in this budget situation is the future of the Beechworth prison. It was named as one of the prisons likely to close, and it is suggested that within two years the decision will be made, with no decision to build another prison in that area.

One of the good things in the budget relates to the federal government's commitment to the relocation of the railway line out of the central business district of Wodonga. The federal government has committed \$20 million to that and the state government has committed \$11 million on top of the \$19 million

committed by the Kennett government. This is a great project, and I am very appreciative of the government for its commitment to it.

But budgets are about taxes — the raising of them and the spending of them. There is no doubt about this government, it is good at both. If you look at the taxes, despite the rhetoric, there is in fact an increase in revenue. The government is a bigger tax gatherer. And when you look at spending, you find it is damn good at spending them too. The increased expenditure in almost all areas is quite extraordinary.

In my electorate we are building a new police station and courthouse — again funded by the Kennett government — but we need some of those extra police we hear about. So much for the extra 800 police; we are not getting any of those 800 police at Wodonga. We need them desperately with the new police station and courthouse we are building. The Kennett government spent about \$18 million to \$19 million rebuilding the Wodonga hospital. We need to see the stage 2 development of the Wodonga hospital. There is nothing in this budget to suggest that is going to happen.

There is a need for cross-border drug rehabilitation in Albury-Wodonga. Again, I was hoping to see something in the budget to support that drug rehabilitation program. Nothing.

The victims of crime in our area have substantial problems. There is a cut in funding for victims of crimes.

**Mr Hulls** interjected.

**Mr PLOWMAN** — It is unbelievable that in our area the requirement for those victims of crime services is quite extraordinary.

As to preschool funding, preschools and preschool teachers are underfunded, which is reflected in the difficulty in attracting preschool teachers. When you live on the border you get that direct comparison. Where are those preschool teachers going? They are going either into primary teaching or across the border into New South Wales, where they are paid more appropriately. Again, nothing in the budget.

As to support for aged care facilities, we have a classic with Vermont Court in Wodonga, in the grounds of the Wodonga hospital, which desperately needs assistance for relocation — nothing at this stage coming from the state government.

Support for ambulance volunteers — one of the most important groups of people right across the state. We

have some of those 350 volunteers in the seat of Benambra. We desperately need more support for them. This budget is not doing enough for regional Victoria.

There are two areas I would like to quickly touch on. One is Workcover and the other is tertiary education at Wodonga Institute of TAFE. Some examples in respect of Workcover premium increases are that for Wodonga Plant Farm the premium has gone from \$500 to \$2000; Butko Engineering, an increase of 60 per cent; and Riverina Truck Wheel Alignment, 80 per cent. I could go on indefinitely, but I will not.

But I do want to say that the Wodonga Institute of TAFE is vital. It has provided 30 000 training contact hours for which it has not been funded. That is \$300 000. I request the government to look at that. I believe negotiations are going on at this stage, and I hope the government successfully concludes those negotiations.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — I rise to speak on two important issues in what has been widely regarded as another excellent budget from the Bracks government. One of the issues I want to speak about specifically is a local issue — public housing in my electorate — and the second is a general issue that concerns some initiatives in the justice portfolio, in which I have the pleasure of being parliamentary secretary to the Attorney-General.

As honourable members are aware, the seat of Richmond is home to some of the largest public housing estates in Victoria, particularly the high-rise estates of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond, which house approximately 10 000 families. During the years of the former Kennett government the investment in public housing in the inner city was absolutely pitiful. The only initiative of the former Minister for Housing to redevelop public housing in the inner city was to pull down a public housing high-rise tower in Kensington. Everyone knew the economics of that were completely wrong.

This government has said — and it is an excellent policy position — that we will maintain the high-rise towers. Their structural integrity has been assured. They are an important form of housing for low-income families who are seeking to make a start in this community and to get a leg up. We want to ensure that our public housing estates offer secure and affordable housing. To that end I must commend the Minister for Housing and the Bracks government for the announcement in this budget of a further allocation of \$154 million to upgrade public and community housing. What has been highlighted has been the inner

city public housing estates, so long neglected by the former government.

If you come to my area and you look at an estate like the Elizabeth Street walk-up flats in Richmond, you can see the flats literally subsiding into the ground. What did the former government do? Nothing. It did nothing. This government is doing a complete redevelopment of the Elizabeth Street walk-up flats, and importantly it is doing it in consultation with the tenants. What a new concept, that you actually go and consult with the people who live there! That would be complete anathema to the opposition benches, to go to talk to the people who live in the estates about how they would like to see their estate redeveloped.

I turn briefly to a couple of initiatives that have been delivered by the Attorney-General through the justice portfolio. There are some excellent initiatives here. The judicial education program was widely supported by both sides of the house — \$2.7 million over the next four years. The criminal justice enhancement program — \$6.1 million for further efficiencies in the court process.

I turn finally to an area where I had the pleasure of chairing the committee: the Aboriginal justice agreement. This was a groundbreaking agreement between the Bracks government and the Aboriginal community through its local representatives and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. We are delivering on the ground an agreement that will go to the fundamental question of access to justice for the Aboriginal community and will ensure that diversion programs are in place so that people have to interact with that community. In that respect there is an extra \$4.4 million for the Aboriginal justice strategy.

The Attorney-General suggests I should wind up at this juncture. This is a great budget. The justice budget has been fantastically well received, particularly by the Aboriginal community. Public housing tenants in my area are delighted with the initiatives of the Minister for Housing. I commend the budget to the house.

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — I thank members of the government for giving us the opportunity to speak. That is the only help my electorate has had in the budget.

In conservation and environment what have we got? Weed infestations right through the forest. We have wild and feral dogs destroying livestock and lyrebirds; fencing that is dilapidated and not maintained; letters that are not answered by the department. In transport there has been a lot of talk about fast trains. We do not want fast trains. We would just like buses; we do not

care if they are slow. We would just like a bus service out in the Upper Yarra. We would like the Met fare extended.

There has been much ado about hospitals and improvements in health. We do not have an after-hours emergency service. What have we got in Upper Yarra for education? The answer is very little. But what we have got is absenteeism averaging 16 to 18 days per student per year, which means that some students are taking 25 or 30 days off. The state average is only 10½ days. Have we got any welfare officers? Have we got any extra support? No. These children are not going to go on to high school because absenteeism in primary school is something that carries through, and they will not be attending high school. They will not be able to get further education.

And what have we got with further education? We have got Swinburne doing an excellent job. We have a proposal for Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE to do a wine training course. Not needed! We already have a wine training course at Swinburne. We do not need another university moving in. What we need are welfare officers for the students who really need support in their primary years.

Do we have natural gas? Do we have anything like the situation on the Bellarine Peninsula? No, definitely not in Upper Yarra.

The Upper Yarra has lost its main industries. As well, we are disadvantaged because of our geographical position. Although ours is a rural area, it is not entitled to funding from the Rural Development Fund. Not one cent comes our way to help us to encourage businesses to come back to the region. We are suffering from higher taxes and increased Workcare premiums, yet despite that and despite our geographical disadvantage, we do not get any assistance from the government.

The region lacks police and emergency services. I received a letter from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services saying that the Mount Evelyn police station would be rebuilt. The announcement was made on 7 February, and the letter was dated 21 March, yet still nothing is happening.

The situation in tourism is interesting. I could refer to the minister's speeches during his time in opposition, but I am conscious of having only 1 minute left. Occupancy rates in bed and breakfast accommodation are down, not just in the Yarra Valley but also in Beechworth, Avoca, Warrnambool, Portland and Port Fairy — all around country Victoria.

The minister proudly announced that \$4 million is being spent on marketing Victoria overseas, but that is not extra money, because it is coming from the tourism budget. I am thankful of the opportunity to speak, although I could go on for hours yet about the faults in the budget, including the ways in which it disadvantages the Yarra Ranges. However, I advise the minister that I would be delighted to write a letter to my local paper listing all of them!

**Mr CARLI (Coburg)** — I am pleased to speak in support of this marvellous budget. It is rebuilding Victoria after the damage done by the previous government to the education system and the social fabric of our community. It is also reinvesting in the infrastructure of the state, particularly in rural and regional Victoria. The previous government underinvested in all those areas, including closing country rail lines.

An example of the damage caused by the previous government can be seen in the audit report that was released on the weekend on the Onelink ticketing system, which took so many years to develop. Although it was supposed to be an important piece of the public transport reforms made by the previous government, it has proved to be absolutely inadequate. It is disliked by Victorians; it breaks down all too often; and it is part of the legacy of seven years of conservative rule that the government now has to fix.

In the brief time available to me I will focus on transport and infrastructure. The honourable member for Mordialloc, who purports to be the shadow Minister for Transport, said that the budget does nothing for transport. He also said that the few things that are happening in transport are initiatives of the previous Liberal government. That is absolutely wrong! We are the ones who are reopening the train lines to Mildura, South Gippsland and Ararat.

We are the ones who are standardising the rail gauge throughout Victoria. The previous government never contemplated doing it. We are the ones who are systematically cleaning up and investing in the transport system after the neglect and the mess left by the previous government. There is no way you can compare the \$1.5 billion that is being spent on Linking Victoria — our transport commitment — to the lack of investment and destruction caused by the previous government.

It is worth thinking through some of the initiatives the government is undertaking to see what they mean for Victoria. We are building the fast rail links; redeveloping Spencer Street Station; providing flyer

trains; reopening country rail service; improving the bus system; and introducing accessible low-floor buses. It is about economic growth. It is about improving access to Melbourne and the rest of Victoria by improving connections between trains, trams and buses. It is about producing reliable and safe travel for all Victorians, particularly schoolchildren. This is a wonderful, integrated initiative by the government that will radically improve transport in the state.

**Mr McINTOSH (Kew)** — The people of Victoria have been betrayed by the government and by the budget. They have been given higher taxes, higher spending, lower growth and lower employment growth. Despite the rhetoric of the turkeys on that side of the house, particularly the chief turkey, Victoria has a record level tax, when you accumulate land tax, stamp duty and payroll tax. The government is also becoming more dependent on gambling revenue. What does the government do with it?

In recent months the government has been talking about petrol excise and the GST. Petrol excise is collected by the commonwealth government but paid back to the states in full. The money is in the government's hands to do with it as it chooses. The state government gets \$500 million a year — that is, \$10 million a week. What did it offer the fishers as part of its recent marine park package? Only \$1.2 million.

Again, the GST is returned to the state governments in full. This government therefore collects \$5.5 billion every year. I do not see the Victorian Treasurer, the chief gobbler, writing any cheques for the people of Victoria. He collects the GST revenue from Peter Costello, the federal Treasurer, but returns nothing to Victorians. That is another indication that this is a high-taxing government. I repeat: decisions about how the GST revenue is spent are in the state government's hands, not the commonwealth's, as are decisions about what it does with gambling taxes and petrol taxes. The government should do the right thing, but instead all we get from the budget is total incompetence.

We are going back to the bad old days of Cain and Kirner. Workcover is \$600 million in the red for the first six months of this year. The government has increased superannuation liabilities, and the Federation Square budget is getting bigger and bigger. What do we get for it? One extra shard —

**Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The time for the completion of debate on the bill has arrived.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Remaining stages*

**Passed remaining stages.**

## PAPER

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Auditor-General — Annual Plan 2001–02.

**Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming).**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — I move:**

That the house do now adjourn.

### **Taxis: contract drivers**

**Mr ROWE (Cranbourne) —** I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport relating to taxis and taxi licences. This week I received a couple of phone calls from taxi owners concerning contract drivers and their hours of work. The concern is that currently there is no way of controlling the number of hours worked by taxidriviers — there are no regulations governing their hours of work. As we all know, there are limits on the number of continuous hours heavy vehicle drivers and bus drivers are able to work.

One owner, who is a constituent, told me that on a least two occasions this week one of his drivers had worked for 18 hours straight. The owner did not find out about it until later. The worker drove for some time in the owner's cab and then drove another cab owned by another licence-holder. The owner was greatly concerned about that, not only for the driver's safety and the safety of his cab, but also for the community and the road-using public in general.

Obviously, a great amount of fatigue can set in after driving for that long. Driving around the suburbs all day can make you quite tired, even though you are sitting down. The concentration needed to drive a motor vehicle for that length of time is high, and it can be very draining on the driver.

I ask that the Minister for Transport look into this matter and perhaps refer it to the Road Safety Committee for investigation. Road safety is very

important, and we should all take driver fatigue seriously.

### **Patrick Street, Stawell: speed limit**

**Mr DELAHUNTY (Wimmera) —** On behalf of the Stawell community, particularly St Patrick's School and the Stawell Secondary College, I request that the Minister for Transport review the speed limit on Patrick Street, Stawell.

The St Patrick's School committee has written to me and given me a petition, which unfortunately does not meet the criteria for presentation in Parliament. I have it with me, and I will pass it on to the minister. The petition is about the committee wanting the speed limit for Patrick Street to be reduced. I will read the top line of the petition:

We, the undersigned, request that a government-funded reduced speed zone be established in Patrick Street ...

The committee wants the speed to be reduced from 60 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour at peak periods before and after school times — from 8.30 a.m. to 9.15 a.m. and from 3.00 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.

The committee has discussed this matter with the Stawell Secondary College, the Stawell police, the Northern Grampians Shire Council and Vicroads. Patrick Street has two school crossings. Three buses service St Patrick's School and many more service the Stawell Secondary College. The parking areas are limited by their proximity to corners and narrow side streets, which is causing further problems. Those things contribute to higher levels of traffic movements at peak times.

St Patrick's School has 170 students, and the Stawell Secondary College has about 650 students, so the volume of traffic, which includes cyclists, cars, buses and pedestrians, is of major concern to the college.

As we all know, a program to reduce speed limits in residential streets to 50 kilometres an hour was initiated by this government, and I congratulate it on that. However, Vicroads looked at the problem in Patrick Street and said the speed limit should be lowered to 40 kilometres and flashing lights and signage should be installed. That would cost about \$12 000. Vicroads is prepared to put in about \$6000, but it has asked the schools to pay the other \$6000.

The schools encourage safe traffic practices, but they do not have the money to pay the \$6000. Patrick Street is a state road under the responsibility of the government, and it should not be the responsibility of

the schools to provide the funds to fix this traffic management problem. I call on the Minister for Transport to review the decision of Vicroads and pay the extra \$6000 to put up signage and flashing lights and reduce the speed limit near St Patrick's School.

### **Disability services: south-eastern suburbs**

**Mr LIM** (Clayton) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Service, and in her absence the Minister for Gaming, seeking her action to address the accommodation needs of disabled people in the south-eastern region of Melbourne, particularly in the Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong areas.

I understand the disability services division of the Department of Human Services funds and provides a range of programs designed to improve the quality of life of people with either intellectual, physical, sensory or neurological disabilities or an acquired brain injury.

I particularly draw to her attention the demonstrated needs of a community-based accommodation service for disabled people in the south-eastern region. Those needs are made more acute due to the profile of the population of the community in that area, who are mainly people from working-class backgrounds or newly arrived migrants or refugees struggling with the task of settling into their new homes and new country. Many of those people need the attention and assistance of the disability shared support accommodation services of the minister's department.

I venture to suggest to the minister that those members of our community, despite their disadvantaged backgrounds and their misfortune to be suffering with a physical or intellectual disability, would benefit from the provision of properly targeted community-based accommodation to allow them to enjoy a good quality of life, take their proper place in the mainstream community and hopefully realise their full potential as fellow members of the Victorian community.

I therefore urge the minister to address this compelling and demonstrated need as a matter of priority.

### **Italo-Australian technologies exhibition**

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Leader of the Opposition) — I seek the Premier's urgent action to ensure that the Victorian government secures the Italo-Australian Exhibition and Conference on Innovation Technologies for Melbourne and Victoria.

The Italian government, through its Australian embassy, is seeking to hold in early 2002 a major conference on information technologies in either

Melbourne or Sydney. The Italian government has allocated \$400 000 to support the conference. Further support has been gained from the federal government, Qantas and a range of other major companies.

That very significant conference will involve leading industries in technology, information technology and communications innovations in both Italy and Australia. More than 200 Italian technology companies, together with Australian companies, are expected to attend the combined exhibition and convention, which will be held over four days. The conference will be worth millions of dollars in direct benefit to the city and state that hosts it, and it will be worth untold millions of dollar in investment and jobs for the future. Indeed, the Italian embassy has said that the conference will be used to encourage a strong Italian attraction for high-tech industries for South-East Asia.

I am very concerned that the Victorian government has ignored the approaches from the Italian embassy and the Italian government to hold the conference in Melbourne. I am advised that the Italian government would prefer to hold the conference in Melbourne, because of the high prevalence of Italian companies that have invested here and the Italian background of many people in Melbourne and Victoria. However, when it approached the Victorian government it received only a lukewarm response. Whereas the New South Wales Carr Labor government has been very helpful in offering support with venues and conference management, the Victorian government has done little or nothing to attract the conference to Victoria.

The convention is a real opportunity for Victoria, and the opportunity should not be allowed to slip through our fingers, like so many jobs and opportunities have slipped through the fingers of the Bracks Labor government.

I urge the Premier to take up the challenge — by contacting the Italian embassy and pursuing it when he is in Italy — to secure this conference for Melbourne and Victoria so that we can get not only the direct benefit of the millions of dollars that will come here as a result but also the many indirect benefits in investment and jobs for years to come.

### **Plenty–Gremel road intersection: traffic lights**

**Mr LEIGHTON** (Preston) — I refer the Minister for Transport to the intersection of Plenty Road and Gremel Road in Reservoir. I am calling for the installation of traffic lights at the intersection. Over the years that intersection has become increasingly busy, and while one may think of Reservoir as a

well-developed suburb, it is an area that has been subject to growth. Plenty Road leads, of course, to the Plenty corridor, with La Trobe University, the RMIT Bundoora campus and housing growth further out along the corridor. In the Gremel Road area there are now two residential villages — the Latrobe Retirement Village and the Summerhill Residential Park — each of which has about 400 residents.

The area now has a nursing home and medical centre and a number of other shops, including two supermarkets and a Red Rooster store. The intersection of Plenty and Gremel roads has no lights or signage and it is becoming increasingly difficult for motorists, especially elderly drivers, to come out into the intersection, given the volume of traffic on Plenty Road, including two tramlines.

I ask the minister to pursue with Vicroads the installation of traffic lights at that intersection, which I believe are necessary. There has certainly been a strong push for traffic lights from the local residents. In examining how the traffic lights should be installed, I suggest that Vicroads should also look at the needs of the nearby secondary school, Reservoir District Secondary College, which I understand has a preference to keep its set of lights and to synchronise them with any traffic lights installed at the intersection.

I congratulate one of the local residents, Mr Frank Cox, for the work he has done in organising the residents and chasing the various authorities. Those who know Mr Cox will know that he will not give up until he gets those traffic lights. I also congratulate Ms Silvia Tabban from the City of Darebin for the work she has done.

I believe such a set of lights is justified. Whenever I cross the intersection with my two young children I insist they each hold my hand tightly before we set off. It is a very busy road and it is becoming an increasingly dangerous intersection. I call on the minister to come to the party with a set of traffic lights for the Gremel Road and Plenty Road intersection.

### **Schools: rural principals**

**Ms DAVIES** (Gippsland West) — I ask the Minister for Education to look for ways to alleviate the pressure on small rural primary schools in particular which results from the impact of principals being included in the school's staffing entitlements.

The principal's role includes a need to liaise with the department, regions, community groups and other schools. That means that at times principals need to be outside their schools, and the more isolated the school the greater the time needed for attendance at those

meetings. It could also be argued that the more isolated the school the greater the need for principals to attend such meetings, for both their own benefit and that of the school community.

Frequent absences from a principal's duties or from normal classroom teaching duties can disadvantage students. For a principal with a teaching load, attendance at those meetings can often result in a very rapid using up of the school's allocation of casual relief teaching days. Those CRT days need to be kept to ensure that teachers who are ill are not forced to attend schools, which sometimes happens in our little schools, and to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.

Principals of rural schools without full-time administrative support are often teaching a class, answering the phone, completing administrative duties, counselling students and talking to parents visiting the school — all at the same time. That load can at times be considerable.

Every principal I know about in a small rural primary school seems to work the most extraordinary hours in order to finish their administrative tasks outside classroom teaching times. It is not productive to burn out our primary school principals too quickly. I accept that this problem is longstanding, but I ask the minister to look at primary staffing entitlements and ways to alleviate the pressure that results from primary school principals being counted within the staffing entitlement.

### **Templestowe Valley Primary School**

**Mr KOTSIRAS** (Bulleen) — I refer the Minister for Education to the Templestowe Valley Primary School in my electorate. It is a great school with a great principal whose first priority is the staff and students of the school.

I ask the minister to investigate the claim that a blocked drain on the northern boundary of that school is causing some water seepage. A constituent of mine, Neil Mackay, has come to see me about a problem he has with his property, which seems to be getting a lot of water in the backyard.

I have spoken to Manningham City Council and to Yarra Valley Water, and they both claim they have undertaken extensive tests and are of the opinion that it is not their fault or problem.

I have since been advised of a blocked drain in the north-west perimeter of the school. I have spoken to the regional office, which has advised me that if the amount for the work is substantial the education department will pay for the works.



I therefore ask the minister to investigate the matter and to provide the appropriate funding for the school to fix the problem. I have written to the minister and have received a holding letter from a junior office staff member advising me that the minister will look into the matter. It is very important that the minister provides the money and that the school is not required to spend its own money to fix the problem.

### **Victims Referral and Assistance Service**

**Mr SEITZ (Keilor)** — The matter I raise for the attention of the Attorney-General relates to the many valuable services that provide support to victims of crime throughout Victoria. I ask that he take action to ensure that the services continue to receive the government's support.

I am proud to be a member of the government that reintroduced pain and suffering compensation for victims of crime. I am also proud to be a member of the government that has made this compensation more accessible to rural and regional Victoria by taking the tribunal to all Magistrates Courts throughout the state — unlike the previous government, which cut out access and pain and suffering compensation in many cases. I am aware that the government is now conducting a review of all government-funded services to victims of crime. The Brimbank Community Centre, which provides invaluable services to the people in my electorate and throughout the wider area, has made a submission to this important review. However, the review has been the subject of a scare campaign by the opposition.

The opposition has been claiming that the Victims Referral and Assistance Service, just one of the many services provided by the government, has run out of funds and is about to close. That has naturally put fear into my constituents, one of whom is now receiving support services because she was harassed on a train — so much so that her husband is now on a carer pension so he can look after her at home. Needless to say, the scare tactics put extra pressure on people in those situations. The opposition claims that it cares about victims of crime and that it is on top of this important issue. I can only assume that the opposition has made a number of recommendations in a submission to the review of services to victims of crime.

I ask the Attorney-General to set the record straight about this important service, and that he take action to ensure that the victims of crime continue to receive the government's support, particularly the people in my electorate of Keilor. In the particular case I have mentioned the victim's husband has become a full-time

carer and has to live on the carer's pension to support his partner, who has been a victim of crime on a train and is still undergoing medical treatment. These sorts of scare tactics by the opposition do no service to the poor, unfortunate people in Victoria who find themselves in such a situation.

These matters are not trifling; they are very important. Some years ago my son was a victim of crime in an unprovoked attack after a disco function, and he ended up in hospital. I am well aware of the trauma he experienced and the trauma my wife and I experienced when we had to take him to hospital.

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

### **Berwick Primary School**

**Dr DEAN (Berwick)** — I ask the Minister for Education to explain a discrepancy between a press release of hers and a letter issued by the person whom she has defamed. I also ask her to come out to Berwick to explain the mess surrounding the two-year delay in relocating the Berwick Primary School. In attempting to explain the two-year delay the minister issued a press release in which she states:

The relocation of Berwick Primary School could be delayed by up to two years —

that is, two years from now —

following a developer's rejection of an offer to purchase the education department's preferred site on Highfield Road —

which does not exist, as a matter of interest. Further the minister states:

This is not simply about cost, the developer refuses to guarantee the provision of roads and other services to the site for up to two years ...

Unluckily for her, the developer decided to respond. He has written a letter to her and faxed it to everybody else. In the letter he states:

To suggest in any way that either myself or my family have been uncooperative —

is simply not true. He says that to say:

... 'the developer refuses to guarantee the provision of roads and other services to the site for up to two years' is defamatory.

Further on he says:

I was advised on 3 April 2000 by ... your department that you —

that is, the minister —

formally approved the purchase of 3.5 hectares of land next to Haileybury College, the High Street site ...

On 29 May 2000 Mr Sullivan wrote to me advising that a valuation would be prepared by the department. As we had already prepared valuations we were keen to start negotiations ...

Despite our preparedness we did not receive an offer for the land, or any substantial communication from your department for the remainder of 2000.

On 5 April 2001 (more than 14 months after I was formally advised of your decision to purchase the High Street site and more than 18 months after you were elected into government) an offer was made.

It is clear from the press release and letter that what the minister said in her press release is totally untrue. If the minister wants to know what is going on she should read the *Pakenham Gazette*, which has been following this issue all the way through. It will tell her what she does not know — that is, the real reason for these delays and what is going on. I ask the minister to come and face the people of Berwick and explain to them not only why there has been two-year delay in buying this site but why she is now suggesting another two-year delay. A four-year delay on a school is outrageous. The minister has issued a press release which is clearly untrue, and the developer has come out and exposed it as being untrue. I ask the minister to explain her press release and tell us whether it is incorrect —

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

### **Housing: Macedon Ranges**

**Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne)** — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Housing. I ask the minister to take action to alleviate the housing shortage in my electorate. The Office of Housing rental report for the September 2000 quarter indicated that median private rents for two-bedroom houses in the Shire of Macedon Ranges, which forms a substantial part of my electorate, have risen by up to 7.7 per cent over the preceding year. That is consistent with what is happening across the state, where the median rate increase has been in the vicinity of 7.4 per cent.

Recent valuations in the shire would also indicate the extent to which housing prices have risen. Obviously that is because the area is growing and there is a lot of pressure for housing in the area. Not only are housing costs high, but rental vacancy rates are very low — below the 3 per cent mark. As I understand it, once vacancy rates get below that point it is extremely difficult for people to access housing. Parts of regional

Victoria are experiencing an affordable housing crisis. That is being reflected in my area, which, as I said, has high rents and a shortage of rental properties. It also has an increasing ageing population, which creates its own housing needs.

In April I was pleased to join the minister in Kyneton to announce an \$866 000 project, which is fantastic. It is a social housing partnership between the government, Windarrang Central Highlands for People with Disabilities and the Shire of Macedon Ranges, in which the government will provide six two-bedroom properties for people with disabilities in the Kyneton area. The announcement was obviously an enormous relief for the carers of these people, who are often elderly parents. I am pleased that the government has recognised that affordable, social housing is an essential element in building stronger communities and getting people's lives back on track.

I ask the minister to take further action to help address the social housing needs for the people of the Shire of Macedon Ranges, and to continue to assist in alleviating this very great need. We recognise that other than your health, if you have a roof over your head there is not much else you require. Without stable and affordable housing, life is extremely difficult.

### **Local government: public liability insurance**

**Ms BURKE (Pahran)** — I ask the Minister for Local Government to take action to relieve the burden the government is placing on local councils given that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Department of Education, Employment and Training and many other departments use a range of local government services and facilities such as playgrounds.

The onerous local government waivers and indemnities that are demanded where the joint use of properties is proposed for the benefit of the community places a great burden on local councils, which are currently managing a great deal of Crown land on behalf of the state. The councils are reluctant to take ultimate responsibility for all the land that has devolved to them on a permanent basis because of the additional public liabilities involved.

The major increases in public liability exposure are a real cause for concern. Councils may already have a high rate of exposure, depending on the level of services and facilities they offer. A large number of community groups have been insured by Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Australia Ltd. Due to the disasters over the past 12 to 18 months, we have seen examples

of personal hardship and a hardening of the market. Brokers have indicated that insurance underwriters will not renew policies on the existing terms. Of more concern is the impact on the current premium costings, which have increased fivefold.

The situation is getting to the point where public services will be closed because no-one wants to carry the liabilities. A council that has established a special committee under section 86 of the Local Government Act is entitled to be insured under Civic Mutual Plus. Once notified, Civic Mutual Plus will check out the site, give advice and take note of the section 86 committee.

I ask the minister to evaluate the concerns of local government that have been caused by the government passing on the public liability expenses of government departments to the residents of local municipalities. Rural councils, which are better at combining their services with other organisations, appear to be suffering more than metropolitan councils. I know of a Weight Watchers group that uses a public hall each week and must now pay public liability insurance to speak about health and services to their community, which seems ridiculous.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The honourable member for Tullamarine has 10 seconds.

### **Housing: outer suburbs**

**Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine)** — I ask the Minister for Housing what she is doing about improving the housing needs of people in the outer suburbs.

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

### **Responses**

**Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Education)** — The honourable member for Gippsland West raised an issue about principals' workloads in small, remote regional schools. She referred to the casual relief teaching budget, administrative support and the inclusion of the principals of those tiny schools in the primary staffing entitlement.

The government is aware of the pressure on principals and has taken action to alleviate some of it. One of the recommendations of the fine report into public education in the next generation is that the government set up local bureaus to coordinate and streamline the performance of administrative tasks, particularly by the smaller schools.

I am happy to inform the house and the honourable member that already those administrative bureaus are being trialled in the Central Highlands–Wimmera region. The trial involves some 20 schools — it is quite advanced work — and is about lifting the administrative load from principals in regional and remote schools. The results should be available by the end of term 3, which will be of some relief to the sorts of schools represented by the honourable member.

Through its funding arrangements the government has acknowledged the pressures on small schools. The disadvantages faced by remote rural schools are largely addressed in the rurality and isolation component of the school global budget. Honourable members will be aware that already the government has delivered \$27.6 million under the rurality component to support small schools.

The government also provides support to principals for professional development, which also has a rurality component weighted into it. Today a departmental officer delivered \$250 per year for each principal in a remote school, compared to \$125 per principal in a metropolitan school. It is acknowledged that regional schools need support, and the government is trying to deliver on that issue.

The honourable member referred to the casual relief teaching (CRT) budget. Principals know about the regional replacement country fund, which is there for emergencies. If principals are under pressure due to sick leave or other contingencies that draw them or other staff away from school, they have access to that fund if they have run out of the CRT budget. That is a good story!

The honourable member for Bulleen raised for my attention a matter concerning a blocked drain. Victoria has 1631 schools across the state, which give rise to many issues, including the big mess that has to be cleaned up after seven years of the former Kennett government. I did not know that the government had a responsibility to fix the drains. Nevertheless, the matter has been raised with me.

My department wrote to the honourable member for Bulleen explaining that the eastern metropolitan regional office has been assisting Templestowe Valley Primary School to find suitable contractors and consultants to fix the blocked drain. It is obviously the responsibility of the school, as the honourable member and I have discussed privately, and I wrote back to the honourable member only on 8 June, explaining that we are giving assistance to the school for it to fix the drain.

The other issue concerns problems with excess water on a property and the allegation of the property owner, Mr Mackay. The honourable member should be aware that I am advised that Mr Mackay's property does not adjoin the boundary of the school, so where there is excess water on Mr Mackay's land I am not sure that it is coming directly from the school. However, I repeat, the eastern metropolitan regional office is working with the school to fix the blocked drain.

The honourable member for Berwick raised an issue that he gets into a terrible tizz about: the relocation of Berwick Primary School. This saga is longer than *Blue Hills*! The problem is that the Bracks government, again, has to fix the mess left behind by the Kennett government.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — It started with the opposition, when in government, promising that it would build a new school in Berwick. Loudly and with great fanfare it announced the relocation in July 1998. But there was a problem: it got the wrong site. And there was another problem: it did not provide any money. You can talk long and loud about a new school, but you have to have a site and money. That is a real problem, and it is a mess the government has to clean up.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — You had several years and you made a terrible mess of it.

**Dr Dean** — They want to see your face.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — They can see it any time. I will send them a tape. I've got loads of them. Do you want a tape from 1988 or going back to 1970? I have probably got one lying around.

The department had to do an evaluation of the site chosen and loudly announced by the honourable member for Berwick. What did the then Liberal government's own department's site evaluation say? The report given to the Kennett government on 1 March 1999 said, 'Site not suitable' — I repeat: not suitable. So here we go, the Bracks government has to clean up another mess. These poor parents and young students were led down the garden path by a government that did not give a damn about education. The Bracks government has come in and it is faced with more problems to fix up in education.

The government set up negotiations with the community. I know that that is a novel idea — absolutely novel — to this lot!

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — I am talking about the parents, the school community and those who have to live and work in a new school. The government came back to a negotiated position, and that is what the department has been trying to prosecute. I am saddened and disappointed that the Berwick — —

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — You had your turn.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick!

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — I am laughing at you because you are trying to make a lot of political mileage out of this. You do not give a damn about the kids of Berwick. You do not give a damn about them! You are being duplicitous, and those kids are waiting for a new school. They waited a long time when you guys were doing nothing.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! It is nearly the end of the parliamentary sittings and we all want to go home. I ask honourable members not to interject across the table, and I ask the minister to direct her remarks through the Chair.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — I will adhere to the protocols of this place.

The government is quite disappointed and saddened that the developer has rejected the government's offer to purchase the preferred site. However, the government will continue to negotiate with the developer and discuss the matter with the school community. I can report to the honourable member for Berwick that there was a very positive meeting two nights ago at which the school council, the school president and the school principal had discussions with departmental representatives to find a solution. It was a positive meeting. I hope we can have bipartisan support to solve — —

**Mr Hulls** — Good luck.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Ms DELAHUNTY** — Obviously, the honourable member for Berwick is not interested in solving this. He is interested in playing politics. However, we will find a solution, and I hope the developer will work with the school community and the government to find a resolution for these young people.

**Ms PIKE** (Minister for Housing) — I thank the honourable member for Gisborne for drawing to our attention the urgent need for affordable housing in her community and for highlighting that over the past year median rents for people living in two-bedroom houses have risen 7.7 per cent. We clearly have a crisis in accommodation.

I was, as the honourable member said, pleased to join her a few weeks ago in announcing funding of \$866 000 as part of our social housing partnership program for people with disabilities. That initiative is just one of the many initiatives across the state that are now being funded out of the \$94.5 million social housing innovations project.

What a fantastic project this is! What a fantastic example of the government's commitment to some of the most needy and vulnerable people in our community! It is the first investment of state money in housing in over 10 years and is a very tangible acknowledgment of the government's commitment to housing. The project is doubly exciting because it brings together government money and local resources.

In the first round of grants \$34.3 million, plus \$13.3 million from the community itself, will allow provision of more homes right across the state. In a joint venture partnership with the Lancefield-Romsey Lions Club and the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, for example, the government will provide for the construction of 10 one-bed properties — just another example of the kinds of things a government can do when government and community work together. The government will provide approximately \$175 000 towards the project.

When government money is joined with the money, resources, commitment, time and energy in local communities, a major social policy initiative of the government is expressed, one that defines this government. Projects of this kind do not just settle for the minimum, for what comes through the commonwealth-state housing agreement; they look to enhance and increase the government's efforts in partnering with local communities, so that an opportunity for building a more cohesive and inclusive society emerges.

The government knows that such initiatives not only promote cohesion but also invite people to participate with and care for their neighbours. They also create other opportunities, jobs and economic stimulus, so they are good news all round.

I am pleased to advise the honourable member for Gisborne that her community is one that has put its best foot forward and invited the government to be a partner with it. That is what the government is all about, and it is good news.

**Mr BATCHELOR** (Minister for Transport) — The honourable member for Cranbourne outlined an incident reported to him about taxi licence owners in his electorate and the drivers who work for them. The story he outlined is of concern to me — as it was to him — and related to taxidriviers managing to do double shifts working some 18 hours straight by swapping between one taxi owner and another, thereby concealing their dangerous behaviour and practices.

The matter is of concern because driver fatigue is a very serious workplace issue that, in the case of bus and heavy vehicle drivers, is being addressed at a national level and has been the subject of limitations at a national level. I will take up the matter with the Victorian Taxi Directorate and the Victorian Taxi Association.

A review of the taxi industry is under way at the moment to develop a response to competition requirements. That is an all-embracing review and has been under way for some time. Perhaps that is an appropriate place for issues of this kind to be addressed. If that does not eventuate the government will ask the taxi directorate to establish some ground rules and procedures to make sure that when taxidriviers are working late they do not extend their continuous hours of work to the extent of putting themselves, their passengers and other road users in danger.

The honourable member for Wimmera raised the issue of a request for the installation of variable speed signs in a street in his electorate. A petition on the matter was passed on to him and he has subsequently passed it on to me.

The request is for the installation of variable speed signs on Patrick Street, Stawell, adjacent to St Patrick's School. The petition is signed by a very large number of community members and is quite an impressive effort. It indicates clearly a widespread concern about the traffic conditions outside St Patrick's School and the nearby Stawell Secondary College

I will have Vicroads look at the issue. It falls within existing policy settings that have been in place for some years, predating the entry of the honourable member for Wimmera into this house. Under those policy settings, which were in operation under the former coalition government, the imposition of lower speed limits during morning and afternoon peak times can be achieved through a partnership arrangement between the relevant road authority and the school community. The Ararat–Stawell road, known locally as Patrick Street, is the responsibility of Vicroads. The application of those longstanding policy settings would mean that Vicroads, as the responsible authority, would pay half the cost of the variable speed limit signs, with the school community arranging the balance by paying, by arranging sponsorship or perhaps with the support of the local municipal authority.

The school community has indicated that that is not within its resources. Given the proximity of the two schools, the request for a solar-operated unit means that the cost is very high. It was looked at in the past, when it was thought it might cost \$12 000. However, a more contemporary cost could be as high as \$20 000 because of the extensive nature of the signs. I will ask Vicroads to have another look at the proposal. If it is within existing policy, its application would require some local contribution.

Variable speed zones outside schools, particularly primary schools, are an important issue. Concern about the issue is being expressed right across Victoria. The introduction of a speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour in local residential streets has stimulated interest in a further lowering of speed limits near schools. The government is looking at that as a policy position.

I note that Parents Victoria has been campaigning actively on the issue for a short time. The government has already taken steps to try to arrange a meeting with the organisation. Subject to establishing a mutually convenient time, I will talk to Parents Victoria about the appropriate policy settings and how the government might respond to the issue on a statewide basis. We will look at the situation in Stawell, and I will get back to the honourable member for Wimmera in due course.

The honourable member for Preston raised for my attention the difficulties of the residents of the Latrobe Retirement Village and people visiting the local shopping centre in getting safely onto and off Plenty Road. He referred to the support given to the issue by Frank Cox.

Not only has the issue been raised by the honourable member for Preston, but Michael Smith, the manager of

the Latrobe Retirement Village, has raised it with a member for Jika Jika Province in another place and people have raised it with my electorate office staff. Their concerns are being backed by people who have a tenacious capacity to pursue their interests. I will take the request on board. That section of Plenty Road is busy and difficult to access. Along the 700 metres nearby there are already four sets of traffic lights.

I can advise the honourable member for Preston that on 8 May a meeting on the site was held between officers of Vicroads, members of my ministerial and electorate office staff, and representatives of the retirement village, the secondary college and the City of Darebin to identify short and long-term solutions to the problem. The aim is to ensure that measures can be set in place to ease the difficulties people leaving the retirement village experience in getting out onto Plenty Road as well as off Plenty Road into Gremel Road.

I understand that short-term measures have already been agreed to and may have put in place. If not, they will be being worked on at the moment. They include line marking in Gremel Road for left and right-hand turn lanes on the approach to Plenty Road. 'Keep left' signs have also been installed in the median break in Plenty Road to further guide motorists. All that is being done while Vicroads is carrying out investigations as to how it can implement a long-term policy, which may or may not include traffic lights. In the meantime it will also investigate reducing the speed limit on that section of Plenty Road between, say, Barwon Avenue and Darebin Creek, which is currently 70 kilometres per hour. It might be that one of the suite of treatments will be to reduce the speed limit to 60 kilometres per hour.

I will follow up on the matter, but it is in hand. We are looking at both short-term and long-term measures. I thank the honourable member for Preston for raising the matter and looking after the interests of his electors.

**Mr HULLS** (Attorney-General) — I thank the honourable member for Keilor for raising an important issue. I know many of his constituents use the valuable services provided by the Brimbank Community Centre and other agencies in the area.

It is fair to say that the Bracks government has an excellent track record when it comes to assisting victims of crime. One of my proudest moments in government has been to stand in this place and introduce legislation to restore compensation for the pain and suffering of victims of crime, which as honourable members know was abolished by the current opposition in 1997. The government has also made the scheme more accessible, with the Victims of

Crime Assistance Tribunal sitting in Magistrates Courts throughout Victoria to ensure that rural and regional Victorians are able to access that important service.

In this financial year \$40 million has been committed to support victims of crime. That is an increase of \$8.6 million, which is in stark contrast to the \$28-odd million committed in the last year of the Kennett regime. In addition, the government is now conducting a review, chaired by the honourable member for Burwood, of all government-funded services for victims of crime. It is fair to say that the review is crucial in examining the effectiveness of all services, identifying any gaps or duplication, and predicting future demand for victim support services.

I do not mean to be complacent about the services that the government provides to victims of crime. I want to ensure that the best possible services reach the people who are most in need. To do that, the government must ensure that all services are working together and providing comprehensive support across the board.

The review committee has received about 75 submissions from a wide range of agencies, private service providers and individuals. As the honourable member for Keilor notes, the Brimbank Community Centre is just one of a number of support services that have taken the time to contribute to that important review. However, I regret to inform the honourable member that, despite its vigorous scare campaign in recent weeks, the opposition has failed to put in any submission about or make any recommendations on the crucial issue of support for victims of crime.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr HULLS** — Is it because members of the opposition do not care about victims of crime, or are they too lazy to put in a submission? They claim to be concerned about victims of crime and the Victims Referral and Assistance Service, yet they have not taken the time to put in a submission about or show any support at all for victims of crime support services.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr HULLS** — They have obviously been far too busy peddling gossip and innuendo about victims support services to bother putting in a submission to the review that will take victims of crime support services into the 21st century.

This is the Stensholt review. Bob Stensholt, the honourable member for Burwood, is a person who is easily approachable. There could have been a verbal

submission or a written submission, but there has been no submission at all.

**Dr Dean** — Give them some money, as you promised you would!

**Mr HULLS** — The interjection is, 'Give them some money'. As I said, there has been a huge \$8.6 million increase in funds for victim support services. The government has also provided an additional injection of funds to the Victims Referral and Assistance Service counselling scheme on top of the core funding of \$2.7 million to meet the increased demand.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick!

**Mr HULLS** — I can understand the honourable member's absolute embarrassment over this. The government took the total provided for counselling schemes to \$5.2 million last financial year and \$6.1 million in this financial year. Guess what was provided in the last year of the Kennett regime? The answer is \$2.6 million. The government provided \$5.2 million last year and \$6.1 million this year as opposed to \$2.6 million in the last year of the Kennett government. Is it any wonder that the honourable member for Berwick is so embarrassed? He was a lead advocate in cutting pain and suffering compensation for victims of crime and no doubt a lead advocate when the Kennett government provided only \$2.6 million in its last year of government.

The Bracks government has reinstated compensation for victims of crime. It provided \$5.2 million last year for counselling services and \$6.1 million this year. The core funding has been reallocated in the budget for this financial year. Anyone who has read the budget papers would know — —

**Dr Dean** — I've read them!

**Mr HULLS** — The honourable member says he has read them! He will know that there is a footnote in the budget papers that says quite specifically — —

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**Mr HULLS** — Perhaps he read them upside down! Perhaps he had someone read them for him! But the fact is — —

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick!

**Mr HULLS** — The core funding of \$2.7 million has been allocated and the budget papers clearly state that this is only an interim figure depending on the outcome of the review that is being conducted by the honourable member for Burwood. It is written in the budget papers.

**Dr Dean** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — Order! The honourable member for Berwick!

**Mr HULLS** — It confirms yet again that the opposition is incapable of reading the budget papers and has been claiming that the core budget allocation will be the only funds available to victims of crime. That is not the case. The honourable member for Berwick knows it has not been the case in the past, and that is not what the budget papers say. The fact is that the government is absolutely committed to victims of crime as is the honourable member for Keilor. The government has increased funding. Is it any wonder that the opposition is embarrassed about its track record in relation to victims of crime?

The honourable member for Clayton raised an issue for the Minister for Community Services and referred specifically to disabled people in the Springvale and Noble Park areas. As he would know, the minister — who is not here today — is absolutely committed to providing appropriate services for disabled people in the honourable member's electorate. I will refer the matter to the minister.

The honourable member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government and I will refer that matter to him.

The Leader of the Opposition raised an issue for the Premier about the Italo-Australian Exhibition and Conference on Innovation Technologies. The honourable member would be well aware of the government's commitment to science, technology and innovation and the huge injection of funds that it has put into the area since coming to office. The government intends to ensure that Victoria is at the cutting edge in innovation and technology, but I will refer the matter he raised to the Premier.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Nardella)** — I take this opportunity to wish all honourable members and staff well until we sit again in August.

**Motion agreed to.**

**House adjourned 5.05 p.m.**



QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.  
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly.  
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.  
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

Wednesday, 13 June 2001

**Premier: racial and religious tolerance bill**

**302. MR KOTSIRAS** — To ask the Honourable the Premier— (a) what are the names of all consultants and outside researchers used to advise the Government on — (i) its proposal to introduce a racial and religious tolerance bill; (ii) the draft bill’s consultation process; (iii) any further work required to finalise the bill; and (b) what is the total cost for each consultant and researcher.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

(a) Sweeney Research Pty Ltd was engaged to research and assist in developing a communication strategy to promote the Government’s proposed Racial and Religious Tolerance legislation.

The Strategy Shop was engaged as part of the consultation process to facilitate the public and Indigenous consultations.

Sweeney Research Pty Ltd is located at 232 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. The cost of research undertaken by Sweeney Research totalled \$35,200 GST inclusive.

The Strategy Shop is located at 248 Coventry Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. The total cost of the facilitation process was \$42,128.75 GST inclusive.

(b) Relevant units within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and other government departments and agencies were consulted in the drafting of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Bill.

(c) Subsequent to Cabinet consideration of recommended amendments to the Bill, Parliamentary Counsel has made all necessary drafting changes.

**Premier: FOI requests**

**303. MR KOTSIRAS** — To ask the Honourable the Premier whether any individuals have been employed within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to police and monitor Freedom of Information (FOI) requests; and if so — (a) what does the role entail; and (b) how is the role different from that of FOI officers.

**ANSWER:**

I am informed that:

There are no individuals employed within the Department of Premier and Cabinet that police Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

However, two officers of the Department of Premier and Cabinet are duly appointed Authorised Officers under s 26 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Act). They have been vested with the powers and functions that have been conferred on the Secretary of the Department (the Principal Officer under the Act). The two officers have been authorised to make decisions in respect of FoI requests for access to documents made to the Department under the Act. They also:

- (i) manage the receipt and processing of those requests;
- (ii) advise the Secretary, staff and senior management of the Department and its agencies on the application and interpretation of the Act and the regulations made under the Act; and
- (iii) maintain statistics and reports on FOI activities across the Department and its agencies.

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

*The answer to the following question on notice was circulated on the date shown.*

*The question has been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly.*

*The answer has been incorporated in the form supplied by the department on behalf of the appropriate minister.*

*The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts the heading.*

**Thursday, 14 June 2001**

**Local Government: Greater Geelong candidate**

- 292. MR PATERSON** — To ask the Honourable the Minister for Local Government — what are the details of the Victorian Government Solicitor's advice regarding the candidacy of Mr Alex Di Natale in the recent City of Greater Geelong election.

**ANSWER:**

The Department of Infrastructure's Local Government Division has received advice from the Victorian Government Solicitor in relation to allegations made in relation to the candidature of Mr Alex Di Natale in the March 2001 elections for Greater Geelong City Council's Cheetham Ward.

The detail of this advice is for internal purposes relating to an investigation.

