

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

15 August 2000

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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, 15 AUGUST 2000

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS	1	ADJOURNMENT	
CONDOLENCES		<i>SES: Hamilton office</i>	28
<i>Hon. Joseph Anstice Rafferty</i>	1	<i>Housing: Geelong homeless</i>	28
<i>Adjournment</i>	8	<i>Public transport: seniors concessions</i>	29
SHADOW MINISTRY	8	<i>Melton: commissioners</i>	29
NATIONAL PARTY FRONT BENCH	9	<i>Mount Hotham: tourism</i>	30
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE		<i>Schools: special developmental entry criteria</i>	30
<i>Minister for Industrial Relations:</i>		<i>Tabcorp: minimum telephone bets</i>	31
<i>responsibilities</i>	10	<i>Mornington Peninsula: public transport</i>	31
<i>Minister for Police and Emergency Services:</i>		<i>Forests: regional agreements</i>	32
<i>committee evidence</i>	11	<i>Eastern Freeway: extension</i>	32
<i>Economy: government policies</i>	11	<i>Gilmore College for Girls</i>	32
<i>Melton: commissioners</i>	12	<i>Responses</i>	33
<i>Schools: funding</i>	12		
<i>Workcover: premiums</i>	13, 14, 16		
<i>Rural Victoria: mayors conference</i>	15		
<i>Employment: government policies</i>	17		
PETITIONS			
<i>Gladysdale Primary School</i>	19		
<i>Robinsons Road and Frankston–Flinders Road</i>			
<i>intersection: safety</i>	19		
CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE COUNCIL			
<i>Review</i>	20		
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES			
COMMITTEE			
<i>Native flora and fauna</i>	20		
SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS			
COMMITTEE			
<i>Alert Digest No. 7</i>	20		
PAPERS	20		
ROYAL ASSENT	22		
APPROPRIATION MESSAGES	22		
CENTENARY OF FEDERATION	22		
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE			
<i>Program</i>	23		
MEMBERS STATEMENTS			
<i>Sir James Gobbo</i>	24, 25, 26, 27		
<i>Sunbury: tornado</i>	25		
<i>Public transport: seniors concessions</i>	25		
<i>Essendon Football Club</i>	25		
<i>Warragul Regional College</i>	26		
<i>Olympic Games: torchbearers</i>	27		
COURTS AND TRIBUNALS LEGISLATION			
(FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL			
<i>Second reading</i>	27		

Tuesday, 15 August 2000

The **SPEAKER** (Hon. Alex Andrianopoulos) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The **SPEAKER** — Order! On behalf of the Victorian Parliament it gives me great pleasure to welcome to the gallery Mr Stanislaw Zajac, the Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament. Mr Zajac is accompanied by Mr Wieslaw Osuchowski and Mr George Luk-Kozika from the Polish consulate.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Joseph Anstice Rafferty

Mr **BRACKS** (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death on 14 June 2000 of the Honourable Joseph Anstice Rafferty and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral districts of Caulfield from 1955 to 1958, Ormond from 1958 to 1967, and Glenhuntly from 1967 to 1979.

Joe Rafferty was born in Launceston, Tasmania, in 1911 into an authoritarian household where his father, a Boer War veteran, maintained strict discipline. The fourth of seven children, Joe was born partially blind, a handicap which meant that he missed the first years of school. Joe started his education at the age of 8 and remained at school until the age of 14. He worked as a helper at the King Island Cooperative Store and as a post office telegram messenger, before returning to school. After two years of part-time study Joe matriculated.

In 1940 Joe moved to Melbourne, where he studied law at Melbourne University and later joined the fledgling Australian National Airlines as personnel manager, where he gained valuable skills that were to help him in his future career in politics. After eight years with ANA Joe set up his own business as an industrial management consultant, and in that position he began to think about a political career.

As a means of accessing the Melbourne business world, Joe joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce — or Jaycees — in 1950 and went on to represent the organisation at several conferences abroad. He successfully ran for a seat on the Melbourne City Council and mounted two unsuccessful bids at winning

preselection for state seats. Joe finally achieved his goal.

He was first elected to the Victorian Parliament in May 1955 and served the community as the member for Caulfield from 1955–58, the member for Ormond from 1958–67, and the member for Glenhuntly from 1967–79. In a distinguished parliamentary career spanning 24 years, Joe served as a minister for nine years.

His maiden speech was on drink-driving — an issue I know is of concern to many members of this Parliament — an issue he felt strongly about. Joe would later devote considerable ministerial effort to, as he put it, ‘putting the drink-driver out of business’.

Joe was a member of the Subordinate Legislation Committee from 1955–61 and became Chairman of Committees in 1961, a position he held until 1965. In 1965 Joe was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet, a position he maintained until June 1970, when he was appointed as the Assistant Minister of Education. That was the first of five ministerial positions he held in his distinguished career. Joe was the Minister of Labour and Industry from August 1972 to March 1976, the Minister of Consumer Affairs from May 1973 to March 1976, the Minister for Federal Affairs from February 1975 to March 1976, and the Minister of Transport from March 1976 to August 1978. In August 1978 Joe was appointed Chief Secretary, a very prestigious position in Victoria at that time, which he held until his retirement from Parliament.

During his parliamentary career Joe was personally responsible for a number of legislative changes which allowed things we in Victoria now take for granted — such as late-night shopping and smoke-free public transport — to become a reality. Joe was also instrumental in setting up the Small Claims Tribunal, which brought greater access to justice to many Victorians.

Following his retirement from Parliament in 1979, Joe was posted to London for four years as Victoria’s Agent-General. Joe and his wife, Lyn, were popular figures on the diplomatic circuit in London during that period.

Joe Rafferty continued his education into his retirement, undertaking a course in journalism in order to produce travel stories and capitalising on the love of travel he shared with his wife Lyn.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the government, I extend condolences to the family of Joseph Rafferty, including his wife Lyn and his sons Andrew and David.

Honourable Members — Hear, hear!

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — It is with pleasure I join in this condolence motion for the Honourable Joseph Anstice Rafferty. Joe Rafferty, as he was known to many of us, was the epitome of a great Liberal and a great Australian. Joe came from what can only be described as a fairly ordinary background in Tasmania. He overcame great challenges and difficulties in his early life to achieve a great deal. As a great Victorian and a great Australian, he always had at the heart of his achievements service to his community and to his country.

Joe Rafferty also epitomised the fact that if an individual works hard to achieve his goals he can achieve them — and that is certainly at the heart of my Liberal beliefs. Joe Rafferty made the most of his opportunities, but he used those opportunities to better the community in which he lived and which he served and loved.

As the Premier said, Joe Rafferty was the member for Caulfield from 1955 to 1958, the member for Ormond from 1958 to 1967, and the member for Glenhuntly from 1967 to 1979. He was the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and Chairman of Committees from 1961 to 1966, and Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet from 1965 to 1970. He served in various ministerial portfolios for the next nine years, initially as Assistant Minister of Education from 1970 to 1972 and then as Minister of Labour and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs from 1973 to 1976. I believe he was the first Minister of Consumer Affairs in Victoria, if not in Australia, which was a tribute to him. He was Minister for Federal Affairs from 1975 to 1976, Minister of Transport from 1976 to 1978, and Chief Secretary from 1978 to 1979. As honourable members would be aware, the position of Chief Secretary was an eminent and prominent one in the government of the day.

I attended Joe Rafferty's funeral and had the honour of seeing a large crowd farewell and pay tribute to him and the great achievements of his life. As a member of Parliament, one of the things that struck me about Joe's career was that he spent all of the 24 years he was a member of Parliament in government. He spent nine years as a member of Cabinet and an additional five as Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet. I do not think we will ever see the day again where somebody spends all of 24 years in this Parliament in government. In every

election he contested from 1955 until the end of his career not only did Joe win his own seat but his side of politics won government. That is a remarkable career in any political life.

It is an even more remarkable career when one learns of Joe Rafferty's upbringing and background. Joe was born and raised in Tasmania. At the age of four years he was discovered to be almost blind in one eye and have very poor vision in the other. As the Premier has said, that delayed the start of his schooling; indeed, Joe Rafferty did not start school until he was eight years old. Despite starting late — and, as honourable members know, those formative years in early schooling are very important — Joe unfortunately also finished early. He left school at the age of 14, with only six years of formal schooling to his credit. At that stage he was working on King Island, fundamentally as a dogsbody and messenger for the telegraph office.

He realised at that stage of his life that he had more to offer and more he needed to achieve, but that to achieve his goals in life he would have to return to education and overcome his difficulties in that area. He studied part time for his matriculation certificate while continuing to work and later enrolled for a bachelor of arts degree in Tasmania. He put himself through that course while working at a stage of Australia's history when it was not common to work part time and also study at university. Joe was industrious and hard working, and clearly made it his goal to put himself through university.

Joe then came to Victoria and undertook three years of study at law at Melbourne University, following which he joined the commonwealth public service and embarked on a career of industrial relations and personnel management. His talents in that area were recognised quickly by the fledgling Australian National Airlines, or ANA, and he worked with that company from 1945 to 1953. At a young age he rose to the position of personnel manager.

As the Premier has highlighted, at the same time Joe recognised the need to involve himself in the broader community and became heavily involved in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, or Jaycees. He was president of Melbourne Jaycees in 1950 and was involved in many overseas delegations, representing the organisation and chambers of commerce across the world. That helped him establish his credentials in the business community and broaden his horizons when he was looking to future opportunities.

In 1953 he left ANA to establish his own business in industrial management consulting. I suggest that to

embark on a consultancy in industrial relations and management in 1953 would have been a very brave decision to take for a relatively young person with a young family. However, Joe Rafferty was that sort of person — he was prepared to take risks and accept challenges to achieve his objective.

Joe's next challenge arose because he felt he could make a greater contribution to the community by joining the Liberal Party as it sought to take government in the mid-1950s. He caused what was described as an upset win in the preselection for the Caulfield electorate, tipping out an incumbent candidate in a narrow victory. Not much has changed in politics when it comes to preselections, particularly the importance of doing the groundwork in securing a preselection base.

Joe was elected to Parliament in 1955, which as many honourable members will recall was the start of the era of government under the premiership of the late Sir Henry Bolte.

As the Premier said, Joe Rafferty demonstrated his far-sightedness in his maiden speech. It is hard to imagine in 1955 a newly elected member of Parliament talking about drink-driving and the need to combat the problem of people who were causing the loss of life on the roads by irresponsibly using alcohol and then driving. Joe Rafferty pursued that important issue throughout his career.

As has been said, Joe Rafferty held numerous ministerial portfolios and his achievements were many. Some of those outlined by the Premier included the introduction of late-night trading, which was a significant step at the time, and as the then Minister of Consumer Affairs, the establishment of the Small Claims Tribunal. In the time it has operated the Small Claims Tribunal has been shown to be an effective mechanism to enable people to deal with small claims issues.

Joe was a leader on the social issue of the banning of smoking on public transport. Recently, some 20 or 30 years after Joe Rafferty dealt with smoking on public transport in an environment that differed greatly from the present in respect of attitudes to smoking, Parliament dealt with the issue of smoking in restaurants. In his six years as the then Minister of Labour and Industry, Joe Rafferty presided over what I believe was a harmonious and positive industrial situation. An article in the *Herald* of 7 August 1970 outlines some of Joe's philosophy on industrial relations.

The article describes Joe in the following manner:

A former public servant and member of the Clerks' Union, he was personnel manager for ANA for eight years, negotiating industrial awards.

Joe Rafferty is quoted as saying:

And I concede, as a principle, the union right to strike. But it is used far too readily and frequently.

I would much prefer that reasonable men get together to resolve problems.

That approach taken by Joe Rafferty to industrial relations was the hallmark of good industrial relations during his period as Minister of Labour and Industry in Victoria. Joe Rafferty made a positive contribution to Victorian government and to the Victorian Parliament.

I again refer to his maiden speech and his concern about drink-driving. Joe Rafferty was pleased to be part of a Parliament that oversaw significant changes to legislation and attitudes to driving and safety in this state. He played a part in the decisions to introduce compulsory seat belt legislation, the .05 blood alcohol level legislation, speed limits, and a number of other constructive approaches to reducing the road toll and the risk on our roads.

Joe Rafferty was part of a strong and good Bolte government — a Liberal government — that served all Victoria. He played his part as a member of that government, as a backbencher, as a minister, as a cabinet secretary, and as an effective parliamentarian.

I finish my contribution with a quote from a poem entitled *Faith in Life* which was read at the funeral of Joe Rafferty — a poem written by Rupert Rafferty in about 1937. Rupert Rafferty was a brother of Joe Rafferty and unfortunately was killed during the Second World War. I quote from one stanza of the poem:

I pray to God, His blessing be on them,
My friends, who to me are His medium,
And ask, Great God, that as they pray to You,
Pray not for me, but pray for what I do.

That sums up what Joe Rafferty was about: he was about making sure his friends were looked after. As the poem states, 'Pray not for me, but pray for what I do'. He asked what he could do for the community and how he could make the community a better place. That is why he was a well-loved, respected member of Parliament and a great representative and minister. On behalf of the Liberal Party and the opposition I pass on our deepest sympathy to his wife, Lyn, and sons, Andrew and David.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — In joining the condolence motion on the late Honourable Joe Rafferty, I support the comments already made to the house by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition.

Joe Rafferty was elected to this place on 28 May 1955 for the 40th Parliament of Victoria. Sir Henry Bolte was then the Premier. Joe Rafferty was re-elected on seven occasions and ceased to be a member on 15 March 1979, after 24 years in Parliament. He died on 14 June 2000. Both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have outlined the dedicated service he provided in that time, particularly in his ministerial role.

I freely confess that on these occasions I find it difficult to speak in a manner that does justice to a man I did not know. One of the mechanisms by which one can gain an insight into an individual is to examine some of the speeches that have been made by and about that person over the years. For the purpose of speaking today I also read much of the commentary contributed by Joe Rafferty to this place, particularly on the important issue of roads and road safety. Earlier today I was looking at a contribution he made in September 1955, soon after he was elected, when he talked about the road toll as it then was. He said that in 1954, 587 people were killed on Victorian roads.

In the course of that speech he spoke about his concerns for young people and the way they were involved in the carnage on the roads. He established some mechanisms to improve the safety of Victoria's roads by introducing legislation in Parliament. Although we still have far too many people dying on our roads — not as many as died in 1954 and the years of that era — it is appropriate to reflect on these occasions that through the contributions of people such as Joe Rafferty Victorians and those who visit this great state have been able to travel along our roads much more safely than was the case when Joe Rafferty rose in this place to make that speech.

Joe Rafferty contributed in many ways to Victoria, not just in this place. As has been said, he faced adversity as a child, as a young man and during the period before he entered this place. In making his way there were various hurdles he had to surmount.

Joe Rafferty had a proud history of service, including service with the then Melbourne Chamber of Commerce. He was the Agent-General in London for a period and made a contribution of a wide-ranging nature to the life and times of Victoria. As I said, he has left a proud legacy of service.

On behalf of the National Party I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in offering my condolences to his wife, his two children, his five grandchildren and his two great-grandchildren.

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party in expressing my condolences on the recent passing of the Honourable Joe Rafferty. Joe was born on 10 January 1911 and died on 14 June 2000, aged 89 years. Joe had a long and distinguished political career — a full life with many achievements. I did not know him personally in my capacity as a parliamentarian, but as is clear from what the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party have said, his political achievements were significant in the life of Victoria. I can remember some of those events when I was a young person and going through my formative years at school.

Joe Rafferty was elected as the member for Caulfield in 1955 and retired from Parliament as the member for Glenhunting in 1979 — a political career of some 24 years. During that time he was the Deputy Speaker in the Legislative Assembly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet, Assistant Minister of Education, Minister of Labour and Industry, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Minister of Transport, Minister of Police, and Chief Secretary. Between 1979 and 1983, after leaving Parliament, he became the Agent-General in London, continuing to serve the Victorian community.

Joe Rafferty was part of a large Tasmanian family. He was the fourth of seven children, and at the age of four years he was found to be virtually blind in one eye. Because of that handicap he missed the important introductory years at school and his schooling was delayed until he was eight years old. He left school at 14 years of age. Reflecting his tenacity and his capacity, he re-entered the education system both in Tasmania and in Melbourne and obtained an arts degree through part-time study at the University of Tasmania. He also spent three years at the law faculty of the University of Melbourne.

After working in a variety of positions in the private sector, Joe turned his ambitions to a political career. There were some unsuccessful bids to be a councillor of the Melbourne City Council and two failed attempts to win preselection for this Parliament before he won preselection for the seat of Caulfield by five votes. It was a narrow victory.

However, Joe consolidated his political position, which allowed him to go on and participate as a

parliamentarian for the following 24 years in a high-profile and high-value political career. During his time as Minister of Labour and Industry he revitalised the Department of Labour which, until his stewardship, had been neglected. Joe introduced new ideas and concepts to the administration of labour. He also set up the first ministry of consumer affairs, which began a proud Victorian tradition of leading consumer affairs in Australia.

Of interest to me is the fact that during his political career Joe was also the Minister of Transport. Speakers before me have alluded to his support for initiatives to improve road safety — a scourge with which Victoria is still trying to grapple. During his time as transport minister he also oversaw the construction of the Melbourne underground loop, a \$500-million project which continued over a 14-year period providing 18 kilometres of rail track and a wonderful connection linking the suburban rail lines as they then existed. Melbourne is to be eternally grateful for his contribution to that project, which he oversaw during his time as Minister of Transport.

Joe Rafferty was interested in not only the big-picture transport issues, but also important matters such as smoke-free public transport. That is something we take for granted these days, but at the time Joe introduced it during his stewardship in transport it was a leading change, for which we are all thankful.

Joe was responsible for the introduction of late night shopping, an issue that many Melburnians and Victorians now take for granted, appreciate and enjoy. However, I well remember the many debates that took place around that issue at the time and since.

Joe was also instrumental in setting up the Small Claims Tribunal, which brought greater access to justice for many ordinary Victorians in their day-to-day dealings in the commercial arena. Joe Rafferty was known to have a crisp and incisive mind, and it is said that he disdained long, tedious and unproductive conferences. He wanted to get things done. He believed the public had a right to know how, when and where its money was being spent. He was reported as having said:

If we meet a tough problem, then the public should know about it and understand our difficulties. The people should also share in our accomplishments and our triumphs.

That is a simple political philosophy that all honourable members should remember during their political careers.

Although I did not personally meet Joe Rafferty, in 1999 he contacted my ministerial office. He continued to remember his period as transport minister. While travelling around on one of Melbourne's much-loved trams — I believe it was on the no. 64 route — the seat on which Joe was travelling collapsed and he was spread-eagled across the floor. Those who knew Joe Rafferty would understand the nature of the conversation that he and ministerial officers had the next day when Joe reported the incident for our attention.

His thoughts were never far removed from action he could take to improve public transport. The government appreciated his detailed comments and advice late last year.

I join with all honourable members in extending condolences to Joe Rafferty's family: his wife, Lyn, and his sons, Andrew and David.

Mr MACLELLAN (Pakenham) — I join the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and the Minister for Transport in debate on the condolence motion for Joseph Rafferty out of respect for Lyn, his widow, and sons, Andrew and David, and their families.

Lyn was an outstanding companion for Joe; she had been his ministerial assistant prior to their marriage, and was a loyal and great supporter of his through the latter part of his ministerial career in Parliament and life afterwards. She has been an outstanding person, and we should think of her kindly on this occasion. Andrew and David have lost a father who was widely respected.

When I became a member of Parliament Joe Rafferty was secretary to cabinet. I arrived as the 42nd member of the government party. I was not expected to be elected and had to be organised when I arrived here; Joe was just the person to do it. He made it clear to me exactly what I was expected to do in the party room, which, I recall, was to say nothing but to vote. The Bolte government was, after all, a success. Joe, who was at that first party meeting, was soon to become the assistant education minister. He later held a number of portfolios.

It was my honour in due course, somewhat to his surprise and certainly to mine, that I followed him as labour and consumer affairs minister, then as transport minister. I regret that I never had the opportunity to follow him as Chief Secretary or as Agent-General. Had I done so, history may have been different.

The era in which Joe was labour and industry minister, even in a Liberal government, was one of wages boards

where half the representatives were from the union or employee side and half from the employer side, with an independent chairman. They managed the state industrial relations scene. If a dispute arose, they were the ones who were meant to bring the parties together to resolve it, and they had extraordinary success in doing so.

As the Minister for Transport said, Joe was the minister who was instrumental in instigating the building of the West Gate Bridge and was responsible for the construction of the underground rail loop, which resulted in trains circling the city and a rebalancing of the fleet so trains could come from any part of the suburban system and be redirected to another area. His aim was to balance the availability of train services.

With his background and understanding of business — perhaps small business rather than big business — he brought a perspective, which we now call deregulation, long before that word became part of the political language. During that time Parliament was regulating the cartage of bread and weekend trading, and the government was prosecuting traders in Acland Street, St Kilda, who had the temerity to open their shops on Sundays or Saturdays after 12 noon. It was also prosecuting shops that sold meat after 5.00 p.m.

A series of regulatory rules were put in place that today we would regard as inconceivable. Joe was part of the transition that saw the then government modernise Victoria in ways for which honourable members of this Parliament should remain grateful.

One of the great things about him, apart from the respect that he gained from all sides of the Parliament, was his ability to see both sides of arguments. He did that throughout his ministerial career, and certainly gave good advice to anyone who served as a minister with him. I respect and honour his memory.

I followed him in two positions during his ministerial career, and I felt the strength of independence of the public servants who worked with him, and then with me. I saw many of them — varied people from all sides of politics and people who had taken all sides on the issues of the time — respecting his memory by attending his funeral. The funeral was well attended by people on all sides of politics. I was pleased and honoured to attend with those others, and I felt I was representing all members of Parliament.

All honourable members have reason to be grateful to him in very practical ways. For example, he dealt with the issues of superannuation and pay for members of Parliament. It was the end of an era in which members

of Parliament were regarded as gentlemen — although Dorothy, the then single female member of this house, was there, too! In the party room one always commenced remarks with, ‘Mr Premier, Dorothy, gentlemen!’. That was the opening to every contribution in the party room.

In those days parliamentary salaries were determined on the basis that we were talented amateurs, people who could support themselves by some other means, rather than full-time members of Parliament. Joe saw to the transition from that yesteryear situation to a more modern approach. He transformed superannuation for all of us.

Previously, widows of former members of Parliament had been living on the breadline because Parliament had not paid sufficient attention to ensuring provision was made for them through contributions by both members and the public. The wives and widows of former ministers and former senior members were often found to be quite literally without means and were left struggling to keep up a respectable life.

All of us have shared in the benefits of the work of Joe Rafferty. We should honour and respect him. We should say to Lyn, his widow, and to Andrew and David, his sons, ‘Well done!’.

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — As the member for Caulfield I am honoured to make a contribution to the debate on this condolence motion for the late Joseph Anstice Rafferty. He is survived by his wife, Lyn, and by two sons, Andrew and David. We think of them on this day.

Raff, as he was fondly known, was a distinguished member of Parliament. He was a minister of the Crown and a man with an active career in the business world prior to entering Parliament. He was also a member of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce and the Victorian Employers Federation.

As honourable members have heard, Joseph Rafferty entered Parliament as the member for Caulfield in 1955 and continued as a member of the Victorian Parliament for 24 years, subsequently representing the seats of Ormond and Glenhuntly, electorates that covered similar districts. As the current member for Caulfield I am therefore very proud to speak about him today.

I attended Joseph Rafferty’s state funeral and could not help but be very impressed by the array of people attending from all sides of politics. The honourable Jim Ramsay was one of those who gave a eulogy for his long-time political friend, even though Jim had entered Parliament some years after Raff — very many years,

in fact. I took the opportunity of speaking to Jim Ramsay about his friend. I am told that Raff's success in becoming the member for Caulfield was seen as a shining example of what could be achieved by a young man of the business world of that time. I am also told that in narrowly winning preselection for the seat of Caulfield he tipped out the incumbent, causing a great upset.

During his political career, Raff participated in eight consecutive electoral victories and was lucky enough to always sit on the government benches. His distinguished political career saw him serve as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees for six years, Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet in the Bolte years for another six years, and then in 1970 he commenced a nine-year period of being a minister in seven portfolios under Premiers Bolte and Hamer.

Jim Ramsay tells me that Raff soon earned himself a reputation as an effective and productive leader and manager of his areas of responsibility, that he was seen as constantly striving for achievement and that he gained effective results. That was demonstrated in his very first year in Parliament when he chaired the parliamentary committee on road safety, which initiated sensible and important law reforms. As honourable members have heard today, many of that committee's recommendations found their way into the statute books.

I am told that for the nine years after Raff became a minister in 1970, his initiative, persuasiveness and management skills bore fruit in the portfolios he held of Minister of Labour and Industry, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Minister for Federal Affairs, and Minister of Transport, and as Chief Secretary.

As honourable members have already heard, one example of his success was in establishing, as Minister of Consumer Affairs, the Victorian Consumer Affairs Council and Small Claims Tribunal. He was also responsible for outlawing pyramid selling. He went on to very proudly serve as Victoria's Agent-General in London from 1979 to 1983.

Jim Ramsay, in his eulogy, told us of the poem that was published for the very first time at Joseph Rafferty's funeral, which was written by his younger brother Rupert at the outbreak of the Second World War. Sadly, Rupert did not survive the war. Raff actually named the poem and called it 'Faith in Life'. The Leader of the Opposition read to the house the last stanza of that poem and I will conclude today by reading the second-last stanza:

And though I love this life, I fear not death,

For, seeing last when then I pass my breath,
I know I lose not in the very least
When God endows me with eternal peace.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill) — One of the consequences of political longevity is that as the years go by and condolence motions are proposed to honour former members, one finds oneself to be part of a diminishing group of members who actually knew the person concerned.

In the case of the late Joe Rafferty, the honourable member for Pakenham and I are the only members who would have served with Joe. The honourable member for Pakenham quite rightly made reference to the transition that was occurring during the years when Raff held positions of significance in this place.

I can recall the contrast between what was done and how things were done when I first arrived here and the way things operate now. For example, on Tuesday afternoons the house did not meet until 4 o'clock and on Wednesdays it did not convene until 11 o'clock.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON — I think there is considerable merit in that. Changes occurred in this institution and Joe Rafferty had to take the tiller and steer the house through many of those changes because of his position in the government and the governing party of the time.

The honourable member for Pakenham referred to the transition from the idea that members of Parliament were talented amateurs to them being professional members of Parliament and that being their job, that salaries should reflect that, and that widows should be adequately provided for.

Previously it had been assumed that members and their surviving families would have other sources of income to draw on. Rafferty was responsible for implementing many changes that reflected the shift in attitudes. He was a distinguished minister who served in a number of portfolios and probably gained most distinction during his years as Minister of Transport. He was responsible for the West Gate Bridge and the underground rail loop.

My friend Barry Jones once described the loop as being useful only for growing mushrooms. It has since been found that for once Barry was wrong; the underground rail loop has become an important component of the rail system. It has enabled the rationalisation of the suburban train system, and Joe Rafferty was responsible for overseeing it. He was also Minister of Transport when work on the Eastern Freeway commenced. There were vigorous and violent protests

at the proposed end of the freeway, which came into the heart of the city. He was responsible for dealing with the protests and getting the road built, and he achieved both.

Joe Rafferty served with great distinction as a minister in this place and to the great credit of Victoria as its Agent-General in London.

My wife and I extend our sincere sympathy to Lyn, his widow, who was beside him for much of the time and certainly all of the time I have been in this place. She was a credit to Victoria as his partner while he was a minister and as Victoria's representative in London. Both she and Raff served the state and the nation with great distinction.

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — In 1996 I received a telephone call from Joe Rafferty. He said, 'They tell me you know a little about the Internet. Can you come over and show me what it is about?'. I visited him and his wife, Lyn, at their house in Caulfield. Although he was 84 years of age and blind in one eye he was interested and curious about the Internet. That was at a time when most other people had not thought about it. Within a couple of weeks he had a modem and an Internet service provider and at the age of 84 was surfing the web.

This condolence debate reveals qualities to which we should all aspire — to remain curious, progressive and committed to learning right to the end of our lives, to be remembered fondly by all sides of politics and to have at our funerals people who represent a diverse range of people from Melbourne and beyond.

Joe Rafferty was one of those Liberals elected in the 1950s who represented a new breed who went beyond the United Australia Party. In writing about that period, Sir Robert Menzies said:

We took the name 'Liberal' because we were determined to be a progressive party ... [and] in no sense reactionary ...

Joe Rafferty epitomised the group of people who joined the party and sought parliamentary office at that time. Each of his achievements talked about by the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Transport and the honourable members for Pakenham, Caulfield and Forest Hill shows that.

Joe Rafferty's achievements were as follows: in consumer affairs, empowering ordinary people in their commercial and personal purchasing behaviour; in transport, the underground rail loop, the West Gate Bridge and the Eastern Freeway, which remains important to my constituency and the whole of the

eastern suburbs; and in the establishment of the Small Claims Tribunal, setting aside the formalities of the law and the high cost of justice so ordinary people could access their rights.

That is the sort of Liberal I aspire to be, and I am proud to be part of this debate and to honour a wonderful Liberal, Joe Rafferty.

The SPEAKER — I join honourable members in expressing my sorrow at the passing of Joseph Anstice Rafferty, and I extend my condolences and those of my wife to his family — his wife, Lyn, and his sons, David and Andrew, 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 Joseph Anstice Rafferty, the house do now adjourn until 8.00 p.m. this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 2.59 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 8.05 p.m.

SHADOW MINISTRY

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — As the house would be aware, during the recess between the autumn and spring parliamentary sittings the National Party decided to resume its status as an independent party. As a consequence — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order. The Attorney-General shall cease interjecting.

Dr NAPHTHINE — Therefore, I advise the house of the front bench of the Liberal Party and Her Majesty's opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! This is not a good start for the spring sittings. The Minister for Transport shall cease interjecting!

Dr NAPHTHINE — The honourable member for Brighton, Ms Louise Asher, is the Deputy Leader of the

Opposition, shadow Treasurer and shadow Minister for Finance.

The Honourable Mark Birrell, a member for East Yarra Province in the other place, is Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council and shadow minister for industry, science and technology.

The Honourable Bill Forwood, a member for Templestowe Province in the other place, is Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, shadow minister for rural and regional development, shadow minister for small business and consumer affairs, and shadow minister for tourism.

The honourable member for Hawthorn, Mr Ted Baillieu, is shadow minister for tertiary education and training, and shadow Minister for Gaming.

The honourable member for Prahran, Ms Leonie Burke, is shadow Minister for Local Government and shadow Minister for Women's Affairs.

The honourable member for Box Hill, Mr Robert Clark, is shadow Minister for Planning, including major projects, and shadow Minister for Workcover.

The Honourable Ian Cover, a member for Geelong Province in another place, is shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, shadow Minister for Racing and shadow Minister for Youth Affairs.

The Honourable Philip Davis, a member for Gippsland Province in another place, is shadow minister for natural resources and energy, and shadow Minister for Ports.

The honourable member for Berwick, Dr Robert Dean, is shadow Attorney-General and shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The honourable member for Malvern, Mr Robert Doyle, is shadow Minister for Health.

The honourable member for Mooroolbark, Mrs Lorraine Elliott, is shadow Minister for Community Services and shadow Minister for the Arts.

The honourable member for Warrandyte, Mr Phil Honeywood, is shadow Minister for Education.

The honourable member for Mordialloc, Mr Geoff Leigh, is shadow Minister for Transport.

The honourable member for Monbulk, Mr Steve McArthur, is shadow Minister for Agriculture, shadow minister for water resources and the manager of opposition business in the Legislative Assembly.

The honourable member for Doncaster, Mr Victor Perton, is shadow minister for conservation and environment, and shadow minister for multimedia.

The honourable member for Caulfield, Mrs Helen Shardey, is shadow minister for aged care and housing, and shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The honourable member for Wantirna, Mr Kim Wells, is shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and shadow Minister for Corrections.

NATIONAL PARTY FRONT BENCH

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I wish to announce the National Party front bench.

I will have responsibilities as the leader and as the National Party spokesman on the Attorney-General's portfolio, regional development and major projects.

My deputy, the honourable member for Swan Hill, Mr Steggall, will have responsibility for agriculture, water resources and technology.

The Honourable Roger Hallam, a member for Western Province in another place, will have responsibility for Treasury matters, finance and gaming.

The Honourable Peter Hall, a member for Gippsland Province in another place, will have responsibility for education, tertiary education, and resources and environment.

The Honourable Ron Best, a member for North Western Province in another place, will have responsibility for health, housing, and sport, recreation and racing.

The Honourable Bill Baxter, a member for North Eastern Province in another place, will have responsibility for industry, industrial relations and Workcover.

The honourable member for Murray Valley, Mr Jasper, has responsibility for tourism, and small business and retail.

The honourable member for Rodney, Mr Maughan, has responsibility for community services and the arts.

The honourable member for Shepparton, Mr Kilgour, has responsibility for police and emergency services, and corrections.

The Honourable Barry Bishop, a member for North Western Province in another place, has responsibility for transport, roads and ports, and commodities.

The Honourable Jeanette Powell, a member for North Eastern Province in another place, has responsibility for local government, planning, women's affairs, and multicultural affairs.

The honourable member for Wimmera, Mr Delahunty, has responsibility for youth affairs, consumer affairs and Aboriginal affairs.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Industrial Relations: responsibilities

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I note that the Premier is once again paying failed former Cain–Kirner minister Neil Pope to do the government's work in yet another industrial dispute in Victoria. Can the Premier explain what the Minister for Industrial Relations, the Honourable Monica Gould, actually does?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the house to come to order. The honourable member for Monbulk shall cease interjecting.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I can tell you that she does much more than the whole of the National Party front bench put together! I am pleased to report that by including in the negotiating team a former Minister for Labour, Neil Pope — a very good minister — the government has been able to do what the previous Kennett government could not do — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have already indicated to the house my displeasure at this start to the spring session. I ask the house to come to order or I will commence using sessional order no. 10 much earlier than intended.

Mr BRACKS — I am pleased to report that, as part of the negotiating team, he has been able to achieve what the government set out to achieve in the nursing dispute, and that is to send the matter to arbitration.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — Isn't it interesting that the side that rejected the arbitration commission and the notion of an

umpire is so ferocious in its opposition to the umpire deciding on an industrial matter. I heard an interjection to the effect that, 'We didn't have a dispute!'. If you go back three years and examine the press clippings about the Kennett government, you will see that the very same issue was apparent.

Dr Napthine — On a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker, the question was what the Minister for Industrial Relations, Monica Gould, does. So far the Premier has said she does nothing.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. I will not allow the Leader of the Opposition or any other honourable member to take points of order to make a point in debate, as the Leader of the Opposition was attempting to do on that occasion.

Mr BRACKS — If one looks back to the nurses' dispute some three years ago when the then enterprise agreement was coming to maturity and to the situation in the health system, one finds that under the previous government one in four beds was closed not for two days, not for three days and not for a week but for four and a half weeks!

Mr Rowe — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Premier is obviously debating the question. He is not relating his answer at all to the duties of the minister in the other place. He is debating the question by talking about industrial relations, which the minister in the other place has nothing to do with.

Mr BRACKS — On the point of order, I am referring to a current matter which is about to come before the Industrial Relations Commission. The answer is very much about the resolution of industrial disputes, on which a team of people is working, including the Minister for Industrial Relations, and it is relevant to the question asked about that minister.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier should come back to the question and conclude his answer.

Mr BRACKS — In conclusion, I indicate that because of the efforts of the Minister for Industrial Relations in another place the negotiator, Mr Neil Pope, who was referred to in the question and who is working with the government and others, including the Minister for Health, who has done a fantastic job — —

Mr Cooper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington should cease interjecting. This is the

second time the Chair has asked him to do so. I warn him.

Mr BRACKS — The Minister for Health has done what is required of a responsible health minister by ensuring that the government's position that is set out in the budget estimates is prosecuted — that is, a 3 per cent salary offer to the Australian Nursing Federation, which is exactly what the government has offered. The Minister for Health and others have done a fantastic job in negotiating.

I am pleased that in almost four weeks less than the time it took the former government to arrange it the parties are prepared to have the matter go to arbitration by consent, under section 111 of the federal Workplace Relations Act — and that is the best place for it to go. The government has enormous concerns about leaving hospital beds closed week after week. It wants to ensure that available beds are open, staffed and resourced, and that is why I am pleased the matter is approaching a resolution.

I urge all parties to resolve the matter. The government stands prepared to resolve the dispute and I urge the nurses to accept the decision of Commissioner Blair, who has recommended that the matter go to arbitration by consent. The government is hopeful that that recommendation will be acceded to and that arbitration will lead to an early resolution of the dispute.

**Minister for Police and Emergency Services:
committee evidence**

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to the evidence he recently gave before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. When did he become aware of the substantial errors in the output groupings of portfolios as contained in the 2000–01 budget passed by the Parliament during the autumn sessional period?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAERMEYER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) — If the Leader of the National Party had bothered to consult with his colleagues who were present at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee meeting — —

Mr Ryan — He did, he did!

Mr HAERMEYER — It is interesting that he refers to them as his colleagues. I thought there had been a separation on the other side, but they still sleep in the same bed!

Mr Helper interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Ripon.

Mr Ryan — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, on the question of relevance, the questions to which I am referring and which are the basis of my question today were asked by the Honourable Roger Hallam in another place.

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

Mr HAERMEYER — They are sensitive petals, Mr Speaker. If the Leader of the National Party had bothered to consult with him the Honourable Roger Hallam would have told him the answer the chief commissioner gave him.

There was an error in transcribing figures from one column to another within Victoria Police in preparation for the figures coming before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, of which I was advised. Victoria Police have assured me that appropriate mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that this does not recur.

Economy: government policies

Mr LONEY (Geelong North) — I refer the Premier to the government's commitment to grow the whole of Victoria. Will the Premier inform the house of the impact of government policies on the economic climate in Victoria?

The SPEAKER — Order! In calling the Premier I remind him of the need to be succinct.

Mr BRACKS (Premier) — I thank the member for Geelong North for his question and his continued interest in the fiscal and economic position of the state. I can report to the Parliament that in the period between the last sitting of Parliament in autumn and this session the outlook for the Victorian economy was found to be not just strong but extremely robust. A series of six or seven different economic indicators have been publicly released since the autumn session of Parliament. One of the most telling was an issue of the *Economic Report* released in June by the Colonial Bank. It is called 'The state of the states — economic rankings June 2000' and is a once-a-year economic ranking of states that looks at eight different economic indicators across every state in Australia.

In five of those eight indicators Victoria rated not second or third but first. If you look at growth, retail trade, housing, capital expenditure or vehicle

registrations you see that Victoria rated no. 1 in all those indicators. This led to the conclusion in 'The state of the states — economic rankings June 2000' that overall Victoria was rated the no. 1 state for economic growth of any state in Australia.

Turning to other matters including business confidence, which was raised by the shadow Treasurer, and job growth, the recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that Victoria's unemployment rate dropped 0.3 per cent in the last month to 6.2 per cent. That is below the national average. The question asked by the member for Geelong North was what were our targets, what was our effort, how are we growing the whole state. Having unemployment levels below the national average was a clear objective of this government, and a drop of 6.2 per cent — the second successive month below the national average — is a very good achievement. In the last month 29 000 new jobs were created in Victoria, and 20 000 new jobs were created in the month before that.

The Access Economics report on the relative nature of the states released in July showed that Victoria would have employment growth of 3 per cent, which is about the average we predicted in the budget outlook. However, economic growth has been revised upwards to 4.7 per cent.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRACKS — The matter of investor confidence was raised by interjection, and I will refer to it anyway because it is in my notes. Jones Lang LaSalle reported on investor confidence around the country and showed that Melbourne was well ahead of other capital cities in investor confidence on the rating that firm undertook. That was in a survey in July 2000.

Mr Smith — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Premier indicated that he is reading from a speech. Is he prepared to make the speech notes available to the house which is the normal tradition of Parliament?

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Glen Waverley raised a point of order relating to a document that is being quoted by the Premier. Is the Premier quoting from a document?

Mr BRACKS — They are written notes, Mr Speaker.

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

Mr BRACKS — In July 2000 the Australian Industry Group undertook a nationwide survey that

compared states and found that Victorian manufacturers expect stronger sales in September and improved export volumes. If one looks at exports of goods and services one finds that in the six months to April this year there has been a 21 per cent increase in Victoria.

Finally, *Fortune* magazine, which surveyed the capital cities that are attractive to investment in the Asia-Pacific region, ranked Melbourne as the third-best city for doing business in Asia. I can report to Parliament that in the period between the autumn and spring sessions the Victorian economy has not just been strong it has been very robust on all the economic indicators, including those of the Colonial bank, which used nine indicators. Victoria is performing extremely well and has a base that can be built upon for further investment and job growth around the state.

Melton: commissioners

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — I ask the Minister for Local Government whether it is a fact that the Premier intervened to stop the minister sacking the three democratically elected Melton shire commissioners. Will the minister now give an undertaking that the commissioners will serve out their full three-year terms in office?

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Local Government) — I must say that is a little odd coming from the mob that went around sacking every councillor in the state! As you will appreciate, Mr Speaker, government members believe in local democracy, and to that end they want to see democracy returned to Melton. I am currently involved in discussions with the commissioners of Melton. Certainly they recognise that the government has a mandate and they endorse the government's position. The government would like to see a harmonious transition to local democracy. Discussions will continue and we look forward to bringing democracy back to Melton.

Schools: funding

Mr LANGDON (Ivanhoe) — I refer the Minister for Education to the government's commitment to deliver better educational services to ordinary Victorians. Will the minister inform the house of the government's latest action to upgrade Victorian schools?

Mr Richardson — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I have to say that the honourable member for Ivanhoe treated the house with considerable discourtesy by racing through his reading of the question, which in itself is out of order. His question was indecipherable. I ask that he either repeat the question or distribute written copies of it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair had no difficulty hearing the question, which asked about the latest government action to upgrade Victorian schools. However, for the benefit of the house, and so all honourable members are aware of it, I ask the honourable member for Ivanhoe to repeat his question.

Mr LANGDON — Mr Speaker, I would be more than pleased to oblige and speak slowly for my opposition colleagues.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have just extended a courtesy to the house by asking the honourable member for Ivanhoe to repeat his question. However, the house is preventing the honourable member for Ivanhoe from being heard by indulging itself in excessive, unnecessary noise. I ask the house to listen to the honourable member in silence.

Mr LANGDON — I refer the minister to the government's commitment to deliver better education services to ordinary Victorians. Will the minister inform the house of the government's latest action to upgrade Victorian schools?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Richardson — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, it is a silly question. I am sorry I brought it up.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. I warn the honourable member for Forest Hill about taking points of order of that nature.

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Education) — I thank the honourable member for Ivanhoe for his question and for his continued advocacy of public education in this state. The Victorian people know that in the past seven years under the Kennett government education was stalled. The Bracks government has kick-started education in this state — and I suspect the Leader of the Liberal Party ought to kick-start the honourable member for Forest Hill!

Today was the next instalment of what the government promised the people of Victoria for their schools. It is with very great pleasure that I announce today that

more than 200 Victorian schools have been given the green light to plan major building works at a total cost of \$160 million. The planning program is a tremendous boost to our schools. It underlines the government's commitment to a safe learning environment for all students. The planned works cover the whole state, from the electorate of Wimmera to the electorate of Warrandyte and from the electorate of Northcote to the electorates of Narracan and Niddrie.

There will be \$9 million for an upgrade of the Niddrie Primary School; \$6 million for the Alexandra Secondary College; \$14.6 million for redevelopment of Sandringham Primary School; \$13.8 million for redevelopment of the excellent Mitcham Primary School; a \$10 million upgrade of the Bundarra Primary School, which is near Portland; and \$9 million for Melton West Primary School.¹ I ask the house to note that nearly \$2 million has been approved for planning programs for three schools in Warrandyte. People at those schools have told the government that they were completely neglected by the previous government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms DELAHUNTY — And they are not alone.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms DELAHUNTY — Fred Clarke, principal of the Warrnambool East Primary School, is quoted in the *Warrnambool Standard* as having said:

There's been no capital works program money spent in this school for a long, long time.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms DELAHUNTY — For seven long years! No wonder the opposition parties split, Mr Speaker. Today's announcement is great news. It means that now schools in Victoria can plan confidently for the future.

Workcover: premiums

Ms DAVIES (Gippsland West) — I have a question for the Minister for Workcover. Why was the Victorian Workcover Authority allowed to remove the industry rate cap in the same year that premiums were going to be adjusted upwards because of the reintroduction of common-law rights and the addition of GST?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Dromana.

¹ See minister's personal explanation page 40.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover) — The honourable member for Gippsland West asked a question concerning the experience rating system in Victoria. You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that there has been an experience rating system in Victoria for the past six years. I will recap how that works. The government inherited a system that was introduced six years ago by the previous government. The experience rating system rewards those industries that have good occupational health and safety records and their rates go down, but rates go up in those industries that have very poor occupational health and safety records. Equally, the individual performance of firms is important.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr CAMERON — As a consequence, this financial year 31 per cent of businesses are paying a lower premium than they paid last financial year.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the honourable member for Glen Waverley for the last time.

Mr CAMERON — As you are aware, Mr Speaker, earlier this year the government announced a general 15 per cent increase across the board before introducing legislation which everybody in this house supported. In addition, there is a 12 per cent GST impact. That is a 2 per cent additional impact over and above the normal 10 per cent.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Davies — On a point of order, I seek your assistance, Mr Speaker. This issue is a fairly complex one and I am very interested in the answer. I am afraid I cannot hear because there is too much noise on this side.

The SPEAKER — Order! On numerous occasions during question time I have asked the house to come to order. I have already advised two members that they will not be warned again. I ask the whole house to respect Parliament and the chamber and allow question time to be completed so that every member is able to hear and be informed by the answers provided. The Chair will not tolerate for much longer behaviour such as that which has occurred for the last half hour. I will start by using sessional order 10 to remove all those members who continue to make a racket and a mockery of the proceedings of Parliament.

Mr CAMERON — Notwithstanding those average increases in premium rates, nearly one-third of

employers are paying a lower premium rate this financial year. Naturally, that is the effect of having an experience rating system. This year the board wanted the industry rates to reflect the true position. For small to medium-sized firms the cap is precisely the same as what has been in place for the past six years, which is that no increase can be more than 20 per cent, although the premium rate can go down more than that. The premiums for industries with bad occupational health and safety records will be capped at 20 per cent, and then there will be the general increases.

I trust that clarifies matters for the honourable member for Gippsland West. If she has individual concerns that require explanation, I will provide that to her.

Workcover: premiums

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I refer the Minister for Workcover to his answer to the previous question and to the longstanding cap that has applied to the Workcover premium rate increases of individual employers to which the minister referred. When did the minister first decide on a premium-increase model for 2000–01 that involved applying an across-the-board percentage increase in premiums over and above the longstanding cap?

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Workcover) — As everybody in Parliament is aware, there was to be an average 15 per cent increase across the board, and that is precisely what has occurred. The rate was set and an average increase of 15 per cent plus the goods and services tax (GST) impact of 12 per cent was applied.

Mr Rowe — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance on a matter of misleading Parliament. The minister refers to a GST impact on the Workcover premium. My understanding is that it is in fact not a GST impact but a tax package impact to do with the payments of increased benefits.

The SPEAKER — Order! That is a spurious point of order. The honourable member is attempting to make a point in debate under the guise of taking a point of order.

Mr CAMERON — The honourable member sounds like Professor Allan Fels, who takes the view that you can say 12 per cent so long as you say 12 per cent as a result of the federal government's tax package and not 12 per cent as a result of the GST package. There is no difference at all. That was the way the government made it clear that there had to be an average increase of 15 per cent to cover the cost of the scheme.

Let us look behind the honourable member's question. Fundamentally, he is saying that there should be a cap for small and medium-sized firms. However, obviously if those industries have poor performance in occupational health and safety and they hit that cap, it will mean that larger employers' premiums will skyrocket even if they have good health and safety performances.

Mr Clark — Mr Speaker, my point of order relates to relevance. My question related specifically to timing, as to when the minister made the relevant decision. The minister is debating the merits of the decision and therefore his comments are not relevant to my question.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. In asking his question the honourable member for Box Hill referred to the answer provided by the minister to the previous question, and then proceeded to ask his question about when the capping or the premium would occur. There is no point of order.

Mr CAMERON — Fifteen per cent plus the GST was applied across the board and, as I said earlier, notwithstanding that, 31 per cent of businesses are paying a lower premium rate this financial year because of good occupational health and safety performance.

Rural Victoria: mayors conference

Ms ALLEN (Benalla) — I refer the Minister for State and Regional Development to the government's commitment to listen to the concerns of rural and regional Victoria, and ask him to inform the house of the outcome of the government's rural and regional mayors conference held last week.

Mr BRUMBY (Minister for State and Regional Development) — Prior to the last election Labor promised to give a stronger voice to rural and regional Victoria. One of the specific promises that it made was to hold an annual summit of mayors from regional and rural Victoria to strengthen opportunities for consultation and growth in regional and rural areas. That was a key part of our regional and rural policy, and I am pleased to advise the house that last week the government delivered on yet another election commitment. Last Thursday — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Bentleigh!

Mr BRUMBY — Last Thursday and Friday in this chamber, for the first time in the history of the chamber, a summit was held of all mayors and their chief

executive officers (CEOs) from regional and rural Victoria. The conference was attended and hosted by me and the Minister for Local Government, and was opened by the Premier. For the first time in decades they had the opportunity to meet with the government, to share ideas, and to plan strategies for growth opportunities in rural and regional Victoria. Altogether in the order of 90 mayors and CEOs attended the two-day conference. Topics which were covered — —

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — Mayors and chief executive officers. Your arithmetic is not too good. Are you going to ask the question on stamp duty tonight? I will tell you how you can read the budget papers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting. I ask the minister to stop responding to interjections.

Mr BRUMBY — A range of speakers spoke at the conference, including the general manager of the Bendigo Bank, Rob Hunt, and Mr Dick Sedden from the Australian Industry Group. About a dozen mayors from regional and rural Victoria attended. All in all it was a sensational event and an historic occasion for this house.

A number of recommendations came out of the summit. They included considering the establishment of a regional embassy in Melbourne supported by the councils to promote regional investment.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — It is amazing that there was a summit in this house at which 47 councils were represented and at which for the first time in more than 100 years they had the opportunity to meet with government and come up with a number of recommendations, yet all the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and members of her party can do is scoff, mock and make fun of those mayors. You have learnt nothing!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BRUMBY — For seven years the former Kennett government ran down country Victoria. It cut investment, closed schools, cut hospitals and did not talk to local government. When this government holds a two-day summit at this Parliament all the Liberal Party can do is knock, knock, knock and criticise country Victorians.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the honourable member for Warrandyte.

Mr BRUMBY — The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party will be profoundly embarrassed by the fact that the shadow Minister for Local Government, the honourable member for Prahran, attended the summit dinner on the Thursday evening — —

Mr Perton — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the question. His press release about the summit sets out a number of claims.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. The Chair has heard sufficient to rule on the matter of whether the minister is debating the question. I uphold the point of order, and I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr BRUMBY — The proof of the success of the summit can be judged by the way it is seen by those who participated in it. I refer to some of their comments. The mayor of the City of Warrnambool, Cr Atkinson, was reported in the *Warrnambool Standard* as having said:

It has been excellent ... it has been a great opportunity, quite historic really, for local government and the state government to get together.

Cr Karen Douglas, the mayor of the Shire of Southern Grampians, said in her column in the *Weekly Advertiser*:

... there has been an injection of optimism that this is a chance for rural Victoria to speak with a united voice and claim some well overdue attention and consideration.

We all came away feeling that we had experienced one of those rare moments in time that has far-reaching effects.

Finally I refer to a comment from Cr Bernard Gross, the mayor of the City of Horsham, who was reported in the *Wimmera Mail-Times* as stating:

It was a wonderful and uplifting conference and we spent two days working together to recognise and concentrate on developing the state together.

The opposition hates good news. It hates the fact that country Victoria is growing again. It hates the fact that employment in country Victoria grew 4 per cent last year. It hates the fact that new investment is occurring in the food industry and the economy is growing at a fast rate.

Workcover: premiums

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — Can the Treasurer inform the house of the estimated cost to the state budget of increased Workcover premiums, both in additional premiums paid directly by the government and in reimbursement to non-government organisations to compensate for increased premiums?

Mr BRUMBY (Treasurer) — The whole point about the question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is that for the last four years of the Kennett government the Workcover scheme in this state was unfunded and racked up significant losses.

Mr Leigh interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the honourable member for Mordialloc.

Mr BRUMBY — For four years in a row under the former Kennett government, of which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was a minister, the Workcover scheme racked up huge losses, and our job — —

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — Have a look at the budget papers.

Dr Napthine — I raise a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked the Treasurer specifically about the additional cost to the state budget of the increased Workcover premiums in the government sector and the non-government sector, recompense for which the government will be responsible. It is not about the fundamental issue of the Workcover scheme.

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

Mr BRUMBY — The opposition is struggling to get the point here. In the past two years — —

Ms Asher interjected.

Mr BRUMBY — Yes, you are! In the past two years alone the unfunded losses of the Workcover scheme exceeded \$300 million. Our job in government is to fix up the mess you left behind, and that is what we are doing. We are fixing up the mess!

Ms Asher — I also raise a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. I asked the Treasurer about Workcover premium increases enforced by the government and their cost to the state budget.

It is a simple question, and I would be grateful if the Treasurer could answer it directly.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. On numerous occasions I have ruled, as have previous Speakers, that it is not up to the Chair to make ministers answer questions in ways that the questioners or other honourable members may wish them to. The minister was being relevant in his response, and I will continue to hear him.

Mr BRUMBY — The strategy that the government has put in place will ensure that the Workcover scheme, which was unfunded under the previous Kennett government, will be fully funded within four years. That has necessitated some premium increases. However, the conclusion that industry and government can draw from that is that there are significant savings for employers who have safe workplaces — and that is the bottom line. The government has a responsibility to ensure that the scheme is fully funded. The government has put the strategies in place and is cleaning up the mess you left behind!

Employment: government policies

Ms LINDELL (Carrum) — I refer the Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment to the government's commitment to reduce Victoria's unemployment rate. Will the minister inform the house of the impact of the government's policies on new jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria?

Ms KOSKY (Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment) — I thank the honourable member for Carrum for her question and interest in this area. As the Premier has already said, Victoria is experiencing good economic and employment growth. Recent figures on unemployment and employment are good news for Victoria. Unemployment in Victoria fell to 6.2 per cent, the lowest rate in a decade. That is good news for Victoria.

Since August 1992 unemployment in Victoria has fallen below 10 per cent in every region. That has not occurred since 1992.² The government is pleased that unemployment has fallen across Victoria.

Teenage unemployment has been too high, and is still high, but has fallen by 2.7 per cent to 16 per cent. That was the largest fall of any state. More Victorians, now 2.2 million, are taking home a pay packet.

I refer to what the former coalition promised on employment when in government. Since October last year, when the Bracks government was elected, 73 100

new jobs have been created in 10 months compared with the now opposition's election promise of 150 000 new jobs over four years. No wonder the Bracks government was elected!

Other states are aware that unemployment figures continually vary but a highly skilled labour force is required to sustain jobs growth in Victoria. The government is making a major investment to ensure that a highly skilled labour force is in place.

Despite a recent announcement by the federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr Kemp, in federal Parliament — we know he often gets it wrong, and the honourable member for Warrandyte has pointed it out on previous occasions — the number of apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria has grown by 9.2 per cent over the past 12 months compared with a previous lowly 2.7 per cent annually. Victoria's growth in apprenticeships and traineeships has been fantastic compared with that in the rest of Australia. It is more good news about what the Victorian government is doing through its investing in apprenticeships and traineeships.

Victoria is leading the charge on skills training and has taken up the challenge for 30 per cent of the nation's apprentices and trainees. It is making a major commitment by spending \$40 million more than last year on apprenticeships and traineeships. Overall an additional \$40 million has been spent. That represents a major commitment not only to increased employment across Victoria but also to an increased level of skills so that the Victorian economy will continue to grow.

I am pleased to announce to the house that Victorians across the state are doing better. I am pleased that in Victoria now more women are in training and more teenagers are in apprenticeships and traineeships than ever before.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for questions without notice has expired, and a minimum number of 10 questions has been asked and answered. I now wish to make a statement.

Honourable members will recall that on 1 June the honourable member for Monbulk asked me to consider the relevant authorities and rule, firstly, whether remarks made by the honourable member for Mordialloc relating to the honourable member for Springvale were in fact disorderly, and secondly, whether it is improper to criticise actions of members that occurred prior to their election as members of Parliament.

² See minister's personal explanation page 110.

Standing order 108 states:

No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to any member of the house and all imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on members shall be deemed to be disorderly.

May classifies expressions which are unparliamentary and which call for prompt interference as including the implication of false or unavowed motives, the misrepresentation of the language of another and the accusation of misrepresentation, charges of uttering a deliberate falsehood, and abusive and insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

As I have previously stated, I do not wish to rule in such a way as to restrict unnecessarily any critique on the comments or conduct of honourable members. In the case of the remarks under current consideration, however, imputations were being made alleging fraudulent production of student cards and their misuse. I consider that an imputation that another member has broken the law is personally offensive, and therefore disorderly.

I now turn to the issue of the remarks being concerned with events alleged to have occurred before the honourable member was elected. Having considered all the authorities, I rule that I do not consider that any distinction is appropriate. What is important is the nature of the remarks and whether the remarks are offensive. When they relate to past events it matters not, in my opinion, that the events predated a member's election. It is what is said and not the date of the events referred to that is important.

Accordingly, I reiterate the original ruling I made in this instance and confirm that the remarks made were disorderly. Should the honourable member for Mordialloc wish to take the issue further, the only avenue would be by way of a substantive motion, which would then allow a distinct vote of the house.

Mr McArthur — On a point of order, Mr Speaker, may I first thank you for your ruling and for the time and consideration you have given to the issue I raised.

I regard this issue as substantial and one that relates to much of the behaviour displayed by honourable members in this place. Allow me to pick up on your last sentence or two, Sir, in which you invited the honourable member for Mordialloc to pursue the matter further, if he wished, by way of substantive motion. I ask you to reflect on the sessional orders that the house adopted immediately after the last election and on what has happened to the management of the business of the house in the eight or nine months since that time.

In doing that, I point out to you, Mr Speaker, and to members of the house, that a substantive motion arises during general business and so far, in almost one year that this place has sat since the last election, there has been only one item of general business. That item was a specifically negotiated and contrived arrangement agreed between the government and the opposition to allow the honourable member for Mildura to introduce his private member's bill. There has been no other item of general business.

Mr Speaker, by way of reinforcing the comment about the total irrelevance of general business to this house in this session of Parliament, I refer you to the 26 items under general business, notices of motion on the notice paper.

In my experience, and having looked at a number of notice papers over past years and past Parliaments, it has been usual for notices of motion under general business to come from all sides of the house — that is, from members of every party. One party is missing from the notice paper, and that is the Australian Labor Party, which is the government — not one of the 26 notices of motion has come from a Labor Party member, either a minister or a backbencher.

Why is that so, Mr Speaker? Why would that be the case? Because they know it will never, ever come up for debate. In order that a notice of motion come up for debate, a change to the operations and practices of this house is required. Since the election and the adoption of sessional orders there has been no debate on general business items. There can be no debate on notices of motion under general business unless the Leader of the House agrees to it and discusses it with the opposition.

Mr Speaker, when contemplating the matter, I ask you to consider the possibility of success of the negotiations if the substantive motion being considered were a motion condemning one Peter Batchelor for actions he took in 1985 in the Nunawading by-election or re-election, and if that request were made to the current member for Thomastown, who is the Leader of the House and is absolutely in control of what happens in this house. I ask you, Mr Speaker, and other honourable members to consider what chance of success there would be in negotiating a successful time for debate of a substantive motion condemning the Leader of the House for actions he took before he became a member of this place. There is police evidence to say those actions were illegal.

Mr Batchelor — On the point of order, Mr Speaker, in all my life in this Parliament never have I seen such a display of crocodile tears as I have seen tonight. Not

only is it the height of Parliamentary hypocrisy but it actually misses the mark.

I point out to the honourable member for Monbulk a number of facts that he ought to remember and that you, Mr Speaker, ought to take into consideration when you are considering this spurious point of order.

Firstly, the honourable member for Monbulk referred to 26 — I think it was — notices of motion from members of the opposition on the notice paper. There are five notices of motion from members of the Labor Party on the very front page. In his dissertation tonight he said there were no notices of motion under general business from members of the Labor Party but on the very front page there are five!

Mr Speaker, you would also be aware that a number of the notices of motion have already been dealt with by the Parliament under sessional orders. That is the first point: the honourable member for Monbulk does not understand the nature of notices of motion — where they appear on the business paper and how they may be progressed.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that at the commencement of the 54th Parliament the sessional orders debate resolved this matter. I ask you to take your mind back to previous parliamentary sessions when hundreds of general business notices of motion were placed on the notice paper to deliberately obstruct and prevent the then opposition from progressing a general business notice of motion.

The Labor government has put rules in place that provide for additional time for the opposition to raise matters through a series of initiatives, including 90-second statements and matters of public importance, both of which did not exist under the previous regime. Then only a set number of questions were available, and the previous government used a blocking technique to prevent the then opposition from bringing on its notices of motion.

As I said, the Labor government decided to put an end to the farce and now provides the opposition with additional time and opportunities to raise matters in an unrestricted, open way that was not available to the Labor Party when it was in opposition.

Mr Speaker, you should acknowledge that the contribution of the honourable member for Monbulk was frivolous and without knowledge of the precedents established by the previous Kennett government, which ran this chamber in an absolutely dictatorial fashion. The Labor government has tried to provide more parliamentary sessions and more open, accessible

forums in which the opposition can initiate and bring matters before the house. Mr Speaker, you should reject absolutely not only the spirit but also the words of the honourable member for Monbulk.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have allowed a fairly wide-ranging debate on the point of order raised by the honourable member for Monbulk. However, I cannot accept it. I therefore rule that there is no point of order.

The sessional orders are the prerogative of the house itself. It is true that the house adopted a set of sessional orders in November last year, and they were modified during the last session.

If they so desire, the honourable member for Monbulk and the Leader of the House should re-examine those sessional orders and put forward proposals or alterations for the house to consider. There is no point of order.

PETITIONS

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

Gladysdale Primary School

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 the citizens of Gladysdale are concerned at the dangerous condition of footpaths and parking at the Gladysdale Primary School.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Parliament of Victoria, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Transport urgently provide funding for the required works.

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

By Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) (167 signatures)

Robinsons Road and Frankston–Flinders Road intersection: safety

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 we the residents fear for ourselves, our children and our relatives and friends safety at the intersection of Robinsons Road and Frankston–Flinders Road.

Your petitioners therefore pray that traffic lights or a bridge/walkover be immediately installed.

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

By Ms McCALL (Frankston) (355 signatures)

Laid on table.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Frankston be considered next day on motion of Ms McCALL (Frankston).

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE COUNCIL

Review

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Local Government) presented February 2000 review.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Native flora and fauna

Mr SEITZ (Keilor) presented report, together with minutes of evidence and research investigation reports.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 7

Ms GILLETT (Werribee) presented *Alert Digest No. 7 of 2000 on:*

Accident Compensation (Common Law and Benefits) Act
Chinese Medicine Registration Act
Constitution (Amendment) Bill
Constitution (Proportional Representation) Bill
Courts and Tribunals Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill
Dairy Act
Disability Services (Amendment) Act
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Injecting Facilities Trial) Bill
Education Acts (Amendment) Act
Emergency Management (Amendment) Act
Equal Opportunity (Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation) Bill
Health Practitioner Acts (Amendment) Act
Information Privacy Bill
National Parks (Amendment) Act
Petroleum Products (Pricing) Bill

Planning and Environment (Restrictive Covenants) Bill

Psychologists Registration Act

Rail Corporations and Transport Acts (Amendment) Act

Victims of Crime Assistance (Amendment) Bill

together with appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Agricultural Industry Development Act 1990:

Northern Victorian Fresh Tomato Industry Development Order 2000

Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Order

Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee — Report for the year 1998–99

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Section 17DA Orders granting under s 17D — leases by the Bayside City Council (two orders)

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — Documents pursuant to s 12H — Poisons Code:

Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons No 14

Amendment Nos 1, 2 and 3 to the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons No 14

Notice regarding preparation, substitution, commencement and availability of the Poisons Code

Financial Management Act 1994 — Reports from the Minister for Health that he had received the 1998 and 1999 annual reports of the Chiropractors Registration Board

Report from the Minister for Health that he had received the 1998–99 annual report of The O'Connell Family Centre

Financial Management Regulations 1994 — Order in Council pursuant to Regulation 11: Authorisation of expenditure of a Royal Commission

Lake Mountain Alpine Resort Management Board — Report for the period ended 31 October 1999

Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 — Notice pursuant to s 7(4)

Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board — Report for the year ended 31 October 1999

Murray-Darling Basin Act 1993 — Revised Schedule E to the Murray Darling Basin Agreement pursuant to s 28(b)

Planning and Environment Act 1987:

Notices of approval of the following new Planning Schemes:

Central Goldfields Planning Scheme
 Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme
 Greater Geelong Planning Scheme
 Hepburn Planning Scheme
 Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme
 Manningham Planning Scheme
 Moorabool Planning Scheme
 Nillumbik Planning Scheme
 Northern Grampians Planning Scheme
 Stonnington Planning Scheme
 Wellington Planning Scheme
 Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme

Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

All Planning Schemes — Nos SL11, SL12
 Ballarat Planning Scheme — No C23
 Banyule Planning Scheme — No C4
 Bass Coast Planning Scheme — No C5
 Boroondara Planning Scheme — No C9
 Brimbank Planning Scheme — Nos C15, C17
 Campaspe Planning Scheme — Nos C3, C7, C9, C11
 Cardinia Planning Scheme — Nos C7, C8
 Casey Planning Scheme — Nos C7, C14
 Colac Otway Planning Scheme — No C3
 Darebin Planning Scheme — No C2
 Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme — Nos C6, C9
 Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — No C5
 Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme — Nos C6, C8
 Indigo Planning Scheme — No C3
 Kingston Planning Scheme — No C6
 Maroondah Planning Scheme — No C6
 Melbourne Planning Scheme — Nos C13, C27, C29, C31
 Mitchell Planning Scheme — No C3
 Moira Planning Scheme — No C3
 Monash Planning Scheme — No L48
 Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Nos C4, C8, C14
 Moreland Planning Scheme — No C4
 Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Nos C6 (Part 2), C20

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme — No C1
 Port of Melbourne Planning Scheme — No SL12
 Strathbogie Planning Scheme — No C1
 Warrnambool Planning Scheme — Nos C4, C8
 Whitehorse Planning Scheme — No C6
 Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Nos C4, C6, C7, C11
 Yarra Planning Scheme — Nos C11, C12

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994 — Orders in Council under ss 6 and 8 respectively and Statement under s 9 of reasons for making a Nomination Order (three papers)

Psychologists Registration Board — Report for the year 1999

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 — SR No 71
Cemeteries Act 1958 — SR No 70
Children and Young Persons Act 1989 — SR No 74
Co-operative Housing Societies Act 1958 — SR No 49
County Court Act 1958 — SR Nos 40, 42
Country Fire Authority Act 1958 — SR No 48
Court Security Act 1980 — SR No 47
Dangerous Goods Act 1985 — SR No 81
Dental Practice Act 1999 — SR No 34
Education Act 1958 — SR No 52
Extractive Industries Development Act 1995 — SR No 53
Financial Institutions Duty Act 1982 — SR Nos 60, 80
Forests Act 1958 — SR No 66
Gaming Machine Control Act 1991 — SR No 44
Health Act 1958 — SR No 57
Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — SR Nos 43, 46, 51, 69, 73
Melbourne City Link Act 1995 — SR No 35
Mineral Resources Development Act 1990 — SR Nos 54, 55, 56
National Parks Act 1975 — SR No 67
National Taxation Reform (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000 — SR Nos 39, 59
Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 — SR Nos 50, 62
Petroleum Act 1998 — SR No 65
Planning and Environment Act 1987 — SR No 72
Road Safety Act 1986 — SR No 58
Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SR Nos 64, 76, 79
Supreme Court Act 1986 — SR Nos 36, 37, 41, 63, 75
Treasury Corporation of Victoria Act 1992 — SR No 32
Tobacco Act 1987 — SR No 45

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — SR No 33

Water Act 1989 — SR Nos 38, 77, 78

Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995 — SR No 68

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Ministers' exception certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 33, 36, 37, 40, 46, 47, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 63, 64, 67, 69, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77

Ministers' exemption certificates in relation to Statutory Rule Nos 32, 34, 35, 38, 44, 45, 48, 49, 52, 57, 58, 60, 68, 78

The Constitution Act Amendment Act 1958:

Report on the Burwood District by-election, 11 December 1999

Report on the Benalla District by-election, 13 May 2000

Statement of function conferred on the Electoral Commissioner, 6 June 2000

Western Underground Gas Storage Pty Ltd — Financial Statement for the period 26 June 1997 to 27 November 1998

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 (Common Law and Benefits) Act 2000 — Section 33 on 31 May 2000 (Gazette S75, 30 May 2000)

Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Whole Act (except for ss 3, 8, 9, 10, 18, 20(1), 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31 and 37) on 19 June 2000 (Gazette G24, 15 June 2000)

Children and Young Persons (Appointment of President) Act 2000 — Whole Act on 26 June 2000 (Gazette S87, 22 June 2000)

Dairy Act 2000 — Sections 4, 5(b), 6(h), 6(I), 7 to 21, 62, 63 and 68 on 1 July 2000 (Gazette G26, 29 June 2000)

Electricity Industry Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Part 1, ss 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, Part 3 (except s 19), s 29 and Part 6 on 29 June 2000. Sections 3, 4, 9, 10, 19 and remaining provisions of Part 4 on 1 September 2000 (Gazette G26, 29 June 2000)

Federal Courts (Consequential Amendments) Act 2000 — Remaining provisions (except ss 22 and 23) on 1 July 2000 (Gazette G26, 29 June 2000)

Flora and Fauna Guarantee (Amendment) Act 2000 — Remaining provisions on 29 June 2000 (Gazette G26, 29 June 2000)

Health Practitioner Acts (Amendment) Act 2000 — Remaining provisions (except ss 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21(2), 21(3), 23, 25, 26 and 29) on 20 July 2000 (Gazette G29, 20 July 2000)

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent to:

6 June

Adoption (Amendment) Bill

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) (Amendment) Bill

Arts Legislation (Amendment) Bill

Business Registration Acts (Amendment) Bill

Children and Young Persons (Appointment of President) Bill

Dairy Bill

Electricity Industry Acts (Amendment) Bill

Health Services (Governance) Bill

Land (Revocation of Reservations) Bill

Psychologists Registration Bill

State Taxation Acts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill

Tobacco (Amendment) Bill

Victorian Law Reform Commission Bill

14 June

Appropriation (2000/2001) Bill

Appropriation (Parliament 2000/2001) Bill

Control of Weapons (Amendment) Bill

Emergency Management (Amendment) Bill

Environment Protection (Enforcement and Penalties) Bill

National Parks (Amendment) Bill.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Constitution (Proportional Representation) Bill

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances (Injecting Facilities Trial) Bill

CENTENARY OF FEDERATION

The SPEAKER — Order! Following the joint sitting of the two houses of the commonwealth Parliament to consider the invitation to come to Melbourne on 9 and 10 May 2001 to commemorate the centenary of the first sittings of the commonwealth Parliament, I have received a joint letter from the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, which states:

On Monday, 26 June, both houses of the commonwealth Parliament passed motions accepting the invitation from the two houses of the Victorian Parliament meeting in joint session for members of the Senate and members of the House of Representatives to convene at the Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, on 9 May 2001 for the joint commemorative ceremonial federation meeting and

commemoration ceremony and at Parliament House, Melbourne, on 10 May 2001, for the commemorative federation sitting of each of the houses of the commonwealth Parliament.

A copy of the *Hansard* record of the consideration of those motions in each chamber is attached for your information.

On behalf of the commonwealth Parliament, we extend to each of you and your houses our thanks for the invitation which was unanimously endorsed by each of our houses.

The commemorations on 9 and 10 May 2001 are recognised as one of the major centrepiece events in the celebration of the centenary of our nation. The two houses of the commonwealth Parliament will be honoured to return to the Royal Exhibition Building on 9 May 2001 to commemorate the first meeting of the commonwealth Parliament in joint session and, on 10 May 2001, to meet separately in the two chambers of the Victorian Parliament where they continued to meet until their move to Canberra in 1927.

Your assistance and support in the planning of these events are greatly appreciated by us. We look forward to continuing to share with you preparations for this grand occasion in our nation's history.

It is signed by Senator Margaret Reid, the President of the Senate, and Neil Andrew, MHR, the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Mr BATCHELOR (Minister for Transport) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order no. 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, 17 August 2000:

Courts and Tribunals Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill

Victims of Crime Assistance (Amendment) Bill

In moving the motion I indicate, by way of explanation, that the government knows there will be more parliamentary business conducted this week than just the debates on those two bills. However, in preparation for this week of sittings the government has advised the opposition that it intends to also consider two other bills that deal with the reform of the upper house; they are the Constitution (Amendment) Bill and the Constitution (Proportional Representation) Bill. It is the intention of the government to commence debate on one or both of those bills this week.

Given the significance of the bills, which the government acknowledges, and the likelihood that many honourable members on both sides of the house

will wish to contribute to the debates on them, the government was asked to give a guarantee that it would not use the government business program sessional orders to guillotine debate on those bills this week. The government provides that guarantee, and the motion before the house is a demonstration of the government's commitment to that guarantee.

If during the course of this week the debate on one or both of those bills is completed, a vote on them will proceed. However, an undertaking was sought that the government would not use the guillotine on those bills this week, and that guarantee is given.

Mr McARTHUR (Monbulk) — The opposition will not be opposing the government business program and it welcomes the government's commitment not to use the guillotine on the constitution amendment bills. However, a number of the bills that the government said were important when it introduced them into the house, in some cases almost 12 months ago, seem to have disappeared off the face of the earth.

I particularly mention the amendments to the Juries Bill. When the Attorney-General introduced the bill he proclaimed its importance and said how urgent the reform of the jury system was. However, he seems to be unable to cope with some minor amendments sent back to this place by the Legislative Council some six or seven months ago. I wonder when the Attorney-General will get around to dealing with those amendments.

The Equal Opportunity (Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation) Bill seems to have lost its way in the winter recess. I understand the Petroleum Products (Pricing) Bill is also on the backburner, the Information Privacy Bill is some months away despite a three-month break, and the Planning and Environment (Restrictive Covenants) Bill is also several months from being ready. This is despite ministers having been able to go overseas on holiday and neglect the legislative program that should have been before this place for the spring sittings.

Mr HULLS (Attorney-General) — I certainly support the motion, which I think is supported by the Liberal Party, although it is hard to tell. It seems the Liberal Party wants it all ways. It is nice that members of the National Party have stayed out of this debate. They well understand that when a deal is done the government is prepared to adhere to that deal. The bills listed in the motion are very important and will be debated this week.

The Victims of Crime Assistance (Amendment) Bill deals with an important piece of legislation that created enormous heat when it was introduced into this house by the former government and compensation for pain and suffering was taken away from victims.

Mr Honeywood — One hundred dollars!

Mr HULLS — I expect there will be a substantial amount of debate on that bill. I note the interjection by the shadow minister for whatever-it-is. I say that in all fairness. It is hard to know these days because there have been a number of changes. From his interjection I expect he will oppose the legislation. I will be interested to hear his contribution.

The constitution bills are of course important, and we need as much time as possible to debate those matters. The opposition raised the issue of the Juries Bill. Unfortunately this opposition does not understand what consultation is all about. The government introduced this important bill, but the opposition was not prepared to support it. It wanted some particular changes that the government was prepared to negotiate on but not finally agree to holus-bolus. The bill will come back into the house probably in the next week of sittings because agreement has finally been reached. That is what democracy and negotiation are all about. It did not happen under the previous government, but it is happening under this government.

The same thing has occurred with the Equal Opportunity (Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation) Bill. There has been substantial discussion and negotiation. Despite all the doomsayers on the other side of the house and despite the fact that they had seven years to introduce this sort of legislation but did not have the spine or the backbone to do so, this bill will come back into the house when we next sit.

I hope it is passed by the house. Negotiation and consultation have taken place, which is something that did not occur under the previous government. I expect the bill will receive the praise of the gay and lesbian, transgender and bisexual communities. The house should remember that this is a very complicated piece of legislation that during its seven years in office the former government did not have the guts to introduce. The bill will come back to the house in two weeks time, when I hope it gets the support of members opposite.

Mr RYAN (Leader of the National Party) — I am pleased to join the debate to confirm that the National Party accepts the government business program. The constitutional bills are critical to us as representatives of country Victoria. Given the legislation the government

proposes to have debated this session, nothing will be more important to members of the National Party than their being able to fully participate in the debate on those bills. We are delighted to see that the government has seen the sense of ensuring that debate on them is not guillotined.

The general tenor of the Attorney-General's comments was reasonable. The Courts and Tribunals Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill and the Victims of Crime Assistance (Amendment) Bill are important, and members of the National Party will be pleased to participate in the debates on those bills, as will all members of the house. However, to reiterate, the purported reforms in the two constitutional bills are of paramount importance to National Party members, and we are pleased to see the government business program structured as it is.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Sir James Gobbo

Mr HONEYWOOD (Warrandyte) — All fair-minded Victorians are appalled by the shabby treatment of His Excellency, Sir James Gobbo, and Lady Gobbo. Sir James has been a Governor of inclusion par excellence. Given the Governor's expertise and advocacy in social welfare, multiculturalism and the law, and given his sheer hard work right around the state, together with Lady Gobbo, it is a complete insult for the Premier of Victoria to contrast his own appointee with the current Governor, using the phrases 'A Governor for all Victorians' and 'A Governor for country people'.

Mr Hulls — You're politicising this!

Mr HONEYWOOD — I said 'all fair-minded Victorians', not 'all small-minded Victorians'. Sir James Gobbo has been a Governor for all Victorians. He also happens to be, along with our leader, one of the best off-the-cuff speakers in Victoria. One can contrast the Governor's performance with the performance of the Premier, when the latter accepted the Olympic torch in Hamilton earlier this month. The Premier had to read his acceptance speech word for word. As I said, the Governor of Victoria is admired as a Governor of inclusion.

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

Sunbury: tornado

Ms BEATTIE (Tullamarine) — Last Tuesday, 8 September, a tornado ripped through Sunbury, damaging the Boardman basketball stadium and many houses, particularly in Noble Way and Archer Avenue. It struck with such force and suddenness that parents and sports coaches did not have time to implement emergency evacuation procedures.

Fortunately, only two people suffered minor injuries. However, many children and parents were severely traumatised by the event. Much of Sunbury is indebted to the hardworking men and women from the Sunbury and other regional units of the State Emergency Service, the Sunbury unit of the Country Fire Authority, the Sunbury police and council workers from the City of Hume. Their dedication and commitment ensured that local residents were safe and that tarpaulins were placed on roofs where necessary, thus preventing the situation from becoming worse.

Under the most trying conditions those dedicated men and women, many of whom are volunteers, put their own safety at risk to protect the lives and homes of families in the area. I extend my thanks to every person who contributed to the efforts to protect homes and families. It was by no means a small effort by the emergency forces. Everyone in Sunbury praises them and feels grateful.

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

Public transport: seniors concessions

Mr KILGOUR (Shepparton) — I refer to the government's supposed openness and accountability. I speak on behalf of the self-funded retirees across country Victoria, including those in Shepparton, Warrnambool and Echuca, who for more than nine months have been unable to arrange a deputation to a minister. They simply wish to put their case for regional Victorians having parity with city residents in respect of travel concessions on trains, but no-one wants to talk to them. The concessions are currently available to them only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, but are available to others five days a week and to city people seven days a week.

It is only fair that country people be able to talk to the ministers about the matter, but their requests for meetings have been handballed between the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Aged Care. They ask for an opportunity to put their case to a minister. So

much for the government's supposed accountability and openness!

The issue has been raised by letter and in the other place by my colleague the Honourable Jeanette Powell. The honourable member for Warrnambool has also raised the issue in letters to ministers. However, no opportunity has been given — —

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

Essendon Football Club

Mrs MADDIGAN (Essendon) — I take the opportunity of congratulating the Essendon Football Club on being the first football club to take up the Greenhouse Challenge, an innovative voluntary program designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Australian industry and business. The program is being run by NIETL/NORTH Link, which is a business networking and economic development organisation based in the northern suburbs.

The Essendon Football Club has shown its community commitment by getting behind the project. Club player Matthew Lloyd is being used in publicity for the activity. The initiative was first recorded in the *Football Record* under the heading 'Take a mark for the environment: join Essendon in the Greenhouse Challenge' when Essendon recently played Collingwood. It is good to see organisations such as the Essendon Football Club being prepared to put their time and money into such a worthwhile project. I hope other football clubs will follow Essendon's lead and see if they, too, can join the premier football club!

Sir James Gobbo

Mr KOTSIRAS (Bulleen) — I condemn the Labor government, and in particular the Premier in his role as Minister for Multicultural Affairs, for sacking the Victorian Governor, Sir James Gobbo.

Government members should be ashamed of the way Sir James has been treated. It was nothing less than an act of political vandalism by a government that has been shown to be arrogant. The Premier's only response to the sacking so far has been to say, 'Because I can'. It is a slap in the face for the Italian community by a Minister for Multicultural Affairs who has shown little interest in that important area.

Sir James has been active in the Italian community in the areas of welfare, language, history and care of the aged. He was the president of CoAsIt and was the founding chairman of the Italian Historical Society. He

has served Victoria's culturally diverse communities well.

He served on various national peak bodies in the area of population, immigration and refugees. He was also chairman of the Australian Multicultural Foundation. Members of the Veneto Club, which is situated in my electorate, are appalled, angry and alarmed at the treatment of Sir James. Many see this as an insult and are very irritated that this Premier, who pretends to be supportive of multiculturalism, sacked Sir James in a secret and offensive manner.

Sir James understood the needs and aspirations of all groups. He was looked upon as a fine example of a migrant who made it to the highest office in this land.

Warragul Regional College

Mr MAXFIELD (Narracan) — The Warragul Regional College is a great, well-run school in my electorate. I am very proud of the school, which has an excellent principal in Russell Monson. In July the disgraced shadow Minister for Education, the honourable member for Warrandyte, falsely claimed that English class sizes were 31 when there was a maximum of only 23 students. When told he was wrong he attacked the principal for providing the wrong figures rather than accepting that he was deliberately misleading the community. I call on the honourable member to apologise to the principal and the Warragul Regional College community for his dishonest and deceitful behaviour.

By way of contrast, the Bracks government has announced funding of well over \$1 million for the first stage of long overdue refurbishments at the college. We are overcoming seven years of neglect of a fine school that has tremendous staff and fine, energetic students, a school of which I and the Warragul community are very proud.

Mr Honeywood — On a point of order, I believe my reputation has been impugned, particularly as in the case in point I was referring entirely to government freedom of information documents. The honourable member for Narracan should be well aware that I can hardly be deliberately misleading when I am referring to his own government's documents. I take offence and ask that under standing order 108 the member withdraw his comment that I was deliberately misleading the community when I was using his own government's FOI document.

The SPEAKER — Order! As I indicated in my ruling earlier this evening about a matter that related to the previous sittings of Parliament, I will not make

rulings that in my view unnecessarily restrict honourable members in their critique of other honourable members. On this occasion I am of the opinion that the honourable member for Narracan was not impugning the honourable member for Warrandyte. However, when an honourable member takes offence at words used in this house and requests that they be withdrawn, it is customary for the words to be withdrawn. I ask the honourable member for Narracan to withdraw his words.

Mr MAXFIELD — If the shadow minister opposite — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr MAXFIELD — I withdraw. The shadow minister clearly engaged in dishonourable activities and he owes an apology — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Narracan has impugned the reputation of the honourable member for Warrandyte, and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr MAXFIELD — I withdraw. The principal of the secondary school is well overdue for an apology. The way he was treated was appalling and shabby. I urge that the apology be given to the Warragul community and the principal.

Sir James Gobbo

Mrs SHARDEY (Caulfield) — As shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I too am appalled at the shoddy treatment of Sir James Gobbo by the Bracks government. Multicultural communities, and in particular the Italian community, have been insulted by the manner of the sacking of Jim Gobbo, one of the state's most popular Governors and the first from a non-English-speaking background. Sir James has been praised for his longstanding commitment to multiculturalism and this state's cultural and linguistic diversity. Sir James has served this state both effectively and with great distinction. He has been enormously active in multicultural and Italian community affairs and has served as an important role model for those of non-English-speaking backgrounds.

The Italian community has stated publicly that this act by Premier Bracks demonstrates a lack of appreciation for the Italian community and its contribution to Victoria. This single, thoughtless and unnecessary act has done enormous damage to the relationship between the Victorian government and the Italian community, to which we owe an enormous debt.

Olympic Games: torchbearers

Mr LANGUILLER (Sunshine) — With Victoria still reeling from the Olympic torch relay I take this opportunity to congratulate all participants. The Olympic spirit was at fever pitch two weeks ago on Saturday, 29 July, in my electorate of Sunshine when the torch relay lit up Ballarat Road to the proud cheers of onlookers. The City of Brimbank had seven torchbearers. I congratulate Brimbank residents Tony Mifsud and Ray Barry, who carried the Olympic torch through Brimbank. I also congratulate Brimbank residents Christina Kalaitzis, Syke Henderson, Katharine Micalizzi, Vanessa Crawford and Juanita Frantz, who carried the torch in other areas.

The Brimbank community is proud of all the torchbearers, male and female, young and old, those from diverse cultural backgrounds and those who have overcome serious illnesses. One torchbearer was an amputee.

I also commend the mayor of Brimbank, Charlie Apap, and Brimbank councillors and officers for their good work with the relay. Like all Victorians, Brimbank residents are great lovers of sport. They showed their devotion to the Olympic Games and its spirit in droves during the torch relay. I commend them.

Sir James Gobbo

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — Late last year Sir James and Lady Gobbo visited my electorate to the overwhelming joy of the people of Polwarth, and in particular the Italian community, which admires the Governor with passion and deep respect. One of my first official functions was to accompany Sir James and Lady Gobbo on a tour of my electorate. During the visit I followed Sir James and Lady Gobbo to Apollo Bay, where the Governor accepted a role as patron of the Apollo Bay Health Foundation. On the way to Apollo Bay the Governor and I came across a serious car accident, and he displayed the compassion and concern for which he has become so well known. He refused to leave the scene of the accident until the injured persons were attended to.

The greatest credential that the Victorian Parliament has to offer is its multicultural mix, and I have continually advocated that point on behalf of all those who serve this Parliament. We all represent multicultural communities, and as such we are at the forefront throughout the world in our ability to conduct our parliamentary process in harmony.

The sacking by the Premier of the first Governor from a non-English-speaking background was a very sad day for the Victorian Parliament and an insult to all who support Victoria's multicultural mix. The Italian community is dismayed and bewildered by this ruthless dumping of a great achiever and ambassador to this young state and country.

On a commercial front, the Victorian wool industry, which has ironically improved its position over the past three years, has lost its greatest ambassador and conduit to one of its best customers — Italy.

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

COURTS AND TRIBUNALS LEGISLATION (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of Mr HULLS (Attorney-General).

Dr DEAN (Berwick) — This looks as if it will be one of my shorter speeches. I suppose I have to ask myself the question: is this bill worth more than a 4-minute speech? The Attorney-General will be pleased to know that, in the spirit of cooperation for which the opposition is well known, I believe the bill is worth more than a 4-minute speech and that the opposition will not oppose it.

The bill makes some technical amendments to the operations of the courts, including the Magistrates Court and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It was presumably put together by the Department of Justice for the Attorney-General to introduce in the house. The department seems to have done a reasonably good job. I suspect most of the proposals for changes have come from the courts concerned.

However, the interesting thing is that tacked onto the substantial and appropriate amendments to the principal legislation is a little bit of the icing the Attorney-General has become renowned for. Let me not get involved with legislation such as that which will reform the Sale of Land Act, which is long overdue, or that which will introduce drug courts, which seem to have vanished off the horizon. Let me get into something really serious, such as whether the oath of allegiance to the Queen should be repeated when lawyers become practising members of the Supreme Court. That is a really meaty issue. The interesting

question is this: in the explanation by the Attorney-General of the legislation he has introduced have we heard one word about the substantive amendments it contains? Not one. Instead we have heard lots about whether a certain oath should or should not be sworn.

Honourable members heard the minister say in his second-reading speech that one of the reasons for doing away with the oath is that England does not have it. All of a sudden it appears the Attorney-General is looking to England for his example. All of a sudden an Attorney-General for whom I would have thought England would be the last direction in which he would look is seeking support by looking at what is happening in the English courts. Perhaps the Queen Mother finally got to him!

He is quick to point out that courts in New South Wales, Western Australia and New Zealand do not have the oath of allegiance to the Queen. However, he makes no mention of whether the legislatures in those states saw fit to introduce legislation into their parliaments to get rid of it, whether they just did not have it in the first place or whether the courts themselves decided not to have it. Let me inform the house: they did not see fit to introduce legislation into Parliament to get rid of it.

Debate interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Under sessional orders the time for government business has now expired. The honourable member for Berwick will get the call when debate on the bill resumes.

SES: Hamilton office

Dr NAPHTHINE (Leader of the Opposition) — I ask the Premier, firstly, to take action to direct the State Emergency Service to retain its regional headquarters at Hamilton, and secondly, to discipline his Minister for Police and Emergency Services for allowing the SES to encourage a bidding war between councils in western Victoria for that regional headquarters.

Currently, the SES regional headquarters for south-west Victoria is located in Hamilton. It has operated effectively and efficiently as the site for the regional headquarters for more than 25 years. I am advised that there are seven staff based at the regional headquarters and that Hamilton is well located geographically to be the site of the headquarters as it is close to many SES volunteer units across south-west Victoria and close to

areas where the SES is required to work on many occasions, such as the Grampians National Park, the coastline, Rocklands reservoir, the Lower Glenelg National Park and the road network throughout western Victoria.

On 21 June, Mr Rhys Maggs, the director of the SES, wrote to the Southern Grampians Shire Council advising of the imminent retirement of the regional director of the south-west SES and saying that the SES would review the location of its regional headquarters. In particular, Mr Maggs in that letter and in other correspondence I have seen has suggested that Geelong be an alternative location for that regional headquarters.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is too much audible conversation. If members wish to hold conversations, they should go somewhere else to do so.

Dr NAPHTHINE — Further, I direct the Premier's attention particularly to a letter to the chief executive officer of the Southern Grampians Shire Council, in which Mr Maggs states:

Your comments on each of these options are invited plus an indication of any incentives that you may be able to offer the service to assist should your municipality be selected as a possible new regional headquarters facility.

Clearly Mr Maggs, with the support of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, is encouraging councils across south-west Victoria to engage in a bidding war using ratepayers' funds to try to purchase the location of the regional headquarters of the SES. That is how the government is presuming to deliver services in regional and rural Victoria: it is encouraging councils to use ratepayers' funds to bid for government agencies and government departments to locate offices and regional headquarters in their municipalities.

That is an absolute disgrace and the Premier must put a stop to it immediately. The Premier must step in and discipline his minister, who has obviously lost control of the management of the SES. He must also reassure the people of Hamilton that the regional headquarters of the SES will be retained in Hamilton, where it has served the community of south-west Victoria efficiently and effectively

Housing: Geelong homeless

Mr TREZISE (Geelong) — I refer the Minister for Housing to the issue of homeless people, and in particular homeless adult men in my electorate of Geelong. Along with Melbourne and other major regional centres in Victoria, Geelong faces a major

problem with homeless adult males. I refer specifically to adult males because currently in Geelong there is no refuge for that group of people. The closure some years ago of the St Vincent de Paul night shelter has left a significant gap in assistance to both homeless men and homeless men with children in the Geelong area.

I ask the minister to advise the house as to the actions being taken by her department to provide assistance to homeless men in the Geelong region. Currently, homeless men in Geelong seek essentially bandaid solutions to their housing predicaments. They either accommodate themselves in hotels or caravans, sleep out, or seek crisis accommodation in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

In many instances homelessness is also a symptom of mental illness or mental breakdown. Geelong is in need of assistance in providing accommodation for homeless adult males, and I look forward to the minister's advice and action.

Public transport: seniors concessions

Mr MAUGHAN (Rodney) — I raise with the Minister for Community Services concerns about travel concessions for pensioners and Seniors Card holders on Victoria's public transport system. Aged pensioners or holders of a health care card are able to obtain travel concessions on Victoria's public transport systems — buses, trams and trains — in the metropolitan area and on nominated V/Line off-peak country services. That clearly discriminates against country people, who are only able to obtain concessional fares on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Older people are often required to travel to Melbourne for medical, family and social reasons, funerals and the like, all of which may require travel over two days or over a weekend and frequently require them to be accompanied by a spouse, partner or friend. Age pensioners are disadvantaged by having to pay higher fares on days other than Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. For example, the Echuca–Melbourne return fare is \$18.80 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and \$53.80 for the other four days — a very significant difference. Seniors Card holders and self-funded retirees are significantly disadvantaged on days other than Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Given the minister's previous indication that the government gave a commitment to examine the feasibility of extending the Seniors Card discount to Monday and Friday, can she advise the house of the outcome of that examination and indicate what action the government proposes to take to rectify the blatant

discrimination against country people and honour its pre-election commitment to an even better deal for the people of country Victoria?

Melton: commissioners

Ms BURKE (Pahran) — I raise with the Minister for Local Government an article that appeared today in the *Melton Express Telegraph* headed 'Doubt on tenure'. The article mentions the Premier's visit to Caroline Springs and the discussion about the future of the commissioners and the chief executive officer at Melton Shire Council. The issue should be discussed in this house rather than outside.

In 1996 the commissioners of Melton shire received 71 per cent of the vote, and in 1999 they received 61 per cent. One of the most interesting things about Australian Labor Party members is that that they consider democracy to be represented by the way they see it working, not the way the people see it working. Democracy is about the voice of the people. Each time the Kennett government dismissed councillors it was in response to a request from an investigation or for new boundaries, which is an entirely different situation.

The minister is so caught up with the problems he has in Workcover that Melbourne City Council is completely out of control. Allegations there — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms BURKE — The minister has told the council, 'Pull up your socks!'. The Greater Geelong City Council is having its fifth restructure of ward boundaries in eight years! Five times it has changed the boundaries and he is letting it change them again. Moonee Valley City Council is talking about giving credit cards to everybody at that council. There are allegations that 75 members of staff at Brimbank City Council had credit cards. It is difficult enough to have to look after credit cards in any business, let alone 75 of them. I would love to know what the minister is doing about that.

I will not go on about the extra costs involved in Workcover because that just goes on and on. The government can use the guise of the goods and services tax and give all the other excuses we have heard in the house, but it has increased the cost to the community of Workcover.

Mr Mildenhall — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable member has been speaking for some time and has yet to request any

action, indicate a consistent theme or make a cohesive request to the chamber.

Mr Perton — On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Footscray has got himself into the bad habit of interrupting members at the 4-minute mark.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Stop the clock.

Mr Perton — Madam Deputy Speaker, members of Parliament are entitled to use the adjournment debate as they see fit. If at the end of the 3 minutes they have not complied with the rules, a ruling should be made. No valid point of order can be taken at this time by either the honourable member for Footscray or anyone else.

Mr Brumby — On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The honourable member for Prahran has raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government. The honourable member is required to address issues within the portfolio of local government, and I ask her to continue to do that.

Ms BURKE — I seek that the minister uphold the results of a democratic ballot of the residents of Melton, which has called for the shire to be administered by commissioners. I ask the minister to end the doubt on tenure.

Mr Cooper — Madam Deputy Speaker, I was on my feet — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I did not see the honourable member for Mornington because I was looking at my list of order. I call the honourable member for Benalla.

Mount Hotham: tourism

Ms ALLEN (Benalla) — I raise with the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism one of the most beautiful tourist destinations in my electorate — that is, Mount Hotham. It is having one of its best snow seasons for the past 50 years. One could say that it has had the best snow season for 50 years because there is now a Labor member for Benalla, but I would be too shy to say that!

Mr Perton interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster!

Ms ALLEN — Recently I have spent a couple of weekends up at Mount Hotham. The chief executive officer there, Jim Atteridge, has shown me around the facilities and informed me of the wonderful new developments and the future planning for the area. Not only is Mount Hotham a well-planned mountain resort, but the plans can only make it one of the world's best ski resorts. We are very lucky to have that mountain in the Benalla electorate, and it is only a 4-hour drive from Melbourne.

An infrastructure development recently opened at Mount Hotham is the new Mount Hotham airport, which is a wonderful advantage not only to the Mount Hotham and Dinner Plains area but also to townships up that way including Bright and Mount Beauty.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member has 1 minute to refer to the action she wishes the minister to take.

Ms ALLEN — Will the Minister for Major Projects and Tourism continue to undertake the promotion of Mount Hotham to ensure that it will continue to be one of the leading ski resorts not only in Australia, but in the world?

Schools: special developmental entry criteria

Mr COOPER (Mornington) — I seek a review from the Minister for Education of the entry criteria for the enrolment of students at special developmental schools. As an example I advise the minister of an 11-year-old student at a primary school in my electorate who earlier this year was diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder and schizotypal disorder. At the age of four this boy had been misdiagnosed as having attention deficit disorder and placed on stimulant medication. He is a significant problem at his school and cannot be left unsupervised at any time. If he is left alone even for a couple of minutes he creates situations that physically endanger other students, the staff and himself. Even a full-time aide for him at his school has not resolved the problem.

He is severely disabled in all social and life skills, and an expert panel assembled by the school to deal with his case is unanimously of the view that he should be placed in a special developmental school on the Mornington Peninsula.

That view is supported strongly by Professor B. J. Tonge from the Department of Psychological Medicine at Monash University. The current entry criteria of the department of education prevent the student from going to a special school. I understand from the principal of the school he is currently

attending that many others are in a similar predicament. If that is so it signifies that there is a major need in government schools that is not being met. Such students cannot handle a normal school setting — they are disruptive and sometimes dangerous to other students and staff — but the rules prevent them from being at a school that is designed to meet their needs.

I ask the Minister for Education as a matter of urgency to look into the situation and initiate a solution for a very real and worrying problem.

Tabcorp: minimum telephone bets

Mr ROBINSON (Mitcham) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Racing the vexed issue of the minimum telephone bet with Tabcorp, which over the course of the winter recess was raised from \$2 to \$3 at peak times. I ask the minister to investigate what measures can be taken to exert the utmost pressure on Tabcorp to reform its practice in setting minimum bets in a way that disadvantages many Victorians.

I am pleased to admit that I am one of a select group of members of this place who occasionally do not mind a wager. I know the honourable members for Polwarth and Warrnambool do not mind a wager. Indeed on this side of the chamber I know the Treasurer does not mind a wager.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ROBINSON — It is his own money. Having visited a racetrack with the Treasurer, I am pleased to be able to say that he uses his own money and not the state's money.

I understand that since the TAB was privatised the power to set rules and regulations for minimum telephone bets has rested entirely with Tabcorp. The problem appears to be that Tabcorp's policies fail to take account of the difficulties many people experience in seeking to engage in what they regard as a pleasurable pastime. Over the past few years Tabcorp has closed down many of its agencies in suburban shopping centres and has relocated many others in hotels. It has also considerably reduced the telephone service.

On many occasions it is extremely difficult to place a bet using the telephone service. I understand a number of punters do not like to visit hotels and find that the relative shortage of suburban agencies forces them to use the telephone service more than they want to. They are not in the habit of betting more than 50 cents at a time, and the raising of the minimum phone bet to \$3

effectively excludes them from indulging in their pastime.

Tabcorp has addressed the issue in the wrong way. It has mistaken the need for an increase in share value with an increase in service for punters, because the service to punters has reduced considerably. I urge the minister to explore every avenue available to him to put pressure on Tabcorp.

Mornington Peninsula: public transport

Mr DIXON (Dromana) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Transport the issue of public transport on the Mornington Peninsula. I ask the minister to approve a plan put forward by a combination of the Grenda group of companies, which runs Peninsula Bus Lines; the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, supported by the local community, as indicated by a petition I will table in this Parliament; and the youth council representing the young people of my area. The plan is being considered and was warmly received by the minister's department, but we are awaiting a decision.

The problem is basically the cost of public transport. A resident of the southern peninsula would pay \$23 to travel to Melbourne and back, whereas a person travelling an equivalent distance from Healesville to Melbourne would pay about \$9.50 for a return fare because it is within the Met zoning. The Dromana electorate is the poorest in the state, with the lowest average per capita income. Not many residents can afford to take a day trip to Melbourne, let alone commute regularly and pay \$23 a day. Many of my constituents do not have cars because they are too old to drive. They are totally reliant on public transport.

The shape of the peninsula further compounds the problem. If residents want to access education, training, jobs or shops, they cannot travel to the four points of the compass; they can go in only one direction — up the peninsula. In addition, the electorate has high unemployment. The Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment referred to no region having over 10 per cent unemployment, but I can assure the minister there is well over 10 per cent unemployment in my electorate.

The solution to the problem is to introduce a fourth Met zone in the Melbourne area, which would significantly reduce the cost for people in my electorate commuting to Melbourne or into the metropolitan area. It would enable a far more frequent bus service, reducing the average time between buses from about 1¼ hours to 45 minutes. It would also enable the local community

bus to operate into the trunk route, which is currently subsidised by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. The bus would be able to travel to different areas such as the back beaches, which would be popular with young people who wish to surf in those areas.

The community is well behind the plan, as will be demonstrated by the petition. I ask the minister to ensure that our young people in particular have better access to training, education and recreation on the Mornington Peninsula.

Forests: regional agreements

Ms DUNCAN (Gisborne) — I ask the Minister for Environment and Conservation to advise the house of the action she is taking to improve the management of our forests. Honourable members may recall that shortly after the last state election the Bracks government made a number of changes to the regional forests agreement (RFA) process by adding some steps and making some improvements.

One of those improvements was the introduction of an independent panel chaired by Christine Foster. The panel did an excellent job. Panel members travelled around the state, and I am happy to say they visited part of my electorate and held a meeting at Woodend. The purpose of their travel was to look at ways in which the government could improve the RFA process. Many opposition members scoffed at the introduction of that additional process, as they frequently do with anything that involves community consultation. I suspect that they — —

Mr Perton interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Doncaster is making too much noise.

Ms DUNCAN — The honourable member for Doncaster was one of those who scoffed at the consultation process. Opposition members see it as an excuse for doing nothing. One can only question what they have in mind when they have consultations, if they ever do. They are cynical about anything that involves talking to the community, which probably says more about the way they conduct themselves than anything else. However, true consultation results in collective decision making, and generally collective decision making results in better decisions and better outcomes.

One of the clear messages the panel received during its travels was that the public desired to have much more involvement in the management of its forests. Although there continues to be debate on this issue, members of

the public often state that when issues are discussed openly and honestly and when data and information are shared, they have a much better understanding and greater confidence in the process.

I ask the minister what action she is taking to implement the panel's recommendations to have greater community involvement in forest management.

Eastern Freeway: extension

Mr PERTON (Doncaster) — I raise for the attention of the Minister for Transport, and in his absence the Minister for State and Regional Development, a matter of concern to the residents of Savaris Court, Donvale, whose properties are being blighted because of changes to the Eastern Freeway.

I first raised this matter on 23 November 1999, when the Minister for Transport replied:

I acknowledge that the issue needs to be addressed quickly, and I will do so as quickly as I can.

In February I took a delegation of residents of Savaris Court to the minister, who again made the same commitment to deal with the issue speedily. On 31 May the honourable member for Mordialloc again raised the matter. The minister said that when the government had properly evaluated and given due consideration to all the views put forward in a thorough, detailed community consultation it would make a response available to Parliament, the public and the media. It is now August and the people in Donvale have had their lives on hold for more than nine months.

Mr David Sparks of 4 Savaris Court wrote to me on 7 August. He states:

The residents of Savaris Court, including my family, have put our lives and any renovations we had planned on our homes on hold since early November 1999 when it was leaked about alignment changes of the Eastern Freeway. We want to get on with our lives. Please make a decision on what freeway option will be used and let the people on Savaris Court, including myself, know what the decision is before the end of August. It has taken much longer than you had promised and longer than anyone had hoped for.

That is a plea for help. An entire street of families have had their lives blighted as a result of the minister's inaction. It is time for the minister to act and make a decision. Construction work on the Eastern Freeway extension has commenced. These people deserve to know where they stand.

Gilmore College for Girls

Mr MILDENHALL (Footscray) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I ask that

she consider Gilmore College for Girls in Footscray as a school in the proposed programs of assistance to the East Timor education system. I am aware from recent publicity that the minister has expressed her desire for a stronger relationship between the education systems of Victoria and East Timor, and is considering ways in which assistance can be offered as the community of East Timor seeks to rebuild a public education system from virtually ground zero.

There are a number of reasons why the Gilmore College for Girls in Footscray would be an appropriate school to offer assistance as either a venue for placement of teachers or as a potential school for a twin schooling arrangement. They include a diverse multicultural college setting; its well-known skills in providing quality education for a range of cultural groups; its experience with students from East Timor; and its well-delivered programs for refugees from the Horn of Africa, many of whom have suffered traumatic experiences. The school has developed expertise in providing careful and compassionate counselling.

The school has enthusiastically embraced the middle years of schooling program, particularly for students in years 5 to 8. The teachers and students of the school are enthusiastic about participating in the program and providing assistance to the East Timorese community as a result of the students' study of international relations and the compassion staff, students and the school council feel for the plight of that country.

Responses

Ms PIKE (Minister for Housing) — I thank the honourable member for Geelong for raising the issue of homeless men in Geelong. I have visited Geelong on several occasions and have attended the Geelong Housing Issues Working Group, which his office supports. I also thank the honourable member for his ongoing interest in general housing issues in Geelong, and particularly for his interest in the plight of homeless people in that community.

The government has indicated a strong commitment to addressing issues of homelessness in Victoria. Recently the Premier and I launched the Victorian homelessness strategy, which is assisting us to move beyond the traditional programs of last resort that provide housing and support and to address the causes of homelessness through a broad range of government and community strategies. The Victorian homelessness strategy will be developed with the assistance of a ministerial advisory group and will involve broad community consultation and program redevelopment and design over the next 12 months.

As a first step the government has committed \$7 million to develop four new accommodation centres across the state. One of those new services will be located in Geelong. It will be a crisis accommodation service that principally targets men in that community. Preliminary work by my department suggests that provision of six accommodation and support packages each night — a significant upgrading of the current response — would have a big impact on the problems of homelessness, particularly among single men and men with children. Over a 12-month period an estimated 80 men would be assisted by the new service, which would link closely to the transitional housing and support services already offered in that community.

I can assure the honourable member for Geelong that the funds we have set aside for those new accommodation services will provide great assistance to people in the Geelong community. Those funds are, however, only a first step in the government's broader homelessness strategy, which will seek to provide a more adequate and appropriate response to homelessness in this state.

Mr PANDAZOPOULOS (Minister for Major Projects and Tourism) — I thank the honourable member for Benalla for her enthusiastic support for tourism in her region, and particularly tourism in the high country. I had the opportunity of being with the honourable member not long after her election when I opened the ski season at Falls Creek and Mount Hotham. On that occasion I attended the ball at Mount Hotham, and I am going up to Falls Creek again next week for the Kangaroo Hoppett, for which the government is considering some ongoing funding. The honourable member for Benalla has encouraged me in that work, even though it is outside her electorate, because she supports the entire region.

The honourable member highlighted for me some of the great assets of the region, including the enthusiasm of the tourism industry, local councils and the various local communities. All those people are now seeing positive results. The new Mount Hotham airport is a significant addition because it means the Victorian ski fields are now more accessible to the people of Sydney than those in New South Wales. Eastern Airlines, which originally scheduled four flights a week from Sydney to Mount Hotham, has had to find a fifth aircraft because demand has outstripped supply; and even so the service is regularly booked out. Sydney people can now leave from Sydney airport and be in the ski fields in a couple of hours. They cannot do that when they travel to the New South Wales ski fields.

Melbourne people can now get to Mount Hotham in 35 minutes.

The government can do a lot when there is enthusiasm and investment. Tourism Victoria has committed itself to a new \$690 000 campaign as part of the campaign entitled 'Victoria. A whole lot moreski'. That campaign for the first time packages together all of Victoria's ski fields. Mount Hotham, Falls Creek and Mount Buller will all benefit, and the government can sell the Victorian ski fields message in the key markets of Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Mount Hotham is reporting an 85 per cent increase in skier numbers since last year and a 25 per cent increase in visitor numbers overall.

The Mount Hotham airport has provided additional opportunities for Victoria. The state not only wants people to come for a great experience during the ski season, it also wants to promote the summer experience in the area. People can now fly in during summer, and joint interstate promotional packages to encourage people to do that are being considered.

I thank the honourable member for Benalla for her ongoing support. I know that ski tourism industries are extremely appreciative of her efforts in speaking to government ministers and taking an interest in the wider region apart from her own electorate, which is very good. I might see her up at the Kangaroo Hoppett.

Mr HULLS (Minister for Racing) — The honourable member for Mitcham raised a very important issue about Tabcorp's decision to introduce a minimum bet of \$3 for bets placed with its telephone operators. Previously a \$2 minimum applied to telephone betting between 12 noon and 5.00 p.m. and after 7.00 p.m. The minimum bet for Tabcorp's touch-phone betting service will remain unchanged at 50 cents for bets places between 8.00 a.m. and 12 noon and between 5.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m., and a \$2 limit applies at other times.

I am sure many members of this house have received letters from elderly and disabled constituents who are not able to use the touch-phone service or gain access to transport on a regular basis to get to a TAB. On behalf of those constituents, who ought to be valued customers of Tabcorp, I urge Tabcorp to reconsider its policy.

I understand that Tabcorp is now a private company and that it considers its bottom line, but in this particular instance it should be putting punters before profits. It is vitally important that in this situation Tabcorp puts punters before profits, because those people do not have a gambling problem. They are

simply people who regularly sit at home and like to make the occasional small wager through their telephone account but cannot use the touch-phone service. It is unfair to impose upon them a \$3 minimum bet when for years they have been able to have a 50 cent bet.

As Minister for Racing I will be making representations to Tabcorp to discover whether there is some way that Tabcorp can accommodate people with special needs who are unable to access the company's wagering services by any other current means. Those people should be considered valued customers and I hope Tabcorp can see its way to ensuring that they can have a 50 cent minimum bet.

Ms DELAHUNTY (Minister for Education) — The honourable member for Mornington raised the entry criteria for special development schools. It astonishes me that suddenly there is an outbreak of compassion after seven years of not a lot of great interest, certainly no flexibility, and minimal funding for students with special needs. The honourable member asked me to look at the entry criteria, and I am very happy to do that as requested.

The honourable member for Footscray made an excellent suggestion about the Gilmore College for Girls, a secondary college in Footscray, in light of its experience in dealing with refugees, particularly from the Horn of Africa and East Timor. He suggested it would be an ideal school to participate in what the government hopes will be developed between East Timor and Victoria — that is, a twin schools arrangement.

Last weekend I visited East Timor to deliver some assistance on behalf of the people of Victoria. Honourable members would be aware that it is nearly 12 months since violence engulfed East Timor following the independence ballot, violence that completely destroyed the physical infrastructure of that emerging nation. It was a terrible shock to see the systematic, planned vengeance of the East Timorese militia.

With Australian support, the United Nations is assisting in the reconstruction of East Timor. The United Nations has never before attempted to build and manage an entirely new state, but that is the challenge before it.

The schools have been completely devastated. In most cases they have no desks and hardly any of them have roofs. After meeting with Xanana Gusmao and the education minister, Father Filameno Jacob, the Victorian government said it would help rebuild the

education system in any way possible. Once the schools are re-established in East Timor with assistance from Ausaid, the Victorian and other governments around Australia, the Bracks government will be able to establish an effective twin school program.

Many students and school communities have told the government they would like to contribute to the reconstruction of East Timor. The Labor government believes that once schools are re-established in East Timor the twin school program would be a practical way to provide assistance to the East Timorese schools. I thank the honourable member for Footscray. Gilmore College for Girls will be top of the list.

Ms CAMPBELL (Minister for Community Services) — I congratulate the honourable member for Rodney on his new position as National Party spokesperson on community services. The honourable member raised his concern about aged pensioners and Seniors Card holders getting full concessions on public transport on days other than Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. He has received correspondence from me to which he alluded in his comments.

The Bracks government has given a commitment to examine the feasibility of extending the Seniors Card discount to Mondays and Fridays. I have been advised that the matter was considered by the Kennett government, but unfortunately there were no positive results for older people who wish to travel on public transport on Mondays or Fridays.

The Bracks government has given a commitment, which it will honour, and a feasibility study is currently being carried out. The results of the study will be conveyed to the honourable member for Rodney and other honourable members who have corresponded with me advocating strongly for the inclusion of self-funded retirees in the scheme.

The honourable member for Rodney talked about the cost of travel from Echuca to Melbourne. I have also had correspondence from the honourable member for Bendigo East relating to the cost of transport from Bendigo to Melbourne. The facts there are similar to those in Echuca. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays it costs \$14.65 to travel from Bendigo to Melbourne with a differential cost of \$29.30 on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. It is obviously considerably more expensive to travel on those days, and the government is concerned and will be following it up.

Staff from the Department of Infrastructure are working with staff from the Department of Human Services, so

interdepartmental consultation is well and truly under way. I look forward to presenting the results of that feasibility study to the honourable member for Rodney and others.

Ms GARBUTT (Minister for Environment and Conservation) — The honourable member for Gisborne raised the issue of community involvement in the sustainable management of forests and the timber industry in general. I have recently announced the establishment of regional sustainable forest reference groups in each of the forest management areas. The first will be in the Midlands, which is in the honourable member's electorate and which includes the Wombat Forest.

The government will set up groups in other areas of active forestry with the intention of including as many stakeholders as possible. They will give local people a great opportunity to have a say in the range of issues affecting forest management. The reference groups will ensure that the process of considering forest issues is open and accountable and gives stakeholders an active role in management decisions. They will also provide a forum for raising forest management issues, enable an exchange of views between stakeholders and the department, and perhaps lead to the resolution of many of the controversial issues involved.

The government will encourage the participation of a wide range of community organisations, including environment groups, catchment management authorities, educational and recreational users, environment groups, neighbouring landholders, forest graziers, the timber industry, the unions, tourism bodies and others. Applications for membership of those groups, including independent chairpeople, will be advertised, and members of the relevant industry groups will be directly invited to apply.

The honourable member for Gisborne will find the process useful in her area, where people have a range of views and where a number of active groups are interested in the issues. They will now have a forum in which to come together to work through those issues and, in many cases, resolve them.

Mr CAMERON (Minister for Local Government) — The honourable member for Prahran raised a grab bag of matters rather than one matter. I find it odd that a couple of hours ago in question time the honourable member was asserting that the Melton commissioners had tenure, yet now we are past 10 o'clock their tenure is in doubt. I refer her to my answer, when I said that the government and I want to

reach a situation of democracy in Melton, and it is our hope to do so in a coordinated way.

For some reason the honourable member referred to the Greater Geelong City Council, where I understand electoral processes are being discussed tonight. No doubt I will get a full report on that tomorrow. People in the Geelong community look to their council on these matters. I do not know whether the honourable member for Prahran is suggesting I should go around overruling councils, but she should recognise the changed approach of government in this state and that the previous approach was not only wrong but detrimental. People did not like it and the previous government suffered as a result.

The honourable member referred to Workcover premiums, I assume in a local government context in which an experience rating system was inherited. Everybody in this house recognised that a 15 per cent rise was necessary to cover the enormous liability of the previous scheme.

The honourable member also referred to the goods and services tax. Opposition members whinge and whine, but you did not hear them saying anything about it when the federal government was attempting to introduce it.

The premium of the Shire of Campaspe has fallen below 1 per cent because the council has worked actively on improving occupational health and safety. If the opposition has suddenly taken the position that it does not want an experience rating system, that it does not care about occupational health and safety or that it wants the Shire of Campaspe to have a higher rate, it should have the courage to say so.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition referred a matter to the Premier through the Minister for State and Regional Development. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has said he would like to respond to it. I will seek guidance from the Clerk about whether he can respond on behalf of the Premier.

I am advised that the Minister for State and Regional Development must respond to the matter raised.

Mr BRUMBY (Minister for State and Regional Development) — The honourable member for Dromana asked the Minister for Transport to consider the issue of public transport in the Dromana region, including the coastal areas, and proposed a four-stage Met zone plan. I will refer the matter to the minister, who will respond to the honourable member for Dromana.

The honourable member for Doncaster raised a matter concerning Savaris Court, Donvale, decisions made about the Eastern Freeway, and the impact of those decisions on the quality of life and amenity of local residents. He said it was a pressing matter in his electorate and that he required a proper consideration of the issue by the Minister for Transport. I will refer the matter to the minister, and I am sure he will reply to the honourable member.

The Leader of the Opposition raised with the Premier the relocation of the State Emergency Service offices currently in Hamilton. I understand that matter is being considered by the SES and that a full consultation process will take all community views into account. I assure the Leader of the Opposition that neither the government nor the SES has made a decision on the matter. The Leader of the Opposition has raised the matter in the house, but I am advised that at no stage has he made any representations to the responsible minister, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services — —

Dr Napthine — On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, if the Minister for Police and Emergency Services cares to check his correspondence, he will find that I wrote to him about this issue some 10 to 14 days ago. I have also written to the Premier on this issue. I suggest the minister at the table should check his facts before seeking to mislead the house.

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

Mr BRUMBY — The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been in the house all day. The house was adjourned today from 3.00 p.m. until 8.00 p.m. I am sure if the Leader of the Opposition had felt strongly enough about the issue he would have raised it directly with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, but he failed to do so.

In conclusion, I repeat: neither the SES nor the government has made any decision on the matter. It is pretty rich for the opposition to be raising this issue, given its record as the former government in closing in excess of 100 schools in regional areas, 6 country rail lines and 12 country hospitals — one bit of infrastructure after another was taken out of country Victoria. The opposition might like to put that consideration into context before raising such matters in the house. It should go through the appropriate channels and raise them directly with the minister.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house stands adjourned until next day.

House adjourned 10.55 p.m.