

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

27 February 2001

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¹ Resigned 3 November 1999

² Elected 11 December 1999

³ Resigned 12 April 2000

⁴ Elected 13 May 2000

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2001

CONDOLENCES

<i>Hon. William Vasey Houghton</i>	1
<i>Adjournment</i>	6

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>ALP: donations</i>	6
<i>Electricity: Basslink</i>	7
<i>Economy: performance</i>	8
<i>Crown Casino: inquiry</i>	9
<i>Business: taxes</i>	9
<i>Royal Botanic Gardens: flying foxes</i>	10
<i>Crown Casino: contract</i>	10
<i>Rural Victoria: employment</i>	10
<i>Gaming: political donations</i>	11
<i>Workcover: board</i>	11

PETITIONS

<i>Wedderburn: sewerage scheme</i>	12
<i>Housing: Moorabbin development</i>	12
<i>Berwick Primary School site</i>	12
<i>Rail: Berwick service</i>	12
<i>Preschools: funding</i>	13
<i>Kilsyth South spider orchid</i>	13

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

<i>Communiqué</i>	13
-------------------------	----

LAW REFORM COMMITTEE

<i>Legal services in rural and regional Victoria</i>	13
<i>Theatres Act</i>	13

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

<i>Water resource allocation</i>	14
--	----

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

<i>2000–01 budget estimates</i>	14
---------------------------------------	----

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

<i>Annual review</i>	14
<i>Alert Digest No. 1</i>	14

BLF CUSTODIAN

<i>49th report</i>	14
--------------------------	----

PAPERS

ROYAL ASSENT

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

<i>Sessional orders</i>	18
<i>Consequential renumbering of bills</i>	18
<i>Correction of bill titles</i>	18
<i>Program</i>	19

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Olga Venables</i>	20
<i>Community care: funding</i>	21
<i>Members: email</i>	21
<i>Disability services: Gippsland special school</i>	21
<i>Fire services: Tullamarine</i>	22
<i>Gas: Gippsland supply</i>	22
<i>VOMA: director</i>	22

<i>Centenary of Federation: women's petition</i>	22
--	----

<i>Adrian Mannix</i>	23
----------------------------	----

<i>Bill Caldwell</i>	23
----------------------------	----

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

COUNCIL BILL

<i>Second reading</i>	23
-----------------------------	----

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Youth: Moorabbin refuge</i>	26
--------------------------------------	----

<i>Housing: Footscray estate</i>	27
--	----

<i>Bridges: Reids Creek</i>	27
-----------------------------------	----

<i>Scoresby freeway: funding</i>	28
--	----

<i>Rail: St Albans crossing</i>	29
---------------------------------------	----

<i>Fire services: Greenvale</i>	29
---------------------------------------	----

<i>SES: Croydon</i>	30
---------------------------	----

<i>Housing: Werribee electorate</i>	30
---	----

<i>Yarra Ranges: mobile immunisation program</i>	31
--	----

<i>Brimbank: neighbourhood houses</i>	31
---	----

<i>Responses</i>	31
------------------------	----

Tuesday, 27 February 2001

The **SPEAKER (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos)** took the chair at 2.06 p.m. and read the prayer.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. William Vasey Houghton

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death on 11 January 2001 of the Honourable William Vasey Houghton, and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Templestowe from July 1967 to July 1985.

Vasey Houghton was born in Melbourne and educated at Melbourne Grammar School before he studied law at Melbourne University. His studies were cut short during the outbreak of the Second World War when he joined the Australian Imperial Force. He served as a lieutenant in the 7th division of the 2/4 Field Artillery throughout the war, fighting in Egypt, Syria, Papua New Guinea and Borneo from 1940 to 1945.

After the war Vasey Houghton took up his lifelong ambition of farming and settled into a 500 acre property at Yarra Glen. The Yarra Glen district was an extremely close-knit community. Vasey Houghton was heavily involved in the community, including the local tennis club, cricket club, fire brigade and agricultural society. Vasey Houghton was elected to the Eltham council in 1951 and served as president in 1955. After helping organise the severance of part of Eltham riding into the Shire of Healesville, he was elected to the Healesville council in 1958 and served as a shire president in 1964.

It was then a natural progression for Vasey Houghton to take the first steps into Parliament, which happened in 1967 when the upper house seat of Templestowe Province was created. His maiden speech was on providing a modern, progressive government that would improve education, transport, planning and recreation facilities for the Victorian community.

In a distinguished parliamentary career spanning 18 years, Vasey became cabinet secretary in 1972 and held the social welfare portfolio between 1973 and 1976, the health portfolio between 1976 and 1979 and the conservation, lands and soldier settlement portfolios between 1979 and 1982.

Vasey Houghton's most notable achievements include improving prison conditions, upgrading child-care facilities and establishing a national parkland in Victoria's alpine country, for all of which we are eternally grateful to him.

Vasey also had a vision to initiate the transformation of a depressed, run-down precinct south of the Yarra River into a tourist attraction of which Melbourne could be proud. In the 1980s he made the commitment to redevelop the Southbank site. The area, which has become one of Melbourne's icons, will be Vasey's legacy for the future.

Vasey Houghton retired from politics in 1985 and spent his remaining years with his family and friends on his cattle and sheep farm. He will be remembered in this house as a good friend not only by members of his party but also across party lines because he endeavoured to represent Victorians and his electorate in a compassionate and caring manner.

Vasey Houghton passed away on 11 January 2001. A state funeral that was attended by family members, colleagues, friends and well-wishers on 16 January befitted a great Victorian who contributed considerably to public life. Vasey Houghton will be remembered for his significant contribution to the community, Parliament and to the people of Victoria.

On behalf of the government, I extend condolences to the family of William Vasey Houghton, including his wife, Audrey, his sons, Gary and Andrew, and his daughter, Robyn, and their families and friends.

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — It is with both pride and sadness that I join the Premier in contributing to the condolence motion to recognise the life and service of William Vasey Houghton. He gave significant and lifelong service to the Victorian community, Parliament and Australia, all of which he served with great distinction.

Vasey, as he was well known in this place and throughout the community, was born in Melbourne on 3 January 1921. He passed away a week after his 80th birthday on 11 January last. In company with other honourable members I attended his state funeral at the chapel of his old school, Melbourne Grammar School. His funeral was notable for the large number of dignitaries and members of the community in attendance in recognition of the contribution made by Vasey Houghton.

Those in attendance included former premiers and ministers and present parliamentarians — in fact, people from all walks of life, including a wide range of

community members particularly from the Yarra Valley and Yarra Glen areas where Vasey Houghton and his family lived. The funeral was a fitting tribute to him.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, my condolences and sympathies are extended to the surviving family of Vasey Houghton — namely, his wife, Audrey, and his children, Gary, Robyn and Andrew.

After a long and distinguished career in local government Vasey was elected as a member of the Legislative Council in 1967. However, his commitment to public service began at an early age when Australia faced probably its greatest threat. In 1940 Vasey left his study of law at Melbourne University, where he had been following in his father's footsteps, to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). He served in the 7th division field artillery for the remainder of the war in three theatres of battle: the Middle East, Papua New Guinea and Borneo. In 1942 he was commissioned as a lieutenant, which was a true sign of his future leadership potential.

When members reflect during condolence motions on former members who lived during Vasey Houghton's era — that is, those who were confronted at a young age with the horrors of war and the challenge of serving their country — we should recognise and pay tribute to the courage and commitment they displayed and to the fact that Vasey served this country in a variety of theatres from 1940 to the end of the war.

When Vasey returned to Australia after the war, instead of returning to his law studies he decided to tackle his lifelong ambition of becoming a farmer and he settled in Yarra Glen. Vasey became a very good farmer. Certainly the Houghton property under Vasey's management and control was recognised as one of the most productive properties in the Yarra Valley. His cattle were recognised throughout Victoria and Australia as some of the best bred at that time in Australia.

As well as being a good farmer Vasey Houghton was a great community citizen. He put an enormous amount back into the community through his involvement in many sporting groups and clubs: the tennis and cricket clubs and the local fire brigade. One of his great loves was the local agricultural society.

He also enjoyed playing polo, and had a great love of sailing, which originated in the days when he lived as a young person near Port Phillip Bay. He was a proficient sailor and competed on a number of occasions in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Vasey enjoyed his commitment through local community groups at the grassroots of our democracy, and contributed positively to the community. Indeed, he demonstrated the essence of that community commitment in an article in the *Diamond Valley News* of 1 October 1985. When questioned about what led him into local government and subsequently state politics, he is reported as having said:

It was taking part in all those community activities that led me into representation of the local community.

And municipal affairs led to state affairs — with a bit of prodding from a few friends.

Vasey certainly did get involved in all levels of government. From those local community groups he moved on to local government. He served on the Eltham Shire Council from 1951 to 1958, including a term as president from 1954 to 1955. In his role as an Eltham shire councillor he recognised that with the growing size of the Yarra Valley the Eltham shire was not an appropriate size to cover that area, and he subsequently played a key role in severing the Eltham riding into what was then the Shire of Healesville. He then served on the Healesville council from 1959 to 1967, and was its president from 1965 to 1966. Therefore, he had a long and distinguished career in two Victorian municipalities.

Vasey was elected to the Legislative Council in 1967. He served on the Meat Industry Committee until 1970 and the Public Works Committee from 1970 to 1972, and was then promoted to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet. He held that position for only a brief period, as he was promoted to the cabinet in May 1973 by Sir Rupert Hamer, and became the Minister of Social Welfare.

It is interesting that, throughout his ministerial career, he had a number of portfolios dealing with human services. It is a reflection of Vasey Houghton's compassion that while his background was as a farmer, as a community person he was recognised as having great compassion and understanding, demonstrating the Liberal principles of looking after those in need. Indeed, it was in many of those areas that he made a lasting contribution.

As the Premier said, Vasey made a significant contribution to improving child-care agencies, and initiated government funding for childcare workers in those agencies to assist them in their work, when previously they had been totally voluntary.

He was also a firm advocate of improving our prison system, and did some wonderful leadership work to

make prisons a better place for prisoners to rehabilitate and in which to turn their lives around. He was particularly proud of the fact that he was involved in the closure of C division of Pentridge, as it was then, which was described by prisoners, warders, and the community alike as a hellhole, and the hell of Pentridge. He took great pleasure in closing down C division under the philosophy of providing prisoners with a reasonable opportunity to rehabilitate themselves rather than just seeing prison as a form of severe punishment.

Vasey also served as Minister for Conservation, Minister of Lands and Minister of Soldier Settlement from 1979 to 1982. He expressed a view that some people thought was a surprise, when he was quoted as saying:

I am a farmer; naturally I am a conservationist.

At that time people often thought of farmers not as conservationists but rather as being exploiters of the land, but Vasey Houghton was able to demonstrate through the management of his own property that he was truly a conservationist, and many farmers since have been able to show through Landcare operations right across the state that farmers truly are conservationists. He was one of the first people to demonstrate the significant role that farmers play in managing the environment for the long-term sustainable production of farms.

As the Premier said, Vasey Houghton played a leading role in the development of the Alpine National Park system, something for which we as subsequent generations are eternally grateful. As outlined by former Premier, Lindsay Thompson, in his eulogy at the funeral, Vasey Houghton was one who saw the south bank of the Yarra in the Melbourne city area not as a collection of derelict warehouses and buildings but as an enormous asset and opportunity. Many would agree that Vasey Houghton was the first to envisage what is now the Southbank area. When he put that vision to the cabinet and funding was provided for feasibility studies it led to development that has made an enormous difference to the city of Melbourne and to Victoria.

Following his retirement from Parliament in 1985 he continued to be actively involved with the community. Until recent times he was heavily involved with local community representations regarding the construction of the Melba Highway. It was a proud day for Vasey Houghton and his family when the Vasey Houghton Bridge in Yarra Glen was named in his honour. It was a tribute not only to his work as a member of Parliament

and as a local government representative but also to his ongoing efforts to ensure that the redevelopment of the Melba Highway reflected the views of the local community and the direction they wanted the highway to take.

Clearly Vasey Houghton was a man who provided great service to this community as a soldier, a citizen, a councillor and an elected representative, including nine years as a cabinet minister.

Vasey Houghton made a real difference to Victoria, to Australia and, first and foremost, to the community in which he lived. He saw the potential of the Yarra Valley and looked after its development and growth so that it could become what it is today, one of the great treasures and assets of Victoria.

Despite the sadness, it is with pride that through this condolence motion today we recognise the passing of Vasey Houghton and place on record our appreciation for his contribution to his community, to his Victoria and to his Australia. We pass on our sympathy and prayers to Audrey and the family.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in this condolence motion not only to mark the passing of William Vasey Houghton, who died on 11 January this year aged 80 years, but also to honour his life. He was a man who had a proud history of military and community service.

The history of many of those who came to either house of this place at or about the same time as Vasey Houghton contributed on behalf of their country not only through military service but also by way of general community contribution.

Vasey Houghton was a man of wide-ranging interests. He was interested in marine science, in yachting, in the Yarra Glen Hunt Club, the polo club and in local government. It is interesting to note that not only was he a participant in those wide-ranging and civic interests, he was often the leader.

Vasey Houghton entered Parliament on behalf of the Liberal Party in July 1967 and was the first member for Templestowe Province. He remained a member of Parliament until July 1985, giving some 18 years of service. In his maiden speech in October 1967 he spoke about the importance of the family unit and the fundamental part it plays in the stability of our society.

He spoke about education and the significant contribution teachers make in educating our children properly as well as the need to ensure that they have

proper facilities available for that important role. He was a far-sighted man who had a distinct interest in planning issues, to which both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have referred.

He saw a strong future for the Yarra Valley, not only for residential development but also for responsible commercial development. Over the years, as has been said, he helped to achieve that responsibly.

In his 1967 maiden speech he referred to the necessity of preserving and enhancing water resources. He foresaw the day when water purification would become an important issue in the Parliament. In his speech he also referred to the important notion of the interdependence of country and city living. He recognised that although the fortunes of Victoria rested to a large extent on metropolitan Melbourne they also depended on development of the country areas of the state in ways that were appropriate to the needs of country people. That was also a far-sighted view.

He undertook several ministerial roles during his career: he was responsible for the portfolios of social welfare, health, conservation, lands, and soldier settlement, and achieved a proud record in each area of responsibility.

The death of Vasey Houghton marks the passing of a fine man who made a magnificent contribution to the life and times of Victoria, a state which he loved. I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in offering my condolences on behalf of the National Party to his wife, Audrey, and to their children.

Mr THWAITES (Minister for Health) — I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party in acknowledging the life of Vasey Houghton.

When Vasey retired his services were acknowledged and appreciated by various members of the Legislative Council and it is clear that he was very well regarded by honourable members on all sides of the house. Everyone had a similar view of him. Alan Hunt said at the time that Vasey had never been a big-noter. He was never one who sought publicity for his own sake; rather, he sought first to do a good job for the state and for his electorate. He did that job quietly, effectively and with great strength of purpose.

Bernie Dunn of the National Party said that Vasey had a sensitive approach to humane issues and to problems concerning people, especially those not so fortunate as others. Barry Murphy — who was then a member of the Labor Party — also complimented Vasey with the words:

Vasey may have been a crusty conservative, but he told me once that for relaxation he went home and talked to his cattle. I knew then he was a genuine human being with real feelings.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr THWAITES — Those words probably say as much about Barry Murphy as they do about Vasey Houghton. No-one who knew Vasey well would have described him as a 'crusty conservative'. He was an understated person and indeed described himself not as a conservative but as a liberal.

Despite the fact that he was not a big-noter he made a huge contribution, both to his state and to his local community. It was fascinating to hear at his funeral about a life so varied and so rich. Things were expressed about him that are not often heard, such as that when he was 13 he wanted to join the navy because he liked sailing, and did everything he could to join it. He was unable to, but for the rest of his life he maintained his interest in sailing.

His contribution to his local community went well beyond simply being a councillor. He was a captain of the rural fire brigade and president of the Yarra Glen agricultural and horticultural society. He founded the Yarra Glen and Lilydale hunt and polo clubs. That degree of local contribution, added to the rich life he had with his family, makes his life particularly notable.

The Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party have referred to Vasey's war service. The fact that he served in three critical regions — the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo — is in itself an important part of the Australian story.

Vasey spent 18 years in this place — a long time. He spent 10 years as a member of cabinet, although he was cabinet secretary for one and a half of those years. He said that during the time he was cabinet secretary he was not allowed to speak, and he admitted that it was a good rule for cabinet secretaries. Vasey made significant contributions as the Minister for Social Welfare in upgrading child care, in deinstitutionalisation and importantly in abolishing the notorious C division of Pentridge — a significant contribution in itself.

During the period when he was responsible for the health portfolio he acknowledged what a fascinating and interesting portfolio it is. He set one precedent in that area that I do not intend to follow: he made a second-reading speech that went for 3½ hours. When he retired he said it was the one thing he was not proud of. In that second-reading speech he referred to the record

of the Health Commission and the new health plan that he implemented, which followed a major study and report by Sir Colin Syme and Professor Lance Townsend.

Vasey's greatest contribution was in the conservation portfolio, not only in declaring new parklands but most significantly in cleaning up the Yarra River. During the 1970s Vasey was at the forefront of the campaigns to clean up the Yarra. We take it for granted that we have such a good waterfront environment and that the Yarra is relatively clean — certainly compared with what it was like then. Vasey was part of that. He referred to the 1970s, under the leadership of Sir Rupert Hamer, as the golden years of the environment. In many ways Victoria led the way in environment issues, and Vasey played an important part in that.

I have referred to his rich and varied life. As was indicated earlier, Vasey originally had an interest in joining the Australian Navy, but ended up in the AIF. He studied law for a year and then worked as an articled clerk. When he came back from the war he chose farming. That is an interesting reflection on the man, because he was not from a farming family. He had to start from scratch, and the practical aspects of farming must have been difficult in many ways for a city boy, but he was able to take up the challenge and succeed. He said that he used to milk the cows before going to work. That may have given him a different perspective.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the last years of Vasey's life. Life does not stop when you leave this place. Vasey contributed a lot during those years. As the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party have said, Vasey left this society a better place than when he entered it.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am honoured to join the leaders of all parties in the condolence motion for the late Vasey Houghton. Honourable members have referred to Vasey's war service, his service as a councillor at Healesville, his life in this Parliament and the work that he did. I knew of Vasey Houghton during those years, but I did not really know him. I got to know Vasey in the Yarra Valley after he retired from Parliament.

The headline in the *Mountain Views* regarding his funeral — 'State funeral for a Yarra Glen icon' — reflects the way I got to know Vasey Houghton. I met Vasey many times over the past 10 years, and we had wide-ranging discussions. He was very interested in viticulture and the growing of vines. In fact he was interested in everything that was happening in the

valley. He had foreseen the advent of tourism and the benefits it would bring to the valley long before many others had. He was involved in planning and making sure that the valley was left as a beautiful rural environment for other people to enjoy.

I was pleased to read John Lithgow's comments in the *Journal* newspaper. He had known the family for many years:

'Vasey's wisdom and knowledge were just astounding', he said.

'If Vasey was at the meeting his logic seemed to rise above anyone else, but he was always very gracious whenever he was opposed to anything'.

My first real test with Vasey Houghton came when as a local government commissioner I attended a meeting at the Grand Hotel at Yarra Glen. Arguments about why the Melba Highway diversion around Yarra Glen should have priority in road funding were being put forward. I had been briefed by the council to be firm; that other matters took priority. By the end of that hour-long meeting this gracious, polite, gentle man had me nodding in agreement with everything he was saying, even though we hardly touched on the subject of the roadway until the end. That was Vasey's manner — he made you feel special and important, and that your opinions counted. In doing that he brought you around to his way of thinking and convinced you that what he was saying was right.

The bridge can be seen as part of Vasey Houghton's contribution to Yarra Glen, because that alteration to the road would not have been made if he had not been so much involved and had not convinced so many people over a long period. Safety has been improved and the people of Yarra Glen will continue with his work — the diversion around the back of Yarra Glen to make it safer.

As has been said, Vasey was involved with the hunt club and in marine life and water activities. In a quieter way, he was also involved in many other activities, including charity fundraising in the community. He had great respect for individuals who had difficulties in life, and without boasting about it he spent a lot of time helping those who were less fortunate. He quietly achieved throughout his life. It was an honour to know him. His service to Victoria will be remembered by many.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — I joined the Young Liberals and moved into the electorate of Templestowe when Vasey Houghton was both a minister and the local member. As the honourable member for Evelyn said, he was a man of extraordinary courtesy. He was a

man who wanted to instil in people the belief that they could do whatever they wanted to do and be whatever they wanted to be. He was utterly encouraging to young people in politics.

In those days, the Doncaster Young Liberals became the most vibrant branch of the organisation and it was a time when the Young Liberal movement was probably at its peak, with people such as Louise Asher and the Honourable Mark Birrell serving as president. Vasey Houghton was always utterly encouraging of the liberal views and liberal passions of young Liberals and of what they stood for in those times. In his generous speech, the Deputy Premier referred to the fact that Vasey Houghton always said he was a liberal and not a conservative. He certainly encouraged those young people who were getting a start in the political system to take that approach — to be vibrant and brave. I thank him greatly for that.

On behalf of my constituency, which was so well served by him as an upper house member, I can only say thank you to Vasey Houghton, and extend condolences to his family, who can remember the great man as a father, a grandfather and a brother.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Vasey Houghton's life reflected that of an Australian Everyman of the 20th century in a number of respects: as a farmer, as a soldier, as one who served his local community through the mayorship of two local shires, as a member of Parliament, and, when he left this place, as one who continued to serve his local community.

I will share two interesting stories with honourable members. One is that the name 'Vasey' was taken from one of the 100 000 or so Australian soldiers who lost their lives during the two great wars. His father's best friend, who was named Vasey, died alongside Vasey's father in the trenches in the First World War. Throughout his political career Vasey showed to those he served and on whose behalf he served the same sense of loyalty and commitment his father showed to his fallen friend.

The second story I will share with the chamber is that during his war service as an artilleryman Vasey Houghton made only one practice parachute jump before he was dropped behind enemy lines in the Ramu Valley in New Guinea in a strategic military move.

Speakers before me summarised Vasey Houghton's life and said he was a man of humanity and wise judgment. A eulogy given at his funeral and an *Age* article prepared by his brother referred to his contribution to community life. His favourite poem was Tennyson's

Crossing the Bar. I commend the reading of that poem to the house.

The SPEAKER — I join with honourable members in expressing my sorrow at the passing of William Vasey Houghton and extend my condolences to his wife, Audrey, and their two sons and one daughter and their families.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable William Vasey Houghton, the house do now adjourn, until 8.00 p.m. this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 2.43 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 8.05 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ALP: donations

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to his interview on 3AW on 7 February about the \$100 000 PBL donation to the Victorian Labor Party.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The government benches should come to order.

Dr NAPHTHINE — The Premier absolutely denied that the casino was discussed at his meeting with Graham Richardson and James Packer, but comments made by the Premier's staff confirmed that Crown was discussed at the meeting. In the interests of honest, open and accountable government, will the Premier advise the house of exactly what was discussed at this secret meeting, and will he make the notes available to the house?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. In the interests of honesty, openness and accountability, the Parliament needs one clear answer: why has \$60 million been kept secret — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition front bench should cease interjecting to enable the Premier to answer the question.

Mr BRACKS — The Liberal Party's secret slush fund in Victoria is not of the order of \$5 000, not of the order of \$10 000 and not of the order of \$100 000 but of the order of \$60 million. Sixty million dollars has not been disclosed, and any occurrence by the Liberal Party — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Will the house come to order!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable members for Doncaster, Monbulk and Pakenham!

Mr BRACKS — There is a clear difference between the donation that has been received by the Labor Party in Victoria and the donations that have not been disclosed by the Liberal Party. One hundred thousand dollars was disclosed by the Labor Party under the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) rules, but \$60 million is yet to be disclosed by the Liberal Party under the rules.

Mr Rowe — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, can the Premier actually remember the facts in relation to the \$100 000 because he cannot remember the meeting or whether he discussed — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Cranbourne is clearly not raising a point of order but is using the guise of a point of order to debate the issue. There is no point of order. I will not hear the honourable member for Cranbourne.

Mr BRACKS — Accountability is about disclosure and openness.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — The government has made disclosures under the AEC rules, but the opposition has kept a \$60 million secret.

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Premier was asked to advise the house what was discussed at his secret meeting with Mr Richardson and Mr Packer and whether he would make the notes of the meeting available. He has not addressed that issue: he is obfuscating the issue and is trying to avoid answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is not in a position to tell the Premier to answer the question in a particular way. The Chair believes the Premier's answer was relevant, and therefore he will continue to be heard.

Dr Napthine — Give him \$100 000 and he'll answer it!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that it is disrespectful to the Chair to interject in the manner in which he just did when the Chair is standing. I will not tolerate that behaviour in the future.

Mr BRACKS — Accountability and openness require disclosure. The Labor Party has complied with the disclosure rules; the Liberal Party has not — and to the tune of \$60 million! The Leader of the Opposition's question went to the matter of openness, but he has not disclosed, nor will he disclose, some \$60 million that is currently funding Liberal Party campaigns in Victoria.

Electricity: Basslink

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — Does the Premier agree with claims made by the National Grid — —

Government members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the government backbench to cease interjecting. I cannot hear the Leader of the National Party.

Mr RYAN — Does the Premier agree with claims by the National Grid Company and Nemmo that the Basslink project, when completed, will benefit Victoria?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — There is no doubt that the completion of an electricity link between Tasmania and Victoria is important for the future of the national grid system, which I support.

At present, under the panel and environment effects statement processes, the government is considering the environmental aspects of the proposal to erect above-ground pylons in Victoria. The government has long supported the notion of a national electricity supply system.

Environmental and public interest matters will be taken into account by the panel, as one would expect. The government is waiting for the report, which is due some time at the end of the year, and until it is finalised the

government will not be in a position to make a judgment on the project. Significant benefits will flow to Tasmania. It is a Tasmanian project that has been nominated by the Prime Minister as a project of national significance. I understand that that notion is supported by the federal government.

The Tasmanian government seeks extra electricity capacity to assist in encouraging industry and, therefore, extra generation for that industry. Victoria will have some benefits in supply in the peak and off-peak periods, but the major benefit will be to Tasmania.

The project has been designated as a national project of significance, but Victoria is waiting on public interest and environmental grounds to see whether the project stacks up in relation to its above-ground nature as it reaches Victoria.

Economy: performance

Mr LEIGHTON (Preston) — I refer the Premier to the difficult economic times that confront international and Australian economies. Will the Premier inform the house of the latest information concerning the state of the Victorian economy?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — The honourable member for Preston is correct when he says that Victoria is entering a period of mild slowdown in the Australian economy. Victoria is not immune from that situation, although the robustness of the Victorian economy means it will be able to sustain adequate levels of growth in the future. The United States of America economy has recorded growth of 0.4 per cent — almost zero growth in the last period. That will have an impact on world economies, including Australia and Victoria, which are not immune to that situation.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BRACKS — In part response to the interjection, and in response to the question from the honourable member for Preston, Victoria has been the stand-out economy in Australia over the past 12 months.

Ms Asher interjected.

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

Mr BRACKS — In the past 12 months some 90 000 jobs have been created in Victoria, which means that just over half of all the jobs created in Australia have been created in this state. In the past 12 months

32 500 jobs were created in regional Victoria, which is a record high for any government that has presided over the state of Victoria. A record number of 2.3 million Victorians are now employed.

In the final quarter last year the retail sector was up by 4.5 per cent, despite a significant slowing of the economy. Over the past 12 months shop building approvals have increased by 45 per cent to a new high of \$621 million.

Victoria has had record export growth. It is now the second highest exporting state in Australia. The only state that has reported higher growth is the resource state, Western Australia. That has lifted Victoria from its position of being the second lowest growth state some 10 years ago.

I can report on some more good news for Victoria. Today the Yellow Pages business survey was released, which shows that the confidence index for Victorian small and medium-sized enterprises jumped from a net 30 per cent in the previous quarter to 42 per cent in the current quarter, which is a significant increase. I compare that figure with the national increase in the net confidence index, from 30 per cent in the previous quarter to 36 per cent. So Victoria significantly outstripped the national improvement with a jump to 42 per cent.

The foundations and the fundamentals of the Victorian economy are very strong. The government understands that there has been a mild slowing of the Australian economy and a slowing of the US economy, and Victoria is not immune from that. That is why in the current budget estimates growth has been predicted to be less than the 4 per cent to 5 per cent growth that was achieved over the past 12 months.

The government is also setting the foundations ahead of time. It is embarking on some of the biggest infrastructure projects the state has seen for some time. Over the coming 12 months we will embark on public and private projects worth \$5 billion. In addition, the Treasurer reported today on the business tax review, the second component in driving down the cost of doing business in Victoria and making sure it has the right environment for investment and growth in the future.

The government is proactive in encouraging growth and investment. Its record over the past 12 months has been exceptional. The proposals and the framework for infrastructure and costs for the next 12 months are also exceptional, and they are the two biggest issues for business and investment. As the economy slows

internationally and in Australia, Victoria is in a robust and sound position to work well through that period.

Crown Casino: inquiry

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to the Labor Party's calls in September 1998 for a full inquiry into the Crown Casino after Mr Kerry Packer's takeover. Now that the Labor Party has been in government for 16 months, when will the inquiry commence?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — Because of the refusal of the previous Premier to release details of the tender for Crown Casino, the former shadow Attorney-General rightly called at the time for that to happen through an inquiry. The government has subsequently released all the documents around the tender for Crown Casino.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have called the honourable member for Monbulk to order on two occasions. I shall not hesitate to start using sessional order 10 on day 1 of this sitting.

Mr BRACKS — Those documents have been released for public examination, and members of the media have examined them also. At the last election we had an explicit platform that was clear about the inquiry. There was one inquiry that we agreed to and supported, and that was the Intergraph royal commission, which is now proceeding. The opposition knows that our election commitments went to the release of tender documents, and we have done that.

Business: taxes

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — Will the Treasurer inform the house of the latest action taken by the government to promote debate on how to achieve a competitive business tax system in Victoria?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — I advise the honourable member for Keilor and other honourable members that today I publicly released the final independent report of the state business tax review. With its attachments the report totals about 300 pages.

I publicly thank the chairman of the review committee, John Harvey, a former senior partner of Pricewaterhousecoopers, and the other members of the committee — Nicole Feely, Professor John Freebairn, Kathleen Townsend and Dr David Pollard — who have worked for the best part of a year on the review. They have put in thousands and thousands of hours on a

gratis basis for Victoria. I thank them on behalf of the Parliament.

The report contains wide-ranging recommendations for the Victorian business tax system. The government will implement \$400 million of tax cuts over the next three financial years with the first tranche payable from 1 July 2001 — this financial year. On that date the government will also abolish financial institutions duty and duties on quoted marketable securities. When combined with the \$100 million of tax cuts to which the government is committed, that will produce an 11.8 per cent reduction in Victorian business taxation. It is the biggest single reduction in business taxes in Victoria's history and it is being delivered by the Bracks government.

The government is releasing the report and the recommendations in it for public debate. The recommendations are sure to generate robust public debate; indeed, in some quarters they will generate heated public debate. Some of the report's recommendations are controversial but in the government's view the public interest will be served by its releasing the report and enabling debate to occur.

One of the key points made in the report is the appalling state of the business tax system inherited by the Bracks government.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — I will read from the report, which was signed off by all members of the committee, including the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The overview states that some of the taxes inherited by the government are a 'strong disincentive to capital formation', especially the stamp duty regime; that 'some of them have severe unintended consequences'; and that some are positively underexploited. The report states that if business people want to understand the tax system they 'are often required to go to great expense to obtain legal and accounting advice on how to comply'.

The business tax system in Victoria is hopelessly complex. The Bracks government inherited that system following seven years of Kennett government. It was a period in which taxation increased by a massive 50 per cent, from \$6.2 billion to \$9.5 billion. In a period when inflation was 14 per cent the former Kennett government put taxes up by 50 per cent and left a hopelessly complex system. As the former Minister for Small Business, the honourable member for Brighton, would know, there were 2308 separate increases in

taxes, fees and charges which affected business. Shame!

The government will examine the report. It contains some strong recommendations and will create debate, but the government believes the public interest will be served by that debate. I assure honourable members that the government is committed to the reform of Victoria's tax system and will produce a system which is competitive and outward looking and which will attract investment and create new jobs for Victorians.

Royal Botanic Gardens: flying foxes

Mr INGRAM (Gippsland East) — Will the Minister for Environment and Conservation assure the house that the flying foxes that now inhabit the Royal Botanic Gardens will not be relocated to Dowell Creek at Mallacoota without consultation with and the support of the Mallacoota community?

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation) — Everyone will have his or her own theory about what to do with the bats, but it is a serious issue and I thank the honourable member for raising it on behalf of his constituents. Honourable members would be well aware that the number of bats at the Royal Botanic Gardens has been increasing since about 1980. They are now doing serious damage to the gardens, which, if allowed to continue, will ruin the gardens. The issue must be tackled.

The Victorian government convened a forum on 24 January with most of the eminent bat experts from around the country to ask them how to stop the damage to the fern gully and to the gardens. Coming out of that was a recommendation for relocation, which was the preferred non-lethal alternative to culling.

Dowell Creek in East Gippsland is the site of the only other flying fox colony in Victoria. It has a long history of having flying foxes. For example, about 20 000 flying foxes were there in the late 1980s, and just over the border at Pambula about 9000 flying foxes were counted in the census conducted last weekend. Flying foxes have therefore lived around that area in Croajingolong National Park for a long time.

What is proposed is a trial relocation. There are no guarantees that it will work. It has been recommended by the scientists, but the scientific community itself is divided on the issue.

Any relocation would be carried out only when natural food is available for the flying foxes. I understand none is available at the moment, so clearly it will not happen overnight. However, I can guarantee the honourable

member that any relocation trial will not proceed without consultation with the local community and consideration of the concerns of that community. That is what this government is about.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GARBUTT — You certainly do not understand that. No, you just go straight off and do your own thing, regardless of what local communities think. And you have paid a price for that. Just ask the people of East Gippsland — they have punished you!

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to address her remarks through the Chair.

Ms GARBUTT — So the government can certainly give the honourable member that guarantee.

Crown Casino: contract

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I refer the Premier to Crown Casino's requirement to build by November 2003 a second hotel tower and lyric theatre. Will the Premier guarantee that if the tower and theatre are not built on time the government will stand firm and collect the \$50 000-a-day fine until they are finished?

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I am not aware of any change in plans. The government will adhere to the contract as it has been derived, and we do not expect any departure from that.

Rural Victoria: employment

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — Will the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment inform the house of the latest employment opportunities in Victoria, particularly in regional and rural areas?

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment) — The Bracks government is ambitious about providing more employment opportunities across Victoria: it wants more Victorians working. As the honourable member for Geelong knows, the unemployment rate in the south-western Barwon region is now 5.2 per cent — the lowest since 1990. I know he is pleased about that result.

Employment in Victoria is at its highest level ever; more than 2.3 million Victorians are taking home pay packets every week. As the Premier has said, in the past 12 months more than 90 000 new jobs have been created across Victoria compared with 52 000 in New South Wales and 21 000 in Queensland — the states

with which Victoria should be compared. During the election campaign the then coalition made a commitment to create a lousy 150 000 new jobs over four years, yet in only 12 months this government has already passed the halfway mark of that target!

The opposition was pessimistic, but the government is ambitious and serious about creating jobs. I am pleased that one-third of the new jobs created are in country Victoria. More jobs were created in regional Victoria in the 12 months to January last than were created in the previous three years. The government has been getting on with the task of creating jobs in Victoria, and employment across the state has grown by 4.1 per cent — the fastest growth of any state. Unemployment is down to 6.3 per cent, which is well below the national rate. Employment growth is up, participation is up and, most importantly, the gains in jobs growth have been shared across the Victorian community.

The GST is having a dampening effect on employment across Australia, but the government is building a base in Victoria by putting money into both infrastructure and a trained and educated work force. That is why business wants to invest in Victoria.

The government is happy with the results and is confident that it is building a firm base to encourage further growth in the future to keep Victoria ahead of the pack in Australia.

Gaming: political donations

Mr BAILLIEU (Hawthorn) — I refer the Minister for Gaming to Labor's election promise to limit gaming owner and operator donations to political parties. Is \$100 000 above or below that limit?

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Gaming) — The subject of political donations is obviously one for the political party receiving them. All Labor's election commitments will be delivered. The election commitment relates to the party — —

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS — It would seem the honourable member for Hawthorn was referring to the way the opposition deals with its political donations! Certainly it should be disclosing why it has \$60 million of hidden political donations when the Labor Party fully discloses its donations. There are no roort funds on this side of the house — they are all with the opposition! The government will deliver on its election commitment.

Workcover: board

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — I ask the Minister for Workcover to inform the house of the new appointments to the board of the Victorian Workcover Authority and of the challenges facing the new administration.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Malvern!

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover) — There has been some changing of the guard at the board of the Victorian Workcover Authority. Last week Mr James MacKenzie took up the appointment of chairman. Mr MacKenzie is well known to many people in this house and is regarded as being extremely capable. Mr MacKenzie was the managing director of funds management at the ANZ bank. He would be particularly known to some honourable members as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Transport Accident Commission from 1994 to 1997. He took up that position at a time when the TAC scheme was deteriorating. Over a three-year period he stabilised the scheme and turned it around. Honourable members will appreciate that insurance takes a long time to turn around and his work there is certainly very well regarded.

I place on record my thanks to the retiring chairman, Professor Bob Officer. He is remaining on the board, but he has extra commitments at university this year. In the time I have been minister, as chairman of the board, Professor Officer certainly took up the challenges of having the board tackle issues without the persistent political interference seen in recent years. In particular, I thank him for the recruitment of the new CEO, Mr Bill Mountford, and the team he is putting in place to stabilise the Workcover scheme.

Mr Paul Barker was appointed to the board of Workcover effective from last week. Honourable members will know him as the former head of Audit Victoria. He is a chartered accountant by profession with extensive experience both here and overseas in the banking and financial sectors. He had a very distinguished career with Standard Chartered Bank.

There are a great many challenges for the board of the Victorian Workcover Authority. Certainly you will realise, Mr Speaker, that when Labor took over the actual Liberal liability amounted to over \$770 million in unfunded liabilities in the Workcover fund. The latest actuarial assessments of the scheme have taken place. As part of that, the impact of the federal Liberal

Party's GST has been taken into account. It has a significant impact on the existing liabilities of the insurance scheme. The result of the assessment is an increase in liabilities of \$190 million. Labor inherited over three-quarters of a billion dollars in state Liberal liabilities and now an extra \$190 million in federal Liberal liabilities. Therefore \$1 billion in Liberal liabilities have to be tackled.

The government took over a scheme that was out of control. It was a financial mess. The government must deal with those massive Liberal liabilities as it moves forward.

I am pleased to report that two independent actuaries have advised the Workcover board that premiums do not have to rise to pay off these Liberal liabilities. They have estimated that the scheme will be fully funded by 2006 with the current premium, which is an average of 2.2 per cent of payroll — in other words, the premiums can stay put to pay off the Liberal liabilities. Clearly, the work of Mr Mackenzie and Mr Mountford will be important as we go forward in turning the scheme around. The scheme was out of control, but is now being stabilised. The Liberal liabilities amounting to \$1 billion have to be and are being dealt with.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAMERON — Don't you just love these Howard's heroes? They cheer the GST on at every opportunity, and they are cheering it on again today. I am advised by the chairman of Workcover that the existing premium level will remain when the new premiums are set. Victorian employers pay the second lowest premiums in the country, and that will remain. In addition, and critically, we have a scheme which is now fairer for workers.

PETITIONS

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

Wedderburn: sewerage scheme

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 showeth:

The property owners of Wedderburn and district seek that the government honour a promise made that if the majority of property owners/ratepayers of Wedderburn and district don't want their properties to be sewered then they will not be forced against their will to make costly and unnecessary sewerage alterations to their properties.

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

By Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East) (215 signatures)

Housing: Moorabbin development

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

The humble petition of Moorabbin residents sheweth that the state department of housing:

1. Will be developing the corner of Wickham Road and Nepean Highway for the purpose of emergency housing for homeless youths which, given its position, will exacerbate local problems and diminish the livability of our local streets and nearby homes; and
2. That the department of housing may be targeting Moorabbin to purchase a disproportionate number of properties for public housing and thereby aggravate existing neighbourhood problems.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the decision to locate a youth refuge be reversed and that the property be developed for accommodation of older persons, the waiting lists for whom are significant.

Your petitioners also pray that the suburb of Moorabbin not be a target for public housing saturation but that the numbers of public housing properties be kept to numbers comparable to other suburbs.

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

By Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh) (971 signatures)

Berwick Primary School site

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 there is considerable support for the retention of part of the existing Berwick Primary School located in Peel Street, Berwick, as a public park.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Minister for Education supports a redevelopment of the old Berwick Primary School site in Lyall Road, Berwick, to include the establishment of a substantial park for the benefit of the whole community, but not another school on the site.

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

By Dr DEAN (Berwick) (2006 signatures)

Rail: Berwick service

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 reduction in V/Line services at the Berwick railway station.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Minister for Transport raise with V/Line the need and desirability for V/Line trains

to continue to stop for both the picking up and dropping off of passengers at Berwick railway station in order to maintain the current service to the Berwick community and surrounding region, and that the Minister make V/Line aware of the strong community support for the maintenance of the existing services.

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

By Dr DEAN (Berwick) (59 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 the state of Victoria respectfully requests:

That the Victorian government immediately invest more substantially in preschool education for the benefit of Victoria's young children and their future. That the Victorian government increase funding to preschools to at least equivalent to the national average in order to ensure:

a reduction in fees paid by parents and the removal of the barrier to participation for children;

reduction in group sizes to educationally appropriate levels consistent with those established by government for P-2 classes in primary schools;

teachers are paid appropriately and in line with Victorian school teachers and preschool teachers interstate;

critical staff shortages for both permanent and relief staff are alleviated;

the excessive workloads of teachers and parent committees of management are addressed.

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

By Dr DEAN (Berwick) (37 signatures)

Kilsyth South spider orchid

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

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria and other concerned countries draws to the attention of the house that the Kilsyth South spider orchid is in danger of becoming extinct. It is the last known population on earth and it would be a direct contradiction of various acts (e.g. section 4(1)(d) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and section 4(1)(a) of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act) if the matter continues to be ignored and the orchid becomes extinct. My petitioners therefore request that the house exercises its power to acquire the two relevant private allotments (exact address withheld in the orchid's interests) in Kilsyth South, whether it be a compulsory acquisition or a negotiated settlement, and supply the monetary amount necessary for its preservation.

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

By Mrs ELLIOTT (Mooroolbark) (1267 signatures)

Laid on table.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Bentleigh be considered next day on motion of Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh).

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, one or two of the ministers must have missed the call on giving notices because there were only four notices. I give them leave to bring forward notice of government legislation.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Chair called the item and a number of notices were given.

Ms Asher interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition! I shall not hesitate to use sessional order 10 if she continues with her persistent interjections.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

Communiqué

Mr BRACKS (Premier), by leave, presented Council of Australian Governments communiqué of 3 November 2000.

Laid on table.

LAW REFORM COMMITTEE

Legal services in rural and regional Victoria

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) presented report, together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

Theatres Act

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) presented interim report, together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Water resource allocation

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) presented interim report.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES
COMMITTEE**

2000–01 budget estimates

Mr LONEY (Geelong North) presented report, together with minority report, extracts from proceedings, appendices and minutes of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that minority report, extracts from proceedings and appendices be printed.

**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS
COMMITTEE**

Annual review

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) presented annual review, together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

Alert Digest No. 1

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) presented *Alert Digest No. 1* of 2001 on:

Building (Legionella) Bill
Crimes (Questioning of Suspects) Act
Electricity Industry Bill
Fair Employment Bill
Health Records Bill
Health Services (Amendment) Bill
Mineral Resources Development (Amendment) Bill
Nurses (Amendment) Bill
Police Regulation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
State Taxation Acts (Further Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill
Statute Law Revision Bill
Victorian Qualifications Authority Bill

together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

BLF CUSTODIAN

49th report

The SPEAKER presented report with appendices given to him pursuant to section 7A of the BLF (De-recognition) Act 1985 by the custodian appointed under section 7(1) of that act.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Australian Food Industry Science Centre — Report for the year 1999–2000

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Ballarat Health Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Bendigo Health Care Group — Report for the year 1999–2000

Boort District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Budget Sector — Quarterly Financial Report for the period ended 30 September 2000

Central Gippsland Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Cohuna District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Djerriwarrh Health Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981:

Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons No 15 Amendment No 2

Notice regarding the amendment, commencement and availability of the Poisons Code

East Grampians Health Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Echuca Regional Health — Report for the year 1999–2000

Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Environment Protection Act 1970 — Order declaring Industrial Waste Management Policy (Prescribed Industrial Waste) (*Government Gazette* No S183, 5 December 2000)

Financial Management Act 1994:

Reports from the Minister for Environment and Conservation that she had received the 1998–1999 and 1999–2000 annual reports of the Casey's Weir and Major Creek Rural Water Authority

Report from the Minister for Environment and Conservation that she had received the 1999–2000 annual reports of the Melbourne Parks and Waterways

Reports from the Minister for Health that he had received the 1999–2000 annual reports of the:

- Alexandra District Hospital
- Beaufort and Skipton Health Service
- Far East Gippsland Health and Support Service
- O'Connell Family Centre (Grey Sisters) Inc
- Osteopaths Registration Board of Victoria
- Queen Elizabeth Centre
- South Gippsland Hospital
- Tallangatta Health Service
- Tweddle Child and Family Health Service
- West Wimmera Health Service
- Yarram and District Health Service

Financial Management Act 1994 — Budget Update for the year 2000–2001

Food Safety Council — Report for the year 1999–2000

Gippsland Regional Waste Management Group — Report for the year 1999–2000, together with an explanation for the delay in tabling

Gippsland Southern Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000

Hepburn Health Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Inglewood and District Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000

Kerang and District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Kooweerup Regional Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Kyabram and District Memorial Community Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Kyneton District Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000

Latrobe Regional Hospital — Financial Statements for the year 1999–2000

Legal Practice Act 1996 — Practitioner Remuneration Order pursuant to s 113

McIvor Health and Community Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Maldon Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Mallee Track Health and Community Services — Report for the year 1999–2000

Manangatang and District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Maryborough District Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Melbourne City Link Act 1995:

City Link and Extension Projects Integration and Facilitation Agreement Sixth Amending Deed

Exhibition Street Extension Third Amending Deed

Melbourne City Link Thirteenth Amending Deed

Melbourne City Link Fourteenth Amending Deed

Statement of Variation No 7/2000: Detailed Tolling Strategy

Statement of Variation No 8/2000: Agreement under Clause 8.12 of the Concession Deed

Mt Alexander Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

Murray-Darling Basin Act 1994 — Schedule F to the Murray Darling Basin Agreement pursuant to s 28(b)

Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Board — Report for the year 1999–2000

Numurkah District Health Care — Report for the year 1999–2000

Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman (Police Complaints) — Report for the year 1999–2000 — Ordered to be printed

Omeo District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000 (two papers)

Parliamentary Committees Act 1968:

Response of the Attorney-General on the action taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Law Reform Committee's Report on the Review of the *Fences Act 1968*

Response of the Minister for Environment and Conservation on the action taken with respect of the recommendations made by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee's Report on the Utilisation of Victorian Native Flora and Fauna

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Alpine Planning Scheme — Nos C1, C2

Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme — No. C7

Ballarat Planning Scheme — Nos C13, C20, C36

Banyule Planning Scheme — Nos C3, C7

Bayside Planning Scheme — Nos C10, C13, C14, C15

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Nos C8, C12

Brimbank Planning Scheme — Nos C12, C16

Cardinia Planning Scheme — Nos C12, C18

Casey Planning Scheme — Nos C9, C27

- Darebin Planning Scheme — Nos C4, C9, C25, C26
- Glen Eira Planning Scheme — No. C9
- Golden Plains Planning Scheme — No. C3
- Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme — No. C16 Part 1
- Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Nos C3, C4, C10
- Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — No. C8
- Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — No. C2
- Hume Planning Scheme — Nos C5, C9, C10
- Kingston Planning Scheme — Nos C7, C9, C11
- Knox Planning Scheme — Nos C13, C14
- Loddon Planning Scheme — Nos C1, C3
- Manningham Planning Scheme — Nos C5, C8, C9
- Maroondah Planning Scheme — Nos C12, C17
- Maribyrnong Planning Scheme — No. C12
- Melbourne Planning Scheme — Nos C16, C30, C32, C33, C34, C36, C37
- Melton Planning Scheme — No. C4, 14
- Mildura Planning Scheme — No. C3 Part 2
- Mitchell Planning Scheme — No. C11
- Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Nos C9, C16 Part 1
- Moorabool Planning Scheme — No. C5
- Moreland Planning Scheme — No. C1 Part 3
- Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Nos C11, C17, C27, C31, C33
- Nillumbik Planning Scheme — No. C2
- Port Phillip Planning Scheme — No. C5
- Pyrenees Planning Scheme — No. C4
- Stonnington Planning Scheme — Nos C4, C6 Part 1, C8, C9, C10, C11 Part 1
- Strathbogie Planning Scheme — No. C7
- Surf Coast Planning Scheme — Nos C1, C2
- Victoria Planning Provisions — No. VC10
- Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Nos C15, C25
- Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Nos C10, C13
- Wyndham Planning Scheme — Nos C18, C26
- Yarra Planning Scheme — Nos C6, C19, C21
- Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Nos C2, C4, C5
- Yarriambiack Planning Scheme — No. C1
- Public Lotteries Act 2000* — Licence to operate the AFL Footy Tipping Competition
- Robinvale District Health Services — Report for the year 1999–2000
- Rochester and Elmore District Health Service — Report for the year 1999–2000
- Rural Finance Act 1988* — Direction by the Treasurer to the Rural Finance Corporation to establish, operate and administer, a scheme of assistance for persons affected by bushfire in the Stawell area in December 2000
- Rural Northwest Health — Report for the year 1999–2000
- State Superannuation Fund — Report on the Actuarial Investigation as at 30 June 2000 (two papers)
- Stawell District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000
- Statutory Rules under the following Acts:
- Business Names Act 1962* — SR No. 122
- Cemeteries Act 1958* — SR No. 10/2001
- Club Keno Act 1993* — SR No. 118
- Control of Weapons Act 1990* — SR No. 130
- Corporations (Victoria) Act 1990* — SR No. 121
- Country Fire Authority Act 1958* — SR No. 2/2001
- County Court Act 1958* — SR No. 119
- Dangerous Goods Act 1985* — SR No. 127
- Electricity Industry Act 2000* — SR No. 137
- Electricity Safety Act 1998* — SR Nos 136, 3, 8/2001
- Fisheries Act 1995* — SR Nos 138, 9/2001
- Forests Act 1958* — SR No. 117
- Land Tax Act 1958* — SR No. 140
- Libraries Act 1988* — SR No. 129
- Magistrates' Court Act 1989* — SR Nos 133, 134, 7/2001
- Melbourne City Link Act 1995* — SR Nos 131, 132
- Motor Car Traders Act 1986* — SR No. 115
- National Taxation Reform (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000* — SR No. 141
- Road Safety Act 1986* — SR Nos 126, 5/2001
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — SR Nos 123, 124, 125, 128, 139, 6/2001
- Supreme Court Act 1986* — SR Nos 120, 121
- Tattersall Consultations Act 1958* — SR No. 118
- Tobacco Act 1987* — SR No. 116
- Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* — SR No. 135
- Wildlife Act 1975* — SR Nos 1, 4/2001
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*
- Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 115, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 128, 133, 135, 139, 140, 6/2001
- Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 116, 117, 118, 122, 129, 131, 132, 136, 137, 138, 1, 5, 7, 8, 10/2001
- Swan Hill District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group — Report for the year 1999–2000
- Wildlife Act 1975* — Wildlife (Control of Hunting) Notice No. 1/2001
- Wimmera Health Care Group — Report for the year 1999–2000

Wonthaggi and District Hospital — Report for the year 1999–2000

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were laid upon the Table by the Clerk pursuant to an Order of the House dated 3 November 1999:

Accident Compensation (Amendment) Act 1998 — Section 29(2) on 30 December 2000 (*Gazette* G51, 21 December 2000)

Adoption (Amendment) Act 2000 — Section 19 on 15 December 2000 (*Gazette* G50, 14 December 2000)

Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Sections 18, 20(1), 21, 23 and 27 on 11 December 2000 (*Gazette* G49, 7 December 2000)

Commonwealth Places (Mirror Taxes Administration) Act 1999 — Remaining provisions on 30 January 2001 (*Gazette* S8, 30 January 2001)

Control of Weapons (Amendment) Act 2000 — Whole Act on 17 December 2000 (*Gazette* G50, 14 December 2000)

Country Fire Authority (Amendment) Act 2000 — Whole Act on 29 January 2001 (*Gazette* G4, 25 January 2001)

Electricity Industry Act 2000 — Section 83 on 1 January 2001 (*Gazette* G51, 21 December 2000)

Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2000 — Section 9 on 1 March 2001 (*Gazette* G6, 8 February 2001)

Gambling Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2000 — Sections 3, 13, 14, 23, 24, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 39, 40, 43, 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 57, 61, 62 and 63 on 1 February 2001 (*Gazette* G5, 1 February 2001)

Gaming No. 2 (Community Benefit) Act 2000 — Part 1, Part 3, Part 4 (except s 21) and ss 24, 25, 27(1) and 30 on 1 February 2001 (*Gazette* G5, 1 February 2001)

Gas Industry Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Section 5 on 20 December 2000 (*Gazette* S198, 20 December 2000)

National Parks (Amendment) Act 2000 — Remaining provisions on 25 January 2001 (*Gazette* G4, 25 January 2001)

Public Lotteries Act 2000 — Whole Act, other than ss 57(1), 57(2), 57(3), 58, 89, 90, 91, 92(2), 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99(1), 100, 101(2) and 103(1) on 28 November 2000 (*Gazette* G47, 23 November 2000)

Transport Accident (Amendment) Act 2000 — Sections 3(1), 3(2), 3(5), 4 and 41 on 7 December 2000. Sections 3(3) (with the exception of s 3(3)(c)), 3(4), 5, 7, 8, 15(1), 15(2), 15(5), 19, 20, 23(2), 28 and 38 on 1 January 2001 (*Gazette* G49, 7 December 2000)

Training and Further Education Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Remaining provisions on 1 March 2001 (*Gazette* G7, 15 February 2001).

ROYAL ASSENT

Messages read advising royal assent to:

28 November 2000

Agricultural Industry Development (Amendment) Bill
Country Fire Authority (Amendment) Bill
Courts and Tribunals Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
Duties Bill
Fisheries (Amendment) Bill
Melbourne City Link (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
Mineral Resources Development (Amendment) Bill
Tertiary Education (Amendment) Bill
Transport Accident (Amendment) Bill

5 December 2000

Building (Legionella) Bill
Crimes (Questioning of Suspects) Bill
Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals (Amendment) Bill
Gambling Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
Gaming Acts (Gaming Machine Levy) Bill
Gaming No. 2 (Community Benefit) Bill
Gas Industry Acts (Amendment) Bill
Magistrates' Court (Committal Proceedings) Bill
Marine (Amendment) Bill
Nurses (Amendment) Bill
Superannuation Acts (Beneficiary Choice) Bill
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Bill
Victorian Qualifications Authority Bill

12 December 2000

Information Privacy Bill
Magistrates Court (Infringements) Bill
Planning and Environment (Restrictive Covenants) Bill
University of Melbourne Land Bill

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Health Records Bill
Police Regulation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
Statute Law Amendment (Relationships) Bill

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Sessional orders

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — By leave, I move:

That so much of sessional orders be suspended on Wednesday 28 February 2001 to allow:

1. Precedence to be given after Statements by Members to a government business motion of condolence in relation to the late Sir Donald Bradman, such debate being limited to a maximum of 30 minutes.
2. The debate on the question 'That grievances be noted' to commence immediately following the conclusion of the debate referred to in paragraph (1) and shall last a maximum of 2½ hours.
3. At the conclusion of the Grievance debate, the house to proceed with government business in accordance with the notice paper subject to the interruption of business for question time in accordance with sessional order 3.

As agreed between the parties the motion provides for a condolence motion for the late Sir Donald Bradman. It also provides that tomorrow grievance time will follow that and if necessary continue after question time, subject to the timing of all those events.

Motion agreed to.

Consequential renumbering of bills

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — By leave, I move:

That —

1. Where a bill has been amended, the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Parliaments be empowered to carry out any consequential renumbering required in the bill save in relation to text being inserted or substituted in principal acts.
2. This resolution shall continue in force unless and until amended or rescinded by the house in this or a subsequent Parliament.

For the edification of honourable members, the motion provides the power to carry out consequential renumbering. The power has existed as a longstanding practice. It has been regarded as essential to ensure the correct preparation of the ultimate acts. Until the amendments the house has adopted are known, it is not possible to work out their knock-on effect on the numbering system.

The Interpretation of Legislation (Amendment) Act clarified the status of all elements of an act. Accordingly, it is now clear that numbering is regarded

as part of the act. This may be seen to impact on the longstanding practice and the motion allows the present practice to continue formally. I understand a similar motion is being proposed in another place.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The Liberal Party supports the sensible motion. As the Leader of the House pointed out, until the passage of the Interpretation of Legislation (Amendment) Act it was a common practice and the usual procedure for the Parliament. However, because that act classified clause numbers and headings as part of acts it would have had the unintended consequence of requiring the Parliament to consider all renumbering or consequential amendments to clause numbers caused by amendments. That would have been very time consuming and expensive. For those reasons the Liberal Party thinks it sensible that the tradition of this place of the Clerks having the power to do consequential renumbering should be reinstated and continue.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — This eminently sensible motion is supported by the National Party.

Motion agreed to.

Correction of bill titles

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — By leave, I move:

That where a bill has passed through both houses and the citation of the bill includes a reference to a calendar year earlier than that in which the passage of the bill was completed, the Clerk of the Parliaments be empowered to alter the calendar year reference in the citation of the bill and any corresponding reference within the bill itself to the year in which the passage of the bill was so completed.

Honourable members would be aware that several bills introduced in the houses in 2000 are still current, and any that are passed into law from now will require adjustment to reflect in their titles the year of enactment. The Clerk of the Parliaments will be empowered by this motion to effect those minor changes prior to presenting the bills for royal assent, which will relieve the houses of having to pass purely formal amendments and exchange messages in relation to them. I understand it is proposed to move a similar motion in another place. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The opposition supports this motion also. By passing this simple administrative motion the Parliament will allow the Labor Party to bring its legislation into the 21st century.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — The motion is self-explanatory and is supported by the National Party.

Motion agreed to.

Program

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6(3), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 1 March 2001:

- Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Bill
- State Taxation Acts (Further Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
- Racing and Betting Acts (Amendment) Bill
- Police Regulation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill
- Health Services (Amendment) Bill

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The opposition will not be opposing the government's business program, which has been arrived at after some discussion. As the Leader of the House said, only five bills appear on the notice paper for this week, and I will make a couple of brief passing comments about that.

It is worth noting that the government has made a sudden change to its priorities. Yesterday it was intending to deal with the Environment Protection (Liveable Neighbourhoods) Bill this week and have it passed by Thursday. However, I understand that a meeting was held yesterday between the Municipal Association of Victoria and the minister and now suddenly that bill has been pulled. I am not quite sure why that is so, but I am sure the minister will be happy to advise the house later.

It is also worth noting that certain legislation considered by the government in the past to be very important is languishing somewhere at the bottom of the list. I refer in particular to the Whistleblowers Protection Bill, which was introduced in August of last year. That bill has been sitting on the notice paper for six months; it seems that somebody has blown the whistle on it.

Some other legislation introduced by the Attorney-General also seems to have disappeared. I recollect his introducing at some stage a bill dealing with transgender issues and also the Constitution (Amendment) Bill. It seems that although the Attorney-General cuts a fine figure around town he cannot get his legislation up in Parliament.

It appears from what happened earlier that despite the fact that the house has not sat since November — almost four months ago — the government has only four new bills ready to introduce into the house at the start of the autumn sittings. The government's legislative program is in disarray yet again and it has no legislation to be going on with.

The government, which was treading water in its first year in office, is still treading water. Following question time today it could well be known as the cheap-as-chips government. All honourable members have seen the Cheap As Chips television advertisement, which used to be six rooms for 60 bucks; now it is 46 members for \$100 000, and you can get anything you want!

Given that these are the conditions under which the Parliament will now operate — —

Ms Pike interjected.

Mr McARTHUR — No, they gave me that one only in the past 5 minutes. If that is all the house has to do this week, I am sure the Liberal Party can accommodate the government's program. I hope the government gets its autumn session legislation in order and that the house is given some decent legislation to debate over the next three or four months.

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I wish to indicate that the National Party will not be opposing the government business program. It is a reasonable program for the week, with five bills that we will be able to get through.

However, I agree with the honourable member for Monbulk. A number of bills that members on the other side talked about with a great deal of enthusiasm have dropped off the business program, and I refer in particular to the Whistleblowers Protection Bill. Members on the other side have talked about that bill a lot, but week after week it seems to have been dropped off the bottom of the government's business program.

The National Party will be more than happy to accommodate the government with its five bills. However, I wonder what we will do for the rest of the session, because I think we will run out of legislation before the session ends.

As I said, members of the National Party will not be opposing the government's business program. We will accommodate it, and I look forward to the groundbreaking legislation that this government might introduce in this session of Parliament. We will wait and see!

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — I wish to continue along the lines of the comments made by the member for Monbulk. Members came back to Parliament this week, people are in the gallery and the public is waiting for a number of environment bills to be debated. The first bill on the list is the Environment Protection (Liveable Neighbourhoods) Bill, which was considered an urgent bill when it was introduced on 2 November last year. It contains important principles relating to the interpretation of the Environment Protection Act and audits, yet we have come back to the Parliament today to find that the bill is not ready for debate.

One would have thought that the major stakeholders would have been consulted when the bill was ready to be introduced into Parliament. After all, this government was elected on the basis that it would be consultative. The Independents signed a charter on the basis of transparency and consultation. However, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), which represents local government in Victoria, was brought in two days before the bill was introduced and, rather than being consulted, was told what was in the bill. The Housing Industry Association and the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) were not consulted on the provisions of the bill relating to neighbourhoods. They were brought in two days before the bill was introduced and told what was in it.

These organisations did not take that lying down. They told members of the opposition about it, and we were prepared to act on their recommendations. Surprise, surprise, last Friday the chairman of the Environment Protection Authority visited the MAV and the HIA to tell them yet again what was good for them. Those organisations were not prepared to accept that and called on the opposition to move against part 3 of the bill.

They did not stand alone. The Environment Liaison Office, which represents all the environment groups in Victoria, had not been consulted on these provisions. The assessment made by the very able officer who represents that office in this Parliament was that the process for achieving its ends is convoluted.

Finally, at 4.00 p.m. yesterday the MAV was called into the office of the Minister for Environment and Conservation to be instructed on its position. It did not take that lying down, as the honourable Leader of the Opposition knows, and has proposed sensible amendments to this bill.

The Housing Industry Association also indicated that it would stand by its position. What happened? An

important environment bill that should have come before the Parliament today was pulled last night. The environmental movement and all Victorians can see that the environmental policy of the government is in disarray.

Not only has the Environment Protection (Liveable Neighbourhoods) Bill — item 1 on the notice paper — been pulled, so has the Forestry Rights (Amendment) Bill, item 6. One would have expected that bill, which was championed by the government as part of its contribution on the greenhouse effect, to have been debated, although it has been described universally by both the environmental movement and those engaged in forestry policy and greenhouse policy as either premature or stupid.

The opposition is prepared to debate the order. The Minister for Environment and Conservation has shown herself incapable both of managing her legislative program and of engaging in the consultation promised by the government. Both her office and the bureaucrats have failed to consult with important organisations that should have input on conservation and environment matters.

The motion moved by the Leader of the House is indicative of a government whose Minister for Environment and Conservation is incompetent and incapable of keeping up with her workload and who has disappointed all those who are interested in good environmental management in Victoria.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Olga Venables

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — I pay tribute to a colourful character on the Victorian political scene who died last year during the Christmas break.

Olga Venables was born on 30 September 1929 and died aged 71 on 2 December 2000. She was one of a family of nine children. Her father taught her to stand up every day to do something for Australia and its people.

In 1987 she stood against Bob Hawke, when he was Prime Minister, for the seat of Wills. She certainly was not afraid of a fight. She always said she was a very proud Australian who wanted to give something back. Besides being involved in politics, she was the mother of three children. Sadly, her daughter, Carol, died of cancer in April 2000. Olga was always raising money

for those in need and was a long-serving member of the Australia Day Council and a stalwart of many charities.

Her husband Brian and two daughters, Glynis and Sally-Ann, survive her. I am proud to have known such a woman as Olga Venables. Victoria has lost a wonderful citizen.

Community care: funding

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I call upon the government and in particular the Minister for Community Services to substantially increase funding to Victoria's not-for-profit welfare agencies. Recent reports indicate that between one-third and one-half of Victoria's 22 key welfare agencies that run foster and residential care services for wards of the state and children at risk are struggling to remain viable without sacrificing services.

Agencies claim they can no longer afford to operate or are no longer willing to run substandard services for teenagers removed from their families because of child abuse or because they are at risk. Reliable reports indicate that at least 50 per cent of services provided by charitable organisations are at risk of closing.

As an example, Anglicare Victoria has said that it will start handing services back to the government unless it receives a substantial increase in funding in the May budget. I suggest that the government back up its rhetoric by giving an unequivocal commitment in the May budget to a substantial funding increase to agencies that provide residential care services for abused adolescents and children at risk.

Members: email

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I raise concerns about the existing policy of Parliament on access by honourable members to email facilities.

On 23 January last the *Herald Sun* carried a report headed 'Emails to MP banned', which referred to Parliament's insertion of a filter on the email access to a member who, the press article states, 'complained the material was offensive'. The organisation in question was Salt Shakers, a group based in my electorate. My concerns in this matter are twofold.

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, as you know, this matter was investigated by you. You decided that private communications between yourself and officers of Parliament were not to be released. I would have thought the issue being raised was an internal matter for Parliament and not one appropriate for 90-second statements.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. During time for members statements an honourable member may raise any issue he or she wishes to bring before Parliament. However, I assure the honourable member for Doncaster that I will listen carefully to what the honourable member for Mitcham says and will take appropriate action, if need be.

Mr ROBINSON — Thank you, Mr Speaker. My concerns in this matter are twofold: firstly, the issue of members' access to email has come to public attention in the press without, so far as I am aware, a common understanding among members of the current policies and procedures. Equally, the Victorian community is entitled to understand what the policy is. Secondly, I am concerned that, in applying the Parliament's policy of installing a filter at the request of a member, the access to all members previously available to the organisation mentioned was inadvertently terminated.

Members depend heavily on those who manage our Parlynet system, and I seek your assurance, Mr Speaker, that if inadvertence was the cause of the misunderstanding in January it may be addressed.

Disability services: Gippsland special school

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — Children from more than 12 families in the Bairnsdale area travel for up to 4 hours a day on a dilapidated bus to and from the only special development school in the East Gippsland area in Sale. In many cases those children suffer severe disabilities. For instance, the 13-year-old child of Mel and Pam George has tuberous sclerosis, which involves uncontrolled seizures. Their letter to me states, in part:

It is a very long day for him and he gets tired which doesn't help with his seizures. We have had to go to Sale to collect him because he has been too out of it with his seizures and it was considered unsafe for him to travel home on the bus. The bus is another issue. It is unreliable as it frequently breaks down. There is now only the front seat left for students which they don't want to use for safety reasons.

Any number of families in the Bairnsdale area cannot get access to genuine education opportunities for their severely disabled children. It is unsatisfactory that the bus constantly breaks down and that in many cases 12 and 14-year-olds have to travel for 2 hours each way — that is, 4 hours a day — on a bus. If a child has a seizure or other medical problem while in Sale the parents must travel all the way to Sale to pick up the child. They have to drop what they are doing during the day to try to access a hospital arrangement.

I would have thought that, given the cosy arrangement the honourable member for East Gippsland has with the government —

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

Fire services: Tullamarine

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — My thanks go to all the firefighters in my electorate. This fire season has been particularly bad because of the good spring rains last year and the present dry summer season. To add to the difficulties, a firebug has been operating in the Sunbury–Bulla area. However, despite that adversity, both volunteer and career firefighters have responded magnificently to fire outbreaks.

In January a ferocious grass fire threatened homes in the Greenvale area; many residents had to be evacuated. The Sunbury, Bulla and Greenvale brigades, with other brigades, worked tirelessly to save homes and lives, along with the magnificent Woodlands Historic Park homestead.

Today I am reminded that this year is the International Year of Volunteers. A couple of weeks after that large fire the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Hume council held a joint meeting with residents to inform them on fire prevention strategies and emergency evacuation procedures.

We often hear about the differences between members of the fire brigades, but when it comes to community safety, they all get together to fight a fire and put their lives on the line so that we remain safe — and I thank them for that.

Gas: Gippsland supply

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — As summer draws to an end, people in South and West Gippsland are dreading the approach of another winter. The worst dread is felt by those who are the most vulnerable, including the elderly, people on social security and many families with children. Natural gas is not piped into Bass Coast or the Shire of South Gippsland. I am having discussions with the government on that issue, and I will continue those discussions because a natural gas pipeline is the only proper solution.

The cost of a gas bottle has risen from \$39 in 1996 to \$72 at present, and the price is still rising. Some families use a bottle of gas each week over the winter period. High bottled-gas prices cause real physical hardship, yet the utility relief grants scheme covers emergency relief for power, mains gas and water but

not bottled gas. The non-mains winter energy concession, which was improved by the Bracks government, still gives less benefit to people using bottled gas than it does to those on mains gas. Privatised gas companies can be brutal about threatening to cut off supply and imposing high reconnection charges.

Theories about the benefits of competition have failed rural users of liquefied petroleum gas for vehicles, as well as people using bottled gas.

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

VOMA: director

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I rise to question the priorities of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs. When the former director of VOMA, John Unger, was dumped for credit card misuse, he was replaced with Ms Jennifer Fraser. I would have thought her no. 1 priority would have been to ensure that public money was not used unwisely and to come up with new policies and initiatives on ways to better serve the need of our multicultural communities.

However, one of the first priorities was to seek advice on how to move furniture into her office. In an email Miss Fraser said:

I have recently moved to the Office of Multicultural Affairs on the 3rd floor of 1 Treasury. I would like someone to come and see whether some of the furniture can be shifted around the office. Could you please give Christine Stowe ... a call and make a time to visit me to do the assessment?

Forget about language services, ethno-specific aged care or the racial bill — all Ms Fraser was interested in was making life more comfortable for herself! According to her diary she set aside half an hour to seek advice. It cost the taxpayer \$80 for someone to come in and move her furniture around in her office. But there is more! She was not happy with the advice she received, so she sent another email:

Last week the removalists came and said they couldn't move me because I didn't have a long enough computer cable. Chris from IT gave me some cable. Could you please ring support services and try to set up a time for someone to come and confirm that they can do what I want?

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

Centenary of Federation: women's petition

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I congratulate the Minister for Education and the Centenary of Federation

Committee for the women's petition program. In 1891 a group of women organised a petition bearing 30 000 signatures in support of the universal franchise in six weeks. It took the men of Parliament 17 years to implement that petition. The new petition being organised by the Centenary of Federation Committee allows current-day women the opportunity to express their concerns and aspirations at the state level. Most councils in Victoria are participating in this project, and I urge all members of Parliament to make sure their local councils are involved.

As part of the process the Moonee Valley City Council, through Cr Julie Hopkins, held a women's forum two weeks ago. It was attended by more than 50 women and it was a great success. The issues raised included work practices, work flexibility and outworker practices, as well as significant concerns about environmental issues regarding the future of their children. Apart from individual issues the forum also demonstrated the great need for and demand by women to be more involved in discussions on issues of great concern to them. I congratulate the program for allowing that to occur.

Adrian Mannix

Mr SPRY (Bellarine) — This evening I pay tribute to a legendary, lovable and sometimes mildly larrikin Bellarine Peninsula personality who died unexpectedly on Saturday. Adrian Edward Mannix was born in December 1939 and lived life to the full, despite being born with physical disabilities that would have stopped most of us in our tracks. He had no feet and severely deformed arms and hand.

In defiance of illness in his latter years he was until recently still in full and powerful, even raucous, voice. His influence on the Bellarine Peninsula has been enormous; his involvement total. Such was his lust for life that at and following his funeral on Thursday the stories of his exploits will be legion and inevitably entertaining.

He was a former distinguished mayor and councillor of the Rural City of Bellarine, and at the time of his death he had been, typically, actively considering having a go at the City of Greater Geelong. He was a member of the Portarlington-Drysdale Lions Club of 27 years standing and a one-time district governor. Despite his disabilities he was an active sportsman with the Drysdale cricket and football clubs, where in 1958 I began a lifetime association with him. He was a former chairman of the Springdale Community Cottage and was fully and vocally involved in primary schools, scouting, foreshore and senior citizens' issues and a host of other local organisations.

His exceptional record of lifetime service was appropriately rewarded on Australia Day 1999 with an OAM, a fitting tribute to a remarkable and dearly loved man.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The honourable member for Geelong has 30 seconds.

Bill Caldow

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I take this brief opportunity to recognise the contribution of Mr Bill Caldow and his long-term services to the township of Bannockburn. Bill Caldow was recently named the Golden Plains shire citizen of the year for his services to the community of Bannockburn. I assure the house that Bill well deserves the honour bestowed on him. The services Bill has provided to the community of Bannockburn have been immense and sustained over a lifetime.

However, Bill's contribution has not only been to the Bannockburn community but to the wider community of Geelong. People such as Bill Caldow are the lifeblood of their communities, and I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his lifetime contributions to his community.

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

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 2 November 2000; motion of Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation).

Government amendment circulated by Ms PIKE (Minister for Housing) pursuant to sessional orders.

National Party amendments circulated by Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill) pursuant to sessional orders.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — As I open the opposition's contribution on the bill, I will outline the bill's extraordinary history. The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, set up by this legislation, is a successor body to the Land Conservation Council.

The debate of the time reveals that in 1970 members of Parliament were extraordinarily conscious of the great

issues of the environment. Mr Hayden Birrell, who was the honourable member for Geelong, said in his contribution to debate on the originating bill:

One wonders what has brought about the worldwide interest in this subject. Some five or six years ago there appeared on the world scene a book entitled *Silent Spring*, which was written by an American woman whose outlook made a vital impact not only on opinions in the United States of America but throughout the world. Her name was Rachael Carson. Her book has been the catalyst of the worldwide interest which has been taken in these matters over the past five years. Every sane person must take note of this bill, and probably agree with it in detail.

Mr Birrell was speaking in the debate after the lead Labor speaker. The bill had been introduced by the Honourable Bill Borthwick, a very successful minister in both the Bolte and Hamer governments.

Mr Steggall — When did this happen?

Mr PERTON — The Deputy Leader of the National Party will be pleased to hear that Mr B. J. Evans, a former honourable member for Gippsland East, led the debate for the National Party — —

Mr Steggall — He was different from the others.

Mr PERTON — He was very different from the others. I point out the approach of the Labor Party in that debate. Mr Wilton, the then honourable member for Broadmeadows, stated:

Unlike the Country Party, ... the opposition supports the bill. I am sure that the Minister for Lands and Minister for Conservation is capable of answering the criticisms ...

Mr Steggall — They have not changed much.

Mr PERTON — The Deputy Leader of the National Party is quite right when he says they have not changed much. On reading the account of the debate of the time one finds an extraordinary amount of cooperation between the Liberal and Labor parties when dealing with the great issues of the environment.

That is in stark contrast to the performance of the current Minister for Environment and Conservation when she was the shadow minister. In May 1997 the Environment Conservation Council Bill was introduced, which after 27 years was intended to modernise the approach to environmental matters. In that debate the honourable member for Bundoora said:

I vigorously oppose this bill ... The bill abolishes the Land Conservation Council and establishes a new body that will be the puppet of the minister. It will be under her total control and will lose the independence that the LCC had maintained.

She went on in an absolute tirade. She probably needed to have her brow mopped, the passion was so strong. She referred to the fact that there would be only three members:

... who will be appointed by the minister, in contrast with the community appointees to the LCC ...

The public will have no input into the ECC, as the three part-time members will be appointed by the minister. The ECC will have no local government representative ... You need to be a mate of the minister.

She went on with her criticism to say:

... The minister will be the only person who can initiate inquiries.

...

The minister has total control over the new body. It will not act independently but will be her puppet.

... The minister will have total control.

...

... the Environment Conservation Council, which will not be independent because it will be a puppet of the minister. The minister will fund the council and appoint and direct its members.

One would have thought that in introducing her legislation, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Bill, the minister would have returned to the days of the former Land Conservation Council. If she thought the Land Conservation Council model was perfectly appropriate, she could have returned to the enumeration of members contained in that bill. To be consistent the minister could have reinserted clause 3 from the Land Conservation Bill of 6 October 1970, which stated that the council shall consist of:

... a person appointed by the Governor in Council who shall be chairman

... the chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority or his nominee who shall be deputy chairman

... the Director of Agriculture or his nominee

... the chairman of the Forests Commission or his nominee

... the Secretary for Lands or his nominee

... the chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission or his nominee

... the Secretary for Mines or his nominee

... the Director of Fisheries and Wildlife or his nominee

... the Director of National Parks or his nominee

... a person with experience in the conservation techniques used in developing land for primary production appointed by the Governor in Council and

... two persons with special knowledge of and experience in some aspect of the conservation of natural resources appointed by the Governor in Council from a panel of five names submitted by the Conservation Council of Victoria within two months of receipt of a request in writing from the minister or if no panel is submitted on the recommendation of the Minister.

You, Mr Acting Speaker, have heard the criticism of the ECC and you have seen the model of the former LCC. But clause 8 of the bill states:

The council consists of five members appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister.

In other words, it is exactly the same provision. It is exactly the same method of appointment. If the minister were being totally consistent, she would describe this body as a puppet of the minister. Having the other day met the new minder of the minister, a former official of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, one would expect not only that you would need to be a mate of the minister but that you would be a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trades Hall Council!

Ms Allan — Reds under the beds!

Mr PERTON — I am glad the honourable member for Bendigo East has joined the debate. It is very likely that the ECC membership, indeed the LCC membership, will be replaced by the reds under the beds she refers to. However, I should have thought the environment movement would have been very disappointed by the fact that this minister, who had promised to reform the Environment Conservation Council, has returned to a provision that is precisely the same as that which went before, save that two extra members are to be appointed.

As I read that speech in 1997 by the then opposition spokesman, now the minister, I found that one of her great criticisms of the Environment Conservation Council was that the minister would be the only person who could initiate inquiries.

Strangely, when one looks at the provision in the bill relating to the functions of the council one sees that the council is to:

- (a) carry out investigations that are requested by the Minister on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of State of Victoria.

I hunted through the bill, having heard the passionate speech the now minister made in 1997 — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PERTON — She did, as I recall. She would have provided that references could be made by Parliament or suggested by the public.

Ms Pike interjected.

Mr PERTON — The Minister for Housing was always strong on public participation in these matters.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr PERTON — Perhaps, as the honourable member for Bentleigh says, references could have been made by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, itself. Clause 15 states:

The Minister may request the Council to carry out an investigation for the purposes of this Act.

It is like the book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. We all recall the term 'newspeak', which is about saying exactly the opposite of what one means. The minister may request the council to carry out an investigation for the purposes of the act. What does one do with a request? Clause 17 states:

The Council must, within the specified period after receiving a request from the Minister, submit a business plan and budget for the investigation to the Minister.

It is strange that clause 15 refers to a request, given that only two clauses later the bill states that the council is required not just to accept or respond to the request but to provide a business plan and a budget for the investigation to the minister. This has been a monumentally hypocritical performance by the minister. She criticised the Environment Conservation Council on precisely those two matters yet introduced a new bill that provides for exactly the same methods of appointment and reference.

I express my disappointment that a number of the environment groups that criticised the ECC legislation because of the changes made as a result of replacing the Land Conservation Council have not been consistent in their criticism of this bill.

Mr Howard interjected.

Mr PERTON — Are you the member for Prahran these days? Is that your abode, or are you the member — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr PERTON — I think it was the honourable member for Ballarat East who was giggling. I find that my discussions with conservation groups on this bill and others have been productive.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster should address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr PERTON — It is just as appropriate for me to express any disagreements I may have with them as it is for me to express any agreements I may have with them. For instance, I have found that the contributions of the Victorian National Parks Association on these matters have been of great assistance. I am sure that as they proceed with the references being completed by the ECC all members of the house will also find it rewarding and productive to work with those organisations — although the Liberal Party may have a better relationship with some of them.

I note that the honourable member for Ballarat East had dinner tonight with his friend the honourable member for Geelong. There appears to be a difference of view between those Labor members on these important matters, which are currently the subject of consideration by the ECC and will later be the subject of consideration by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council. In yesterday's *Geelong Advertiser* the honourable member for Geelong is quoted as saying that he wants to see part of Point Addis excluded from the ECC recommendations. The article states:

I support marine parks in principle, but I've received a number of complaints and have written to the minister seeking to have Point Addis excluded.

In other words, that is a whacking great nimby attitude by Labor members. It will be interesting to see how the minister and her parliamentary secretary cope with the pressure of the blowtorch applied by their union mates and by people like the honourable member for Geelong, who are clearly feeling uncomfortable with maintaining Labor traditions in respect of these matters.

The appointment provisions are important given the hypocritical performance of the minister, and there have been a number of discussions on them. The Public Land Council of Victoria in its comments to both the government and the opposition took the minister at her word. It wrote to the opposition suggesting it might be appropriate in these circumstances that the minister keep her promise and repeat the structure of the former Land Conservation Council.

Its recommendation was that the membership of the proposed Victorian Environmental Assessment Council should be increased from five to seven and that the two additional members comprise one member appointed from panels of names submitted by private land resource groups and one member appointed from panels of names submitted by public land recreation

groups. The Public Land Council of Victoria has suggested a return to the traditions of the LCC.

My discussions with members of the conservation movement indicated they had difficulties with the precise structuring of such representation and that by the time the bill was introduced they had perhaps accepted that the set of skills contained in the ECC was appropriate. Perhaps that is why they have accepted the structure in the bill.

The opposition also talked to the Victorian Farmers Federation, which was interested in this matter. It was one of the groups which were not consulted but which were called in and told what was happening. A number of groups have reported back to me as the shadow minister that in the so-called consultations on the bill they were invited to what were called stakeholder meetings — again, this is newspeak — but which were not consultative. The groups were merely informed of the process. One of those groups has stated:

We asked some hard questions but to people who were not senior enough to answer them. Quite frustrating.

There is a great deal of disappointment about the membership of the council and the failure of the minister to keep her promises in respect of the matter. Under clause 8(2), relating to appointment, the minister has to have regard to the council's collectively having experience, skills and knowledge in certain areas: environment protection and conservation, natural resources management, economics and business management, rural and regional affairs, issues relating to indigenous peoples, local government, social and community affairs, and community consultation and participation. Given that the council will deal with both public and private land, Mr Acting Speaker, I should have thought someone like you would think experience in agriculture and in tourism and recreation might provide the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The time has arrived under the sessional orders for me to interrupt business for the adjournment of the house.

Youth: Moorabbin refuge

Mrs PEULICH (Bentleigh) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing. It is a matter of which I hope she is aware, because today a petition was tabled in my name signed by 971 local residents of

Moorabbin, as well as by some of their family members and friends.

I am told by the locals, some of whom are card-carrying members of the Labor Party and members of the union movement, that this is the first instalment. Basically the petition calls for the minister to reverse a decision to establish a youth refuge on the corner of Wickham Road and Nepean Highway, Moorabbin. The facility, which would cater for 16-year-olds through to 21 or 25-year-olds — there is some disagreement depending on whom one speaks to about the ages of the persons for whom the facility is supposed to cater — is 5 minutes away from Southland and very close to Highett and Moorabbin stations, which have been problematic in terms of local law and order issues.

It is no wonder that there is an enormous amount of concern that this high-visibility site has been designated for such a purpose and that the planning has been conducted in such a surreptitious way, with absolutely no consultation whatsoever. In fact, the minister has been almost contemptuous in her mishandling and mismanagement of the issue, and there has been an appalling lack of consultation and an evasion of responsibility.

I remind the minister of the commitment the government made in the Governor's speech to an open and accountable government that would treat all citizens with honesty, dignity and respect. I ask her to reflect on that and to apply it to the citizens of Moorabbin.

She gave me a commitment that consultations would take place. They have not. An information day was held but it was highly structured, with partitions erected around the area that prevented any community discussion. What is of more concern is that a video camera was used on the day, and I am calling on the minister to investigate who was responsible for videotaping the residents who came to express their concern. Was it members of her department? Was it the local Labor council? Was it the deputy mayor, Elizabeth Larkin, who is a card-carrying member of the Labor Party and who has failed to represent local constituents because of her party political allegiances?

I call on the minister to immediately reverse the decision and establish the site for older persons accommodation; to come clean and take responsibility by directly intervening to ensure that the video that was taken of those members of the community will not be used to expel members of the ALP who have expressed public concern about this issue, or for any other vindictive purpose, because many of the people who

have been signatories to the petition are government employees and are concerned that the minister and the ALP will seek some sort of retribution.

There has been a veil of secrecy in relation to this matter. There has been an absolute failure of commitment to consult and — —

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

Housing: Footscray estate

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise a matter for the attention of the excellent Minister for Housing regarding the security and isolation issues facing many older residents in high-rise flats in Gordon street, Footscray. A difficult situation is emerging with this block of flats, which is occupied by some 200 older people who are tenants of the Office of Housing.

The workers were removed and the position of the caretaker who was housed at the site was removed and defunded. The security system, which is an exaggerated term to cover an antiquated buzzer system in the flats, was allowed to fall into significant disrepair.

A difficult situation has emerged. I have heard a number of hair-raising stories about the level of isolation that characterises the living conditions of tenants in those flats, including the physical isolation and the physical and health difficulties many face. Will the minister address these difficulties and examine the resource requirements of the precinct and the security arrangements? Some local housing workers have come up with an innovative idea to improve the technology and create a much better communication system in the flats, which also forms part of the security system.

Bridges: Reids Creek

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Conservation, and in her absence I direct it to the Minister for State and Regional Development. Late last year in my office I received a deputation from two representatives of the community of Eldorado, north of Wangaratta. They presented detailed information and a petition signed by many residents of that small settlement expressing concern about the possible closure of a pedestrian swing bridge over Reids Creek.

They provided information that Parks Victoria had investigated two bridges that were operating in the area, one of which had been closed in February 1999, and there was an indication that the second swing bridge would be closed in February 2001. The residents, who

made a number of representations to Parks Victoria, said they were unable to obtain sufficient information from that organisation.

On 22 December last year I inspected the site and met with a large number of residents. On 8 January this year I wrote to the minister providing the information that had been provided to me, seeking information about her investigation and response on the future of the upper swing bridge across Reids Creek. I also provided the information to the Rural City of Wangaratta, which sought a response from the minister. My office was involved in extensive representations. We telephoned the minister's office on a number of occasions and faxed letters. We had further representations from other residents in the Eldorado area. Further information was sent to the minister's office, without response.

Last Friday the Wangaratta Rural City Council arranged a meeting in the township of Eldorado, which a large number of residents attended. A member of the Wangaratta council chaired the meeting and a representative from Parks Victoria, Neville Byrne, and I were present. Residents expressed concern that no information has been provided about the possible closure of the swing bridge. It is a disgrace that the minister has provided no response. Information from Parks Victoria had been provided to the minister's office but no response has been provided to me.

At that meeting resolutions were passed seeking the retention of the swing bridge and that another bridge be built across Reids Creek to protect residents on the northern side who have no access when the creek floods. Residents are looking to develop the area for tourist and historical purposes, recognising that the Eldorado bridge is also the subject of funding. I ask the minister to respond to the representations and provide funding and support for what will be an important development for the township of Eldorado and its residents and the people who visit the area.

Scoresby freeway: funding

Mr LENDERS (Dandenong North) — I draw the attention of the Minister for Transport, who is a very good minister, to the Scoresby freeway, which is the final link in the road grid and has been on the drawing board for decades. The previous government received an environment effects statement on it some years ago, but there has been no action since. The question must be asked whether that is because it was to have proceeded with tolls under the previous government.

I refer the minister in particular to a bus tour organised by the eastern municipalities group under the able

leadership of Cr Kevin Walsh of the City of Greater Dandenong. The bus tour departed on 16 February. I was on board, along with the honourable members for Springvale and Carrum and Senator Jacinta Collins. Who was not on board, though? The shadow minister was up in the front seat; he likes front-bench positions.

Not on board, however, were the honourable members for Knox, Wantirna, Cranbourne, Mooroolbark, Berwick and Bayswater — those lions of Scoresby, who in opposition have been calling for action on the project, those Howard's Heroes who defend the GST and everything the Howard government comes up with but will not stand up to —

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, when an honourable member raises a matter on the adjournment he or she should seek some sort of action from a minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I do not accept the point of order. The honourable member has not yet had the opportunity to ask, and he still has 2 minutes. Sit down.

Mr LENDERS — The action I seek from the Minister for Transport is, among other things, to inject some spine into the backbone of the federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services. Before I further develop my action request —

Mr Leigh interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc will not make reflections on the Chair in that manner.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, it is also disorderly to reflect on any member of any house of Parliament. The honourable member currently on his feet was reflecting negatively on a member of federal Parliament. I ask you draw that to his attention and ask him to desist from that course of action.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I uphold the point of order and ask the honourable member for Dandenong North not to reflect on a member of another house of Parliament.

Mr LENDERS — Thank you for your guidance, Mr Acting Speaker.

I will now comment positively on a member of the opposition, a member for Koonung Province in another place, the Honourable Bruce Atkinson. He publishes a wonderful journal called *Koonung Matters*, a copy of

which I received today. It contains 12 pages of transport policy initiatives, including areas of opportunity, the Eastern Freeway, the Scoresby freeway, the East Burwood tramline and the Lilydale–Belgrave line going underground. The tone of the publication is proactive rather than reactive. The honourable member, although he was not on the bus, clearly has a great many views on transport matters. I can understand why he was so keen to get on the frontbench!

I urge the minister to consider some of the matters raised by the honourable member, in particular what action the minister can take to put some backbone into honourable members opposite and what action he can take to get the Howard government to address the issue of the Scoresby freeway, which is a road of national importance. The question, while not an easy one, is critical to the electorate. Can the minister do something to make honourable members opposite get on a bus, look at the issue seriously and look after their electorates?

Rail: St Albans crossing

Mr LEIGH (Mordialloc) — I seek from the Minister for Transport some action on the St Albans railway crossing, and I am not the only one doing so. The honourable member for Keilor, an excellent member, is doing so too. I note in the *Brimbank Messenger* of 28 November that at a meeting attended by the Brimbank mayor, Mr Charlie Apap, and a local resident, Mr George Pace, the honourable member for Keilor seemed to be somewhat upset with his own government. The honourable member is quoted as saying that:

... bureaucracy was running rampant and the state government ministers had little control over top public servants.

But transport minister Batchelor dismissed his backbench colleague's claims and said the Vicroads report was accurate. 'The report was commissioned in order to allow for informed debate', he said.

'They are sensible figures ...

'I can't understand why Mr Seitz has taken this action all of a sudden, out of the blue, after all these years in Parliament'.

The newspaper report then refers to the report identifying three solutions. I seek from the minister the solution he will adopt. The report then goes on to say that putting the station underground was the least economically efficient option. The newspaper report further states:

'The inflated figures that have been put up by the Vicroads discussion paper are biased, don't match, [and] don't have an open mind', Mr Seitz said. 'What we have is a discussion

paper that is politically slanted against the people of St Albans'.

He said Vicroads should have considered other options.

Mr Helper — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, so far the honourable member has only asked a question. I would have thought question time was for questions. I have heard no indication from the honourable member of what action he seeks from the minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The honourable member still has time to ask for action to be taken.

Mr LEIGH — The newspaper report continues:

Mr Seitz also seized the opportunity to attack the state's bureaucracy. Likening the situation to television satire *Yes, Minister*, Mr Seitz said many ministers falsely believed they controlled the bureaucracy.

'We have in Vicroads your typical *Yes, Minister*. There are enough of those Sir Humphreys in the Victorian public service, and we have no. 1 here'.

I ask the minister to indicate which of the three options he will choose. It is not me asking for action, it is the honourable member for Keilor.

Mr Helper — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the honourable member has approximately 10 seconds left, but he has still only asked a question and has not directly asked for action to be taken by the minister.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr LEIGH — The government has three options. The honourable member for Keilor believes the minister is controlled by his bureaucrats and he wants to know the answer on behalf of his community. I also want to know the answer.

Fire services: Greenvale

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services what action can be taken to improve fire services and fire protection in the Greenvale area. It is important to give a potted history of this issue. The fire station for Greenvale was built some kilometres north of the developing suburb. I am not sure whose fault it was, but either the fire station was built in the wrong place or the suburb developed in the wrong place. I think the suburb may have developed in the wrong place, because the area had a Liberal-controlled council at the time.

Country Fire Authority officers have to use their own cars to drive approximately 10 kilometres to the fire station, pick up the fire appliance and drive back another 10 kilometres to fight any fires. The roads are not good and fire appliances must slow down when passing through the major intersection of Somerton and Mickleham roads. Something must be done to protect the people of Greenvale during the fire season.

During members statements I reported on the excellent service provided by officers of the Country Fire Authority. However, they cannot continue providing that excellent service when working under adverse conditions. While the Kennett government's support for the Country Fire Authority was waffle and twaddle the Bracks government is supporting the authority with dollars.

I want to know what action can be taken to improve fire services in Greenvale. I know the Bracks government will do so because already it has allocated dollars for that purpose, and I know the minister will do the right thing by the people of Greenvale.

SES: Croydon

Mr WELLS (Wantirna) — I also raise with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a matter of concern in regard to the government's treatment of individual State Emergency Service units. Of even greater concern is the ability of the current SES director to solve simple, straightforward problems. The action I request of the minister is to change the name from SES Croydon to SES Maroondah — a straightforward request.

Nevertheless it seems that the government, the minister and his advisers do not have the ability to respond to this simple request. The matter has been going on for six months. On 1 September the controller of Croydon SES requested a name change to Maroondah SES. The change has been fully supported by the City of Maroondah. The Croydon SES was set up years ago and when the councils merged one SES office was left out in the corner. It desperately needs the name change.

Currently Maroondah has a population of 96 000 and only one SES office. The name should be changed to accommodate the hardworking, dedicated men and women of the SES. They have the right to ask for a name change under the SES administrative memorandum no. 30/94.

I thought I would do the right thing and take a bipartisan approach in an effort to fix the problem. I phoned the minister's office on three separate occasions to speak to one of the advisers to have the matter

resolved promptly because it had been going on, as I said, for six months.

Not only do the people at that office not have the ability to return a phone call but they do not have the ability to fix a simple problem. I then went to the source of the problem, the SES director, and asked him if he could fix it. One minute he is not there; the next he is; and when I phone back, I am about to be put through and then the phone is disconnected. I ring back and find that he is no longer there! I have grave concerns about his ability to return a phone call. Even when I rang his personal assistant, she was busy in a meeting.

It is a simple request: the matter has been going on for six long months. No wonder the minister's portfolio is in such a shambles with some of the incompetent people he has around him who are not advising him well. I ask him to fix this situation promptly for the sake of the State Emergency Service.

Housing: Werribee electorate

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) — I raise a matter for the attention of the excellent Minister for Housing. The matter relates to the lack of affordable housing, specifically in my electorate of Werribee but also in the Victorian community overall. The minister is, I know, committed to addressing this difficult and historic problem, so the action I request is that she investigate and advise what action she will take to examine the broadest range of options to secure affordable housing for Victorians who are on low incomes.

The minister is aware of the chronic shortage of affordable housing in the municipality of Wyndham, which covers the state electorate of Werribee and that of my colleague, the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment and Minister for Finance.

The Wyndham City Council — good Labor council that it now is — is committed to working with the Bracks Labor government to ensure that some of the most vulnerable people in our community are able to secure one of the most basic necessities of life — that is, a roof over their heads.

I pay tribute to the incredibly hardworking people at Werribee Support and Housing, Carol Muir and Geoff Dimet, for the miracles they work. I also pay tribute to another wonderful organisation that is new in my community, Kids Under Cover. They perform miracles with next to no resources to ensure that each year hundreds of people with nowhere else to go can have something that most of us take for granted: the safety

and security of a roof over the heads of our families and loved ones.

Yarra Ranges: mobile immunisation program

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I ask the Minister for Health to provide funding for the mobile immunisation bus in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. When the minister was a member of the opposition he said that a good government was one that did not sit on a surplus when there were community needs. Not only does the current government have a huge surplus, it also has an extra \$320 000 provided by the commonwealth government on 8 February to provide immunisation services to Victoria.

A recent evaluation of the immunisation bus commissioned by the minister shows that the service is not only successful but also absolutely essential for residents in the remote parts of the Yarra Ranges shire who have no access to public transport and very few of whom have second cars or indeed any cars at all.

In a letter to the federal health minister, Minister Thwaites said the mobile health service was not effective because the service immunised a greater proportion of adults than young children. Immunisation is the easiest way to save lives, whether of children or young adults. The recent outbreak of adult measles in Victoria shows we cannot be complacent.

The immunisation figures for young children have greatly improved throughout Australia since 1996. However, poor adult immunisation figures remain a great concern. Many young adults and many senior adults have not been immunised and need to be. Apart from providing immunisation, the bus is an important tool in raising public awareness of the need for immunisation for the young and old alike.

I urge the minister not to cut the funding to that valuable service and not to go against the evaluation he commissioned. I ask him to provide the necessary funding for the residents of the rural areas of the Shire of Yarra Ranges who are being ignored in many ways by the government.

Brimbank: neighbourhood houses

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) — I refer the Minister for Community Services to the neighbourhood houses in my electorate and the surrounding region. When the concept of neighbourhood houses was devised I was very active in supporting their establishment. One was established in the electorate of Tullamarine with the help of the former City of Keilor, and in particular Cr Cheryl Hildebrandt. The Westvale Community

Centre was established in St Albans. The St Albans Community Youth Club was converted into a neighbourhood house, and it still carries the title of the St Albans Youth Club.

Neighbourhood houses are a very important part of neighbourhood infrastructure. In particular they help the community by providing various learning programs for residents. I have seen many people develop and further their careers by attending neighbourhood houses and accessing computer courses and discussion groups that have improved their lives immensely.

Neighbourhood houses have been developed in partnership with local councils and the state government. I ask the minister to look at the report prepared by the City of Brimbank on changing the process and policy of establishing and running neighbourhood houses.

I have been approached by many people who know of my commitment to neighbourhood houses and my belief that they should be run in partnership with local government. Operating a neighbourhood house is not a matter of charging commercial rent for the premises and charging for maintenance and repairs, such as you would for a sporting club. Local councils spend quite a lot on sporting activities, but when it comes to community services it seems that the councils have a long way to go.

Local councils need to understand that it was part of the Bracks Labor government's commitment to increase funding for neighbourhood houses that councils would also continue their commitment to support and foster those houses.

I ask the Minister for Community Services to monitor the situation in the City of Brimbank and to consider whether she needs to enter into dialogue with the policy-makers in that city to ensure that the neighbourhood houses not only continue to exist at the current levels but that the whole program be further expanded and developed to meet the needs of the community.

Responses

Ms PIKE (Minister for Housing) — The honourable member for Bentleigh has today brought into the house a petition signed by a number of residents in her community. I am aware of the petition; my department has had a copy of it for the past couple of weeks. In the petition the residents express some concerns about the development of accommodation for some of the most vulnerable members of our community — young

people who do not have accommodation, who are at risk and who really need the support of this community.

In 1995 the Department of Human Services was allocated funding to build a replacement youth crisis accommodation facility in the southern region. It proposed to build this facility to accommodate up to eight young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years in a supervised environment. The young people who were to access this accommodation were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Fusion Australia, a very competent and experienced support agency, was to supervise the accommodation facility 24 hours a day.

Opposition members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable members for Mordialloc and Bentleigh will cease interjecting.

Ms PIKE — A site in Moorabbin was identified for the project. The department considered the site to be suitable because it was on a main road and would lead to minimal disruption to the neighbours.

Mr Holding interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Springvale!

Ms PIKE — We must remember that we are talking about young people from the southern region who are in need of access to the support services of their local community and to the connections that are vital for them as they make the transition to independent living. The City of Kingston has advised my department that a planning permit is not required — we know how those changes came about — as the development is in accordance with the Kingston planning scheme.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I would hate to allow the minister to inadvertently mislead the house, but in fact the legislation was established under John Cain. I am asking the minister for a community meeting, a reversal of the decision and an investigation of the video that was taken of the residents.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The Chair does not accept that point of order.

Ms PIKE — Contrary to the allegations of members opposite, a number of steps have been taken to inform local residents of this proposed development. All the adjoining neighbours were notified through a letter drop and doorknocks.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order again, Mr Acting Speaker, I would hate the minister to inadvertently mislead the house, but the lady living next door to the proposed facility, a person who is disabled and lives on her own, knew nothing about it until she was told by the neighbours.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms PIKE — The Department of Human Services wrote to more than 300 local residents providing details of the proposed development.

An information day was held by the department on 24 February. On that day design sketches were displayed, information was provided in relation to homelessness and the associated support services, and there was an opportunity for residents to ask questions regarding the proposed development. About 100 local residents attended. Unfortunately, the honourable member for Bentleigh was unable to be there. However, it was a very worthwhile day. People asked a lot of questions and they expressed concern. The government is committed to ongoing discussion and consultation with the local community to talk through a number of those concerns.

It is interesting that the *Moorabbin Glen Eira Standard* conducted a vox pop of people in the local community. It is germane to the issue — —

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, again I would hate the Minister for Housing to inadvertently mislead the house. The vox pop was taken of residents who lived nowhere near the area.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh is debating the issue rather than raising a point of order.

Mr Mildenhall — On the point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, this is the third occasion on which the honourable member for Bentleigh has raised a spurious point of order to participate in the debate. The rules of the adjournment debate do not allow for a continuation — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh has not had those points of order accepted.

Ms PIKE — The people surveyed in the vox pop — —

Mr Leigh interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc will restrain himself from interjecting across the table.

Ms PIKE — Four out of five — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh will refrain from interjecting.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! Is the honourable member for Bentleigh taking on the Chair?

Ms PIKE — Four out of five people surveyed said that they thought it was good for young people to be given support services and that it was important for the community to provide them with a safe and secure place so they would not be left out in the cold. A survey was also conducted of the people who attended the open day. It is true that 26 per cent of those who attended were opposed to the development. However, although they wanted some questions clarified, 61 per cent supported the provision of accommodation services for homeless people in the community and 13 per cent strongly supported the development.

I have assured honourable members opposite that my department will continue to converse with local people to hear their concerns and provide them with advice and support.

In a previous debate the honourable member for Doncaster berated the house about the so-called nimbies — that is, not-in-my-backyard persons. Rather than showing leadership or speaking with members of her local community about the drastic need for homeless services, I am disappointed that the honourable member for Bentleigh is reinforcing the notion that the government should push homeless people to the boundaries of our community.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the Minister for Housing is currently reflecting on a member of this house, and deceptively so. I have been the only member engaging with the community, while the minister has been hiding in her office.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh is again debating the issue during the adjournment debate. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms PIKE — The provision of services for homeless young people is a complex and challenging task. As a community, we need all the support we can muster.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the Minister for Housing is not answering the question. Will she come to the public meeting as the Bracks government — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The honourable member for Mordialloc well knows that that is not a point of order.

Ms PIKE — I thank the honourable member for Footscray for raising the issue, particularly his concern for older people who are marginalised in the community. It is true that many older people have had difficult lives. I would not hesitate to say that many of them often display challenging behaviours, and some people may find them uncomfortable to be around. They may be frail, may suffer from chronic illnesses or may be isolated. However, they are people in our community who need and deserve our support.

In fact a recent survey has shown that 45 per cent of older people in public housing, particularly high rise, have a history of insecure housing and often lack social supports — the very thing we are trying to do with young people. We are trying to connect them with social supports and make them feel wanted and part of the community. These are things that some older people have missed out on.

The government is pleased to announce two significant initiatives that will assist people in the inner western suburbs, including the Footscray electorate. The western health service will receive \$166 000 recurrently to provide the Older Persons High Rise Support program on the Gordon Street, Footscray, and Hanmer Street, Williamstown, estates. In addition, the western region health service will receive \$62 000 recurrently to operate the Housing Support for the Aged program in the local government areas of Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Hobsons Bay. Here is a program that is not just waiting for older people who are vulnerable to come to it, but is reaching out, offering support and connecting people — doing all the things we believe are important in our community.

I am certainly very proud to be part of a government that is demonstrating its commitment to these people in need. The initiatives are part of a \$2.7 million program to assist people who are homeless or living in low-cost accommodation. A healthy society is an inclusive society; this is part of including people, and it is very important.

Finally, the honourable member for Werribee raised with me the difficult issue of a shortage of affordable housing in her area and the role local government can play in helping to deal with it. It is no secret that over the past 10 years the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement has seen a very real decline in the resources that have been made available to the state to provide affordable housing. That is why the Bracks government, as one of its very first acts, did something that for many years no other government right around Australia has done — that is, it pitched in an additional nearly \$95 million of state money to promote the development of affordable housing.

To facilitate the development of proposals for the use of this money and to plan for the future development of affordable housing in the community, particularly in Werribee, the mayor of Wyndham, Cr Barlow, is working with people from the Office of Housing and the Department of Infrastructure to look at ways of pulling together the resources and skills of the local community to develop affordable housing solutions.

With the government's commitment to extra dollars and with the expertise, energy and commitment there is in that community to really work hard on ensuring that low-income people have access to affordable housing, I am confident of some very good outcomes and that the people in that community will be well served.

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation) — The honourable member for Murray Valley raised with me the issue of Parks Victoria proposing to close the last bridge, a swing bridge, at Reids Creek. There is quite a background to this matter, which the honourable member would be familiar with.

The first bridge was closed in February 1999; this bridge, which is the second bridge and last remaining access for Eldorado residents, is scheduled to be closed this month. The honourable member for Murray Valley said he had written to me. I received that letter, and I understood that I had responded to it. I will check to make sure that it has gone out. I have signed the letter and am disappointed that the honourable member has not received it. I believe it has been sent off.

The honourable member said that Parks Victoria met with the residents on 23 February, but Parks Victoria also advised that it commenced discussions with the Rural City of Wangaratta early last year to identify what the concerns were, what the impact would be on the local community and what possible solutions there might be to the problems caused by the closure of the second bridge.

The background to the situation is that the historic swing bridges in the Mount Pilot multipurpose park near Beechworth were built in the 1930s to provide access for workers from the Eldorado township to the gold-dredging areas near the town. The bridges became Parks Victoria property in 1985, and in 1998 it undertook a risk assessment process that identified safety problems. One bridge was closed almost immediately, and the second one, to which the honourable member has referred, is due to close this year.

Parks Victoria is happy to seek a second opinion on the safety of the remaining bridge and on its ability to provide emergency access to Eldorado residents until a solution to the access problems becomes available. The question of access to residents is a matter for the Rural City of Wangaratta, but Parks Victoria is working with the council to ensure alternative access solutions are proposed. I will ensure that Parks Victoria works with all the responsible organisations to ensure that the access issues are adequately addressed.

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — I thank the honourable member for Keilor for raising the important issue of Brimbank neighbourhood houses. The honourable member's commitment to neighbourhood houses is well founded, and he is respected in his area for his commitment to this issue. Prior to the adjournment debate the honourable member raised with me the importance of the Brimbank City Council continuing its commitment to neighbourhood houses.

In its last budget the Bracks government announced a \$6.5 million increase to neighbourhood houses, which was a fantastic initiative. It enabled 76 previously unfunded houses to receive funding and 103 houses that were funded to get additional funding. The 76 unfunded houses received funding on the condition that local government maintained its commitment to neighbourhood houses. That was clearly spelt out to Brimbank and to all local councils that put in applications for neighbourhood house funding.

I understand the Brimbank City Council released a draft neighbourhood policy for comment in November last year which caused considerable concern among the council's neighbourhood houses. I also understand that a further policy on licensing and leasing has been released and that that will also have a potential impact on neighbourhood houses. I am pleased to advise the honourable member for Keilor that the regional director of the western region of the Department of Human Services has met with the chief executive officer and

officers of Brimbank City Council to discuss draft policies.

It has been made clear that any submissions for funding for the previously unfunded houses require a continued commitment by local government. I remind the Brimbank City Council, as I have reminded the honourable member for Keilor, that strong partnerships between local councils, community organisations such as neighbourhood houses and the state government will result in much stronger community building than Victoria saw in the seven years of the previous government.

The Bracks government intends to build communities, not destroy them, and that requires local government partnership, Brimbank included.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The Minister for Police and Emergency Services, addressing issues raised by the honourable members for Dandenong North, Mordialloc, Tullamarine, Wantirna and Evelyn.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the matter I raised and the matter raised by the honourable member for Dandenong North were addressed to the Minister for Transport. I know he is here in the house and I suggest — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! That is not a point of order. The honourable member for Mordialloc should take his seat.

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — There are some dogs that cannot be taught any tricks.

The honourable member for Tullamarine, as a long-time and ardent advocate of firefighters, particularly Country Fire Authority firefighters in her electorate, raised CFA coverage in the Greenvale area. She pointed out that either the Greenvale fire station was in the wrong location or Greenvale was in the wrong location because the Greenvale fire station is in fact in Yuroke, which is about 10 kilometres from Greenvale. Given that most of the firefighters in the area have to come from Greenvale to get to the fire station and then most of their call-outs are back at Greenvale, it adds about 20 kilometres to the trip, which does not aid their turnout times.

I know of the great commitment given to the community by Mr Gerry Hauke, the captain of the Greenvale brigade, and his people, and that of the many thousands of CFA volunteer firefighters. In this difficult fire season they have all been extremely busy and flat

out. They are volunteers, but I know that this summer firefighters in my local area have spent most nights out fighting grassfires, some of them unfortunately deliberately lit.

The issue raised by the honourable member for Tullamarine is of concern because the turnout time of the CFA to fires is extremely important to the people of Greenvale, and I will certainly look into the matter. If it is possible to relocate the fire station to a more appropriate and central site, both for the volunteers and for the residents of the community they serve, I will pursue that with the CFA. I commend the honourable member for the manner in which she has represented her firefighters in the past and the manner in which she continues to do so.

The honourable member for Wantirna raised in an unfortunate way — —

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr HAERMEYER — He says, ‘Surrounded by dills’. In his despicable contribution to the house he launched a cowardly attack on a public servant who is not able to defend himself. He reflected on the director of the State Emergency Service (SES) in a way that is uncalled for.

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr HAERMEYER — I will get to that in a minute. The director of the State Emergency Service, Mr Rhys Maggs, has served a number of governments of this state with great loyalty and distinction, including seven years under the previous Kennett government. The honourable member now comes into the house in a cowardly fashion and attacks the director of the SES.

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr HAERMEYER — He says he gave him a chance. The honourable member rang and asked to speak directly to the director of the SES and was told that the protocols that exist under this government, and the protocols that existed under the previous government — and you bet they did and you are lying to the house if you reckon they did not — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The minister will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr HAERMEYER — The protocols were in place under the previous government. The honourable member was told that if he wished to speak to the director of the SES he would have to gain authority from me.

Mr Wells — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the minister is clearly misleading the house. He does not have a clear understanding — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! This is not an opportunity for debate. It is a point of order, and I ask the honourable member for Wantirna to take his seat.

Mr HAERMEYER — He was then told to go back and contact my office before the director could speak to him. That was the only contact made with the director of the State Emergency Service. The honourable member for Wantirna has come into the house and talked about the issue going on for six long months, but the contact with the SES was made 10 short days ago! It is a despicable and cowardly attack upon the director of a Victorian agency who served the former government well and is serving the present government with equal distinction.

The honourable member then said he had attempted to contact my office on three occasions. I have checked with my office and there is a record of one phone call and one email. My adviser attempted to contact the honourable member for Wantirna on two occasions, but guess what? There was no-one in the office. I suggest that the honourable member gets into his office and does some work and answers his phones before he starts attacking public servants and others.

The honourable member for Wantirna has a rather unfortunate record of attacking public servants. On numerous occasions when he has been given briefings by public servants he has seen fit to attack them in a very aggressive way as if it were question time. I suggest that the honourable member should change his demeanour in relation to public servants and treat them with a darn sight more respect than he has done, because they are the same people who served the former government loyally and are serving this government just as loyally.

The substance of the issue raised by the honourable member, although it only engaged about 1 minute of his 3-minute tirade, seemed to be about changing the name of the Croydon SES unit to Maroondah SES. The SES has a policy of not adopting municipal names for its units because in many municipalities there are multiple units. For example, East Gippsland has five units, and the SES wishes to have a consistent policy — —

Mr Wells — There is only one SES unit in the City of Maroondah.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr HAERMEYER — In order to have a consistent policy the SES insists upon the use of locality names rather than municipal names. That is why the SES is reluctant in this case. I will raise the matter further with the director of the SES, although I can see some logic in the policy the service applies. Please let us resolve these matters without attacking public servants in a cowardly way.

Finally, the honourable member for Dandenong North raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport, as did the honourable member for Mordialloc. The honourable member for Evelyn raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, and I will ensure that those items are drawn to the attention of the respective ministers.

Mr Leigh — On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, my recollection is that the minister has not answered the issue I raised. Secondly, as part of my point of order, this government, with your assistance, set about creating new standards for the running and accountability of the Parliament. On the first day of the new sitting there is no minister — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! I uphold the first part of the point of order. However, I do not uphold the second part, and I call on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to answer the matter raised by the honourable member for Mordialloc.

Mr HAERMEYER — The honourable member for Mordialloc raised an issue regarding a railway crossing at Mordialloc — —

Mr Leigh — I'm sorry, I did not raise — —

Mr HAERMEYER — In St Albans, I apologise. I have undertaken to draw that matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport for his response. That was in my original response to the honourable member for Mordialloc.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Savage) — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 11.00 p.m.*